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Reflection and Action
Essays on the Bildungsroman

Edited by
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JH

For Anne

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An Introduction

In the last third of the eighteenth century arose a type of novel, usually autobiographical (and sometimes hardly distinguishable from that nonfictional form), and principally concerned with the spiritual and psychological development of the protagonist, that is now known as the *Bildungsroman*.¹ This new kind of novel which owed much to the emergence of the new *Empfindsamkeit* (sensibility) of the period and to Pietist religious stirrings was embraced by the leading prose writers of the period and became, especially after the appearance in 1795 of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (*Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*), the most important subgenre of the novel in Germany. Indeed, it can be argued that well into the twentieth century the greatest German novels are *Bildungsromane*. Yet, in spite of the efforts of a few scholars of German literature,² American literary criti-

1 Attempts to trace the *Bildungsroman* back to the seventeenth century, usually to Grimmelshausen's rich, unclassifiable novel, *Simplicius Simplicissimus* (1669) are not without merit with regard to similarities as to motifs and themes, but the kind of *Bildung* at the center of these earlier works is not the kind of "cultivation" that the chief theorists and practitioners of the genre had in mind. I therefore have not departed from the mainstream interpretation of the *Bildungsroman* in this regard. It should be pointed out, however, that not only *Simplicissimus* but also the many late seventeenth-century political novels, especially those of Christian Weise, popularized motifs later used in the *Bildungsromane*.

2 Such as Martin Swales, in *The German Bildungsroman from Wieland to Hesse* (1978) Princeton: Princeton UP.

cism has in general failed to inform itself about the nature of a type of novel more talked about than understood. The purpose of this collection of essays by eminent American and European scholars is to provide an overview of the state of research on the history and theory of the Bildungsroman, supplemented with "case studies" of some of the most significant novels in that genre. Such a survey in English appears to be long overdue, because hardly any other term is applied more frequently to a novelistic form and scarcely any is used more imprecisely.

Part of the problem is that there is no consensus on the meaning of the term Bildungsroman. Among scholars in Germany there has been much debate in recent years not only as to what precisely constitutes a Bildungsroman but also whether it is a useful, descriptive technical term at all and, if not, whether it might be better to invent another. That is partly the issue in American literary scholarship too, but a more serious problem—the one primarily addressed by this book—is the imprecise use of the word to categorize virtually any work that describes, even in the most far-fetched way, a protagonist's formative years. It would not be difficult to cite dozens of passages in which the term is used in a careless, cavalier, or simply naive or confused way, but it would be a pointless exercise. Two will suffice to illustrate the symptoms of the malady. Jerome Buckley, in his much-cited *Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding*,³ in effect capitulates in the face of the difficulty of defining the term, writing, "If the word ultimately escapes precise definition or neat translation, its meaning should nonetheless emerge clearly from an account of the novels themselves and the steady recurrence of certain common motifs in them."⁴ The *Oxford Companion to English Literature*, 5th ed., defines Bildungsroman as "the term applied to novels of 'education' (in the widest sense), of which many of the best examples are German. . . . The genre overlaps with the older types of the picaresque novel, but is more philosophical."

Obviously, neither definition is very helpful. At the crux of the matter lies the German word *Bildung*, which defies adequate transla-

³ Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1974.

⁴ Preface, viii.

tion, especially at such a remove from the time of Thomas Carlyle, the translator of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, when the term *Bildungsroman* passed into English. As Wulf Koepke recently pointed out, the definition of *Bildung* "preceded historically all institutional changes in Germany and elsewhere that based educational curricula and methods on its application. The Humboldtian model of the university in particular, with its stated aim of independent learning and the development of the personality, cannot be projected back onto the idea of the *Bildungsroman*, although this is done often, explicitly or implicitly. *Bildung*, in an eighteenth-century context, is a verbal noun meaning 'formation,' transferring the formation of external features to the features of the personality as a whole."⁵ In the early nineteenth century as to some extent even in these times it implied "cultivation," education and refinement in a broad, humanistic sense, certainly not merely education with all the current institutional connotations of the word. It also strongly implied "formation" or "forming," a meaning that is not rendered in the usual English translations. As long as critics in the English-speaking world had a clear understanding of what *Bildung* meant in German and what it implied in the early German models of the genre such as Christoph Martin Wieland's *Geschichte des Agathon* (1766/67), and Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, the term appears to have been applied with fair precision. But to the extent that later scholars have lost sight of the historical context of the *Bildungsroman* and of the broad meaning of *Bildung*, they tend to use the term in a loose, casual, arbitrary, or undifferentiated manner, at least when viewed from a historical perspective.

Aside from the fact that the concept of *Bildung* has been eroded by historical forces, it is also subject to misunderstanding or incomplete understanding because it has several distinct meanings in German. Of these, two are especially relevant: first, *Bildung* as a developmental process and, second, as a collective name for the cultural and spiritual values of a specific people or social stratum in a given historical epoch and by extension the achievement of learning about that same body of

⁵ Koepke, "Quest, Illusion, Creativity, Maturity, and Resignation: the Questionable Journey of the Protagonist of the *Bildungsroman*," *Helios* 17, no. 1 (1990): 130.

knowledge and acceptance of the value system it implies. As can be seen, the problem is not merely one of translation from one language to another; rather, it has also to do with the fact that *Bildung* is a slippery concept, more so now than formerly, one that is bound to our interpretation of cultural values. As one English critic put it, "Any generalisation about the 'Bildungsroman' as a genre is apt to be bedeviled by the variant meanings of the word 'Bildung' in German."⁶ And it is therefore impossible in English to arrive at a definition of the genre based on semantic distinctions alone.

Some have proposed to solve the problem by using the word as it was understood in the time of Goethe so that, presumably, the term would properly describe those works that embody this Classical, late-Enlightenment concept of *Bildung*.⁷ But such an approach levels significant differences among leading cultural figures around 1800 such as Goethe, Schiller, and Wilhelm von Humboldt as to what *Bildung* ideally should consist in and what role it ought to play in society. Furthermore, the term *Bildungsroman* was not used by Goethe or by other contemporary writers, and there is no evidence that the great novelists of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century—Wieland, Goethe, and Jean Paul—were consciously using their novels as statements about cultural values of their time.⁸ In short, it may not be logically defensible to define the *Bildungsroman* as a novel embodying the ideals of *Bildung* presumably extant in the age of German Classicism. A more prudent course is suggested by Jürgen Jacobs and Markus Krause: the term *Bildung* as it applies to

⁶ W. Witte, "Alien Corn: The 'Bildungsroman': Not for Export?" *German Life and Letters* 33 (1979/80): 87ff.

⁷ I am indebted in the following especially to Jürgen Jacobs and Markus Krause, *Der deutsche Bildungsroman: Gattungsgeschichte vom 18. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Beck, 1989), 1638; see also Susan L. Cocalis, "The Transformation of Bildung from an Image to an Ideal," *Monatshefte* 70 (1978): 399ff.; and Rolf Selbmann, *Der deutsche Bildungsroman* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1984), 57. Here as elsewhere in this volume, Classicism and Romanticism and their derivatives are capitalized when they refer to literary periods of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

⁸ See Fritz Martini's essay, the first in this volume.

the novel could be used in a broad sense linking it to the intellectual and social development of a central figure who, after going out into the world and experiencing both defeats and triumphs, comes to a better understanding of self and to a generally affirmative view of the world.⁹ Using even this expanded, ahistorical definition of *Bildung* suffices to distinguish the Bildungsroman from certain other types of novels, such as the picaresque or social novel (although not from others, such as the *Erziehungsroman* and the artist novel).

Following Lukács and others, I have chosen *Reflection and Action* as the title for the essays included in this volume because it seems to me that these concepts represent the two poles of the Bildungsroman. It is not sufficient for the protagonist of the Bildungsroman to reflect, though this is essential, just as it is important too that the reader reflect. Reflectiveness, preoccupation with matters of the development of mind and soul, are obviously key elements of the genre, as we see in the figures of Agathon, Wilhelm Meister, Heinrich Lee (in Gottfried Keller's *Green Henry*), and Mann's Hans Castorp. But action is also important. If Meister merely thought and did not act primarily to help others, the actors, the harpist, Mignon, and Felixhe would in fact be as pale a figure as some early, insensitive commentators found him. It is his enthusiasm, his naive vigor, his energy and drive that are attractive and that maintain the interest of the reader in him. A perusal of the earliest theoretical writings on the Bildungsroman, discussed in detail in Fritz Martini's article, will show that action and reflection were thought to be key components of the genre from its very beginnings, and I believe that the existence of this significant dichotomy will be borne out in the contributions contained in this book.

It was only relatively recently that Martini discovered the English translation of his article is the first chapter in this volume that the word Bildungsroman was coined in 1819 by an obscure professor of rhetoric in Dorpat, Karl von Morgenstern. Morgenstern linked the word *Bildung* to the hero's development and experience, to his educa-

⁹ See Jacobs and Krause, 20.

tion, and to the *Bildung* of the *reader*.¹⁰ Although the term did not catch on and had to be reinvented by the illustrious Germanist Wilhelm Dilthey, Morgenstern's definition contained all the basic elements that were to be the focus of debate to the present time. But it was Dilthey who popularized the term. In *Das Leben Schleiermachers* (1870) he designated as Bildungsromane those novels that make up the "*Wilhelm Meister* school." He chose the term because Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* portrays "menschliche Ausbildung in verschiedenen Stufen, Gestalten, Lebensepochen" (human education and maturation in various stages, figures, periods of life).¹¹ In his *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung* (translated as *Poetry and Experience*) of 1906 he defines the genre in greater detail: the theme of the Bildungsroman is the history of a young man "who enters into life in a blissful state of ignorance, seeks related souls, experiences friendship and love, struggles with the hard realities of the world and thus armed with a variety of experiences, matures, finds himself and his mission in the world."¹²

Dilthey's is the most frequently cited traditional definition of the genre, though in more recent research it is often criticized as too limited or indeed as sexist.¹³ It is significant and often overlooked that Dilthey viewed the genre as a historical phenomenon whose time had passed. "Reading Jean Paul's *Titan* or *Flegeljahre* today, works in which the entire sum of the German Bildungsroman of that age is summarized, one cannot fail to notice that from these old pages wafts

10 On the Bildungsroman as related to the reader's *Bildung*, see Dennis Mahoney's essay in this collection.

11 Cited by Jacobs and Krause, 25.

12 ". . . wie er in glücklicher Dämmerung in das Leben eintritt, nach verwandten Seelen sucht, der Freundschaft begegnet, und der Liebe, wie er nun aber mit den harten Realitäten der Welt in Kampf gerät und so unter mannigfachen Lebenserfahrungen heranreift, sich selbst findet und seiner Aufgabe in der Welt gewiß wird." Cited by Jacobs and Krause, 25. Translation here, as elsewhere, by editor unless otherwise noted.

13 See, e.g., the introduction to *The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development*, ed. Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsch, and Elizabeth Langland (Hanover & London: UP of New England, 1983).

the breath of a bygone age."¹⁴ Still, writers around 1910 such as Thomas Mann and Hermann Hesse clearly felt the genre was, if problematic, still very much alive. Hesse used the term in 1911, and Mann, writing in 1916, remarked in connection with his *Felix Krull* (then a short story), "There is a type of novel that is, to be sure, German, typically German, legitimately national in character, and that is the highly autobiographical Bildungsroman and novel of development."¹⁵ Critics of roughly the same period agreed that the genre was still viable and no mere historic phenomenon. Georg Lukács, following in Dilthey's footsteps, theorized that the novel form, "like no other, is an expression of transcendental homelessness."¹⁶ Probably pursuing ideas expressed by Schiller in his famous essay "Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung" (1795/96, *On Naive and Sentimental Poetry*), Lukács argued that the classical epic poem presupposed a meaningful universe in which the writer was unalienated, not at odds with society. As this accommodation between writer and world eroded, the novel replaced the epic, and the vigorous heroes of the older narrative form were supplanted by protagonists who are essentially searching for the lost meaning of life. The novel thus falls into two opposing types, that of abstract idealism, in which the hero is active and confronts the world, on the one hand, and that of disillusion and reflection, on the other, in which the protagonist withdraws into himself in the conviction that any attempt to assert oneself will result in defeat and humiliation. Between these two types, however, exists a variant, intermediating type, the Bildungsroman, whose theme is

14 "Wer heute die Flegeljahre oder den Titan Jean Pauls liest, in denen die ganze Summe des damaligen Bildungsromans zusammengefaßt ist, dem kommt aus diesen alten Blättern der Hauch einer vergangenen Welt." Cited by Jacobs and Krause, 26.

15 "Es gibt unterdessen eine Spielart des Romans, die allerdings deutsch, typischdeutsch, legitim-national ist, und dies ist eben der autobiographisch erfüllte Bildungs- und Entwicklungsroman." Cited by Jacobs and Krause, 26.

16 "Wie keine andere ein Ausdruck der transzendentalen Obdachlosigkeit." Cited by Jacobs and Krause, 27.

"the reconciliation of the problematic individual driven by deeply-felt ideals with concrete social realities."¹⁷

Scholars such as Melitta Gerhard have attempted to make the term *Bildungsroman* more precise by distinguishing it from the *Entwicklungsroman* or "novel of development," and from the *Erziehungsroman*, the "pedagogical novel," which deals with the educational process in a quite specific and limited way.¹⁸ According to Gerhard, whose pioneering work anticipated the attempts of scholars of later generations to delimit the genre, the *Entwicklungsroman* is the more general term which embraces those novels that treat the confrontation of the individual with the world and the protagonist's maturation and development. Gerhard categorizes the *Bildungsroman* as a subgenre of the *Entwicklungsroman*, a specific sort of *Bildungsroman* that flourished in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.¹⁹ Lothar Köhn follows Gerhard in his 1968 résumé of the state of research on the *Bildungsroman*: "'Bildungsroman' is the term applied to a concrete, historic genre; 'Entwicklungsroman' on the other hand is a quasi-ahistorical structural type."²⁰ The *Erziehungsroman* he defines straightforwardly enough as "a strongly didactic genre that discusses pedagogical problems. . . ." ²¹

Feminist criticism, with a few exceptions, has taken up the *Bildungsroman* enthusiastically, one writer finding it in 1972 "the most salient form for literature influenced by neo-feminism."²² Barbara

17 ". . . die Versöhnung des problematischen, vom erlebten Ideal geführten Individuums mit der konkreten, gesellschaftlichen Wirklichkeit." Cited by Jacobs and Krause, 27.

18 Melitta Gerhard, *Der deutsche Entwicklungsroman bis zu Goethes "Wilhelm Meister"* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1926).

19 Gerhard, 1.

20 Köhn, "Entwicklungs- und Bildungsroman: Ein Forschungsbericht," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift* 42 (1968): 427ff. and 590ff. Here cf. 435.

21 Köhn, 434.

22 Ellen Morgan, "Humanbecoming: Form and Focus in the Neo-Feminist Novel," in *Images of Women in Fiction: Feminist Perspectives*, ed. Susan Koppelman Cornillon (Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1972,

(footnote continued on next page)

Anne White in 1985 called the Bildungsroman "the most popular form of feminist fiction."²³ Others view the genre more ambivalently, as a genre heretofore defined in sexist terms but one properly defined uniquely descriptive of the "awakening" experience of female protagonists. Only a minority of feminist critics regard it as a genre having little relevance to the feminist movement. As to earlier definitions, "even the broadest definitions of the *Bildungsroman* pre-suppose a range of social options available only to men," claims the introduction to *The Voyage In*, a collection of essays on "fictions of female development" of 1983.²⁴ Using Buckley's thin definition of the genre referred to earlier, it is quite reasonably argued that females do not have a chance to develop as males can, cannot leave the country for the city (one of Buckley's criteria that, incidentally, does not apply to *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, prototype of the genre), cannot sever family ties as easily as men, cannot indulge in the sexual affairs considered obligatory (by Buckley) without suffering expulsion from society, and cannot have an active role in society and so come to terms with it. Thus, making use of a set of general characteristics perhaps not especially well chosen ones and comparing these to nineteenth-century English social standards, the editors naturally conclude that few female Bildungsromane fit the traditional definition of the genre. A definition of the female fiction of development which takes into consideration specifically female psychological and sociological theories and which is intended to supplant Buckley's non-definition is then abstracted by the editors of *The Voyage In* from a number of English and American novels of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In effect, a form of the female Bildungsroman is constructed that roughly parallels the general thematics and structure of the "male" variety. "While emphasizing gender differences, our definition shares common

(footnote continued from previous page)

18385. I am indebted to Laura Sue Fuderer's *The Female Bildungsroman in English: An Annotated Bibliography of Criticism* (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1990) for this and many of the following citations on the female Bildungsroman.

²³*Growing Up Female: Adolescent Girlhood in American Fiction* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1985), 195.

²⁴*The Voyage In*, 7.

ground with the presuppositions and generic features of the traditional Bildungsroman" (14). Somewhat surprisingly, the study does not limit itself to the novel form; instead, "to probe the tradition's formal boundaries, we include essays that examine the developmental narratives in fairy tales, short stories, and films" (14). Even studies of fictions written by men about women are included (one of which is Marianne Hirsch's interesting study of the famous "Confessions of a Beautiful Soul" that occupies a significant segment of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*). The inclusion of essays on "a variant of the novel of development, the lesbian coming-out story" (17) and on contemporary fairy tales revised so as to "reverse gender biases inherent in the tales" (17) strains the link with the Bildungsroman to the breaking point and again provides an illustration of what I would argue is needlessly cavalier application of what, used with more care, could be a useful literary term.

As can be seen, feminist criticism of the Bildungsroman has encountered the same difficulties with the meaning and application of the term experienced by earlier scholarship. Ellen Morgan in 1972 viewed the female Bildungsroman as a "recasting" of a predominantly male genre until the present century.²⁵ Esther K. Labovitz sees the decline of the male Bildungsroman and the rise of the female form of the genre as an index to changing social and economic realities,²⁶ and Rita Felski comes to a similar conclusion. Labovitz and Felski stress the component of *Bildung* in their interpretations, since it is access to education for women that makes it possible for them to be protagonists of Bildungsromane.²⁷ But other critics argue that the

²⁵ "Humanbecoming," op cit. Cited by Fuderer, 2.

²⁶ "With the male *Bildungsroman* thought to be disappearing in contemporary society, and no longer a viable genre for a pluralistic and fragmented society, where the concept of *Bildung* is being undermined and cannot be upheld in its former cultural context, the belated arrival of the female *Bildungsroman* invites comparison and contrast." Labovitz, *The Myth of the Heroine: The Female Bildungsroman in the Twentieth Century: Dorothy Richardson, Simone de Beauvoir, Doris Lessing, Christa Wolf* (New York: Lang, 1986), 8.

²⁷ See Labovitz, also Rita Felski, "The Novel of Self-Discovery: A Necessary Fiction?" *Southern Review* 19 (1986): 13148.

female Bildungsroman necessarily diverges from the old models, either as to structure or as to the nature of the *Bildung* involved. Bonnie Hoover Braendlin, in an article of 1983, writes of an alternative Bildungsroman written by "disenfranchised Americans women, blacks, Mexican-Americans, native Americans, homosexuals" in which *Bildung* is judged by "new standards and perspectives."²⁸ Elaine Martin, writing about French and German novels, posits a distinction between the "traditional" male Bildungsroman of apprenticeship, which is "linear, and the female novel of initiation and awakening, which is vertical."²⁹ Others have suggested that most women's novels of development would more accurately be termed *Entwicklungsromane*, since the female protagonists undergo "less a self-determined progression *towards* maturity than a regression *from* full participation in adult life." They experience "mere physical passage from one age to the other without psychological development. . . ." ³⁰ Still, some feminist critics view the term with skepticism, questioning whether there is such a thing as a female Bildungsroman. Elaine H. Baruch, for instance, claimed in 1981 that "the authentic feminine *bildungsroman* remains to be written."³¹

Not only feminist critics are ill at ease with the term Bildungsroman. Some critics among them Hartmut Steinecke, whose major essay on the Bildungsroman is found in this collection have argued in recent years that the term ought to be scrapped and replaced by a more precise one, one not so overladen with ideological biases. Steinecke proposes the formulation *individual-novel* (*Individualroman*).

28 "Bildung in Ethnic Women Writers," *Denver Quarterly* 17 (1983): 7587; here p. 75. Cited by Laura Sue Fuderer, 4.

29 "Theoretical Soundings: The Female Archetypal Quest in Contemporary French and German Women's Fiction," *Perspectives on Contemporary Literature* 8 (1983): 4857. Cited by Fuderer, 45.

30 Annis Pratt and Barbara White, "The Novel of Development," *Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1981), 1337, here p. 36. Cited by Fuderer, 5.

31 "The Feminine Bildungsroman: Education through Marriage," *Massachusetts Review* 22 (1981): 33557. Cited in Fuderer, 5.

In so doing he subscribes to a view of the Bildungsroman as a highly subjective genre that aims principally to portray the protagonist's inner life and psychological development. Just as clearly, this interpretation reduces substantially the number of works that could be included in the genre.

A significant further variant of the "classic" definition of the Bildungsroman was suggested by Michael Beddow in 1982. In analyses of *Agathon*, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, Adalbert Stifter's *Der Nachsommer* (1857, translated as *Indian Summer*), and Thomas Mann's *Der Zauberberg* (1924, *The Magic Mountain*), he argues that the portrayal of a sensitive hero's development far from being "the be-all and end-all" of the Bildungsroman is "undertaken in the service of a further end." Such novels are highly stylized, symbolic works, and "the expression and recommendation of a particular understanding of the nature of humanity through the more or less overtly fictitious narrative of the central character's development is . . . the most important feature which gives the novels on which this study concentrates their peculiar generic identity. This feature, above all, sets them apart from other works. . . ."32 It should be emphasized that Beddow's view of the protagonist as an exemplary, symbolic figure is applied here not to *all* Bildungsromane but only to those he treats though admittedly they are precisely the German novels considered the most representative exemplars of the genre.

Much recent literary criticism about the Bildungsroman grapples with a problem having to do with the pervasive pessimism of modern literature. Twentieth-century novels seldom have a harmonious conclusion, let alone a "happy ending." It is not surprising that the "revaluation of all values" radically hastened by Nietzsche and his many twentieth-century disciples should have the same effect on the Bildungsroman that it had on all other modern and postmodern literary forms. Modern novels and I include among them Goethe's remarkable *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* and Stifter's *Indian Summer* tend to be profoundly concerned with values, either overtly, as in the novels of Hermann Broch, Hermann Hesse, and Alfred Döblin, or

32 Beddow, *The Fiction of Humanity: Studies in the Bildungsroman from Wieland to Thomas Mann* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982), 56.

rather more enigmatically, as in the case of Kafka. And although it is obsessed with the fall of old ethical-philosophical systems, the modern novel is notoriously unable to provide more than open-ended intimations of what might supplant post-Nietzschean nihilism. In general, the modern novel is open-ended, noncommittal, relativistic. Yet most traditional definitions of the Bildungsroman consider an accommodation between the individual and society an essential characteristic of the genre. To put it another way, the universe has traditionally been meaningful, even beneficent in the older examples of the Bildungsroman. The teleological character of the genre is best seen in *Wilhelm Meister*, whose protagonist is made finally to see through an abundance of examples that major turns in his life were due not to chance but to a vaguely benign fate that cannot be explained away merely as the human, well-meaning but sometimes bumbling machinations of the Society of the Tower.

Martin Swales has pointed out the apparent lack of a teleological philosophical underpinning in modern Bildungsromane such as *Magic Mountain* and Robert Musil's great fragment, *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (1930/43, translated as *The Man without Qualities*), and Klaus-Dieter Sorg argues similarly in *Gebrochene Teleologie*.³³ As Swales points out, it is a truism to speak of *Magic Mountain* as a parodistic Bildungsroman. At the end of the novel there is not harmony but chaos and violence, and from the very outset the world in which the novel's protagonist, Hans Castorp, is "educated" is an unreal, neurotic one (and yet one that reflects Europe before the First World War). But Swales, like Jacobs and Krause, significantly finds that there is more to Mann's novel than mere parody: "*The Magic Mountain* involves not simply an exploration of the tradition and a critique of it, but also a precarious reinstatement of it."³⁴ And at the same time the novel, begun in 1913 but not finished until over ten years later is an account of Mann's own education and political

33 Martin Swales, *The German Bildungsroman from Wieland to Hesse* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1978), 31; 123/27; Klaus-Dieter Sorg, *Gebrochene Teleologie: Studien zum Bildungsroman von Goethe bis Thomas Mann* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1983), 813; see also Jacobs and Krause, 33f.

34 Swales, 125.

maturation, when the novelist's political conservatism was altered by the events surrounding the First World War. In that sense too it is a sophisticated, modern form of the Bildungsroman and traces Mann's own *Bildung*. However, I believe Mann's novel, perhaps the last in the *Wilhelm Meister* tradition, can also be considered a Bildungsroman in the classical sense. It bears unmistakable resemblances to *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* in that it emphasizes in the strongest possible terms the necessity for the protagonist not merely to think but also to act. In *Magic Mountain*, although Castorp spends most of his first six years at Berghof in (at first passive) conversation, reading, and reflection, he returns at the end of the novel to the flatland, to the war and perhaps death, to, as Mann grudgingly saw it, *his duty*. His departure from the ivory tower is not based on reflection and logic but is visceral and intuitive. I do not think that Mann's portrayal of Castorp at the end of the novel is ironic, any more than is his portrayal of the death of Castorp's cousin, the officer Joachim Ziemssen. In a radical way reminiscent more of Naphta than of Settembrini, Castorp seems to be attempting to pay his debt to society, and Mann shows in this young man, who is well aware of the obligations of his class, not an alienated member of society but one willing to risk his life to defend what he perceives as its values. And the life-affirming insights granted Castorp when he becomes lost in the snow likewise reveal a protagonist actively, indeed obsessively, searching for stability and traditional values. And so I would argue that *Magic Mountain* demonstrates the longevity of the Bildungsroman as genre even though it is undeniably a self-conscious, sophisticated, ironic, parodistic, and hence a thoroughly modern novel.

And so we come once again to the topic with which I began these remarks: the question of the definition of the Bildungsroman. If American literary criticism in general lacks knowledge of the great tradition in the Bildungsroman, and is imprecise, as Buckley, or suffers from a restricted vision of the genre (as does much feminist criticism of the genre), or is consumed by its commitment to deconstructionist or Lacanian modes of interpretation, what might serve as a working definition? Jeffrey L. Sammons, in the essay included in this collection, holds that for the term Bildungsroman to mean anything it should have something to do with *Bildung*, "that is, with the early bourgeois,

humanistic concept of the shaping of the individual self from its innate potentialities through acculturation and social experience to the threshold of maturity. . . . It does not much matter whether the process of *Bildung* succeeds or fails, whether the protagonist achieves an accommodation with life and society or not." Using this gauge, Sammons admits *David Copperfield* to the fold, *Jude the Obscure* and *Le rouge et le noir* possibly, but *Illusions perdues* not at all. By circumscribing the applicability of the term, he aims to maintain or restore whatever integrity it might have possessed earlier. But it is significant that he specifically rejects the affirmative conclusion of the novel, the coming to terms with society, postulated in Dilthey's classic definition, and he thus provides, I think, a useful and usable interpretation of the genre that at the same time preserves the traditional link to *Bildung* and allows the inclusion of modernist, "alienated" works such as Hesse's *Steppenwolf*, even if such novels may be regarded as parodies of the Bildungsroman. In short I especially invite a close reading of Sammons' essay because considered in the light of traditional views about the genre as found in Morgenstern, Dilthey, and Lukács it contains what is lacking in Buckley's *Season of Youth*.

Finally, I would like to touch on the question of whether there might be national variants of the Bildungsroman, or at least peculiarities or predilections based on social or historical factors. Certainly, no one these days would characterize the Bildungsroman as an exclusively *German* genre, though such an assumption was not uncommon in the Wilhelminian epoch. Naturally, whether one concludes that there are a lot of non-German Bildungsromane or just a few depends on how inclusive one's definition of the genre is. Jerome H. Buckley, Susanne Howe, François Jost, Randolph P. Shaffner, and feminist scholars referred to earlier to mention just a few view the Bildungsroman as a supranational literary type and one that exists in a relatively large number of examples.³⁵ Critics with a stricter understanding of the

³⁵ See Buckley, *Season of Youth*; Susanne Howe, *Wilhelm Meister and his English Kinsmen: Apprentices to Life* (New York: Columbia UP, 1930); F. Jost, "Variations of a Species: The Bildungsroman," *Symposium* 37 (1983): 125ff.; Martin Swales, "The German Bildungsroman in komparatistischer Sicht," in *Akten des VI. Internationalen Germanistenkongresses Basel 1980* ed. H. Rupp and H.-G. Roloff, (Bern: Lang, 1980); R. P. Shaffner, *The Apprenticeship Novel: A Study of the*

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form, such as Sammons, include fewer. Sammons quite understandably makes no distinctions based on nationality because that is not at issue in the essay. But other writers on non-German Bildungsromane have found interesting national characteristics. Two examples having to do with the English variant of the Bildungsroman will have to suffice here.

It has been said of the English Bildungsroman that it is more concerned with social mobility, with class conflict, than is its German counterpart. This highly class-conscious slant on the genre is well illustrated in Patricia Alden's *Social Mobility in the English Bildungsroman: Gissing, Hardy, Bennett, and Lawrence*. The author uses the term Bildungsroman in a traditional sense though pointing out the "genre has proved difficult to define" but ascribes to its English form a preoccupation not found in the German: "[The Bildungsroman] readily accommodated the concerns of a new middle-class reading public, willing to be absorbed by the history of an individual and gratified to see how its collective experience of social mobility might be rendered as the individual's pursuit of an ideal of self-development. In its English form then, the Bildungsroman linked the individual's moral, spiritual, and psychological maturation with his economic and social advancement."³⁶ Similarly, Susanne Howe's thoughtful study of 1930, *Wilhelm Meister and his English Kinsmen*,³⁷ cites a number of factors that caused the English model to diverge from the classic German models, not the least of which was the more rapid and more radical changes wrought in England by the Industrial Revolution and by social developments.

The machine age of nineteenth-century industrial England, the growth of large cities, and the progress in transportation have surely not been without their effect on the quality of the experiences that fiction heroes undergo. The possibility of sharp contrasts, the more sensitive social conscience, the "speeding up" of life in general, have added to

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"Bildungsroman" as a Regulative Type in Western Literature with a Focus on Three Classic Representatives by Goethe, Maugham, and Mann (New York: Lang, 1984).

³⁶ Alden, (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1986), 12.

³⁷ New York: Columbia UP, 1930.

their self-revelations an intensity and variety, a sharpness of outline, and an immediacy of appeal that has gradually deepened if not widened the province of the novel.³⁸

Although Howe finds the same dichotomy of reflection and action that characterizes the German Bildungsroman, the emphasis in English Bildungsroman works by Bulwer-Lytton, Disraeli, George Henry Lewes, James Froude is on activity:

Through Carlyle the sane and corrective power of action was the moral lesson that *Wilhelm Meister* taught its English readers and imitators, and Goethe's eighteenth-century *Bildung*, or harmonious self-development motif, became subsidiary. Our heroes became too busy finding something to *do*, to envisage life very clearly as an artistic creative process. Thus the English apprentice heroes, often derived only indirectly from Goethe through Carlyle's translation of *Meister* and his interpretations of Goethe in general, pass through their black period of Wertherism and Byronism to the Carlylean conviction that they must find something to *do* in the world, and do it whole-heartedly.

It is in the variety of things that they find to do, that the interest of this hybrid, transplanted apprenticeship theme chiefly lies. These German-English heroes, looking about them at their English world swept by industrial confusion, political reform, religious doubt, and imperial expansion, solve their common adjustment problem in strange and manifold ways. . . . They may choose a career of public service as members of Parliament, or become, after many false starts and choices, successful doctors, reformers, or writers. . . . But the fascination of this whole array of novels consists in the fact that, by their very nature, they show life and philosophies of life as something moving, changing, dynamic.³⁹

The essays in this collection are not intended to provide a full picture of the Bildungsroman understood either in a broad or narrow sense. Although all of the major German Bildungsroman with the

³⁸ Howe, 89.

³⁹ Howe, 1011.

exception of Gottfried Keller's *Der grüne Heinrich* (1879, *Green Henry*) are discussed in one or more contributions, the genre and the theory about it is simply too problematic and dynamic to allow of a full treatment in a single volume. But the essays address the chief issues and offer new insights. The seventeen essays the majority of which were translated from German or written specifically for inclusion in this collection provide a stimulating introduction to the history of the genre, to the problems with the term that is used to describe it, and to some of its most representative examples.

Not surprisingly, Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* receives top billing in the articles by Hartmut Steinecke, Thomas P. Saine, Jane Brown, and Michael Minden. Ehrhard Bahr's essay on *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* (1821 and 1829, *Wilhelm Meister's Travels*), the fascinating continuation of the *Apprenticeship*, provides the most up-to-date broad examination in English of that difficult and (until recently) neglected, "modern" novel.

The essays are placed roughly in two groups, the first of which treats the history and theory of the term Bildungsroman. These include Fritz Martini's landmark article, which provides the historic background about the first use of the term and how it was understood around 1820, and Sammons's previously mentioned essay, "The Bildungsroman for Nonspecialists," a witty, lucid introduction to the problem of defining the genre. Steinecke's contribution concentrates on the role of *Wilhelm Meister* in the discussion of the Bildungsroman as genre in the nineteenth century; Dennis Mahoney, following Morgenstern, emphasizes the role of the *reader* in defining the genre; and Swales offers in his "Irony and the Novel" important insights into the complicated relationship between narrator and author in the Bildungsroman. The second group consists of exemplary analyses of major works or thematic concerns across several Bildungsromane. Aside from Thomas P. Saine's provocative "Was *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* Really Supposed to be a Bildungsroman?" (I don't want to spoil the suspense you'll have to see for yourself), Jane Brown's "The Theatrical Mission of the *Lehrjahre*" also deals at length with the work that was, with *Agathon*, to become the starting point for all discussions about the Bildungsroman. Brown's analysis, which commences with the (to us) odd dialogues between Goethe and Schiller on the difference between narrative and drama, moves then to the more substantial issue of Goethe's violation of classical aesthetics in

major works such as *Faust* and *Wilhelm Meister*. The other contributions include Eve Tavor Bannet's "Rewriting the Social Text: The Female Bildungsroman in Eighteenth-Century England," a highly significant and until now neglected topic that, like Mahoney's contribution, considers the importance of the *reader* in the poetic equation; Wulf Koepke's "*Bildung* and the Transformation of Society: Jean Paul's *Titan* and *Flegeljahre*," an informative essay on two problematic, major works of German Classicism almost unknown in the English-speaking world; Michael Minden's "The Place of Inheritance in the Bildungsroman: *Agathon*, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, and *Der Nachsommer*," an overarching analysis of a central theme in those three Bildungsromane by Wieland, Goethe, and Stifter; Gerhart Hoffmeister's "Eichendorff's *Ahnung und Gegenwart* as a Novel of Religious Development," and James McGlathery's "E. T. A. Hoffmann and the Bildungsroman," new examinations of that fascinating subgenre, the Romantic Bildungsroman; a wide-ranging, magisterial article by Walter H. Sokel on "existentialist education" in Rainer Maria Rilke's epoch-making short novel, *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* (1910); Gerald Gillespie's "Educational Experiment in Thomas Mann," in which he considers how the great novellas *Tonio Kröger* and *Death in Venice* might have become Bildungsromane, and how they relate to Mann's great Bildungsroman, his "encyclopedic symposium on the fate of the West," *Der Zauberberg*; Egon Schwarz's ingenious reading of Hesse's *Steppenwolf* (1927) as a novel much influenced by elements of the Bildungsroman; and Michael Beddow's "Doubts about Despair: Christa Wolf's *Kindheitsmuster*," a sensitive analysis of a modern variant of the Bildungsroman. As a further guide to research the editor has provided a bibliography of all works cited in the collection.

Bildungsroman Term and Theory

Fritz Martini

It appears to be an established *opinio communis* that the term Bildungsroman was introduced by Wilhelm Dilthey into the language of literary scholarship. H. H. Borchardt states this both at the beginning of his essay on the topic in the *Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturgeschichte* and elsewhere¹ in connection with Dilthey's *Das Leben Schleiermachers* (The Life of Schleiermacher),² and he adds that Dilthey was also the first to have given a definition of the term and a

¹*Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturgeschichte*, ed. Werner Kohlschmidt and Wolfgang Mohr, 2d ed. (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1958/1984), 1:175ff.; Hans Heinrich Borchardt, "Der deutsche Bildungsroman," in *Von deutscher Art in Sprache und Dichtung*, ed. Gerhard Fricke, Franz Koch, and Klemens Lugowski (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1941), 5:5; likewise Ernst Ludwig Stahl, *Die religiöse und die humanitätsphilosophische Bildungsidee und die Entstehung des deutschen Bildungsromans im 18. Jahrhundert*, Sprache und Dichtung No. 56 (Bern: Haupt, 1934), 115; and his articles "Bildungsroman" in *Goethe-Handbuch*, ed. Alfred Zastra (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1959), 1210; in *Lexikon der Pädagogik*, ed. Heinrich Kleinert et al. (Bern: Francke, 1951), 1:204; in *Lexikon der Pädagogik*, ed. Deutsches Institut für wissenschaftliche Pädagogik (Freiburg: Herder, 1952), 1:501 et passim.

²"I would like to call the novels that constitute the school of *Wilhelm Meister* (since Rousseau's related form of art did not continue to affect them) *Bildungsromane*. Goethe's work shows human development in various stages, forms, epochs of life." *Das Leben Schleiermachers*, 2d ed. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1922), 1:317.

history of the Bildungsroman in concise outline.³ Other articles on the topic adopt the term blindly without inquiring about its origin or the history of its theory,⁴ although the suspicion must have arisen that both might lead back further historically to a time when the term *Bildung* and all its derivations had gained a specific topicality in intellectual history. A perusal of the famous, if outdated, bibliography known as Goedeke⁵ always to be recommended would have quickly clarified matters here,⁶ for it shows that the term Bildungsroman surfaces as early as the years 1819 and 1820 in two lectures by professor Karl (von) Morgenstern of Dorpat. August Langen also refers to these instances in his etymological work.⁷ He only mentions them peripherally; this may have to do with the fact that both of Morgenstern's lectures, "Über das Wesen des Bildungsromans" and "Zur Geschichte des Bildungsromans" (On the Nature of the Bildungsroman and On the History of the Bildungsroman), were published in obscure and inaccessible locations, in the journals *Inländisches*

³ *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1906), 323ff.

⁴ E.g., Melitta Gerhard, *Der deutsche Entwicklungsroman bis zu Goethes Wilhelm Meister* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1926); Walther Rehm, *Geschichte des deutschen Romans*, Sammlung Göschen (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1927); Günther Weydt, "Der deutsche Roman von der Renaissance und Reformation bis zu Goethes Tod," in *Deutsche Philologie im Aufriß*, 1st and 2d ed. (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1957); Bruno Markwardt, *Geschichte der deutschen Poetik*, vols. 2, 3 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1956/58); Herbert Seidler, *Die Dichtung* (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1959); likewise the literary dictionaries as in the collection Dalp, *Kleines literarisches Lexikon*, ed. Wolfgang Kayser, 2d ed. (Bern: Francke, 1953); Gero von Wilpert, *Sachwörterbuch der Literatur* (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1955); Hermann Pongs, *Das kleine Lexikon der Weltliteratur* (Stuttgart: Union, 1954), and others.

⁵ Goedeke's *Grundriß*, in three editions, an indispensable, massive but uneven bibliography of German literature, named for the nineteenth-century bibliographer and Germanist Karl Goedeke. Ed.

⁶ Karl Goedeke, *Grundriß zur Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung*, vol. 7, 2d section, 471f.

⁷ August Langen, "Der Wortschatz des 18. Jahrhunderts," in vol. 2 of *Deutsche Wortgeschichte*, ed. Friedrich Maurer and Friedrich Stroh, 2d ed. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1959), 50.

Museum (first volume: 4 issues 1820/21; second volume: 5th and 6th issue 1821; discontinued) and *Neues Museum der deutschen Provinzen Rußlands* (first volume: issues 13, 1824/25; discontinued) closely connected with the University of Dorpat and edited by that university's lecturer in Italian, Carl Eduard Raupach.⁸ Yet Morgenstern's coinage of the word goes back even further. The term first surfaces in a fragment of a lecture "Über den Geist und Zusammenhang einer Reihe philosophischer Romane" (On the Spirit and Connection of a Series of Philosophical Novels) held publicly on 12 December 1810 in the main hall of the Imperial University in Dorpat and published in the third volume of the *Dörptische Beyträge für Freunde der Philosophie, Litteratur und Kunst* journal edited by Morgenstern himself and published at his cost appearing in Dorpat in 1817 as the first half of the journal for 1816.⁹ Here the term was applied to the novels of the poet Friedrich Maximilian Klinger, at the time the head of the University of Dorpat and on friendly though not always untroubled terms with Morgenstern. In this lecture Morgenstern finds "none of the other philosophical novels of the Germans, or of their Bildungsromane in general, suited in the same degree" to foster moral elevation and masculine strength of character as those of Klinger. At this point, in a footnote, Morgenstern provides additional help in dating. He writes, "As early as 1803 the author of this fragment had sketched out the plan for a text: "Über Bildungsromane" (On Bildungsromane), which, if carried out according to its plan, would have become a counterpart to Blanckenburg's *Versuch über den Roman* (Essay on the Novel), known to him at that time only by title."¹⁰ The introduction to the lecture "Über das Wesen des Bildungsromans" reveals that he was aware of his new coinage of the term: "[to] designate the most excellent among the many types of novels as a Bildungs-

⁸ Carl Diesch, *Bibliographie der germanistischen Zeitschriften* (Leipzig: Hiersemann, 1927), NO. 1674 and 1721.

⁹ *Dörptische Beyträge für Freunde der Philosophie, Litteratur und Kunst. In drey Bänden Jahrgang 1813, 1814, 1816* (Dorpat: gedruckt auf Kosten des Herausgebers; Leipzig: in Commission bey P. G. Kummer, 1814f.).

¹⁰ *Beyträge* 3:194. [Friedrich von Blanckenburg's essay on the novel was the first significant treatise in German on the aesthetics of the novel. Ed.]

roman, a word which, to my knowledge, has not been used before."¹¹

Karl Morgenstern (1770-1852), the pupil of the philologists F. A. Wolf, J. A. Eberhard and Niemeyer, had studied in Halle from 1788 after a thorough preparation at the Cathedral School in Magdeburg; he became a senior lecturer of classical philology in Halle in 1797.¹² After a brief appointment as professor of rhetoric at the Athenäum in Danzig beginning in 1798, he accepted a position in 1802 at the newly founded University of Dorpat as a professor of eloquence and classical philology, of aesthetics and the history of literature and art. Here, where he was also the director of the library and the academic museum, he undertook unusually diverse activities. Ambitious and industrious, he had already made contacts in classical Weimar, yet his manner and personality never gained him the favor of Schiller and Goethe.¹³ It was easier for him to win the admittedly somewhat

¹¹ Karl von Morgenstern, Introduction to "Über das Wesen des Bildungsromanes," *Inländisches Museum* 1, no. 2 (1820): 46f.

¹² Wilhelm Süss, *Karl Morgenstern: Ein kulturhistorischer Versuch* (Dorpat: Krüger, 1928). Süss not only draws an instructive picture of the early years of the university but also presents a wealth of excerpts from Morgenstern's unpublished works in Dorpat's university library. For more see Roderich von Engelhardt, *Die deutsche Universität Dorpat in ihrer geistesgeschichtlichen Bedeutung* (Munich: Reinhardt, 1933). I am gratefully indebted to Prof. Dr. Kurt Schreinert of Göttingen for information on literature about the history of the University of Dorpat. On the relationship between F. A. Wolf and Morgenstern, see volumes 1 and 2 of *Friedrich August Wolf: Ein Leben in Briefen*, ed. Siegfried Reiter, 3 vols. (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1935f.).

¹³ Schiller to Goethe, 8 May 1798, in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Briefwechsel mit Friedrich Schiller*, vol. 20 of *Gedenkausgabe der Werke, Briefe und Gespräche*, ed. Ernst Beutler (Zurich: Artemis, 1950), 575. Further, *Briefe von Goethe, Schiller, Wieland, Kant, Böttiger, Dyk und Falk an Morgenstern*, ed. F. Sintenis (Dorpat, 1875). On Goethe's judgment of Morgenstern see Süss, 110. Goethe owned many of Morgenstern's writings, some with dedications. Since he read or leafed through the *Dorpatische Beyträge*, according to his journal entry of 6 December 1821, he may well have come across the term Bildungsroman. Cf. *Goethes Bibliothek: Katalog*, ed. Hans Ruppert (Weimar: Arion, 1958). On Morgenstern and Goethe, see also Otto von Petersen, *Goethe und der baltische Osten* (Reval: Kluge und Ströhm, 1930), 169ff.; Julius Petersen, *Goethe im Nachruf*, Sitz. Ber.

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indiscriminate and unstable friendship of Wieland. In 1808 he left Dorpat and entered again into the Weimar circle on the way to Italy when, in loose connection with the Czar Alexander and his entourage, he was present in Erfurt for the *Fürstentag* (Diet of the German princes). The scholarly expectations raised by the first work of the philologist, *Commentationes tres de Platonis republica* (1794), which had also attracted Kant's attention,¹⁴ were not fulfilled; but his activity in Dorpat became fruitful in other respects, and since it casts light on the intellectual background of his neologism and theory of the Bildungsroman, some discussion of it is necessary.

The idea of cultivation (*Bildung*) through a harmony of aesthetic, moral, rational, and scientific education had long been common property of Enlightenment thought. For Morgenstern it acquired personal urgency for psychological reasons that have to do with his personality, which tended to diversity and fragmentation. The notes left by Wilhelm Süß reveal a self-critical, reflective urge toward self-cultivation early on, the "desire for an increase in knowledge, for ethical perfection,"¹⁵ for confidence "in one's own expression of power and human freedom" which, rejecting Pietist religiosity, feels itself able to eschew "help from above."¹⁶ For Morgenstern, the ideal of a harmonious form of cultivation (*Bildungsharmonie*) unifying divided talents and actions and infused with individualism increasingly replaced scholarly achievement in a specialized field as his goal. "I did not become what Wolf (in Halle) wanted me to become: an important philologist. Why not? Because I, this person, this individual, with the outlines of a character designed just so and not otherwise by

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d. Preuß. Akademie der Wiss. Phil. hist. Klasse, 26 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1931), 762ff. Viktor Hehn, a student in Dorpat from 1830, was probably led to Goethe by Morgenstern. Cf. K. Girgensohn, *Viktor Hehn: Baltisches Geistesleben* (Reval, 1928), 155ff.

14 Kant's letter of 14 August 1795, in *Briefe an Morgenstern*, ed. Sintenis.

15 Süß, 90.

16 Süß, 50, note 56. On the history of the concept *Bildung*, see Franz Rauhut, "Die Herkunft der Worte und Begriffe 'Kultur,' 'Civilisation' und 'Bildung,'" *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift*, n.s. 3 (1953): 819f.

nature, and to be developed according to the needs of my spirit, disposition, and taste, outlines of which I was more keenly and self-confidently aware than anyone else could have been, even Fr. A. Wolf not excepted in short, because I always loved to go my own way."¹⁷ The laconic turn of phrase in a letter of January 1808 with which he answers A. Böttiger's question about what irons he had in the fire is characteristic: "myself." In his fragments, which he repeatedly published in the *Dörptische Beyträge* as "Themata und gelegentliche Bemerkungen" ("Themes and occasional comments"), he writes in the 1813 volume, "One's own power they should be awakened, strengthened, purified in the individual from the ground up."¹⁸ It was his constant conviction certainly viewed from the perspective of the time a backward, rationalistic idea, and even epigonal with respect to the Enlightenment when he wrote in that same volume, "Let state constitutions perish of monarchies and republics alike. All the same! If only the human spirit endures, the spirit of the exercise of power and striving, the higher spirit of justice; if morality, the arts, the sciences progress, if only the human spirit may strengthen its power through exercise."¹⁹ Rich in unrealized plans, Morgenstern had also drafted a story of his development (*Bildung*) in novelistic form. For "there must be something wrong if the history of the life and education (*Bildung*) of a real person, authored by that same person, doesn't have the interest of a good novel for one who possesses eye and heart."²⁰

This subjective need, conceptually undergirded by Enlightenment theory, received its objective and social legitimation through the special professorship in eloquence in Dorpat. In part because only a few students were suited for and committed to the field, the narrower and more specialized teaching obligations of the professor of classical philology increasingly assumed a secondary role in favor of more pedagogically oriented lectures of broader interest for students in all

¹⁷ Süß, 272.

¹⁸ *Beyträge*, No. 49: 173.

¹⁹ *Beyträge*, No. 75, 351.

²⁰ Süß, 159.

fields who sought to strengthen their general education through the culture of classical antiquity. This teaching program of a simultaneously preparatory and crowning *studium generale* was legitimized by the classical tradition of rhetoric, which was the basis of the professorship of eloquence. What the aesthetician J. G. Sulzer had to say about the pedagogical significance of rhetoric was certainly not only familiar to Morgenstern but in fact corresponded at least to the theory of what he was doing in Dorpat. In an extensive discussion of the matter, Sulzer writes that eloquence "is evidently the most perfect means of making human beings more reasonable, more moral, better and happier. The first sages brought together widely dispersed people through eloquence, made morals and laws popular with them; through eloquence Plato, Xenophon, Cicero, and Rousseau became teachers of the people."²¹ The "philosophy of the beautiful" was naturally part of this program; in his first Dorpat speech of 1802, Morgenstern explicitly recommended that the students occupy themselves with the philosophy of beauty and the "graces" so as to achieve "harmonious development of the entire being."²² Following tradition going back to Cicero and Quintilian, the professorship of eloquence encompassed the presentation of universal cultivation (*Bildung*), the doctrine of a well-rounded cultural attitude, and an ideal of education concerned with the exercise of reason and feeling and aimed at the whole person. Evidently Morgenstern's conception of the *Bildung* of people was considerably shaped by this tradition, even though in diluted form and much delayed. In this he was strengthened by the intellectual pioneering mission assigned the new university, which was located in the still backward Baltic area. Morgenstern felt himself to be the teacher of a humanism that valued "the harmoniously developed whole person . . . no longer of Athens, but rather of the European republic" more than

21 J. G. Sulzer, *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste, 1. Theil* (Leipzig, 1773), 197.

22 Published in Leipzig 1805, 77f. In the same speech Morgenstern expressly refers to Quintilian, p. 96. On the influence of Quintilian and Cicero, see Herman Meyer, "Schillers philosophische Rhetorik" *Euphorion* 53 (1959): 314ff.

specialized erudition.²³ He defended this ideal of an ethical, aesthetic, and cosmopolitan humanity also against his teacher's, F. A. Wolf', modification of his own discipline into a stricter and more exact field; but above all he defended it from the one-sided specialization in the practical sciences that had established itself since the French Revolution "under the irresistible pressure of the *zeitgeist*." A considerable number of the speeches which the professor of eloquence had to give as *vox and tuba* of the university, as the unifying representative of its intellectual concerns that stood above individual disciplines, had to do with the problem of this *Bildung* not only in the theoretical-historical sense, but also in a social and practical one.²⁴

The three lectures on the *Bildungsroman* also are among these speeches; they were not concerned merely with aesthetic and literary matters. Rather, the formation and theory of the concept that Morgenstern was developing arose also out of personal considerations, his view of his academic mission, and its immediate social and pedagogical obligations. Morgenstern gave each of these three lectures on 12 December the birthday of Czar Alexander and the anniversary of the founding of the university in a festive and ceremonious framework that was meant to underscore the moral import and rhetorical brilliance of his remarks.

Since these texts are not readily available, it seems appropriate given their significance in the history of German theory of the novel to report more fully about them, even though one certainly cannot speak of trailblazing originality in Morgenstern's thought. Research on the history of scholarship cannot always be research on literary peaks; it is legitimate to turn to less important persons if they have become founders or carriers of tradition. For Morgenstern, despite all his

²³ Süss, 155.

²⁴ The first Dorpat speech was "Über den Einfluß des Studiums der griechischen und römischen Klassiker auf harmonische Bildung zum Menschen" [On the Influence of the Study of the Greek and Roman Classics on the Harmonic Development of a Person], published with his speech on [J. J.] Winckelmann, Leipzig 1805. In a speech on Johannes von Müller in 1804 he justified his demand for a "plan in life." In Wiborg in 1805 he opened the Töchterschule with "Von den Grenzen weiblicher Bildung" (On the Limitations of Female Education).

limitations, does not descend to those levels for which he reproached the late classicist Niketas Eugenianos, in an irritated footnote: "Miserable scriblings which the brevity of a life, not even sufficiently long for incomparably better things, allows only a very few to read."²⁵

The first lecture, "Über den Geist und Zusammenhang einer Reihe philosophischer Romane" (On the Spirit and Connection of a Series of Philosophical Novels), which speaks of Klinger without naming him, was published only in fragmentary form by Morgenstern.²⁶ To praise the head of the university in his function as poet in an official university celebration naturally put limits on critical expression. Yet the friendship that existed at the time between the two of them allows one to conclude that it was not only an officious homage and that Morgenstern was expressing his own opinion. In accordance with the moral and social pragmatism of the Enlightenment, he was most concerned with the pedagogical and practical value of Klinger's novels. He clearly stylized their plot and philosophical thrust into a representative humane educational substance, which he placed not without Klinger's direct influence above Goethe's novels in terms of masculine strength of character. Morgenstern sought Klinger's autobiography, which he refused to write, in his novels. As Klinger put it, "My friend Goethe could do that; he played a game with life and portrayed it for us as vividly as it appeared to him. The effect of outer phenomena on me was of another sort; I fought it, I even believed I had conquered it; but why arouse these storms in others?"²⁷

Morgenstern placed Klinger on the same level with Wieland, Goethe and Schiller. They represented a new brand of poet who had unfolded "the history of their *Bildung* before the eyes of the public," had revealed a process of "revision, continued cultivation, reeducation" (*Bearbeitung, Fortbildung, Umbildung*)²⁸ that points back in turn to transformations of that person reflected in the superior author as a whole person. Thus their work evidences the "capacity to determine

²⁵*Neues Museum der teutschen Provinzen Rußlands* 1 (1824): 10, note.

²⁶*Dörptische Beyträge* 3:19095.

²⁷ Quoted in Süß, 186.

²⁸*Beyträge*, 182f.

and perfect" the human being in individual ways. To be sure, this capability is understood only empirically and rationally. In the case of Klinger, apart from "the significant individual fates and relationships involved," the details of which tact may have prohibited him from discussing, it appears in four representative ways in Klinger's work: in the study of French novelists and psychologists; in the reading of the classical authors; in the diversity of travel; and, finally, as many years of life in the dynamic imperial capital of the greatest Scandinavian empire, which was a mirror of the larger world. Knowledge of literature, the world, and people is understood as a means of expansive development that cultivates character and experience and stores a qualitative and quantitative multitude of experiences and conflicts. These made him, as "eyewitness of many things," superior even to Goethe, Schiller, Klopstock, and Kant, but also imparted that tone of sarcastic bitterness and pessimistic disillusionment to which in the opinion of Morgenstern who prized harmony nevertheless the "proven moral power . . . rooted in the battle of the elements under the thunderstorms of the cosmos" is superior. Experience of the world and proof of character, lived by the "true" person, make the "true" poet. In this lecture Morgenstern defined the essence of the "philosophical novel or the Bildungsroman" as the immediacy with which Klinger described his adventures and experiences. Indeed, the aesthetic question arose as to whether the novelist writing in prose, not in verse, could even be a poet in the actual, essential sense of *Poesie*; a question that played a role not only in the discussions on the novel during the eighteenth century, but which still occupied a position in these discussions in the nineteenth century,²⁹ and which seemed to have been answered by Classical literature to the disadvantage of the novel. Yet it did so only theoretically, since Goethe's novels convincingly refuted all aesthetic objections.³⁰ Morgenstern cites authors from Plato to

29 Friedrich Sengle, "Der Romanbegriff in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts," in *Festschrift für Franz Rolf Schröder* ed. Wolf Dietrich Rasch (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1959), 216.

30 In his notes Morgenstern cites a statement of Goethe's on *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*: "The novel simply is not to be a pure genre, not fully epic, but appropriate to our time." Süß, 93.

Jean Paul to prove the legitimacy of prose as *Poesie*; in addition, he defends Klinger, supported by Klinger's own works, with the argument of the overabundance of his creative fantasy that impatiently overran the straitjacket of versifying.

Yet, fully in keeping with Enlightenment thought, the decisive ingredient of the worthwhile novel lay for him beyond aesthetic considerations; the union of high-minded philosophical scholar, on the one hand, with man of the world and businessman, on the other. For Morgenstern, masculine strength of character elevated Klinger's works above Jacobi's, Wieland's and Goethe's "otherwise so wonderful Bildungsromane."³¹ A letter to Falk dated 1 December 1796 indicates that this was not simply a concession to his superior; "he found Wilhelm Meister unsympathetic despite individual and beautiful, moving passages, since the hero *nervis alienis mobile lignum* experiences all sorts of things without personal energy or defined direction, in an unmanly way, so to speak."³² Such evaluation of the energetic character is immediately defined socially and pedagogically; it simultaneously allows an elegant concluding reference to the head of a university, which, "in a time in which Europe needs men," is obligated to educate (*bilden*) them. "Despite all the beauties of these works [Wieland's and Goethe's], which cannot be praised enough, there seems to be something essential missing in the lovingly treated heroes of the Bildungsromane, through which, at least for the education of youth, they become less fruitful: high moral power, rigorous masculine character."³³ The pragmatic interest, accentuated further by the occasion of the speech, caused the aesthetic question about the essence of the type of the Bildungsroman, introduced here for the first time, to disappear completely insofar as such a novel had even entered into the general consciousness. The Bildungsroman is viewed solely under the aspect of its moral and sociological function.

This attitude is different in the other lectures, which followed after nearly a decade. Only here does the Bildungsroman itself become a

³¹*Beyträge*, 194.

³² Süß, 50.

³³*Beyträge*, 195.

topic, theoretically, aesthetically, and historically. If the boundary to the "true" and historical autobiography, that is, to a form of extrapoetic, nonfictional narration of experiences and thoughts, had previously remained wide open, now the novel is more clearly perceived as a fictional form of narration. The lecture "Über das Wesen des Bildungsromans" (On the Nature of the Bildungsroman), given 12 December 1819,³⁴ opens with a theoretical definition of the genre of the novel "from a general aesthetic viewpoint," in the course of which Morgenstern recognizes the novel more precisely than before as "an invented story" that "lends itself the appearance of a true one."³⁵ It is evident that he had read Blanckenburg's *Versuch über den Roman* in the meantime and had oriented himself with respect to the discussions on the novel circulating since the eighteenth century; yet he did not take up or did not understand the Romantic novel theory that Friedrich Schlegel and, dependent on him, August Wilhelm Schlegel developed, although he was familiar with their writings. Morgenstern's view remained that of the Enlightenment, with its emphasis on the prose of reality, on real contemporary life, on the moral, pedagogical and rational.³⁶ But it would be a mistake to see only a historical lag in this; we have only recently been made aware of the fact that these views on theory of the novel persisted through the nineteenth century and not only during the Restoration and Young German periods.³⁷ Morgenstern's distinction between the *epos* and the novel reappear, much expanded and deepened in literary-philosophical and in historical directions, in Hegel's and in Vischer's aesthetics.³⁸ Here too a continuity from the poetics of the Enlightenment to that of the renewed "realistic" Enlightenment of the nineteenth century becomes

³⁴*Inländisches Museum* 1, no. 2 (1820): 4661 and no. 3 (1820): 1327.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 47.

³⁶ Martin Sommerfeld, "Romantheorie und Romantypus der deutschen Aufklärung," *DVjs* 4 (1926): 459ff.

³⁷ F. Sengle, 218.

³⁸ Fritz Martini, "Zur Theorie des Romans im deutschen 'Realismus,'" in *Festgabe für Eduard Berend*, ed. Hans Werner Seiffert (Weimar: Böhlau, 1959), 272ff.

evident. The reason that Morgenstern now described Blanckenburg's *Versuch*, after a period of forty-five years, as no longer adequate, although he was noticeably indebted to it, lay primarily in the incomparably more extensive illustrative and documentary material which he had before him in the form of the works of Klinger, Goethe, Jacobi, and Jean Paul. He had also learned from the expansion of the novel since the last decades of the eighteenth century up until its trivialized forms as novels of entertainment, through Romantic novels from Novalis, Tieck to E. T. A. Hoffmann, and through Romantic literary scholarship (the Schlegel brothers).

The later lecture on the history of the Bildungsroman evidences a much broader overview, even if one can doubt that Morgenstern had actually read all the novels of world literature he mentioned though he was certainly well known as a voracious reader and had at his disposal a very considerable private library (he left ca. 12,000 volumes) in addition to the Dorpat university library, which was built up by him. For, considering its broad range, the theory remains fragmentary, a mere sketch compared to that envisioned in later works which, in his words, must develop the theory of the novel more fully, "with philosophical spirit and critical erudition."

He remained within the tradition of eighteenth-century poetics in differentiating the novel primarily from the heroic poem; he followed Goethe's famous statements in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (book 5, chapter 7),³⁹ by contrasting it to the drama, without delving further into the aesthetics of genre. Goethe's definition of the differences between the novel and drama, which cannot be fully understood outside the context of the entire Hamlet discussion in the novel, had a certain authoritative weight. Nevertheless, Morgenstern registered reservations that referred to the views alluded to in the first lecture. He resisted [Goethe's] split between an emphasis on *attitudes* in the novel and *characters* in the drama. As little as they could be considered different in psychological terms, so little did they seem to him aesthetic criteria of genre. For the novel, like drama, is dependent on presentation of character, even though it is decisive for the novel that the

³⁹ Hamburg edition vol. 7, 307.

characters in it "should form (*bilden*) themselves only before our eyes."⁴⁰

He is no longer ready to accept the difference between the active hero of the drama and the passive one of the novel. Oedipus, Hamlet, Lear appear to him to be simultaneously passive and active; likewise Richardson's Grandison or Klinger's Faust, Rafael de Aquillas and Giafar the Barmecide in the novel. Morgenstern adopts an attitude already common in eighteenth-century poetics of the novel, expanded to the theory and practice of universal poetry in Romanticism, when he urges the universality of the novel against the limitations imposed by Goethe, emphasizing the freedom of the form, which is valid for the portrayal of the human situation and modes of behavior with which the novel primarily deals. "For, if the novel, among all poetic forms, can be considered the broadest vessel in which every specimen of the soul has room and air to put out shoots, to sprout and to blossom, to branch out and to spread in the entire fullness of its nature; if the novel, as shall be shown further in comparison with the epic of the Greeks, is precisely suited above all other genres to lead us into the inner regions of human souls and to reveal their presentiments, strivings, struggles, defeats and conquests: then it is indeed not comprehensible why forcefulness, even the great and sublime, should not be able to take their place with the same right as the tender, the pleasant, and the beautiful; why the awesome, deep, gloomy, powerful, cannot stand comparison with the lovable, fervent, cheerful, harmonic. From this perspective, any theory that excludes everything beyond the measure of its own individuality would be limited and one-sided."⁴¹ The hidden polemic against Goethe is clear; Morgenstern is attempting to defend Klinger and Schiller and in them the poetic legitimation of the ideal, of the "ideas in the Platonic sense," against Goethe. For in Klinger and Schiller it becomes evident how the "idealism (*Idealität*) of the poet" represents the highest definition of morality. "And according to this, every genuinely poetic portrayal of *morally* deep and strong people as such would certainly rest just as firmly on the unshakable, true, ideal foundation of real human nature

⁴⁰*InländischesMuseum* 1, no. 2, 50.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 51f.

as the presentation which might be ever so beautiful in its own way of people who are *aesthetically* more highly cultivated," which, however, is more attractive to "the larger number of the sophisticated reading public."⁴²

The difference between the novel and the epic is more completely and more definitively analyzed than that between the novel and drama. The discussion about the novel of the Enlightenment, especially as viewed by Blanckenburg, who first placed the novel as the "modern" form on an equal footing with the classical epos, assisted Morgenstern in this task.⁴³ In contrast to the Romantic definition of the novel already developed, which contradicted rather than corresponded to the Bildungsroman, since the concept of universal poetics or of the absolute, the symbolic or mythological, had to repress the individual or limited factor, Morgenstern held to Enlightenment aesthetics by attributing solely to the epic the miraculous, great actions under the immediate influence of superhuman beings. The epic finds its historical position in the naive, simple conditions of peoples, in the "heroic epoch of a nation" which offers "perceptible greatness of actions," presents deeds, not their reflective psychology, and mirrors the powerful, youthful age of the peoples. The epic presupposes openness to wonder, fantasy, enthusiasm, "listeners receptive and credulous like children." It deals with the fate of peoples (*Iliad, La Gerusalemme liberata*), with the well-being and suffering of humanity (*Paradise Lost, Messias*). The novel, on the other hand, appears as the narrative form of the enlightened modern period of history in its calm, clear language. "The miracles finally disappear, the oracles become silent, the gods retreat to their Olympus; reality reigns; the law of causality announces itself loudly and clearly with its unbounded claims."⁴⁴ The novel focuses on the area of cultural life, especially in that "of domestic cultural life." It steps into the daylight of a newer era, with

⁴² Ibid., 53.

⁴³ Erwin Neustädter, "Versuch einer Entwicklungsgeschichte der epischen Theorie in Deutschland," (Ph.D. diss., University of Freiburg, 1927); Bruno Markwardt, vol. 2 of *Geschichte der deutschen Poetik*.

⁴⁴ *Inländisches Museum* 1, no. 2, 57.

"completely modern" subject matter, in a socially differentiated, socially gradated world.⁴⁵ "The feelings, attitudes, actions are those of the real world in educated (*gebildet*) society; but freed of slag and purified through the spirit of the forming (*bildend*) novelist."⁴⁶ For Morgenstern does not surrender the novel to the merely empirical and rational; but imagination, "with its transformations of events," flees into the net of the chain of these events and into the "feelings, images, thoughts and considerations" which are tied to them. Fantasy no longer productively builds up its own world but transforms the experienced world. This experienced world concentrates on the fate of an individual or of several who interact with him. When such a "main action" is worked out, the novel can approach both the drama and the epic. Thus, critical boundaries are drawn that cut off the novel from the area which was earlier precisely the one set aside for it: that of the miraculous and the adventurous. It is differentiated from the "heroic novel," which strives to depict the ancient heroic epoch; from the "chivalric novel in prose," which uses fairy-tale and Romantic elements; and from the "historical novel."⁴⁷ The latter also appears as a "hybrid form," "since historical and unhistorical elements, being contradictory, can never form a harmonic whole"⁴⁸ an objection raised repeatedly in the aesthetics of the novel, which nonetheless did not dam the broad stream of historical novels that flowed through the entire nineteenth century and still has not subsided in the twentieth. The novel cannot depict the fate of peoples, for it would contradict itself if it wished to take on the "appearance of a part of general true history." Morgenstern grants only the satirical and the political-moral novel an exception from this aesthetic law, which raises a general problem of the novel resulting from its position between fiction and

45 On the history of the concept "modern" cf. my article in the *Reallexikon*, 2d ed., Berlin 1965.

46 *Inländisches Museum* 1, no. 2, 55.

47 Here there is an evident dependence of Morgenstern's on his earlier teacher Johann August Eberhard, *Handbuch der Ästhetik für gebildete Leser. . . . in Briefen*, 4 vols. (Halle: Schwetschke, 18035).

48 *Inländisches Museum* 1, no. 2, 59.

reality. Morgenstern gets himself out of this contradiction with a compromise: the novel appears as a transitional form between reality, that is, "history" and *Poesie*. It deceives through the impression of reality wrought by prose and, in fictive narration, weaves with stealthy cunning "the prosaic mood in which people usually find themselves" into an entertaining poetic work.

The distinction between the epic and the novel is central for Morgenstern. The epic shows the active hero who influences his surroundings; "the novel, however, presents more the people and surroundings influencing the hero and explaining to us the gradual formation (*Bildung*) of his inner self which is to be presented."⁴⁹ It shows "more events and happenings with their emotional effects on the hero, whom we should see 'becoming' through himself as well as through that which is not himself." And with this the broad definition of the Bildungsroman is given "as the most noble type of novel and that which best captures the essence of the novel in contrast to that of the *epos*." It pursues the development and formation (*Bildung*) of a character, a personality, and in so doing it also brings about an initially imperceptible harmony from disharmony. In his notes on various books he read, Morgenstern several times reminded himself of this orderly shaping of a life. In reference to *Fernows Leben* (Fernow's Life), edited by Johanna Schopenhauer (1804), he writes, "His determined endeavors appeared very remarkable to me. It becomes clearer to me here too how some things that appear to be coincidental must fall into place in the end to give insight into a character and a talent."⁵⁰ On the other hand, he was referring to himself when he noted, in reference to Sulzer's memoirs (1809), "He himself often felt, as I have too, how he neglected wise limitations. His inclination was divided between scholarly pursuits and practical actions. . . . In addition there was frequent social distraction, including that of higher social circles."⁵¹ The concept of the Bildungsroman now established includes both a unity of the thematic and formal aspects as well as the

49 Ibid., 60.

50 Süß, 312.

51 Süß, 313.

immediate social function of this novel. "It could well be called the *Bildungsroman*, first and foremost because of its content, because it presents the hero's *Bildung* from its inception and continuation until a certain stage of completion; secondly, however, because precisely through this presentation it encourages the cultivation of the reader more fully than any other type of novel."⁵² It presents material according to the laws of beauty, as an artwork which avoids that which is merely didactic, and it communicates according to the primary law of morality in order "to serve a purpose, to teach, to improve." It thus fulfills the Horatian rule, *Omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci*, which was valued by Enlightenment aesthetics as an exhaustive rule for works of art. Replacing the term family novel (*Familienroman*), it represents the basic form of the modern novel, which generalizes the particular and makes it exemplary but which draws its real character precisely from its concentration on the particular. Again, the difference from Romantic novel theory should be stressed, which required irony for the novel, not least because irony "is the only form in which that which emanates from or must emanate from the subject most definitely detaches itself from it and thus becomes objective."⁵³

Because of the diversity of contemporary novelistic literature, Morgenstern attempts a classification of subgenres: the philosophical novel (Jacobi, Klinger), in which the moral-intellectual aspect dominates for theoretical and practical purposes; the artistic novel (Heinse's *Ardinghello*, Tieck's *Franz Sternbalds Wanderungen*, Novalis's *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*) with an emphasis primarily on aesthetic education (*Bildung*), although here "the whole person" in his social relationships and particularly "with respect to the deepest need of the heart of educated humanity in recent times, that of *love* in the higher sense"⁵⁴ is portrayed. The novel that aims "at general, purely human development" constitutes the actual formal type. Morgenstern naturally finds

⁵²*Inländisches Museum* 1, no. 3, 13.

⁵³ On that topic see F. W. Schelling, *Vorlesungen über die Methode des akademischen Studiums*, 3rd ed., (Stuttgart, Tübingen, 1830), especially the fourteenth lecture.

⁵⁴*Inländisches Museum* 1, no. 3, 15.

it, as did Blanckenburg, in Wieland's *Agathon* and, even superior to this "as a work of the most general, broadest humanitarian education," in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. In addition, Goethe's novel offers "German life, German thought and customs of our time" and thus helps to fill a long-felt need. What Morgenstern says at some length about Goethe's novel is not original but is shaped by a now unreserved appreciation, which also turns against Friedrich Schlegel's criticism that Goethe had wasted "so much art on fully modern subjects." Decisive for this assessment is the view through the poetic creation of the work of the significant, exemplary individual, that is, of the practical, empirical experience of *Bildung*. "For one can say what one will about poetic creativity and can elevate the absolute power of artistic fantasy as much as one will in imagination: that which is most vital, powerful, educational in novels and in great literature in general is still that which one feels and lives oneself, regardless of which creation of fantasy it is bound to."⁵⁵

Certainly, Blanckenburg had already done considerable groundwork. His *Versuch über den Roman*⁵⁶ was not only the novel's first lengthy legitimation as the narrative form of the modern era vis-à-vis the ancient epic but also a decisive turn away from the baroque novel of events and the merely moral novel, which he deprecated in the novels of Richardson. For the latter had neglected to provide the "inner" history of the figures portrayed. "In these deeds of passion we do not see what we want to see; we do not see that which alone can move us, namely the inner state of mind of the figure. Everything depends on this inner self, if we are to be moved" (96). The novel could only make a claim to a higher status when it penetrated into the Becoming (*Werden*), into the history of the innermost being of the figures. "And is not this inner aspect the most important part of our entire being?" (335) "The poet, if he does not wish to dishonor himself, cannot pretend that he does not know the internal state of his figures. He is their creator; they have received all their qualities, their entire being from him; they live in a world which he structured. . . . With this presupposition we shall now have to see in the work of a

⁵⁵ Ibid., 24.

⁵⁶ Leipzig, Liegnitz, bey David Siegerts Witwe, 1774.

poet the entire inner being of the active figures in the realization of an event, with all of the causes that set them in motion, if the poet does not wish to transform himself into a mere narrator" (265). A simple chain of events does not form a novel into a whole, but rather a style of narration that allows these events to contribute to the education and formation of a character (324). "The better novelist has and must have other intentions with his figures than the mere determination of their external fate. The development (*Ausbildung*), or rather the history of their powers of thought and feeling is his purpose" (395). Thus, "development" and "formation," repeatedly emphasized which a character can acquire through a multiplicity of events in her history, in short, appears as the most essential and characteristic aspect of the novel for Blanckenburg. It would be a mere accumulation of quotations if one were to cite all the passages in which he deals with the task of the novel to present the inner formation (*Bildung*) of a person and thereby simultaneously to affect the readers educationally (*bildend*).⁵⁷ For Blanckenburg the author's own inner education (*Bildung*) by means of which he develops from a citizen to a *Mensch* is a precondition a task given to each of us "primarily and above all else" which must be the ultimate purpose of the true novel. "If, I say, every event in nature contributes something to the formation and development of our character; if it influences our thinking, and our thinking in turn has an effect in the next instance according to the idea received from it and merged into all its other ideas: then the most distant events naturally stand in a connection of cause and effect, and in this connection only by contributing more or less to the shaping (*Bildung*) of our way of thought, to the formation of our entire being. If we do not recognize this in nature, if we do not become conscious of how our manner of thinking and acting has been shaped into what it is through the influence of the events we have encountered: then the cursorness of our observation of ourselves is in part to blame; in part this formation, this shaping, has been realized so imperceptibly that it could happen even unbeknownst to us" (323). It is the task of the

⁵⁷ See in this connection the essay by Mahoney in this volume, whose chief thesis is that the Bildungsroman is tied more to the *Bildung* of the reader than of the protagonist. Ed.

true novelist to reveal this. "If the poet (*Dichter*) does not have the talent to clarify the inner self of the person and to teach him to know himself, then he has no talent at all" (356). The true novel follows only the grand organization of the entire world. "The universe is arranged in such a way that a person cannot receive his education (*Bildung*) without passing through a variety of events. The poet must thus capture this when he shapes his figure into a real person (*Mensch*) or wants to give us the inner history of a person" (326). Following the model of Wieland's *Agathon*, Blanckenburg at this early date came very close to coining the term Bildungsroman. In addition, the theory of the novel of inwardness (*Innerlichkeitsroman*) was first developed by him, a view of the novel that evaluates it on the basis of the extent to which it portrays the inner soul, the inner history of the person portrayed a theory that had extremely significant and controversial consequences in the history of German theory and practice of the novel to the time of Thomas Mann and into the most recent times. For since then it has remained fundamental for the serious German novel that "the event itself could never be what matters; and that it should be the inner situation of the figures that occupies us" (305).

The last relevant lecture of Morgenstern's, "Zur Geschichte des Bildungsromans" (On the History of the Bildungsroman) of 12 December 1820,⁵⁸ is disappointingly and confusedly superficial. It presents a cursory and conventionally labeled catalog of narrative world literature from classical antiquity to the present, with borrowings especially from Bouterwek and Friedrich Schlegel.⁵⁹ There is no thematic and formal analysis, no attempt to define precisely the formal type from the richness of the historical material. Morgenstern's initial thesis that every good novel is, in the end, a Bildungsroman, allows the term to be used imprecisely and leaves only the banal conclusion that one can learn something about the individuality and the nationality of the author from every novel "which wishes to have a claim to something more than mere fleeting entertainment." Whether serious, comic, or

⁵⁸*Neues Museum der teutschen Provinzen Rußlands* 1 (1824): 146.

⁵⁹Friedrich Bouterwek, *Geschichte der neueren Poesie und Beredsamkeit*, 12 vols. (Göttingen: Röwer, 1801ff.); Friedrich Schlegel, *Geschichte der alten und neuen Literatur* (Vienna, 1815).

in the humoristic hybrid form, the novel "should portray as well as convey *Bildung*, be it in intellectual or in moral or in aesthetic respects, or best of all, in all of these respects simultaneously."⁶⁰ It sounds like an anticipation of the theory of realism when he posits the "poetic transfiguration of that which is borrowed from elements of the real world" as a main requirement of the novel. But this too had long been commonplace. It is a concession of the Enlightenment thinker to the trend of the times that he now considers "the Romantic element in the novel" indispensable. But instead of a development of these thoughts, there first follows a discussion about the fact that, sunk "in the subjectivity of life development," the Bildungsroman in contrast to the literature of antiquity, which presented the world objectively is caught up in the battles of the soul between the sensual and spiritual, nature and freedom, and mixes in the problems of love. It belongs, he argues, exclusively to the modern era and has won in it either consciously or unconsciously an extraordinary influence on shaping or misshaping (*Bildung* and *Verbildung*) the reading public. From the path through the history of the European novel taken quickly by Morgenstern with an awkward accumulation of names, it is unclear whether he considers each of the mentioned works a Bildungsroman: he cannot find it in Italy; calls *Don Quixote* the first classical model of the new novel; in French novelistic literature he stresses *Télémaque* by Fénelon as a very valuable Bildungsroman for its type; likewise the pedagogical Bildungsroman *Émile* by Rousseau. In his critical remarks the enlightened moralist speaks without exception; thus he characterizes the English novels (by Richardson, Fielding, Sterne, Swift, Goldsmith, Smollett and the "ladies" D'Arblay, Robinson and Smith)⁶¹ lock, stock and barrel "with greater or lesser justification" as Bildungsromane. If he had explicitly rejected the term *family novel* in his first lecture, he now conflates it with the Bildungsroman into one category (24). In the section on German novels, Morgenstern must repeat himself: Wieland's *Agathon* is again introduced as "one of the most exceptional Bildungsromane extant," only outdone by Goethe's novels

⁶⁰*Neues Museum*, 5.

⁶¹ See Eve Bannet's contribution in this volume. Ed.

from *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* to *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* (1809, translated as *The Elective Affinities*). A statement on *Dichtung und Wahrheit* [Goethe's poetic autobiography] proves that Morgenstern was not primarily concerned with the aesthetic formal type here either. "An individual life presented thus by a poet and thinker is worth more than the most beautiful and simultaneously most edifying real Bildungsroman" (30). Tieck, Ernst Wagner (*Willibald's Ansichten vom Leben*), Novalis, *Florentin* (still attributed to Friedrich Schlegel) are named as successors to Goethe "on a smaller scale." Once again, Morgenstern advertises Klinger as a novelist still not yet sufficiently recognized; he cites Jacobi, Heinse, Schiller's [novel fragment] *Der Geisterseher* [translated as *The Ghostseer*] which, however, is supposedly more effective as a result of its unresolved riddles and intrigues than through its didactic intentions, especially as a fragment and also Fouqué, who, however, like the popular novels of ghosts, magic and chivalry, is also subject to the judgment about this category of novel made in the preceding lecture, even though "excellent in purely poetical respects." Despite critical remarks, the speaker does not spare his academic listeners, certainly already long exhausted, an enumeration of trivial literature (Lafontaine, van der Velde, Claren, Wall, Rochlitz, Kind, Horn and others). The enumeration ends with Jean Paul and E. T. A. Hoffmann. Only now does Morgenstern notice his confusion, which has led him far from his goal, "according to which I really wanted to characterize the models and examples of the Bildungsroman in the more narrow sense, but not to enumerate all types of novels." Too late and with little success. Again there follows a series of names, including Engel and Lichtenberg, until the conclusion, recapitulating, allows the "classics" to march forward: Richardson and Fielding, Sterne and Jean Paul, Wieland and Goethe, Jacobi and Klinger. The educational significance (*Bildungssinn*) of this digression is accentuated in the last sentences directed to the listening students. "Never let us forget: to compose a common novel one needs the hand of a writing day laborer; for the creation of a novel of higher order . . . a worthy, meaningful human life, such as that led (believe me) by the truly great author" (43).

The lack of precision in this lecture is not coincidental. It signifies not only a personal failing of Morgenstern's and not only a primitive-

ness of the literary historical method which he employed. Through it, rather, can be glimpsed the difficulties of defining the Bildungsroman as a genre among the novelistic forms, a problem with which later research has also had to wrestle again and again. Scholars have not yet found a solution to this problem even with far less "naive" methods and with a significantly greater understanding of the novel as a fictional art form and thus greater abstraction from its immediate pedagogical and social function. This fact is most obvious in the familiar combination of the vague terms *educational novel (Erziehungsroman)*, *developmental novel (Entwicklungsroman)* or Bildungsroman. The source of his creation of the term lay in the perspective from which Morgenstern defended the novel as a moral means of education, as opposed to the conception of the novel as mere entertainment, pleasure, fantasy, and as an escape from reality.

This neologism was to attribute to the novel an immediate practical and pedagogical responsibility for the individual and, in the "real" social fabric, to give it a connection to philosophy, to morality, to "life," which let it be understood less as "literature" and more as a direct expression of the author, as a confession and document of life, as a depiction of his own individuality and nation. Thus, the Bildungsroman is given full freedom to include philosophical reflection, the diary, and the memoir, be it biography or autobiography. It also became evident later that the Bildungsroman can hardly be isolated as a specific "literary" genre with formal structural laws applying solely to it; it is rather determined by prerequisites that have to do with content, theme, and ideology and with its intended effect and function. It appears not as a categorical aesthetic form, but as a historical form deriving from specific and limited historical conditions in the understanding of the world and the self. That fact emerges in the way in which, since Blanckenburg's *Versuch über den Roman*, the conception of the Bildungsroman (even though he did not yet employ this term) as a "modern" expression of emotional, psychological development and cultivation developed on the basis of a specific, significant, and influential book and author [Goethe's *Meister*]. The exemplary works Wieland's *Agathon* and even more Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* regained such social and ideological and pedagogical weight for Morgenstern that it became for him the norm for the

modern novel in general, one according to which he measured and evaluated the novel's history. He did not recognize that this transference must necessarily fail. Given the exemplary nature of these novels, Morgenstern, as a contemporary, did not understand that they in turn were a particular historical expression, a particular historical phenomenon, rather than a general literary genre in a unique and exact sense.

These novels were able to determine a certain continuity based on a common national, social, and ideological culture shared by poet and public and did so with such intensity that the Bildungsroman became a leading German novel form throughout the nineteenth century,⁶² one that could attract the best artistic powers and preserve itself into the twentieth century. But as a historical phenomenon, this continuity is also subject to historical transformations and rifts that have recently appeared and which relegate the concept of the purely humane cultivation toward harmonic universality which was the foundation of Morgenstern's thought to the past.

Translated by Claire Baldwin and James Hardin

⁶² See Jeffrey Sammons's remarks on the German Bildungsroman of the nineteenth century in his article in this volume. Ed.

The Bildungsroman for Nonspecialists: An Attempt at a Clarification

Jeffrey L. Sammons

On a vocabulary-expanding calendar, one of the desperate devices I employ to expose my children to culture (or *Bildung*) there turned up one day the word "bildungsroman." It was defined thus: "a novel about the moral and psychological growth of the main character." There followed an illustrative example: "D. H. Lawrence's 'Sons and Lovers' is a *bildungsroman* with a heavily autobiographical content." A person with more curiosity than my children normally bring to bear on such matters might ask how it comes about that the example for such an obviously German term should be a British novel. Otherwise, however, the definition appears to be innocuous and to throw up no intimidating challenges. But it may also appear to be of doubtful utility for serious discourse about literature. If we were to compose a list of all the novels of Western literature that might fit this definition or be tangentially associated with it, we should be occupied for a long time. One might suppose that a term defined in a way that so patently fails to delimit a genre of the novel might safely be left to bookchat. However, as all those who work in the field of German literature and a few people outside it know, there is a good deal more to it than that.

The defining terminologies of literary criticism and history chronically generate problems. The more technical they are, the easier they seem to be to employ. Probably we do not have much difficulty distinguishing an iamb from a dactyl, though even the question whether a particular line is dactylic or anapaestic may invite dispute.

Doubtless

the identification of a sonnet is noncontroversial, but in this case the term appears to be in some sense tautological, since we identify a poem as a sonnet because a sonnet is that kind of poem. When it comes to period and genre classifications, our difficulties multiply, for they are terms of literary history and thus become involved with the insecurities of historiography in general and are not infrequently freighted with ideology. The term *baroque* originally a term of disparagement applied to German literature of the seventeenth century has often seemed to students of the epoch misleading and reductive, especially as the baroque upon closer inspection comes to look more like a belated German Renaissance. Furthermore, there are always those who find such terms illegitimate because they short-circuit critical attentiveness by blunting our awareness of the uniqueness of literary artists and their works. When such terms threaten to turn into what Ivy League students used to call "cepts," truncated concepts of received opinion that substitute for firsthand interrogation, the tendency to ban them from conscientious inquiry becomes understandable. Similarly with genre classifications: when, after a couple of hundred years of discourse about the *Novelle*, which has provided Germanists with such a vast amount of employment, the topic shows no signs of coming to rest, some observers may be motivated to throw up their hands, declare that the *Novelle* is a prose fiction of intermediate length, and be done with it.

There are, nevertheless, reasons why these deck-clearing gestures do not succeed in putting the offending vocabulary out of the world. For after we have disposed of it, we are likely to discover that we want to have it back. The seventeenth century in German literature, for all its energetic variety and centrifugal tendencies, is an epoch of literary history with detectable characteristics, marked in its internal relations by a quite astonishingly rapid, efficient, and self-conscious resuscitation of the possibilities of vernacular poesy in German, and in its external relations by its embeddedness in the age of the Thirty Years' War, which was perceived then and long afterward as a virtual holocaust and profoundly affected literary tone. The term *baroque* may be an arbitrary sign that has no meaning other than the totality of the literary phenomena it is meant to subsume, but this totality, dynamic and diverse as it certainly is, does exist. The *Novelle* keeps insisting

upon its existence also, in part because some authors themselves through the generations became fixated upon its possibilities and formal qualities (while other authors at the same time demonstrably cared nothing about it, indiscriminately designating prose fictions as *Novelle*, *Roman*, or *Erzählung*).

There is, I should think, nothing wrong with employing such terms and inquiring into their usefulness, as long as they are employed in their heuristic instrumentality and are not confused with ideal forms anterior to literary experience. However, when they are not only generic but carry with them implications of literary history, it is necessary to be alert to the sources and soundness of the literary history they purport to order and not merely accept them as received opinion. In this regard, the term *Bildungsroman* throws up a set of peculiar and, in some degree, confusing difficulties. It is not my purpose here to go into this history in detail; there is a large literature on these matters. Rather, I should like to show that the term is associated with widespread misapprehensions of the course of German literature in the nineteenth century, misapprehensions that initially were internally generated in a German canonization process but that have resulted in a distorted view of German literary history and, to some extent, culture in general as treated in the literary disciplines, insofar as they are interested in German matters at all. At issue here are two propositions: first, that the *Bildungsroman* is a peculiarly German form, and second, that it was the dominant form of the German novel in the nineteenth century, thus to some degree isolating the genre from its counterparts in other countries until it rejoined the European literary community through the achievements, in the usual account, of Theodor Fontane and Thomas Mann.

The first of these propositions is by no means universally acknowledged, as we can easily see in the commonplace definition with which I opened these remarks. But that this is so is evidence of a vast disorder in the employment of the term, and in particular of a confusion as to whether it is to be understood generically or historically. Initially the term was by no means devised to define a type of the European novel. In its modern history, which begins with Wilhelm Dilthey just around the time of the founding of the German Reich, it came to lay claim to a particular German tradition with its philosophical origins in

the Classical Romantic age of *Humanitätsphilosophie* and its literary archetype in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*.¹ This is just the period when German literary history was subjected to an elaborate and long influential reCanonization, in which Goethe and the Romantics were made the axis of the cultural tradition and were eventually linked to neoRomantic modernism, with the effect of consigning a large part of the literary life of the nineteenth century to relative oblivion. This took place under intense nationalistic and ideological pressures, with the aim of demonstrating a German cultural *Sonderweg* that was not only different from but in some ways superior to the foreign cultural developments in both West and East.² Among many statements of this claim, one prominently placed is found in Hans Heinrich Borchardt's article "Bildungsroman" in the *Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturgeschichte*, where the genre is identified as "the major form of the German novel," which "like no other form of art is able to reveal the decisive, essential features of the German character."³

In matters of this sort it is important to remember that traditionally in Germany the study of literature was not a compartmentalized segment of the humanities, as it has been in our universities, but was subsumed under the comprehensive discipline of *Germanistik*, the study, reinforcement, and transmission of the presumed cultural values of the nation. Thus, a question such as the definition of the Bildungsroman is an issue not confined to academic discourse, but spreads into the ideological selfunderstanding of the culture as a whole. Particularly striking examples of this diffusion can be found in the careers of Hermann Hesse and Thomas Mann. Unlike, I suppose, most German

1 Rolf Selbmann, *Der deutsche Bildungsroman*, Sammlung Metzler: Realien zur Literatur, No. 214 (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1984), 2021.

2 See Bernd Peschken, *Versuch einer germanistischen Ideologiekritik: Goethe, Lessing, Novalis, Tieck, Hölderlin, Heine in Wilhelm Diltheys und Julian Schmidts Vorstellungen* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1984).

3 Hans Heinrich Borchardt, "Bildungsroman," *Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturgeschichte*, ed. Werner Kohlschmidt and Wolfgang Mohr, 2d ed. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1958/84), 1:175: "die Großform des deutschen Romans . . ., die wie keine andere Dichtungsart entscheidende Wesenszüge des deutschen Charakters zu enthüllen vermag."

writers, neither had a university education; in fact, neither graduated from school. Nevertheless we find them, each in his own way, fitting themselves into the canonical concept of the Bildungsroman. Hesse was exceptionally ambitious of succession to the great tradition in literature, and this tradition, as he understood it, was pronouncedly Goethean and Romantic. As I have remarked elsewhere, "except for Dostoyevsky and Nietzsche, there is scarcely an artist or thinker to whom Hesse alludes who lived later than the 1830s."⁴ Consequently he wrote one novel after another that can be associated with the Bildungsroman definition of Wilhelminian *Germanistik*: *Peter Camenzind*, *Demian*, *Siddhartha*, *Narziss und Goldmund*, *Das Glasperlenspiel*. Theodore Ziolkowski has asserted, in connection with *Demian*, that "by using this traditional form Hesse consciously placed himself in a narrative tradition to which he felt attuned. Although the form has inspired non-German novels . . . , the *Bildungsroman* is a typically German genre and constitutes Germany's main contribution to the European novel."⁵ Mann, on the other hand, reproduced the form, as was his wont, in earnest parody in *Der Zauberberg*, *Doktor Faustus*, and *Joseph und seine Brüder*, and in considerably less earnest parody in *Felix Krull*. His sense of the status of the genre itself, however, was wholly conformed to the canonical view. In 1916, in an essay on the autobiographical novel, he wrote,

There is a variety of the novel that is German, typically German, legitimately national, and that is just the autobiographically filled Bildungsroman or *Entwicklungsroman*. We are furthermore, I think, agreed that the predominance of this novel type in Germany, the fact of its particular national legitimacy, is most intimately connected with the German concept of humanity, which, since it is the product of a period in which society disintegrated into atoms and made a

⁴ Jeffrey L. Sammons, "Hermann Hesse and the OverThirty Germanist," in *Hesse: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Theodore Ziolkowski (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973), 118-19.

⁵ Theodore Ziolkowski, *The Novels of Hermann Hesse* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1965), 90.

human being out of every citizen, was lacking in the political element all along.⁶

In the nationalistic mood of the *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* (1918, translated as *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man*, 1983) he asserted of *Bildung* itself that it is "a specifically German concept; it derives from Goethe, from him it has its three-dimensional aesthetic character, has maintained the sense of freedom, culture, and reverence for life . . . through him this concept has been elevated to an educational principle in Germany as in no other nation."⁷

With respect to the second proposition, the alleged dominance of the Bildungsroman form over the German novel genre in the nineteenth century, one might suppose that it had been long since exemplified by discussion of the many examples. But this has not been the case; hardly more than a dozen titles have commonly been adduced for the century and a quarter from the advent of Romanticism until the First World War, and a large part of the discussion has been focused upon the single archetypal example, Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*.⁸ Those unfamiliar with the peculiarities of traditional German

⁶ Thomas Mann, *Gesammelte Werke* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1960), 11:702: "Es gibt unterdessen eine Spielart des Romans, die allerdings deutsch, typischdeutsch, legitimnational ist, und dies ist eben der autobiographisch erfüllte Bildungs- und Entwicklungsroman. Wir sind ferner, denke ich, einig darüber, daß die Vorherrschaft dieses Romantyps in Deutschland, die Tatsache seiner besonderen nationalen Legitimität, aufs engste zusammenhängt mit dem deutschen Humanitätsbegriff, welchem, da er das Produkt einer Epoche ist, in der die Gesellschaft in Atome zerfiel und die aus jedem Bürger einen Menschen machte, das politische Element von jeher fast völlig fehlte."

⁷ Mann, *Gesammelte Werke*, 12:505: "ein spezifisch deutscher Begriff; er stammt von Goethe, von ihm hat er den plastisch-künstlerischen Charakter, den Sinn der Freiheit, Kultur und Lebensandacht erhalten . . . durch ihn ist dieser Begriff in Deutschland zum erzieherischen Prinzip erhoben worden wie bei keinem anderen Volk."

⁸ This tendency has continued into relatively modern times. For example, M. M. Bakhtin, in his regrettably aborted effort to develop a theoretical inquiry into the Bildungsroman genre, recognized that it is not purely German: "The *Bildungsroman* and its Significance in the History of Realism (Toward a Historical Typology of the Novel)," *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, trans. Vern M.

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literary study may think that I am making this up, but I am not. I have chronicled my baffled search for the elusive genre elsewhere⁹ and only wish to recapitulate the result here: the German Bildungsroman emerges in the late eighteenth century, flourishes briefly in the age of Goethe and Romanticism, goes largely underground in the nineteenth century except for a handful of scattered examples, some of which were rescued from obscurity in the Wilhelminian canonization process, and then reemerges in the modernist neoRomantic revival in our own century.¹⁰ Even this shrunken canon, however, is not without its insecurities. Several of the Romantic examples seem more clearly grasped as antiBildungsromane, while the nineteenth-century examples, with the single, eccentric exception of Stifter's *Der Nachsommer* (1857, translated as *Indian Summer*, 1985), appear, with their considerably diminished expectations concerning the possibilities of the self in the world, to have been deprived of the optimism that is an essential feature of the Goethean and Humboldtian concept of *Bildung*. Even the identification of the archetypal text, Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, as a Bildungsroman has been challenged.¹¹

Given this crumbling of an article of generic faith upon any sort of conscientious scrutiny, it is not surprising that the first serious, modern, comprehensive examination of the issue came to the conclusion that the Bildungsroman is "an unfulfilled genre."¹² This formulation

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McGee, ed. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: U of Texas P, 1984), 20; but, owing to the fragmentariness of the study, it comes to discuss in detail only *Wilhelm Meister*.

⁹ Jeffrey L. Sammons, "The Mystery of the Missing *Bildungsroman* or: What Happened to Wilhelm Meister's Legacy?" *Genre* 14 (1981): 229-46.

¹⁰ Lothar Köhn, *Entwicklungs und Bildungsroman: Ein Forschungsbericht* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1969), 3, has pointed out that, initially, at the time of the Diltheyan definition, it was thought that there were no living examples of the genre.

¹¹ Kurt May, "Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre, ein Bildungsroman?" *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift* 31 (1957): 137.

¹² Jürgen Jacobs, *Wilhelm Meister und seine Brüder: Untersuchungen zum deutschen Bildungsroman* (Munich: Fink, 1972), 271-78: "eine unerfüllte Gattung."

evidently struck a raw nerve, for it has been vigorously attacked since.¹³ Jacobs has been accused of designing a normative straitjacket and then unsurprisingly finding that it does not fit the texts. But I think that he performed a real service by subjecting a myth of literary history to an analytic inquiry that has liberated the study of the nineteenth-century German novel. Rolf Selbmann, building upon a possibility adumbrated by Lothar Köhn,¹⁴ has distinguished *Bildungsmotiv*, *Bildungsgeschichte*, and *Bildungsroman*, making the element of *Bildung* more thematic than generic and enriching the fabric of literary history. Hartmut Steinecke has proposed the term *Individualroman* for the novel that takes the form of fictional biography or autobiography,¹⁵ a suggestion that has already become widely influential and is helping to release the German novel from its peculiar national status and bring it into the international context of the Western novel, where it belongs. Other scholars have begun to ask, if the *Bildungsroman* is not to be found in overwhelming numbers in nineteenth-century Germany, what novels are to be found there a topic that as recently as 1969 was designated a *terra incognita*.¹⁶ The result has been a series of studies of "other, quite buried novel traditions"¹⁷ of the historical, the political, and the social novel in Germany from the decline of Romanticism to the advent of Theodor Fontane, that is, from the episode of Young Germany through the Programmatic Realism.¹⁸ Decanonized authors who in their own time had national

13 E.g., Martin Swales, *The German Bildungsroman from Wieland to Hesse* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1978), 12; Selbmann, *Der deutsche Bildungsroman*, 26, 39.

14 Köhn, *Entwicklungs und Bildungsroman*, 78.

15 Hartmut Steinecke, *Romantheorie und Romankritik in Deutschland* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1984), 1:27.

16 Köhn, *Entwicklungs und Bildungsroman*, 89.

17 Selbmann, *Der deutsche Bildungsroman*, 28: "andere, erst recht verschüttete Romantraditionen."

18 E.g., Hans Adler, *Soziale Romane im Vormärz: Literatursemiotische Studie* (Munich: Fink, 1980); Horst Denkler, ed., *Romane und Erzählungen des bürgerlichen Realismus: Neue Interpretationen* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1980); Gerhard

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and in some cases international reputations are coming back into view: Willibald Alexis, Charles Sealsfield, Karl Gutzkow, Berthold Auerbach, Friedrich Gerstäcker, Wilhelm Raabe, Gustav Freytag, Louise von François, Friedrich Spielhagen. I expect others will soon follow them into the light, for example, Fanny Lewald, Hermann Kurz, or Karl Emil Franzos. Again the effect is to reconnect the German with the European novel, and in fact the process constitutes the beginnings of a complete rewriting of German literary history in the nineteenth century.

My intention here is not to pursue this development further, but rather to consider how the Bildungsroman concept relates to the perceptions of German literature outside the field of *Germanistik*, where the research I have cited remains, I believe, entirely unknown. The Bildungsroman concept itself, however, is not unknown, but is encountered in all sorts of places, not only on vocabulary-expanding calendars. To begin with, it seems clear that if the term is to be applicable to the whole universe of discourse of general literature, the claims made for its peculiar Germanness in its initial introduction dissolve. One may be tempted to ask, what of it? Well, one consequence,

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(Munich: Fink, 1980); Horst Denkler, ed., *Romane und Erzählungen des bürgerlichen Realismus: Neue Interpretationen* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1980); Gerhard Friesen, *The German Panoramic Novel of the 19th Century* (Bern and Frankfurt am Main: Herbert Lang, 1972); Hans Dieter Huber, *Historische Romane in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts: Studie zu Material und "schöpferischem Akt" ausgewählter Romane von A. v. Arnim bis A. Stifter* (Munich: Fink, 1978); Paul Jackson, *Bürgerliche Arbeit und Romanwirklichkeit: Studien zur Berufsproblematik in Romanen des deutschen Realismus* (Frankfurt am Main: R. G. Fischer, 1981); Dieter Kafitz, *Figurenkonstellation als Mittel der Wirklichkeitserfassung. Dargestellt an Romanen der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts: Freytag, Spielhagen, Fontane, Raabe* (Kronberg/Ts.: Athenäum, 1978); Nancy A. Kaiser, *Social Integration and Narrative Structure: Patterns of Realism in Auerbach, Freytag, Fontane, and Raabe* (New York, Bern, and Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1986); Jürgen Kolbe, *Goethes "Wahlverwandtschaften" und der Roman des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart, Berlin, Cologne, and Mainz: Kohlhammer, 1968); Paul Michael Lützel, ed., *Romane und Erzählungen zwischen Romantik und Realismus: Neue Interpretationen* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1983); Joachim Worthmann, *Probleme des Zeitromans: Studien zur Geschichte des deutschen Romans im 19. Jahrhundert* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1974).

it seems to me, is to introduce an uncontrollable arbitrariness into the usage of the term that, in turn, raises the question why we should retain it at all. Let me give an example that fell into my hands just as I was writing this, from a review by Irving Howe of an Israeli Arab novel:

In its entirety *Arabesques* seems to follow the pattern of the *Bildungsroman* and here there are problems. The pattern is familiar enough: a young man, educated into discomfort with his origins, leaves his town or village, comes to the metropolis to experience money, women, and dissoluteness, and then, sadder, perhaps wiser, returns home. Balzac used this scheme, though with a clever twist at the end in *Lost Illusions*; Dickens adapted it for *Great Expectations*; Balanchine transposed it into the brilliant movements of *Prodigal Son* [!]. But it does not quite work in *Arabesques*. . . . 19

We may note here as a detail the characteristic gesture familiar to anyone wellread in the topic: the *Bildungsroman* turns out upon closer scrutiny to be not a *Bildungsroman*; the author, alas, has failed to realize the form. More troublingly, there is hardly a single German novel that has been or can be designated a *Bildungsroman* that can be made to fit Howe's definition, except Gottfried Keller's *Der grüne Heinrich* and possibly Wilhelm Raabe's early effort, *Die Leute aus dem Walde*. After whole generations, inside and outside of Germany, have believed for a hundred years that the *Bildungsroman* is the characteristic German form, shall it be removed from German literary history entirely and applied instead to altogether foreign phenomena? This would seem irrational.

Insouciance about usage is also characteristic of Jerome Hamilton Buckley's book, *Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding*. It is difficult to make out just why Buckley wants to employ the word at all, since, as he says, "I have been constantly struck by the awkwardness of the German term as applied to English literature."²⁰

¹⁹ Irving Howe, "News from Elsewhere," review of Anton Schammas, *Arabesques*, *New York Review of Books* (14 April 1988): 5.

²⁰ Jerome Hamilton Buckley, *Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to*

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He is not concerned to give the term any superintending definition that would provide a theoretical underpinning for his interpretations; it is just a storage bin: "I now use the label in its broadest sense as a convenient synonym for the novel of youth or apprenticeship."²¹ If that is the case, why not employ the more general, less theoretically charged term *Entwicklungsroman*, or, for that matter, any old arbitrary sign? That Buckley is uninterested in the potentially useful implications of the term is illustrated by the evidence that he has little affinity with the historically archetypal case, Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*; Buckley's knowledge of which seems to have been primarily mediated by Carlyle ("dull exposition and prosy asides"; "long irrelevant interpolated tales and large tracts of cloudy occultism [!]" ; "much windy rhetoric"²²). Doubtless one is not obliged to admire *Wilhelm Meister*, but to deny oneself access to it by measuring it against evaluative canons with which it has nothing to do and then appropriate the literary-historical term largely flowing from it seems more than a little arrogantly provincial.

All this misappropriation has the consequence of catching the German novel in a pincer. On the one hand, when the term is indiscriminately applied to a vast and amorphous type discoverable, I should think, in the whole world history of the novel from its most ancient beginnings, the specific German tradition disappears from view. When, on the other hand, the older claims for the Bildungsroman as the dominant German mode are taken at face value, then it is the *German* novel that comes to seem provincial. It is not that the term, when applied to German literature by those who have some notion of what it might mean, normally carries disrespectful connotations. The Bildungsroman is often acknowledged as an estimable German contribution to the novel genre. But whereas Germans of the older generation *vide* Thomas Mann saw the alleged national peculiarity of the Bildungsroman as a mark of distinction or even of superiority over both East and West, outside of *Germanistik* it has

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Golding (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1974), vii.

21 Buckley, *Season of Youth*, 13.

22 Buckley, *Season of Youth*, 10, 12

come to imply a deficit. Where, we Germanists are asked, are the German Dostoyevsky, Turgenev, Tolstoy, Balzac, Stendhal, Zola, Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot, Hawthorne, Melville, etc.? In other words, the Germans are seen to have excluded themselves from a mighty epoch in the history of literature, that of the great realism, a mode that vastly expanded the boundaries of the art of fiction while at the same time generating works that were, and in many cases still are, widely, enthusiastically, and long read in their own societies and, frequently in translation, in foreign lands as well. For our part, when we are asked to name a major mid-nineteenth-century German-language novel, we are conditioned to offer Stifter's *Der Nachsommer*, all of the readers of which in the entire second half of the nineteenth century could, I imagine, have been gathered into one hall of moderate size. Thus, the nationalistically driven canonization process of the nineteenth century has, with grim justice, resulted in the disappearance of postRomantic, premodernist German literature from the purview of general literary study and appreciation in our society.

It is not improbable that one of the chief agents of this development was Erich Auerbach with his great, influential book *Mimesis* of 1946. This is likely because of his status as one of the founding fathers of the discipline of comparative literature, especially in the United States, and because of the learnedness, lucidity, and persuasiveness of his arguments, which even the wellinformed Walter Bruford has treated with respect.²³ Recently, J. P. Stern has given another display of Auerbach's enduring prestige.²⁴ That only one of the twenty

23 W. H. Bruford, *The German Tradition of Self-Cultivation: 'Bildung' from Humboldt to Tomas Mann* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1975), 153-54.

24 J. P. Stern, "In Praise of Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis*," *London German Studies III*, ed. J. P. Stern (London: Institute of Germanic Studies, University of London, 1986), 194-211. Stern calls the book "the most important single work of literary criticism of the postwar period" (194) and makes large claims for its present and future relevance. I believe that one can admire it as a fine achievement of its time without losing one's breath over it. Stern is actually a little uneasy at Auerbach's treatment of German literary matters, though I do not believe he quite sees the problem; in connection with the chapter on Schiller's *Kabale und Liebe* he criticizes Auerbach's restrictive view of reality but not his restrictive literary history or what I regard as his foreshortened apprehension of Schiller's play. A more critical

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chapters of *Mimesis* deals primarily with a German text is perhaps already a sign of the relative indifference to German literature among comparatists and the general literature experts in English departments, excepting, occasionally, Goethe, one or another of the Romantics, one or another modernist, and authors mediated through French theory such as Hölderlin and Nietzsche. This chapter, as is presumably well known, begins with a discussion of the musician Miller in Schiller's *Kabale und Liebe* as a figure of "sentimental middleclass realism,"²⁵ only to go on to treat the play as a unique example of its type in German literature and to discourse, with a clear undertone of regret, on the failure of the Germans to develop a form of European realism. Auerbach posits a strong influence of Goethe in the nineteenth century, an assumption that more recent literary history has rightly come to question; again the matter is seen through the lens of Wilhelminian canonization. Thus, Auerbach speaks in rather conventional terms of Goethe's indifference to social and political reality and "his aversion to everything violent and explosive."²⁶ His remark on the "timeless realm"²⁷ of *Wilhelm Meister* is I think incorrect; the novel lacks a pronounced sense of *place*, but not of time, for it is recognizably set in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. His view of the "immobility of the social background in the *Wahlverwandschaften*"²⁸ has been challenged by a modern criticism able to detect dynamic social undercurrents in the novel.²⁹ Auerbach does not directly address the issue of the Bildungsroman, but his précis of the subsequent history

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and historical view will be found in Carl Landauer, "Mimesis and Erich Auerbach's Self-Mythologizing," *German Studies Review* 11 (1988): 8396.

²⁵ Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard Trask (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1953), 386.

²⁶ Auerbach, 395.

²⁷ Auerbach, 396.

²⁸ Auerbach, 398.

²⁹ Hans Rudolf Vaegt, "Ein reicher Baron: Zum sozialgeschichtlichen Gehalt der 'Wahlverwandschaften,'" *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Schillergesellschaft* 24 (1980): 12361.

of German literature in the nineteenth century clearly bears on it,

The fragmentation and limitation in the realm of realism which we have noted remained the same in Goethe's younger contemporaries and in the following generations. Until toward the end of the nineteenth century the most important *works* which undertook to treat contemporary social subjects seriously at all remained in the genres of semifantasy or of idyll or at least in the narrow realm of the local. They portray the economic, the social, and the political in a state of quiescence.³⁰

Even in Fontane "the social realism. . . . still does not go very deep, and the political current in Gottfried Keller is pronouncedly Swiss."³¹

Somewhat unexpectedly, Auerbach returns to the issue in his chapter on the Goncourts' *Germinie Lacerteux*. Here we read,

As for Germany, or rather, the territory where German is spoken, we have briefly referred to it in an earlier passage. . . . If we consider that Jeremias Gotthelf (born 1797) was but two years older and Adalbert Stifter (1805) six years younger than Balzac; that the German contemporaries of Flaubert (1821) and Edmond de Goncourt (1822) are men like Freytag (1816), Storm (1817), Fontane and Keller (both 1819); that the (comparatively) most noteworthy prose-fiction writers born roughly contemporaneously with Emile Zola that is, about 1840 are Anzengruber and Rosegger: these names alone are enough to show that in Germany life itself was much more provincial, much more old-fashioned, much less "contemporary."³²

The remainder of the passage, which goes on for several pages, need not concern us; it consists largely of thumbnail judgments on Hebbel, Keller, Fontane, and Hauptmann. Throughout there is a subtext of canonical evaluation inviting an analysis that cannot be pursued here.

³⁰ Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 399, my emphasis.

³¹ Auerbach, 399.

³² Auerbach, 455.

The point is that there is no mention of Willibald Alexis, of Karl Gutzkow, or of the novelists of America, Charles Sealsfield and Friedrich Gerstäcker. Wilhelm Raabe, the most cosmopolitan and innovative of the German realists of the nineteenth century, is mentioned only in passing in connection with *Die Chronik der Sperlingsgasse* and *Der Hungerpastor*, his most canonical but not his most mature works. Auerbach has heard of Friedrich Spielhagen, but remarks only that he is "now totally forgotten";³³ he suggests no awareness that Spielhagen's forgottenness was a canonical development or any indication of a first-hand acquaintance with his novels.

Two things may be noted about this by now classic statement. In the first place, Auerbach was by origin a Romanist, medievalist, and Renaissance scholar. His sense of German literary history is demonstrably influenced by the academic canon of his generation. This is evident from the names of the authors he takes to be representative of the canon: Jean Paul, Hoffmann, Gotthelf, Stifter, Hebbel, and Storm. Whether all of them are socially and politically as quiescent, idyllic, or local as they are said to be is a point that cannot be pursued here, but they may not be the best or the only choices for a discussion of realism in nineteenth-century German literature. In the second place, it should be remembered that *Mimesis* was written in exile in Istanbul, where Auerbach had a limited number of books at his disposal. He was aware of this limitation, but he also thought it might have been an advantage: "it is quite possible that the book owes its existence to just this lack of a rich and specialized library. If it had been possible for me to acquaint myself with all the work that has been done on so many subjects, I might never have reached the point of writing."³⁴ However, it is not the lack of secondary but of primary literature that limits the scope of his chapter on German realism. He simply had not read enough. This is not meant to be a criticism of him; recanonization is not the task of generalists but of specialistsone important reason why specialists are needed in the field of German literary studies. Not only Auerbach but the entire international hu-

³³ Auerbach, 456.

³⁴ Auerbach, 492.

manistic community accepted the narrowly defined canon of *Germanistik* for a long time. It has since become increasingly clear that German literary history can be apprehended in quite different and more comprehensive ways. But, owing to the peripheralization of German literature in comparative and general literary studies, the news of these initiatives has not penetrated much beyond the boundaries of *Germanistik*, and it is this circumstance, I believe, that is largely responsible for the confusion in the use of the term Bildungsroman.

In this regard I have a preference that I do not mean to impose upon others but that might contribute something to making the word Bildungsroman a term of some utility for criticism and not just a noise. I think that the Bildungsroman should have something to do with *Bildung*, that is, with the early bourgeois, humanistic concept of the shaping of the individual self from its innate potentialities through acculturation and social experience to the threshold of maturity. The concept arises at the moment when German thought began to become preeminent in Western culture, and it came to be of great historical resonance, underlying, for example, the principle of liberal education in American education, even if that principle is honored more in ceremonious academic rhetoric than in educational practice. A novel designated as a Bildungsroman should, it seems to me, be in some degree in contact with this concept. It does not much matter whether the process of *Bildung* succeeds or fails, whether the protagonist achieves an accommodation with life and society or not. Thus the anti-Bildungsromane of the Romantics and the parodistic Bildungsromane of modern literature from Thomas Mann through Günter Grass may be located in the generic sequence.³⁵ But *Bildung* is not merely the accumulation of experience, not merely maturation in the form of fictional biography. There must be a sense of evolutionary change within the self, a teleology of individuality, even if the novel, as many do, comes to doubt or deny the possibility of achieving a gratifying result. Certainly the Bildungsroman can be treated as an ideal type that does not necessarily have to be in contact with the German novel tradition or the *Humanitätsphilosophie* of the age of Goethe and Humboldt. But I would suggest that, the farther away one gets from those roots, the

³⁵ See Selbmann, *Der deutsche Bildungsroman*, 40.

more careful one should be about defining the term and justifying its utility. Thus I would say: *David Copperfield*, yes; *Jude the Obscure*, maybe; *Le rouge et le noir*, maybe; *Illusions perdues*, no. The effect of my proposal would be considerably to circumscribe the applicability of the term by keeping it within its historical and especially its ideological limits. For the concept of *Bildung* is intensely bourgeois; it carries with it many assumptions about the autonomy and relative integrity of the self, its potential selfcreative energies, its relative range of options within material, social, even psychological determinants. It may be that in the modern world it has become increasingly difficult, outside of sheer ideology and myth, to sustain these assumptions. As I have tried to show, even in the nineteenth-century German novel they quite rapidly became difficult to sustain.³⁶ By the time of the founding of the Reich it had become evident that the ideal of *Bildung* itself had become obsolescent.³⁷ One can see the effect in Bruford's fine study of the history of the concept of *Bildung*; the only nineteenth-century Bildungsromane he treats after *Wilhelm Meister* are Stifter's *Der Nachsommer* and Friedrich Theodor Vischer's crotchety *Auch Einer*; he then turns to Fontane's *Frau Jenny Treibel*, which is, of course, not a Bildungsroman but a satire on the degeneration of the ideal of *Bildung* among the parvenu bourgeoisie with its "false pretensions to culture."³⁸ This process is even more evident in our century; Werner Welzig, who begins his guidebook to the twentieth-century German novel with a long chapter on the *Entwicklungsroman*, remarks that the Bildungsroman concept has become inadequate "because the principles of a possible *Bildung* or education have become questionable."³⁹

This brings me to certain testable propositions about nineteenth-century German literature that I wish could be communicated to the literary disciplines generally. The Bildungsroman was not the domi-

36 Sammons, "The Mystery of the Missing *Bildungsroman*."

37 See Köhn, *Entwicklungs und Bildungsroman*, 39.

38 Bruford, *The German Tradition of Self-Cultivation*, 194.

39 Werner Welzig, *Der deutsche Roman im 20. Jahrhundert*, 2d ed. (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1970), 11: "weil die Prinzipien einer möglichen Bildung oder Erziehung fragwürdig geworden sind."

nant mode of the novel, but a peripheral, occasional, and usually imperfectly realized subgenre; as has been pointed out, it was the *discussion* of *Bildung* and the *Bildungsroman* that had a special place in Germany.⁴⁰ The dominant modes were the historical novel and the social and political novel. In this respect German literature was much less alienated from its European context than the Germans subsequently made it out to be. In an interesting way, the recognition of this fact runs parallel to a development in historiography that is beginning to question the concept of German peculiarity, the alleged *Sonderweg* that is supposed to have set Germany apart from other European nations, West and East.⁴¹ It may well be that there is a qualitative deficit in the German novel compared to its English, French, American, and Russian counterparts, and there is likely to be some truth in the belief, grounded in the perceptions of nineteenth-century observers themselves, that this deficit had something to do with particular German conditions: the comparatively static social order, the lack of a capital city, the traumatic failure of the revolution of 1848; it should also not be forgotten that, for much of the century, German writers had to contend with a persistently oppressive censorship. As is often the case in literary history, some of the works most renowned in their own time are unable to impress us as much today; in many cases they exhibit disturbing complicities with the evolution of German society toward its worldhistorical catastrophes in our century.⁴² However, exceptional aesthetic excellence,

40 Wilhelm Vosskamp, "Der Bildungsroman als literarischsoziale Institution in Deutschland. (Zur Begriffs- und Funktionsgeschichte des Bildungsromans am Ende des 18. und Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts)," Series "Bürger, Bürgerlichkeit und bürgerliche Gesellschaft: Das 19. Jahrhundert im europäischen Vergleich," Zentrum für interdisziplinäre Forschung, Universität Bielefeld, 1986/87, 24.

41 See David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 1984); cf. Vosskamp, "Der Bildungsroman als literarischsoziale Institution," 25.

42 The consequence of this circumstance is that the modern scholarly attitude toward much of the German literature of the nineteenth century is one of arraignment rather than appreciation, to a degree that may not be the case in our sister disciplines. I mention this merely for the information of those less familiar with our field, but I think it is a contrast that might attract the attention of

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while not irrelevant, is not a commanding priority in literary historiography. Even if it is true, which I am far from sure is the case, that "most German novel writing of distinction partakes of this [Bildungsroman] genre construct,"⁴³ this is a principle of canonical selectivity and not of literary history.⁴⁴ In the nineteenth century there is much respectable, interesting, in some cases innovative writing, especially in the novel genre, that has simply been forgotten. "The history of novel theory and criticism between the Restoration and Programmatic Realism indeed shows that the historical novel in succession to Walter Scott, the Young German political novel, the social or village novel had long since forced the individual novel of the *Wilhelm Meister* tradition into the background in both literary production and criticism."⁴⁵

At the very least we need to emancipate ourselves from the notion that the tone of German letters in the nineteenth century was primarily set by an introverted semihermit like Mörike, a depressive like Storm, a desperate embargoer of experience and perception like Stifter, or a religious fundamentalist like Gotthelf; that it was provincial, quiescent, nostalgically idyllic, "above" the grit and upheaval of society and politics, morosely suffering from the anxiety of influence of Goethe and the Romantics. Literary life was lively and varied, and wide open to cosmopolitan, international influences. Many of these influences were English, and to some degree American, but one can sense the presence of foreign models from Turgenev to Zola. German literature was not only a receiver but also a generator of impulses; the

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comparatists more than it has.

⁴³ Swales, *The German Bildungsroman*, 23.

⁴⁴ In fact, it has been suggested by Selbmann, *Der deutsche Bildungsroman*, 36, that it was the subliterate novel of the nineteenth century that tended to the Bildungsroman form and that more ambitious novelists avoided it in order to escape the always threatening charge of triviality.

⁴⁵ Selbmann, *Der deutsche Bildungsroman*, 28: "Die Geschichte von Romantheorie und kritik zwischen Restauration und programmatischem Realismus zeigt ja, daß der historische Roman in der Nachfolge Walter Scotts, der jungdeutsche Zeitroman, der soziale oder der Dorfroman den Individualroman der 'Wilhelm Meister'-Tradition in Literaturproduktion und kritik längst in den Hintergrund gedrängt haben."

amount of attention that was paid to German literary developments in the nineteenth century from St. Petersburg to San Francisco seems quite remarkable when compared to the relative silence of today. The confusion, indifference, and arbitrariness surrounding the employment of the term *Bildungsroman* is a symptom of these lost connections.

Perhaps, however, it is futile to attempt to discipline usage; the beat goes on, no matter what the likes of us may say. The reader will recall Irving Howe's odd predication of the term *Bildungsroman* to a *ballet*. In the *New York Times* of March 25, 1988, p. C23, a notice of the film of Neil Simon's play *Biloxi Blues* was given the heading "Barracks *Bildungsroman*."

Irony and the Novel: Reflections on the German Bildungsroman

Martin Swales

At one point in Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado* the ruler of Japan shares with the audience his vision of a judicial system in which there would be perfect consonance between punishment and crime.¹ The crimes which he chooses as test cases seem mercifully lightweight-which contrasts engagingly with the ghoulishness of the proposed remedies. One criminal who provokes the Mikado's ire is the bore, and it is decreed that he be condemned to listen to

A series of sermons
By mystical Germans
Who preach from ten till four.

As far as I am aware, W. S. Gilbert is not here pillorying any particular tradition within German theology; rather, he exploits the happy coincidence that Germans rhymes with sermons to draw upon English skepticism about German culture generally and to suggest that the German cast of mind is characterized by prodigious learnedness and longwindedness, by an unrelieved spiritual profundity that transforms anything and everything into a mystical disquisition.

W. S. Gilbert is not alone in his reservations about the German mind. George Henry Lewes, in his pioneering work *Life and Works of Goethe* (1855), at one point defines the German cast of mind by ask-

¹ The present essay was first delivered as an inaugural lecture at University College London 9 February 1978. The College kindly granted permission to publish this revised version.

ing his readers to imagine that a Frenchman, an Englishman, and a German have been commissioned to write a treatise about the camel. The Frenchman, after a brief contemplation of the animal in question, writes a feuilleton in blameless French which, however, adds nothing to the general knowledge of the camel. The Englishman spends two years observing camels and produces a bulky volume full of facts and scrupulous observation but devoid of any overall idea or conceptual framework to hold the dossier together. And the German, despising French frivolity and English empiricism, retires to his study, there "to construct the Idea of a Camel from out of the depths of his Moral Consciousness. And he is still at it."²

Now of course Lewes himself the most persuasive advocate of German culture generally and of Goethe in particular had no intention of damning the German tradition lock, stock, and barrel. But it is interesting that he raises the notion of the appalling learnedness of the German mind in the prefatory paragraphs of his discussion of Goethe's novel *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. In introducing this work, he speaks of the German's fondness for plunging "into the depths." "Of all the horrors known to the German of this school," Lewes continues, "there is no horror like that of the surface it is more terrible to him than cold water."³

I think I had better come clean at the outset and admit that it is my purpose to examine (among other texts) that novel of Goethe's that elicited from Lewes the prefatory apology of the camel parable. Moreover, I shall be looking not at one novel but at several, for I wish to examine that German novel genre the *Bildungsroman* which would seem, alas, to be the perfect corroboration of the Mikado's notion of the German-tradition-as-punishment. The *Bildungsroman*, the novel of personal growth and development, has traditionally been seen as the German counterpart to the realistic novel of England, France, and Russia. My enterprise as is appropriate for a German topic immediately raises a number of theoretical problems. First and most obvious one asks why one needs to bother with literary

² George Henry Lewes, *The Life and Works of Goethe* (London: Dent, 1949), 406.

³ *Ibid.*, 407.

genres at all. Clearly there is no reason why the critic should not establish any conceivable genre for the purposes of comparison and contrast. We could envisage the novel of adultery, of bankruptcy, of aviation, and so on. Such a model of a genre would, I suspect, have no legitimate pretensions to historical status; it would simply be a heuristic tool, a grid that allows the critic to select a number of texts for analytical and comparative purposes. But this notion of the theoreticalor, as I would prefer to call it, taxonomicgenre should not prevent us from realizing that there is also such a thing as the historical genre.

Tzvetan Todorov outlines the vital issues when he points out that the concept of genre or species is one taken from the natural sciences but that "there is a qualitative difference as to the meanings of the term 'genre' or 'specimen' depending on whether they are applied to natural things or the works of the mind."⁴ He continues, "in the former case, the appearance of a new example does not necessarily modify the characteristics of the species . . . the birth of a new tiger does not modify the species in its definition," whereas in art "every work modifies the sum of possible works, each new example alters the species."⁵

It is important to recognize that the literary species or genre is, then, a historically evolving thing and that the mechanism of that evolution is the interlocking of in T. S. Eliot's termstradition and the individual talent. In other words, not all genre constructs are simply foisted on the individual works after the event by eager scholars in quest of a taxonomy. Rather, the historical agency of the genre constitutes, in Hans Robert Jauss's term, that "horizon of expectation"⁶ with reference to which each individual work is made and in the context of which each individual work is received by its contemporaryand subsequentaudience. The work activates these expecta-

⁴ Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (Cleveland and London: P of Case Western Reserve U, 1973), 5.

⁵ Ibid., 55ff.

⁶ Hans Robert Jauss, *Literaturgeschichte als Provokation* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), 177.

tions in order to debate with them, to refashion, to challenge, perhaps even to parody them. Herein resides the element of newness, the individuality which is at one and the same time the modification *and* the transmission of the literary genre.

What, then, is a Bildungsroman? The word was coined in the second decade of the nineteenth century, but some fifty years elapsed before Wilhelm Dilthey's famous discussion of the genre which, as it were, put the term on the map with a vengeance. The capricious history of the term itself should not, however, blind us to the fact that the genre to which it refers existed as a particularly respected and respectable form of novel writing throughout the German nineteenth century. If there is an identifiable *terminus a quo*, it is in my view to be found around 1770 with the publication of the first edition of Wieland's *Agathon* in 1767 and of Friedrich von Blanckenburg's *Versuch über den Roman* (Essay on the Novel) in 1774. Blanckenburg's theoretical work grew out of his enthusiasm for Wieland's novel; for him (as also, incidentally, for Lessing) *Agathon* marked the coming of age of the novel form. Wieland's narrative, in Blanckenburg's eyes, transformed the traditional novel genre by investing it with a new psychological and intellectual seriousness. *Agathon* over and over again engages the reader in debate about novel fictions; in the process it repudiates the romance, which so long-windedly fuses love story and adventure novel, and it repudiates the moral constancy, the interpretative transparency, of traditional novel characters. For Blanckenburg, Wieland's signal achievement resided in his ability to get inside a character, to portray the complex stuff of human potential which, in interaction with the outside world, yields the palpable process of human *Werden*, of growth and change. By this means artistic and human dignity and cohesion was conferred on the sequence of episodic adventures which novel heroes, by tradition, underwent.

The Bildungsroman was born, then, in specific historical circumstances, in a demonstrable interlocking of theory and praxis. It is a novel form recognizably animated by the *Humanitätsideal* of late eighteenth-century Germany in that it is concerned with the whole person unfolding in all his complexity and elusiveness. It is a concern shared by Humboldt, Goethe, Schiller, and many others, and the discursive or theoretical formulations of the idea (and ideal) of *Bildung*

are legion. But it is important to remember that what concerns us here is a genre of the novel, not a theoretical or cultural tract. And the novel makes certain demands in respect of plot and characterization that prevent the concern for *Bildung* from being articulated at a purely conceptual level. Indeed, this is part of the problem. The serious novel may be born with the advent of the Bildungsroman, but there remains a certain bad conscience, as it were. For the novel, it seems, retains that questionable legacy of having to do with events, adventures, episodes all of which militate against human and poetic substance. The need constantly to rehabilitate the novel form is expressed with almost monotonous unanimity by German novel theorists throughout the nineteenth century, and it is nearly always couched in the same terms as a concern for *poetry* within the traditional *prose* of the novel. The danger with the novel is, apparently, that it all too readily backslides into an irredeemably prosaic condition. The paradigmatic statement is to be found in Hegel's *Aesthetics*.

This novelistic quality is born when the knightly existence is again taken seriously, is filled out with real substance. The contingency of outward, actual existence has been transformed into the firm, secure order of bourgeois society and the state. . . . Thereby the chivalrous character of these heroes whose deeds fill recent novels is transformed. They stand as individuals with their subjective goals of love, honor, ambition or with their ideals of improving the world, over against the existing order and prose of reality, which from all sides places obstacles in their path. . . . These struggles are, however, in the modern world nothing but the apprenticeship, the education of the individual at the hands of the given reality. . . . For the conclusion of such an apprenticeship usually amounts to the hero getting the rough spots knocked off him. . . . In the last analysis he usually gets his girl and some kind of job, marries, and becomes a philistine just like all the others.⁷

⁷ Author's translation. See Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, ed. F. Bassenge (Berlin: Aufbau, 1955), 557f. For a discussion of Hegel's aesthetics see Peter Szondi, *Poetik und Geschichtsphilosophie I: Antike und Moderne in der Ästhetik der Goethezeit: Hegels Lehre von der Dichtung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974).

This is a crucial passage. And it is crucial in its all-pervasive ambivalence. On the one hand, Hegel affirms the seriousness of this kind of fiction, it being synonymous with the novel's ability to anchor the time-honored epic pattern in modern bourgeois reality. In this sense Hegel seems to offer his approval of the process by which a somewhat fastidious, idealistic in a word, "poetic" young man is licked into shape by the "prose" of bourgeois society. On the other hand, Hegel also seems to be saying that there is something debased and debasing about this process. That the highest wisdom of the novel and of its latter-day knightly adventurer should reside in the acquisition of wife, family, and job security seems a sorry indeed philistine reduction of the grand model. What is particularly suggestive for our purposes is the extent to which Hegel perceives the novel as hedging its bets in respect of prosaic, bourgeois reality. His comments tell us much about the Bildungsroman in that it is precisely this novel form that is animated by the dialectic of poetry and prose. And the uncertainty is nowhere more urgent, as Hegel himself saw, than with regard to the vexed question of the novel's ending. When Hegel formulates the essential theme of the novel as the conflict "between the poetry of the heart and the resisting prose of circumstances," he sets the seal on virtually all German thinking about the novel for the rest of the century.⁸ And his specter, or, to be more respectful, his *Geist*, can still be clearly felt in Lukács's *Die Theorie des Romans* of 1912.

I have already stressed that the Bildungsroman is a novel form that is concerned with the complex and diffused *Werden*, or growth, of the hero. How, then, is this process intimated narratively; how does it embody the dialectic of "poetry" and "prose"? In its portrayal of the hero's psychology the Bildungsroman operates with a tension between a concern for the sheer complexity of individual potentiality on the one hand and, on the other, a recognition that practical reality—marriage, family, a career—is a necessary dimension of the hero's self-realization, albeit one that by definition implies a limitation, indeed constriction, of the self. The tension is that between the *Nebeneinander* (the "one-alongside-another") of possible selves within the hero and the *Nacheinander* (the "one-after-another") of linear time, of practical

⁸ Hegel, *Ästhetik*, 983.

activity, of story, or personal history. In one sense, then, the Bildungsroman undeniably has something of the rarefied epic of inwardness (the "mystical sermon") that has alienated its English readers in particular. It can tend to dissolve the lived chronology of a life into some providential scenario of symbolic patterns and recurrences. It can at times come perilously close to espousing what J. P. Stern has called "a chimerical freedom as though somehow it were possible *not* to enter the river of experience that flows all one way."⁹ It can be less than strenuous in its recognition of the chain of cause and effect within practical living and of the integrity and moral otherness of those characters with whom the protagonist comes into contact. On occasion we can feel that these characters exist, so to speak, not in their own right but for the educative benefit of the hero: that they are significant insofar as they are underwritten by a potentiality slumbering within him. This is as much as to say that these characters are part of a providential decor whose *raison d'être* is to be found in their relatedness (in a sense that can vary from the literal to the metaphorical) to the hero. But all this is only part of the truth about the Bildungsroman. For what the major novels of the tradition show is not achieved goals, not comfortable solutions, but at best directions, implications, intimations of the possible, which are shown to be no more than that. Moreover, they do not reach the point of dissolving all relationship to plot, to the *Nacheinander* of story. They may seem to promise just such an obliteration of the flow of resistantly linear experience. But they cannot deliver the goods; they do not break faith with the "prose" of the novel form and write an epistemological or aesthetic treatise. In E. M. Forster's words, "Yes, oh dear yes, the novel tells a story,"¹⁰ and the story is made up not simply of beneficent experiences that welcome the "poetry" of the individual's inwardness; hence the tension I have spoken of, a tension which is sustained and narratively enacted and not resolved. The grasping for clarity and losing it, the alternation of certainty of purpose with a sense of being swept along by the sheer randomness of living these are seen

⁹ J. P. Stern, *Idylls and Realities* (London: Methuen, 1971), 132.

¹⁰ E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), 53.

to be the very stuff of human experience and to be such meaning and distinction as men are able to attain, as the Bildungsroman is able to affirm. The novel, then, is written for the sake of the journey and not for the sake of the happy ending which that journey seems to promise.

This, then, is a sketch in necessarily broad strokes of the implications inherent in the Bildungsroman as a historical genre. I want now to comment briefly on six major texts from within that tradition. Specialist readers will, I hope, forgive me if these are but somewhat impressionistic interpretative sketches. I have tried elsewhere¹¹ to provide the detailed argument both on the theory and on the praxis of the genre. I am here concerned with the implications the genre has for an understanding of the European novel as a whole; therefore, the individual text receives less than its due.

Wieland's *Agathon* (1767) operates with a profusion of narrative commentary, which on occasion reaches the proportions of a barrage. Over and over again the narrator reminds us that Agathon is not the usual novel hero; the typical protagonist should be both morally and epistemologically a constant, a known quantity throughout, whereas Agathon changes so frequently that the reader must ask if he will ever know and reliably understand him.

He seemed by turns [nach und nach] a pious idealist, a Platonist, a republican, a hero, a stoic, a voluptuary; and he was none of these things, although he at various times passed through all these phases and always a little of each rubbed off on him. It will probably continue like this for quite some time.¹²

To look back on Agathon's life is to perceive a *Nacheinander*, a chronological sequence. Because the specific circumstances of Agathon's life change, Agathon himself changes. Yet he is always *potentially* the sum total of all these "phases," of all these possible selves and of

¹¹ See my study *The German Bildungsroman from Wieland to Hesse* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1978).

¹² Wieland, *Werke*, ed. Fritz Martini and Hans Werner Seiffert (Munich: Hanser, 1964), 1:760.

many others. In other words, Agathon's true self can only be conceived of as a *Nebeneinander*, as a clustering of manifold possibilities, of which at any given time he can only realize (in both senses of the word) a small proportion. Hence the narrator's irony: in one sense, the significance of the *Nacheinander*, of the plot sequence is relentlessly called into question, but in another sense the hero *does* have a story which is somehow his and nobody else's. And stories need endings. Wieland here has recourse to the fiction of there being an original Greek manuscript on which his account is based. This manuscript ends with a typically novelistic (which is to say, improbable) happy ending, which Wieland both appropriates and undermines. His irony allows him to have his cake and eat it too: to tell a novel and to mount a critique of the expectations inherent in novel convention. Hence the happy ending, that epistemologically simple foreclosure of the process of human growth and self-discovery, is consistently undermined by the narrator's irony.

Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1796) operates with a comparable irony. Wilhelm leaves his bourgeois home and seeks experiences that promise an adequate extension of his personality. He is for some time attracted to the theater, a realm which clearly allows him to widen both actively and imaginatively his experience. But gradually he grows out of this phase of his life and finds himself more and more drawn to the Society of the Tower. The Society of the Tower is made up chiefly of aristocrats, and it is a world devoted to human and human wholeness. In many ways the Society of the Tower would appear to be the goal of Wilhelm's quest, for it seems to reconcile individual limitation and human totality, practical activity and inherent potential, or in Hegel's terms the prose of the practical world and the poetry of the individual heart and imagination. In an appropriately dignified ceremony Wilhelm is admitted to the Society of the Tower; he receives a parchment scroll full of wise sayings, he learns that the boy Felix is indeed his son. Finally the words of graduation are pronounced over him: "Hail to thee, young man. Thy apprenticeship is done."¹³ We know that all the members of the Society of the Tower have contributed the history of their apprenticeships, their

¹³ Goethe, *Werke*, Hamburger Ausgabe, 7:497.

Lehrjahre, to its archive. The title of the novel refers to the hero's apprenticeship, and his very name Meister promises the attainment to mastery. We should, then, by rights have reached the end of the novel. Indeed, our expectations seem to be speedily confirmed, for our hero approaches life with a new mastery and certainty of purpose. He decides that Therese is the appropriate wife for himself and mother for Felix, and he proposes to her. But this action, alas, turns out to be a complete error, from whose consequences he is shielded by pure good fortune. It comes, therefore, as no surprise that our hero feels cheated; so do we, and so, one suspects, did Goethe's contemporary readers, on whose taste for novels of secret societies *Wilhelm Meister* clearly draws, without, as it were, delivering the goods. Goethe, it seems to me, is, like Wieland before him, mounting a critique of traditional novel expectations precisely in order to set up a narrative irony that both validates and calls into question the epistemological assumptions behind such expectations. We note that there is something strangely discursive and wordy about the Society of the Tower (it displays, for example, a somewhat schoolmasterly fondness for wise sayings and maxims). The Society may be dedicated to the concept of human wholeness, but it is not the embodiment of that wholeness. Nor does it confer inalienable possession of wisdom on the aspiring (but struggling) protagonist. The law of linear experience, the *Nacheinander* of plot, continues out beyond the promised goal. So how does the novel end? Like *Agathon* before it, it closes with a happy ending which is undercut by irony as fairy-tale ease and stage-managed providentiality take over.

At one point toward the end of Adalbert Stifter's *Der Nachsommer* (1857, translated as *Indian Summer*) the heroine waits a long time before we discover that his name is Heinrich Drendorf undertakes a world journey.

I went first via Switzerland to Italy; to Venice, Florence, Rome, Naples, Syracuse, Palermo, Malta. From Malta I took a ship to Spain, which I crossed from south to north with many detours. I was in Gibraltar, Granada, Seville, Cordoba, Toledo, Madrid, and many other lesser towns. . . . I had been absent for one and a half

months less than two years. It was again spring when I returned.¹⁴

For the first time in this lengthy novel, experiences are recounted which would commonly be regarded as interesting and exciting. Yet these details are reduced to a mere list, to an empty, cataloging baldness which is never applied to the things and modest activities of the Rose House, the dwelling of Risach, the mentor figure. The description of the world tour exudes an unmistakable inertia. Heinrich tells us, "I had been absent [ich war abwesend gewesen] for one and a half months less than two years," and this explains the deadness of the list. The places visited represent an exile from the centrality of the Rose House, an interlude of inauthenticity, of "being away from being." It is therefore understandable that, after what amounts to a package tour *avant la lettre*, Heinrich returns home with relief. But then he always returns with relief to the Rose House, for it is within that world that everyday objects and modest, recurring human activities can be celebrated with a human (and narrative) affirmation that serves to highlight the emptiness of the world tour. Stifter's art is pitted, therefore, against common expectations of human and narrative interest. It is this which makes *Der Nachsommer* the painstaking yet incandescent litany that it is.

Der Nachsommer is a novel written against history in a dual sense: against social and political history, in that no narrative interest is displayed in the changes and frictions within midnineteenth-century Austrian society; against personal history, against story and plot, in that Heinrich's experiences ultimately all dissolve into a sublime stasis hence the relative unimportance attached to the naming of the hero. In Hegel's terms, Stifter's novel does reconcile the poetry of inward values and the prose of outward, practical activity. It is also the one novel in the Bildungsroman tradition that resolves the tension between *Nebeneinander* and *Nacheinander*. But it can do so only by confining the story to a number of simple, practical activities underwritten by an urgent almost hectoring sense of human and artistic wholeness. The tone is one of sacramental pedantry; the diffi-

¹⁴ Stifter, *Der Nachsommer: Eine Erzählung*, ed. Max Stefl (Augsburg: Adam Kraft, 1954), 811.

culty attending upon the attempt to write an unproblematic Bildungsroman in fact serves to intimate the increasing tension to which the genre is prone, a tension which can be exorcised only by converting the novel into a monolithic litany.

Gottfried Keller's *Der grüne Heinrich* (1880, translated as *Green Henry*) is concerned, like so many of the major Bildungsromane with an artist, or more accurately, with someone of artistic potential. Heinrich Lee tries throughout his early years to replace reality with the alternative world of his imaginative and fictive capacities. In the course of the novel, we see how he succumbs increasingly to that dualism which is so much of his own making. What Heinrich is unable to perceive is that reality even the modest reality of a Swiss peasant community is sustained not just by pragmatic allegiances and practical accommodations but also by an inward, imaginative assent which rounds out the modest facts and experiences into an all-embracing human totality. Because he cuts himself off from such human fulfillment, Heinrich condemns himself to an increasingly lifeless existence. His art suffers too, in that it is either a dissociated fantasy with no enlivening relationship to the objective world or a painstaking copy of physical details with no overall imaginative conception to sustain it. Heinrich returns to Switzerland at the end of the novel, becoming a "somewhat melancholy and monosyllabic civil servant."¹⁵

Keller's novel is grounded in the disjunction within the protagonist's experience of the prose of concrete circumstances on the one hand, and of the poetry of the heart's potential on the other. The narrative perspective is all-important here; the second version of the novel is sustained in the first person throughout. The recollecting voice of Heinrich the narrator is able to document precisely the disjunction I have referred to above and to suggest the alternative (but unrealized) possibility that there need be no such absolute gulf between poetry and prose, between the complex inwardness, the *Nebeneinander* of the inner man and the *Nacheinander* of his actual living in the realm of human society. The tension that is so characteristic of the Bildungsroman becomes here a dualism; moreover, Keller's novel suggests with an urgency rare in the genre the dangers of such

¹⁵ Keller, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Jonas Fränkel (Erlenbach: Rentsch, 1926), 6:308.

unfocused idealism. There is, in this sense, a moral astringency to Keller's debate with the Bildungsroman tradition which so informs his own creation.

Finally, a few brief comments about two twentieth-century Bildungsromane. Thomas Mann's *Der Zauberberg* (1924, *The Magic Mountain*, 1927) chronicles the experiences undergone by a young man in the course of a seven-year stay in a sanatorium. These years, it is suggested, constitute a journey into self-knowledge, a *Bildungsreise*, whose goal, it would seem, is to be found in the chapter entitled "Snow," in which Hans Castorp has a dream vision of the wholeness of man, of a totality which is not only greater than all antinomies but which is also humane, affirmative in its relationship to the living process. No reader can fail to sense the crucial importance of these insights. And yet the goal of Castorp's quest, once glimpsed, once formulated, is forgotten as he stumbles back through the snow to the sanatorium. The vision, the complete perception of human totality, exists outside ordinary time; it can be glimpsed as in a dream; it can be formulated discursively, but it cannot be possessed as an abiding and effective recipe for everyday living. The *Nebeneinander* cannot halt the *Nacheinander* of Castorp's experience; his personal history continues on its wayward path until he is caught up in the events of that other *Nacheinander* to which he has paid such scant attentionworld history. For at the end of the novel, the "problem child of life" (*Sorgenkind des Lebens*) finds himself plunged into the holocaust of the First World War.

The rhythm of Mann's novel in many ways recalls that of *Wilhelm Meister*; the seeming Grails of both novelsthe Society of the Tower, the snow vision, both of which entail a perception of man as a humane totalitydo not come at the end of the novels in which they occur. In both cases the hero emerges on the other side of the goal, feeling not really any the wiser. Both expressions of human totality have in common a certain discursiveness, a limitation to the conceptual postulation of totality, which is relativized by the demands of the hero's ongoing experience. What, then, do we make of Hans Castorp, our mediocremittelmäßigprotagonist? He is, I would suggest, mediocre in the precise sense of *Mittel-maß*, "middle way." He is undistinguished by any dominant characteristic or capacity; he is the

point at which the other characters in the novel, all of them so much better-known quantities than Hans Castorp, intersect. He is, as it were, over-endowed with potentiality. And yet the novel does not allow him to become simply a static cipher for the complexity of man, for he is also a person, an ordinary individual who, like all of us, has to live his (and nobody else's) life.

Thomas Mann's employment of the Bildungsroman tradition in this novel is the measure of his urgent need, under the impact of the 1914-18 war, to review his own and his country's intellectual tradition. A similar critical urgency is, in my view, the source of Hermann Hesse's partly skeptical, partly affectionate employment of the genre in his last novel, *Das Glasperlenspiel* (1943, *The Glass Bead Game*) where the pressure of historical events comes from the turmoil of the 1930s. The novel is narrated by an inhabitant of Castalia, an ivory-tower region dominated by intellect and meditation, who in the first few pages of his account makes derogatory remarks about the bourgeois fondness for biography. Such an interest in the individual and his life story is, he argues, symptomatic of a declining culture. Castalia, on the other hand, is sustained by the principle of suprapersonal service; it has its center of gravity in that model of synchronic universality, the Glass Bead Game, which, in its very abstraction from the specific, the individuated, the particular, creates a scenario for the total play of all human values and experiences. However, the experiences with which the narrator is crucially concerned are those of one man Josef Knecht (the name, meaning, roughly, servant, is, of course, a contrastive echo of Goethe's Meister). Knecht joins the Castalian province and becomes its supreme exponent and servant as Master of the Glass Bead Game. But he then leaves Castalia, because he can no longer accept the abstraction and bloodlessness of the province's values. In its striving for spiritual totality, Castalia is hostile to the ontological dimension that is history. But Knecht, through his encounters with Pater Jacobus, comes to perceive the truth of history to perceive that Castalia itself is, like everything else, a historical phenomenon. At the same time he realizes that he too is a historical phenomenon in the sense that he has a personal history, that he lives, not in timeless abstraction, but in the chronological specificity of choice, of cause and effect. In other words, he learns that he has a story, that his

experiences are inalienably enshrined in the *Nacheinander* of a lived life. All this is faithfully reported by the narrator without his ever modifying that Castalian ideology with which he begins his account and which Knecht's life so manifestly calls into question. It is here that we find in my view the narrative and thematic center of Hesse's text; and the conflict between the *Nebeneinander* (the Castalian striving for universality and totality) and the *Nacheinander* (of Knecht's story) is the measure of the novel's engagement with the Bildungsroman tradition.

The foregoing has been a somewhat rapid review of the theory and practice of the German Bildungsroman from about 1770 to 1943. I want in conclusion to inquire into the implications of this novel tradition for the European novel in general. Let me begin by clarifying one or two issues. In quantitative terms the Bildungsroman is by no means the only kind of novel to come out of Germany in the period with which I am concerned. Nevertheless, it must be said that most German novel writing of distinction does in some form or another partake of this genre. I know it is nowadays fashionable within the curiously neopositivistic enthusiasm for *Rezeptionsgeschichte* (the history of the reception of a work) to say that scholarly inquiry should be concerned not with literary quality but with the demonstrable history of reading habits within a given society. But it seems to me difficult to avoid the issue of literary quality for the simple reason that no amount of *Rezeptionsgeschichte* will alter the feebleness of a novel such as Freytag's *Soll und Haben* (1855) when compared with, say, *Dombey and Son*. Moreover, as a number of critics have shown recently,¹⁶ the 1830s and 1840s in Germany witnessed a consistent but ultimately unavailing attempt to direct the novel away from the Bildungsroman, away from the dominant presence of *Wilhelm Meister* and toward a more socially and historically aware novel (after the manner of Walter Scott). The preeminence of the Bildungsroman can be gauged from

¹⁶ Edward McInnes, "Zwischen *Wilhelm Meister* und *Die Ritter vom Geist*: Zur Auseinandersetzung zwischen Bildungsroman und Sozialroman im 19. Jahrhundert," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift* 43 (1969): 487-514; Hartmut Steinecke, *Romantheorie und Romankritik in Deutschland*, 2 vols. (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1975-76).

the fact that it was not confined simply to serious novels for the adult market. In 1880 there appeared a novel in the German language which must be accounted one of the supreme best-sellers of all time. It has been translated into dozens of foreign languages, it has been filmed and produced in television serializations, and its readership apparently numbers some forty million. If you are still wondering what I am talking about, let me give you the title. It is, of course, *Heidi* by Johanna Spyri. But this, let me hasten to add, is not the correct title of that amazingly successful book; for the first volume of Heidi's adventures is actually entitled *Heidis Lehr- und Wanderjahre*. All of which, I suppose, goes to show that not every novel in German which partakes of the Bildungsroman tradition has to be a sermon by a mystical German who preaches from ten till four.

Let me add a further word in justification of this novel tradition. W. H. Bruford, in a study of the term *Bildung*, has suggested many of the ways in which it speaks of the characteristic limitation of the German middle classes in the nineteenth century;¹⁷ the inwardness of the values esteemed, the fastidious aversion to practical affairs, to politics, the sacramental pursuit of self-cultivation; all these factors bespeak that well-known phenomenon, the *deutsche Misere*, which has been identified as the lack of bourgeois emancipation in nineteenth-century Germany. The specific social and economic circumstances that obtained and their impact on German cultural and intellectual life have been acutely analyzed by a number of distinguished commentators.¹⁸ Moreover, one should add that the nineteenth-century situation is part of a larger legacy which is bound up with the particularism of the Holy Roman Empire, with its tangle of small principalities. The lack of a unified national arena, of a focus, a metropolis where the spiritual issues of the age could find palpable enactment helped to

17 W. H. Bruford, *The German Tradition of Self-Cultivation: 'Bildung' from Humboldt to Thomas Mann* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1975).

18 See for example Hajo Holborn, "Der deutsche Idealismus in sozialgeschichtlicher Beleuchtung," *Historische Zeitschrift* 174 (1952): 359-84; Heinrich Heffter, *Die deutsche Selbstverwaltung im 19. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Koehler, 1950); Leonard Krieger, *The German Idea of Freedom* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1957); Mack Walker, *German Home Towns* (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1971).

produce a situation in which the nation existed as an inwardor, if not inward, then at least cultural and linguisticunit, rather than as a demographic entity. One can register all this as a shortcoming, as something that in linguistic terms militated against there being an energetic language of public (and journalistic) debate. But the lack produced as its corollary a certain gain, a language that could explore inward and elusive experience with an assuredness and differentiation rare in other European languages. Such a language, usually associated with religious or mystical experience, became a potent contribution to the autobiographical and biographical narrative form with the advent of the complex phenomenon of secularization in the second half of the eighteenth century. The pietist, confessional mode is that inward quest for the soul's vindication which so often entails an awareness of sinfulness as a precondition of spiritual distinction. Such concerns (at once thematic and linguistic), in their secularized form, clearly gave the Bildungsroman part of its characteristic impetus. Now all this may be, to English observers, an inauspicious climate for the emergence of the modern novel in Germany. The dangerous historical consequences of the German reverence for inwardness are indicated in Bruford's book and have been underpinned in a recent article by R. Hinton Thomas,¹⁹ in which it is shown that the notion of *Bildung* with its central concept of the organic personality could be, and was, transferred into the sphere of social and political debate in Germany, and became part of the stock vocabulary of German conservatism on which Nazism was later to draw. These are pertinent insights. But neither Bruford nor Thomas are concerned in any thoroughgoing way with the Bildungsroman, which is after all, a vital part of the tradition they explore. And I want to insist that the Bildungsroman is precisely a voice from within the German intellectual tradition which can command our assent and respect because it does not offer unequivocal certainties, unreflected values, but embodies the difficulties of those aspirations which, in their theoretical and discursive formulation, can prove so forbidding for English readers. In other words, if we want to look for a critique of *Bildung*, the Bildungsroman is an obvious and

19 R. Hinton Thomas, "The Uses of 'Bildung,'" *German Life and Letters* 30 (1977): 177-86.

eloquent starting point. Moreover, it seems to me that many of the features of the Bildungsroman that allowed it in the past to be relegated to the periphery of the European novel tradition with the familiar sigh of relief that it was yet another example of the pathology of the German mind are now part of our experience of the twentieth century novel. I have in mind the self-consciousness of the Bildungsroman, its discursiveness and self-reflectivity, its narrative obliqueness, its concern for the elusiveness of selfhood, its dialectical critique of the role of plot in the novel—all these things are not merely German (that is, provincial) excesses; they are the staple diet of the modern novelist's unease in respect of the form he has inherited. All of this makes it very tempting to engage in some polemical historicism and to suggest that the Bildungsroman, precisely because it articulates the unease of a society not easily at home in the bourgeois age, speaks particularly forcefully to our age, when that unease is so very apparent.

We are, I suspect, all familiar with the argument that the novel expresses the contradictions of bourgeois society, that it has its roots in, to quote Raymond Williams's phrase, the "creative disturbance" generated by the norms of that society.²⁰ Or to put the matter another way, the modern novel (and we must remember that, in terms of simple chronology, the Bildungsroman tradition in Germany coincides with the rise of the novel as a European phenomenon) is born under the astrological sign of irony. Ernst Behler has shown that irony as we know it came into being as the expression of a decisive change in sensibility which occurred in the late eighteenth century.²¹ He argues that up until this time irony was a stable rhetorical device (by which a speaker intimated the opposite of what he was saying). But with Friedrich Schlegel irony became enriched by the complex dimension of an author's relationship to his own creation. It was for this kind of irony that Schlegel praised *Wilhelm Meister* (at the same time wondering if Goethe would understand what he meant). And he was referring to irony as a structural principle, irony which issues in a kind

20 Raymond Williams, *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence* (St. Albans: Paladin, 1974), 70.

21 Ernst Behler, *Klassische Ironie, romantische Ironie, tragische Ironie* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1972).

of self-reflectivity in the novel. If the ground of that irony is the dialectic of the creative, inward potential of man on the one hand and on the other the necessary *donnée* of finite, palpable experience, then we can see that such irony is the articulation of vital issues inherent not only in the novel form but also in aesthetics, in philosophy, in history. This is perhaps why Hegel, in his comments on the novel, was so ambivalent precisely about the ironic constellation which he was expounding, why, when he incorporated references to a novel into his *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, they were to Diderot's *Le Neveu de Rameau*. For in this work Hegel perceived the situation of a mind unwilling to serve the values of society but unsure of its own integrity, seeking to realize itself in the complex modalities of its estrangement from the objective world. Lionel Trilling has superbly shown how Diderot's novel and Hegel's gloss on it are central to any understanding of the issues of selfhood, sincerity, authenticity in their (and our) time.²² In the novel's oscillation between potentiality and actuality and it was that oscillation which Hegel saw as constitutive of *Bildung* it enacts the deepest spiritual issues of its age. Moreover, we would do well to remember that Hegel was not alone in his admiration of *Le Neveu de Rameau*. It claimed both the interest and the active engagement of the translation process from none other than Goethe himself. This would, at the very least, suggest the improbability that Goethe's own *Wilhelm Meister* is an unproblematic pilgrimage toward human wholeness and fulfillment. But perhaps it might be felt that all this talk about irony is becoming rather heavyweight, not to say teutonically mystical. For Hegel, of course, every aspect of human experience was reducible to that ironic field of force in which mind and facts, idea and actuality intersect.

Let me then turn to less heady versions of the argument about irony and the novel. It has been shown, most cogently by Ian Watt, that the breakthrough in sensibility that makes the novel possible in the eighteenth century has to do with a perception of the *specific* nature of experience, with the individuality and particularity of the

²² Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (London: Oxford UP, 1974), 43ff.

vital criteria which determine significance and truthfulness.²³ In other words, in respect of narrative forms, the eighteenth century witnesses the breakdown of a stable, public rhetoric in favor of a private language in which the narrator appeals to the reader's own experience as epistemological authority. Wolfgang Kayser²⁴ and others have argued that the birth of the modern novel is linked to the emergence of an overtly *personal* narrator. In theoretical terms, this entails a repudiation of the romance in favor of some more truthful (that is, unstable and personal) mode of narrative discourse. Let me take an example from Ian Watt's discussion of *Moll Flanders*. Watt points out the irony which results from a discrepancy between the experiences narrated and the kinds of values which the successful Moll, as recollecting narrator, espouses. He then goes on to ask how far this irony is, as it were, an articulated situation, or how far it is largely unreflected in the sense that the irony is there for us, the readers, but not for the characters. He concludes that the latter is the case, that *Moll Flanders* "is undoubtedly an ironic object, but it is not a work of irony."²⁵ With this assessment I would agree. And I want to borrow Watt's categories and to risk a somewhat large generalization. If much English novel writing is, as would commonly be argued, realistic in spirit—that is, sustained by the imaginative concern to recreate and thereby to understand society, its pressures, its economic and moral sanctions, its institutions and norms—then it is a fiction that operates with what J. P. Stern has called the "epistemological naivety"²⁶ of realism. The social context is taken as given—it is so much the *donnée* of the novelist's art that it is not the subject of epistemological scrutiny. Now of course, in documenting the clash between individual values and social norms, between personal aspirations and the actuality of society, the realistic novel does not emerge with stable, reassuring assessments of the way its characters live, move, and have their being.

²³ Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968).

²⁴ Wolfgang Kayser, *Entstehung und Krise des modernen Romans* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1955).

²⁵ *The Rise of the Novel*, 135.

²⁶ J. P. Stern, *On Realism* (London: Routledge & Paul, 1973), 54.

Indeed, it is one of the hallmarks of the realistic novel as we know it that it reveals the jostling norms of the social and moral situation which it so persuasively evokes. But the realistic novel is concerned to reflect the jostling rather than to reflect on the norms themselves. The result is the novel as "ironic object." And this I take to be as true of Defoe as it is of Balzac or Dickens. But I want to suggest that the Bildungsroman, although it may display a whole number of naivetés, does not suffer from *epistemological* naiveté. It is highly self-aware in respect of the interplay of values which it so unremittingly explores and articulates within the hero's experience. Hence, its irony is qualitatively different; it is irony as structural principle; it is the novel whose self-awareness generates the "work of irony" (in Watt's sense).

Here we arrive at the central objection to the German novel tradition: its lack of realism. There are two points I wish to make in answer to this charge. First, it seems to me a falsity to assume that the novel has to be wedded to the tenets of literary realism in order to be truly a novel. A number of recent studies of the novel have shown that the genre can appropriately be a self-conscious form in which referentiality of import is anything but the be-all and end-all.²⁷ Moreover, it has been suggested that the realistic novel is but one, historically circumscribed, possibility within a much more durable and continuous tradition. Second, I want to insist that the concerns of the German Bildungsroman are recognizably part of the overall situation of the nineteenth-century European novel. The conflict between individual aspirations and the resistant presence of practical limitations is as much a theme within, say, the Victorian novel as it is within the Bildungsroman. But with a difference. Within the framework of literary realism, this conflict finds palpable, outward enactment, and human growth and development is plotted on a graph of moral understanding; whereas in the German novel tradition, the tension between *Nebeneinander* and *Nacheinander* is essentially a debate about the co-

²⁷ Robert Alter, *Partial Magic: the Novel as a Self-Conscious Genre* (Berkeley and London: U of California P, 1975); Gerhart von Graevenitz, *Die Setzung des Subjekts: Untersuchungen zur Romantheorie* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1973); Wolfgang Iser, *Der implizite Leser* (Munich: Fink, 1972), and *Der Akt des Lesens* (Munich: Fink, 1976); Roland Barthes, *S/Z* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1970).

ordinates of human cognition, and the issues raised are epistemological rather than moral, are embedded in the narrator's (and reader's) capacity for reflectivity. If the German Bildungsroman is a legitimate voice within the European novel as bourgeois epic, then it has something to tell even English readers about the inherent potentialities of the novel form. Moreover, we should not forget that English novel theory changes in the second half of the nineteenth century, moving away from the unambiguous commitment to realism towards a greater concern for what Arnold called "the application of ideas to life." Stang²⁸ and Graham²⁹ have both highlighted the emergence in the 1880s of the so-called novel of ideas or philosophical romance. If the English novel theory of the 1750s (in the famous remarks of Dr. Johnson and Fielding) had repudiated the romance, by the 1880s the wheel had come full circle. And, as Elinor Shaffer has recently shown,³⁰ a novel such as George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* (1876) is vitally informed by a complex indebtedness to Goethe, to *Wilhelm Meister*; to the particular tradition of higher (that is, mythological) criticism in Germany; and thereby the strenuous moral concern of the English novel tradition interlocks with a mythopoeic consciousness, with a density of spiritual and cultural reflectivity which sustains and is sustained by the lives which that novel chronicles.

I hope I have said enough to suggest that the Bildungsroman should no longer be dismissed as a narrowly German exercise in the novel mode. For it is, in my view, a narrative genre that raises problems to do with character and selfhood in the novel, to do with plot, to do with the relationship between narrator and reader which can enrich our understanding of the possibilities of the novel form. Above all else, it can differentiate our awareness of how the novel can convey

28 Richard Stang, *The Theory of the Novel in England: 1850-1870* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959).

29 Kenneth Graham, *English Criticism of the Novel: 1865-1900* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965).

30 Elinor S. Shaffer, "*Kubla Khan*" and "*The Fall of Jerusalem*": *The Mythological School in Biblical Criticism and Secular Literature 1770-1880* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1975), 226ff.

and explore the life of the mind, for the Bildungsroman is not simply an allegorical scenario of philosophical positions and values. No other novel form is so engaged creatively by the play of values and ideas; yet at the same time, no other novel form is so tough in its refusal to hypostatize consciousness, thinking, insight as a be-all and end-all. (Hence that insistent presence of the *Nacheinander* on which I have laid such emphasis.) No other novel has been so fascinated by the creative inner potential in man hence its fondness for artists or cryptoartists as protagonists yet no other novel has seen the artistic sensibility as one involving a whole set of epistemological problems that are not susceptible of easy, practical solutions.

Now of course, this concern for the life of the mind is not confined only to the novel in German literature. English readers have often felt that German culture generally is heavily philosophical (shades of the Mikado's objections!). There is much truth to this but it can also gravely mislead. And I want to insist that German literature is philosophical not in the sense that it has a philosophical scheme which it wants to impose but rather in that it asks after the place of philosophizing, of reflectivity, in living. Ultimately its finest products always suggest that consciousness and being are inextricably intertwined; that consciousness is not a realm serenely encapsulated from the stresses and strains of living.

The Novel and the Individual: The Significance of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* in the Debate about the Bildungsroman

Hartmut Steinecke

If one were to list the most important texts in the history of the novel of the nineteenth century, one work would clearly stand out as the one most frequently mentioned and discussed: *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*.¹ This novel is pivotal in the development of the genre in Germany. This fact was seen from the very beginning in critical discussions; dozens of monographs and hundreds of articles deal with the development and meaning of the type of novel that uses Goethe's work as model and for which, for some time now, the term Bildungsroman has been customary.² *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* was

1 This essay appeared in the original German in Hartmut Steinecke, *Romanpoetik von Goethe bis Thomas Mann: Entwicklungen und Probleme der "demokratischen Kunstform" in Deutschland* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1987), 5375. The English version has been slightly revised and adapted for this volume. Ed.

2 See the state of research summary by Lothar Köhn, *Entwicklungs- und Bildungsroman*. (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1969); Jürgen Jacobs, *Wilhelm Meister und seine Brüder: Untersuchungen zum deutschen Bildungsroman* (Munich: Fink, 1972); Walter H. Bruford, *The German Tradition of Self-Cultivation. 'Bildung' from Humboldt to Thomas Mann* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1975); Martin Swales,

(footnote continued on next page)

considered virtually the German equivalent of the social novel as "the medium through which a characteristically German preoccupation can speak with greatest urgency to a wider European public," as Martin Swales wrote in his work *The German Bildungsroman from Wieland to Hesse*.³ This view is found not only among professional critics. Thomas Mann also repeatedly emphasized that there was only one "typically German" type of novel, that of the autobiographical, confessional Bildungsroman that has as its model *Wilhelm Meister* and which represents the single most significant "contribution of Germany to the European art of storytelling" of the nineteenth century.⁴ After critical works on the Bildungsroman had swollen for decades in an almost inflationary manner, voices have been heard since the 1960s that express doubt as to how appropriate this concept of the genre might be and how much insight it provides into the literary-historical context of that genre. These objections came precisely from those who worked most intensively with German novels of the nineteenth century. Thus, Friedrich Sengle wrote in an analysis of the Biedermeier period in 1972 that there were strictly speaking in this period scarcely any works that one could call Bildungsromane. The whole genre had been so covered in the course of time by "a literary-historical mythology that he of course expected to find little agreement for his skeptical opinion."⁵ But others were coming to similar conclusions. Jeffrey L. Sammons in an essay of 1981 extended the search for the Bildungsroman to the entire nineteenth century and in so doing likewise came to a result approaching the discovery that the emperor has no clothes: he found besides *Wilhelm Meister* only "maybe two and a half

(footnote continued from previous page)

The German Bildungsroman from Wieland to Hesse (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1978); Michael Beddow: *The Fiction of Humanity: Studies in the Bildungsroman from Wieland to Thomas Mann* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982); Rolf Selbmann, *Der deutsche Bildungsroman* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1984).

³ Princeton: Princeton UP, 1978, 160.

⁴ Thomas Mann, *Gesammelte Werke*, 13 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1974). See 11:702f., and 10:360 ("Die Kunst des Romans").

⁵ *Biedermeierzeit: Deutsche Literatur im Spannungsfeld zwischen Restauration und Revolution 1815/1848*, 3 vols. (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1971/80). Here see 2:906.

other examples," so that he even speaks of a "phantom genre."⁶ Sammons comes to the provocative conclusion that this genre which has been exposed as a phantom should be removed from its prominent role in the history of the German novel of the nineteenth century.

Discussion on this question, as controversial as it seems, turns fruitlessly in a hermeneutic circle: the definition is derived from works on which one then tests the appropriateness of the term. Going back to the prototype, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, likewise brings no solution, since several scholars in recent years have even doubted that the designation Bildungsroman strikes the mark even with this work.⁷

In dealing with this controversy, we will attempt to avoid literary historical mythology and will deal first with the historical reception of the term. In this the word *Bildung* plays a role, but the greater context of the discussion on Goethe's work in the nineteenth century will be at the focus of our discussion, because more important from our standpoint than the controversy about the technical term is the fact stated at the outset that *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* was the most important work for the development of the genre in Germany in the

6 "The Mystery of the Missing Bildungsroman, or: What Happened to Wilhelm Meister's Legacy?" *Genre* 14 (1981): 229-46. See Sammons's later article on a similar topic in this volume. Ed.

7 In this discussion foreign literary scholars were mostly in favor of keeping the term (some of the most recent examples being Ivar Sagmo, *Bildungsroman und Geschichtsphilosophie: Eine Studie zu Goethes Roman 'Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre'* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1982), 21ff.; Martin Swales, "Utopie und Bildungsroman," in *Utopieforschung: Interdisziplinäre Studien zur neuzeitlichen Utopie*, ed. Wilhelm Voßkamp (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1982), vol. 3, 218-26; Ehrhard Bahr, 'Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre' als Bildungsroman," Nachwort der Reclam-Ausgabe (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1982), 643-60; German literary scholars do, however, increasingly voice reservations. See for example Rolf-Peter Janz, "Zum sozialen Gehalt der 'Lehrjahre,'" in *Literaturwissenschaft und Geschichtsphilosophie: Festschrift für Wilhelm Emrich*, ed. Helmut Arntzen et al. (Berlin, New York: de Gruyter, 1975, 320-340; Stefan Blessin, "Die radikal-liberale Konzeption von Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahren" in *Die Romane Goethes* (Königstein: Athenäum, 1979), 115-8; Wilhelm Voßkamp, "Utopie und Utopiekritik in Goethes Romanen 'Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre' und 'Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre.'" in *Utopieforschung*, ed. Voßkamp, 227-49. Concerning this discussion see Selbmann, 63ff.

nineteenth century and was the model for a large number of novels. For these novels I will use for the time being the neutral term "novels in the *Wilhelm Meister* tradition" before the possibility of other designations is discussed.

Even those who have become allergic to the frequent and often undifferentiated use of the concept *Bildung* will not be able to deny that Goethe's novel primarily depicts a course of education. The controversial nature of the interpretation revolves around the question as to what extent the goal of *Bildung* is reached. "Wilhelm Meister's Theatrical Mission," the first, provisional title of the work, marks the first stage of his path toward *Bildung*, and to justify himself Wilhelm writes his unimaginative friend Werner a letter in which he defends his "personal" education as an actor with the goal of becoming a "public person"; in his view this is the only opportunity for a middle-class citizen to compensate for the privileges of birth of the aristocrat. In this connection Wilhelm, in another letter to his friend Werner, formulates his goal in life in a way which many critics view as motto and intention of the novel.

Let me put it quite succinctly: even as a youth I had the vague desire and intention to develop myself fully, myself as I am.

I have an irresistible desire to attain the harmonious development of my personality such as was denied me by my birth."⁸

Still it is noteworthy that this path of Wilhelm's, which has to do with his training as an actor, turns out only slightly later to be an error.

The further education of Wilhelm, partially directed by the Society of the Tower and partially through accident, leads finally to his being

⁸ The English quotation is taken here from vol. 9 of *Goethe's Collected Works* (New York: Suhrkamp, 1989), *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, 17475. The original, from Book Five, Chapter III, reads, "Daß ich Dir's mit *einem* Worte sage: mich selbst, ganz wie ich da bin, auszubilden, das war dunkel von Jugend auf mein Wunsch und meine Absicht. . . . Ich habe nun einmal gerade zu jener harmonischen Ausbildung meiner Natur, die mir meine Geburt versagt, eine unwiderstehliche Neigung." *Goethes Werke*, Hamburger Ausgabe, 11th ed. (Munich: Beck, 1982), 7:29091.

given the Certificate of Apprenticeship (*Lehrbrief*). Its formulations are also frequently cited as evidence to support the thesis of his successful education. But here too it is to be noted that Wilhelm sees this pedagogical instruction as somewhat overdone and comments on it in an annoyed and ironic way. Besides this, the last book of the novel questions the "harmonic" ending of the previous one, so that the conclusion of the novel is hardly unambiguous.

So we see the following: Goethe himself in *Wilhelm Meister* has built in warnings about our taking the book to be a description of a successful formation of one's personality; the "irony that hovers over the entire work" (Friedrich Schlegel)⁹ does not permit taking individual pedagogical insights and maxims out of context and making them the basis for our interpretation. Nonetheless, it is of course quite possible to integrate these contradictions in the concept of *Bildung*; for after all, Wilhelm learns that going astray is part of one's education.

The controversial interpretations of the role played by *Bildung* in Goethe's novel began with its first readers.¹⁰ Schiller set forth his interpretation in a letter of 8 July 1796; he wrote that Wilhelm was stepping "from an empty, an indefinite ideal into a prescribed active life but without losing his idealism in the process."¹¹ Christian Gottfried Körner went even further when in a letter to Schiller of 5 November 1796 he praised Wilhelm's development as the "portrayal of a beautiful human character that is formed gradually through the

9 Schlegel, "Über Goethes Meister," in *Charakteristiken und Kritiken I (1796/1801)*. *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*, ed. Ernst Behler (Paderborn, 1958ff) 2:12646. Quotation on page 137.

10 See concerning subsequent statements the well-researched works of Klaus Friedrich Gille, *"Wilhelm Meister" im Urteil der Zeitgenossen: Ein Beitrag zur Wirkungsgeschichte Goethes* (Assen: van Gorkum, 1971), and Karl Robert Mandelkow, *Goethe in Deutschland: Rezeptionsgeschichte eines Klassikers*. (Munich: Beck, 1980). Vol. 1: 1773/1918.

11 Schiller to Goethe 8 July 1796. Friedrich Schiller, *Nationalausgabe*. Begründet von Julius Petersen (Weimar, 1943ff.), 28:254. Wilhelm trete "von einem leeren und unbestimmten Ideal in ein bestimmtes thätiges Leben, aber ohne die idealisierende Kraft dabey einzubüßen."

confluence of its inner aptitudes, talents, and by external events. The goal of this education is a perfect equilibrium."¹² Wilhelm von Humboldt contradicted this optimistic interpretation and saw the role of the hero in a more differentiated, more problematic way. In his view Meister's character possessed "complete malleability, but almost devoid of any real goal"; the great merit of the novel was that "it described the world and life just as it is, completely independent of a single individual, and precisely because of this, open for any individuality."¹³ Schiller was partially convinced by this argumentation and in a letter to Goethe of 28 November 1796 formulated a position that made a compromise between the extremes.

Wilhelm Meister is, to be sure, the most necessary but not the most important person; that is one of the peculiarities of your novel that it doesn't have such a most important person and doesn't need one. *To him* and *around him* everything happens but not really *because* of him. . . .¹⁴

If one doesn't look too narrowly at the concept of *Bildung* as is the case with much of the older research one can recognize in these earliest documents about Goethe's novel a fact that is extremely important for the poetics of the genre: these statements frequently not only have to do with the work itself but also generalize about the

¹² Körner to Schiller, 5 November 1796. Nationalausgabe 36, I, 370. Körner referred to the "Darstellung einer schönen menschlichen Natur, die sich durch die Zusammenwirkung ihrer innern Anlagen und äußern Verhältnisse allmählich ausbildet. Das Ziel dieser Ausbildung ist ein vollendetes Gleichgewicht."

¹³ Humboldt to Goethe 24 November 1796. *Briefe an Goethe, Gesamtausgabe in Regestform*, ed. Karl-Heinz Hahn (Weimar: Böhlau, 1981), vol. 2: 1796/1798, 146: ". . . durchgängige Bestimmbarkeit, ohne fast alle wirkliche Bestimmung . . ."; and "das 'hohe Verdienst' des Romans liege eben darin 'daß er die Welt u. das Leben ganz wie es ist, völlig unabhängig von einer einzelnen Individualität u. eben dadurch offen für jede Individualität' schildere."

¹⁴ Schiller to Goethe, 28 November 1796, NA 29, 16: "Wilhelm Meister ist zwar die nothwendigste aber nicht die wichtigste Person; eben das gehört zu den Eigenthümlichkeiten Ihres Romans, daß er keine solche wichtigste Person hat und braucht. *An ihm* und *um ihn* geschieht alles, aber nicht eigentlich *sein* wegen "

genre. That is particularly true of Schiller. He has a very high opinion of *Wilhelm Meister* as a work of art; many of his letters of the years 1794-97 show but for that reason his criticisms assume added significance. Schiller emphasizes that the "form of *Meister*, as indeed every form of the novel . . . is not poetic" and that it is "complete only in the realm of reason," that it is "subject to all the demands of reason," and that it shares "all its limitations." And thus *Wilhelm Meister*, with all its undoubted literary qualities, lacks "a certain poetic boldness"; it is characterized by a "strange oscillation between a prosaic and poetic mood."¹⁵

Novalis, in his fragmentary remarks on Goethe's novel, agrees in some points with this criticism and sharpens Schiller's more cautious objections. That is true above all with regard to the criticism that the book is "unpoetic." For Novalis, *Wilhelm Meister* is too rational, too "oekonomisch" [preoccupied with financial matters, ed.], and it treats "merely of ordinary *human* things" and is only "a poeticized bourgeois, domestic story."¹⁶ These reproaches apply not only to Goethe's work but also to the "modern" novel in general which Novalis here sees realized. And thus he created in his own novel, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (published posthumously in 1802), a kind of "*anti-Meister*." In his remarks on the novel he suggests an alternative concept of the genre in the framework of Romanticism: the novel should bear the stamp of the poetic, the myth, fairy tale, the marvelous.

Although Friedrich Schlegel's ideas about the novel coincide in many respects with those of Novalis, his conclusions go distinctly in

¹⁵ Schiller to Goethe, 20 October 1797, NA 29, 149: Schiller stresses that "die Form des Meisters wie überhaupt jede Romanform . . . schlechterdings nicht poetisch [sei]"; "ganz nur im Gebiete des Verstandes [liege]"; "unter allen seinen Forderungen [stehe]" "[und auch] von allen seinen Grenzen [partizipiere]." "[So fehle es dem *Wilhelm Meister* bei allen hohen literarischen Qualitäten im einzelnen] an einer gewissen poetischen Kühnheit"; "[charakteristisch sei ein] sonderbares Schwanken zwischen einer prosaischen und poetischen Stimmung."

¹⁶ "Eine poetisirte bürgerliche und häusliche Geschichte." Novalis, *Schriften*, ed. Richard Samuel, 2d ed. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1968), vol. 3, *Das philosophische Werk II*, 638ff.

another direction. In a review of *Wilhelm Meister* of 1798, the first significant published reaction to the work, he emphasizes the role of *Bildung* in Goethe's novel and views it in many respects virtually as the realization of the Romantic ideal of the genre. As congenial as this review may appear to a later observer, it plays only an insignificant role for the judgment of the work by contemporaries. From the perspective of the nineteenth century the significance of the essay resides as indeed almost the entire early Romantic *Meister* criticism in the fact that Goethe's novel is understood and proclaimed with great emphasis as "timely" and "modern."¹⁷ In the prosaic present, poetry for Schlegel is only possible as a transcendental form in which the conditions for its possible [poetic] existence are also reflected in the work; the concept of a "poetry of poetry" [Poesie der Poesie] is at the very heart of the famous theory of "Progressive Universal Poetry," and its outstanding example in contemporary literature is Goethe's *Meister*. Even Schlegel's later negative remarks about this novel reflect a growing skepticism regarding the capacity of the genre "to elevate to poetry a prosaic portrayal of the real present world."¹⁸ In the first phase of the reception of *Wilhelm Meister* a period characterized by texts of a high theoretical level emerges *one* common finding: Goethe's novel is considered the model of the genre, of its potential, but also and above all of its limitations.

This line of reception and of the interpretations of Goethe's novel is continued throughout the nineteenth century. Particularly those interested primarily in aesthetic questions discuss the basic criticisms of Schiller and the early Romantics against *Meister*, which, in effect, are directed against the genre itself. The collective judgment is somewhat negative, even though Goethe's novel is generally conceded to be the best solution of an insoluble dilemma.

A number of well-known aestheticians and writers of poetics follow this interpretative line. I shall briefly discuss only the most significant

¹⁷ Mandelkow, *Goethe in Deutschland*, 50; and on the following, see 52ff.

¹⁸ F. Schlegel, *Geschichte der alten und neuen Literatur*, KA 6, 274: "eine prosaische Darstellung der wirklichen Gegenwart zur Poesie zu erheben."

one, Hegel. In his *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik (Lectures on Aesthetics)*¹⁹ he distinguishes the original poetic condition of the world which brought forth the epic from the drab modern world which has become prose. The novel as a prose genre is for him the proper and adequate expression of modern bourgeois society. Since the novel, as earlier the epic, is to portray a "totality" and since this totality can be found in our time only in the individual, "the individual event" provides "the center for the whole" in the novel (15:393).

For Hegel the novel thus has the task, on the one hand, of "bringing the prose of real life into its descriptions" and on the other, of avoiding being confined to the "prosaic and everyday." It must "reconquer for poetry, insofar as this is possible, its lost right." "One of the most ordinary and most appropriate collisions to be depicted in the novel is therefore the conflict between the poetry of the heart and the opposing prose of existing conditions as well as the accident of outer circumstances" (15, 393).²⁰ The individual therefore struggles against current reality with all its rules: "these struggles, however, are in the modern world nothing more than the years of apprenticeship (*Lehrjahre*), the education of the individual through present reality, and they receive through this their true meaning."²¹ The terminology, above all the word *Lehrjahre*, makes it clear to what extent Hegel's concept of the genre is based on *Wilhelm Meister*.

This conflict between the individual and reality can be solved when "the fictional characters, who at first struggle against the ordinary world order, learn to recognize the genuine and substantial in it, and

19 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, in *Werke in 20 Bänden*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970). See especially vols. 1315. The lectures were written 181829.

20 "Eine der gewöhnlichsten und für den Roman passendsten Kollisionen ist deshalb der Konflikt zwischen der Poesie des Herzens und der entgegenstehenden Prosa der Verhältnisse sowie dem Zufalle äußerer Umstände" (*Werke*, 15:393). Quoted in the original German article by Steinecke, 59.

21 "Diese Kämpfe nun aber sind in der modernen Welt nichts Weiteres als die Lehrjahre, die Erziehung des Individuums an der vorhandenen Wirklichkeit, und erhalten dadurch ihren wahren Sinn," (14:220). Quoted by Steinecke, 59.

who become reconciled to it and can act effectively in it."²² That is reminiscent of Goethe, but there is irony in the *Lectures on Aesthetics*. It is more a capitulation of the individual before reality, because the "end of such years of apprenticeship" consists in Hegel's view in the fact

that he accommodates himself and his wishes and opinions to existing conditions and the reasonableness of them, that he enters into the linkages of the world and gains for himself an appropriate position in it (14:220).²³

The contrast between the ideals of *Bildung* intended by Goethe, the mastery to which the apprenticeship is to lead as opposed to this picture of middle-class philistinism, is unmistakable. At the same time one can see in this statement Hegel's skepticism about the feasibility of a reconciliation of the individual with reality and thus his skepticism toward the novel as poetic form.

In spite of these reservations Hegel's remarks were taken up immediately by his pupils and were applied directly to literature. Karl Rosenkranz was the first who, under Hegel's influence, in 1827 argued that "*Bildung* was the real object of the novel in general."²⁴ He considered it self-evident that "*Bildung*," as in the case of Goethe, "always must have to do with one subject"; the character development of the "interesting subject" was "the life of the novel."²⁵ Rosenkranz regarded the genre astonishingly positively, indeed pragmatically; he

22 " . . . die der gewöhnlichen Weltordnung zunächst widerstrebenden Charaktere das Echte und Substantielle in ihr Anerkennen lernen, mit ihren Verhältnissen sich aussöhnen und wirksam in dieselben eintreten" (15:393). Quoted by Steinecke, 59.

23 " . . . daß sich das Subjekt die Hörner abläuft, mit seinem Wünschen und Meinen sich in die bestehenden Verhältnisse und die Vernünftigkeit derselben hineinbildet, in die Verkettung der Welt eintritt und in ihr sich einen angemessenen Standpunkt erwirbt" (14:220). Cited by Steinecke, 60.

24 "Einleitung über den Roman," in *Aesthetische und Poetische Mittheilungen* (Magdeburg: Heinrichshofen, 1827), 3.

25 Ibid., "Einleitung," 3, 14, 15.

himself attempted to write a novel modeled on *Wilhelm Meister*. This shows clearly that Hegel's philosophical reservations about this genre were shared less and less, even by Hegel's pupils. In popular discussion the objections of aestheticians retreated even more. Goethe's exalted reputation among Classicistic critics caused his novel to be praised with fewer and fewer reservations as the very model and proof of the high potential of the genre.

To trace this development I will cite two examples from the period around 1820. I have purposely chosen them from very different areas.

Of all the articles on the novel probably the one exercising the greatest influence in the period was the article in the *Brockhaus Conversations-Lexicon*, which first appeared in 1817 and which remained essentially unchanged for decades. It defines the novel as poetry of reason and of reality, as the appropriate artistic expression in a prosaic epoch:

[The]. . . life and fate of an *individual* from his birth to his completed *Bildung*, from which, however, the entire tree of humanity, in all its manifold branches in the beautiful time of its maturity and perfection, can be deduced the apprenticeship of the disciple until he is raised to a master, that is the novel.²⁶

It doesn't require an explanation to make clear which type of novel is seen here as the ideal novel of the prosaic age and which work comes closest to this ideal. Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* proves, in the view of the writer, that it was given precisely to the Germans to bring the novel to its zenith because

in this so idealistically organized Germany with the beautiful and peculiar sensitivity of its inhabitants for the pure education of the individual, without other degrading and limiting considerations, this

26 "Individuelle Bildungsgeschichte derselben, Leben und Schicksale eines *Einzelnen* von seiner Geburt bis zu seiner vollendeten Bildung, an und mit welchem aber der ganze Baum der Menschheit nach seinen mannichfaltigen Verzweigungen in der schönen Stillstandszeit seiner Reife und Vollendung, deducirt wird, Lehrjahre des Jüengers, bis er zum Meister erhoben ist, das ist der Roman," 399. Cited by Steinecke, 6061.

spirit of the time arose in its most beautiful blossoming.²⁷

This is, so far as I know, the most important early example for the connection of this type of novel with characteristics which one felt to be peculiarities of the German character.

As a second example standing for a multiplicity of popular aesthetics and school poetics are the works of the Dorpat professor of aesthetics, Karl Morgenstern.²⁸ In the center of his deliberations is likewise to be found the contrast of ancient and modern times and the idea that the epic treats the fates of nations while the novel "only has to do with the fate of an individual or with several individuals who interact with him." Since external action in this prosaic age is forbidden, his inner development moves into the focus of interest; thus the novel, according to Morgenstern, shows primarily "people who influence the hero and the surroundings that influence him and the gradual formation of his mind and emotions."²⁹ The task of the novel is therefore "to lead us into the interior of human souls and to reveal their presentiments, their goals, their struggles, defeats, and victories."³⁰ From this finding Morgenstern is led "to the concept of the *Bildungsroman*, which is the noblest form of the novel and the form that best captures its nature" (61). He defines it as a novel which

represents the hero's *Bildung* in its beginning and progress up to a certain stage of perfection. . . . The goal of the writer of such a novel will be to portray in a pleasant, beautiful, and entertaining way the

27 "In dem so idealisch organisirten Deutschlande mit der schönen wirklich eigenthümlichen Empfänglichkeit seiner Bewohner für reine Ausbildung des Menschen an sich, ohne andre entehrende und beschränkende Rücksichten, sey dieser Geist der Zeit in seiner schönsten Blüthe aufgegangen" 403. Cited by Steinecke, 61.

28 See on related matters Martini's article in this volume. Ed.

29 Karl Morgenstern, "Ueber das Wesen des *Bildungsromans*," *Inländisches Museum* I (1820), Heft 2, 4661; Heft 3, 1327. See here 5860.

30 "uns in das Innere menschlicher Seelen zu führen, und daselbst ihre Ahnungen, Bestrebungen, Kämpfe, Niederlagen und Siege uns zu offenbaren" 51. Quoted by Steinecke, 61.

education of an superbly talented person. . . . 31

It hardly needs mentioning to which model the author is referring.

As the work of the most general, inclusive portrayal of human *Bildung*, however, *Wilhelm Meister's Lehrjahre* by *Goethe*, is the most radiant, a work doubly appealing to us Germans because here . . . the poet gave us, in the hero and in the backdrop and in the surroundings, German life, the German way of thinking and customs in our time. . . . 32

If one summarizes the articles on the novel in the time around 1820, the following picture emerges: among all the differing views of *Wilhelm Meister*, there prevails general agreement that the German novel was fixated philosophically and sociologically on *Wilhelm Meister* and on the task of showing developments and problems of an individual in the real, prosaic world. People were in agreement that Goethe had succeeded admirably in achieving precisely this in his *Meister*. Critics who think it possible that the novel, in spite of its prose form, can be poetic, therefore recognize in *Wilhelm Meister* the most perfect embodiment of the genre. On the other hand, those who do not believe in the realization of this goal must reject *Meister*. Goethe's novel is even for these skeptics the work that comes closest to the goal, and yet this novel, with all its extraordinary qualities, shows all the more clearly the necessity of failure. The conviction that the novel has to do with the inner life of the individual is to be found frequently; the

31 "des Helden Bildung in ihrem Anfang und Fortgang bis zu einer gewissen Stufe der Vollendung darstellt. . . . An sich gefallende, schöne und unterhaltende Darstellung der Bildungsgeschichte eines ausgezeichnete Bildungsfähigen wird sein objectiver, im Kunstwerke überall sich aussprechender Zweck des Dichters eines solchen Romans seyn . . ."13. Quoted by Steinecke, 6162.

32 "Als Werk von der allgemeinsten, umfassendsten Tendenz schönmenschlicher Bildung aber erscheinen im mildesten Glanze *Wilhelm Meister's Lehrjahre* von *Goethe*, doppelt uns Deutsche ansprechend, weil hier . . . der Dichter in dem Helden und der Scene und Umgebung uns deutsches Leben, deutsche Denkart und Sitten unsrer Zeit gab . . ." 15f. Quoted by Steinecke, 62.

concept of *Bildung* plays, to be sure, a certain role in the definition of the genre, but the term Bildungsroman coined by Morgenstern is not taken up by his contemporaries.

Starting in the 1820s, but especially in the period after the July revolution, the interpretation of *Wilhelm Meister* that concentrated on the "inner life" and the *Bildung* of the individual diminished in importance. A countermodel was developed first in the historical novel as popularized by Sir Walter Scott and his imitators. The new appreciation of history led to an more positive reevaluation of reality and of the practical world. On the other hand, occupation with individuals, their thought and emotions, the development of their personality, played a lesser role. In many ways, therefore, the hero of the type of Scott's *Waverley* is a direct antipode to that of *Wilhelm Meister*.

After 1830 the contrasts became even more distinct, as the *Zeitroman* (the epochal novel) and the social novel developed from the historical novel. The individual qualities of the hero retreated even more noticeably in these subgenres, and the society of which he is a part and which conditions and formed him received an ever greater emphasis. In the western European countries this development occurred rapidly, because it could attach to older traditions and reflected contemporary social conditions.

In Germany these novels were also the rage, were much discussed and imitated. But theoreticians, like the novelists, were confronted with two problems: first, the new types of the novel differ in several essential points from the model of the genre which had been derived from *Wilhelm Meister* and which just now was becoming the leading type of novel; second, lagging political and economic conditions in Germany proved to be a severe barrier precisely to the development of the types of novels that dealt directly with the realities caused by these backward conditions. For since this malaise was not only the object but also the *condition* of novel writing in this period, in the view of many contemporary writers the genre in Germany had to develop along different lines than in other Western countries.

The designation of the Bildungsroman as the prototype of specifically German development received as early as the 1820s occasionally a new, by no means nationalistic, rather a regretful or reproachful sound. Goethe had already felt this; he complained that German

conditions had compelled him in *Wilhelm Meister* to deal with the "most miserable material that can be imagined."³³

Ludwig Börne ironically confirms Goethe's judgment, saying that the latter had written in his *Wilhelm Meister* a "typically German" novel: unfree, narrow, and narrow-minded just like Germany itself; and the hero too, a "lax Wilhelm," given to tears, passive, running after ideals, playing theater instead of exerting himself in a practical way, provided a true picture of the German man.³⁴ The *Jungdeutschen* [Young Germans] Heinrich Laube, Theodor Mundt, and Ferdinand Gustav Kühne a few years later picked up this criticism and expressed it even more pointedly. Kühne, for example, emphasizes that Goethe's turn to the individual and to his private problems occurred with a conscious neglect of the individual's relationship to public life. At the end of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* "the boy was hardly perfected, not to speak of the man. . . . In order to become a man, a government is necessary, but Goethe didn't know about the idea of a state, he had no idea of how to describe a public civic life, no courage to speak openly of it and to admit that this element was lacking."³⁵

Since the German novel had largely followed the Goethean tradition, in Kühne's view the concentration on the private, the interior, the psyche and its development had become even stronger in the following decade. The German novel represented "preferentially and best the well-intentioned, philistine idyll of domesticity" and the "quiet islands of family happiness."³⁶

33 " . . . den allerelendsten Stoff." Quoted by Steinecke, *Romanpoetik von Goethe bis Thomas Mann* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1987), 25.

34 Börne, *Sämtliche Schriften*, ed. Inge Rippmann and Peter Rippmann, 5 vols. (Düsseldorf & Darmstadt: Melzer, 1964/68), 2:396.

35 " . . . kaum der Jüngling, geschweige der Mann fertig. . . . Um aber Mann zu werden, dazu gehört ein Staat, den Staat kannte aber Goethe gar nicht, hatte keinen Sinn, ein öffentliches Staatsleben zu schildern, keinen Muth, offen davon zu sprechen und das fehlende Element einzugestehen." In *Literarischer Zodiacus: Journal für Zeit und Leben, Wissenschaft und Kunst* (November, 1835). Cited by Steinecke, 64.

36 " . . . am liebsten und am besten die philisterhaft gutmüthige Idylle der

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Documents of this kind, in which the contemporary social novel is compared in vigorous images with the outmoded interior novel of the *Wilhelm Meister* type, can be found throughout these decades; more characteristic, in fact definitive for an understanding of the time, however, was another tendency: to interpret the Bildungsroman in such a way that it also became the ancestor of the new developments in the genre. Hence, from the 1830s on the emphasis in the interpretation of *Wilhelm Meister* shifts: we no longer see so much of the interior life of the individual, the course of his *Bildung* and a goal of this *Bildung* as the central focus, but the world as his *antagonist*. In short, the work is increasingly read and understood as a social novel.

This shift in accent can be seen in the arguments of Mundt and in the novelistic practice of Immermann. Mundt wrote in 1833 that Goethe had with his *Meister* "so to speak created a *German standard novel*" (136f.); with this work he had raised the "development of an individual" before the background of a broad portrayal of the period to the "standard theme" of the German novel.³⁷

But he warns against treating the fate of an individual as something more important than the portrayal of the "breadth of the world." He turns the charges of Novalis that *Wilhelm Meister* was too prosaic, too mercenary, and too bourgeois in a positive direction. Precisely the fact that the novel occupied the center of the "prose of bourgeois life" reveals, in his opinion, the greatness of the work; this striving for an "ideal prose of reality" must be the goal of every *modern novel*.³⁸

In the novelistic *Wilhelm Meister* tradition the same attitude can be observed most distinctly in Immermann's novel *Die Epigonen* (The Epigones, 1836). Immermann, a passionate adherent of Goethe, repeatedly emphasized the extent to which Goethe's novel had served as a model for the conception and writing of his own novel. The rela-

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Häuslichkeit." *Literarischer Zodiacus*, 480. Cited by Steinecke, 64.

³⁷ Theodor Mundt, *Kritische Wälder. Blätter zur Beurtheilung der Literatur, Kunst und Wissenschaft unserer Zeit*, (Leipzig: Melzer, 1833), 136f., 180, 187. Cited by Steinecke, 64f.

³⁸ Mundt, *Die Kunst der deutschen Prosa. Aesthetisch, literar-geschichtlich, gesellschaftlich* (Berlin: Veit & Comp., 1837), 359. Cited by Steinecke, 65.

relationship of the two novels is indeed so clear that scarcely any critic failed to point it out: *Die Epigonen* shows the life and fate of an individual hero, his development on the way through the reality of his present Hermann, its protagonist, is a new Wilhelm.

Even the title of the novel signals, however, that even the general tendencies of the novel have a special meaning and that Hermann is representative of his generation. Even his quite personal fate, his mysterious origin, proves to be representative of the social contradictions of the time, through the tension between the two great historic powers, aristocracy and middle class. In his work there is much reflection about the relationship of the individual to history; it is precisely as a mirror of his time that the individual takes on significance; "never have individuals been more significant than precisely in our days; even the least important one senses the significance of great world events on his innermost being." Today "everyone has taken on historical significance"; only with this understanding could one "write history in family stories."³⁹

The representative character of the hero brings with it a diminution of the psychological element and thereby a certain colorlessness. Hermann has a passive role as one who only reacts; his function of linking various social strata by his travels and his struggles takes precedence over any interest in his emotions and personal development; a "maturing" to a "personality" is found only partially in this work; in fact, there is a lack of a precisely described *Bildung* toward which Hermann could develop. Wilhelm hasas Mundt puts it "the uplifting prospect of some day becoming a *master*⁴⁰ either in art or, better, in life. The epigone Hermann is far worse off."⁴¹

39 "Nie sind die Individuen bedeutender gewesen, als gerade in unsern Tagen, auch der Letzte fühlt das Flußbette seines Innern von großen Einflüssen gespeist. . . . Jeder Mensch ist eine historische Natur geworden . . ." Karl Immermann, *Werke in 5 Bänden*, ed. Benno von Wiese et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 1977), 2:5089. Quoted by Steinecke, 66.

40 Pun on Meister. Ed.

41 " . . . die erhebende Aussicht, einmal *Meister*, entweder in der Kunst, oder, was noch besser, im Leben zu werden. Weit übler ist der Epigone Hermann daran." In "Immermann und das Jahrhundert der Epigonen" (1836), 286. Quoted by

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New developments of the time and of society sharpened in other ways understanding of elements of the Goethean novel that earlier interpreters had hardly noticed. For example, in addition to the new attention to the subjective development of the hero, the interest in the portrayal and criticism of society became ever stronger. Shortly after Goethe's death Varnhagen von Ense first pointed to the "socialistic" elements of *Wilhelm Meister*, and Karl Rosenkranz and Ferdinand Gregorovius (*Goethe's Wilhelm Meister in seinen socialistischen Elementen entwickelt* [Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* Developed in its Socialistic Elements], 1849) pursued this interpretation farther. The "true socialist" Karl Grün in 1846 even came to the daring conclusion that Wilhelm Meister was a communist. These interpretations were made easier by the fact that the critics not infrequently took *Wilhelm Meister's Travels*⁴² into consideration in their interpretation or read *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* in the light of the *Wanderjahre*. Only in a period when one had become more attuned to social problems did one notice, for example, in the continuation (in book 8, chapter 5) of the letter of apprenticeship of the Society of the Tower which earlier had often been read as a kind of summary of an individualistic program of *Bildung* doctrines that also described the social responsibility of the individual and his relationship to society in a "socialist" manner (the concept understood in the sense of *Vormärz*, that is, of the period previous to the March revolution of 1848 in Germany), as for example in the formulation:

All men make up mankind and all forces together make up the world. . . . All this. . . . lies in the human spirit, waiting to be developed, and not just in one of us, but in all of us.⁴³

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Steinecke, 66.

⁴² See Ehrhard Bahr's essay in this volume on the *Wanderjahre*. See also James Hardin's introduction to *Wilhelm Meister's Travels* in the translation by Thomas Carlyle of the first version of that work (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1991). Ed.

⁴³ *Goethe's Works* in the Suhrkamp edition (New York, 1989), 9:338. "Nur alle Menschen machen die Menschheit aus, nur alle Kräfte zusammengenommen die

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Why these constant references to Goethe's novel even in works which obviously didn't have much to do with the tradition of the Morgenstern-Hegelian inner-directed Bildungsroman? Probably for some novelists and critics the authority of Goethe and of *Wilhelm Meister* in particular, to which they gladly subscribed, played a more important role than the traditional connections and parallels individually. But one series of connections is of a substantive nature: numerous social novels of the *Vormärz* can be seen with some justification to be related to important aspects of Goethe's work that have little or nothing to do with the Bildungsroman.

The changes after the failed revolution of 1848 shifted the critical focus on the novel. The social novel gained in importance and became for decades, even in Germany, the dominant genre. This term described less and less the novel that attempts to portray society in its whole social diversity; the portrayal rather concentrated more and more on a single stratum of society, the bourgeoisie. The disagreement between the novelists Karl Gutzkow and Gustav Freytag is symptomatic of this development. Gutzkow attempted with his nine-volume novel *Die Ritter vom Geiste* (literally, The Knights of the Spirit, 1850/51) in the *Vormärz* tradition to write a work that had as its object the entire spectrum of society. Freytag, on the other hand, concentrated in his *Soll und Haben* (*Debit and Credit*, 1855) consistently on a portrayal of the middle class. Here only one of the many aspects of this differing emphasis can be discussed: the relationship to *Wilhelm Meister*. Both works attempted to be a *Wilhelm Meister* for modern times and circumstances. For Gutzkow these circumstances lay in the political and social realm. He had, he emphasized, "so to speak wanted to write a political *Wilhelm Meister*."⁴⁴ This led him to a structural form stressing simultaneity. For Freytag the emphasis lay on the bourgeoisie, and of the two basic elements of the middle class possessions and *Bildung* he emphasized the former almost exclusively. And what Novalis had reproached *Wilhelm Meister* for is

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Welt. . . . alles . . . liegt im Menschen, und muß ausgebildet werden; aber nicht in einem, sondern in vielen." Hamburg edition of Goethe's *Werke*, 7:552.

⁴⁴ Gutzkow to Levin Schücking in a letter of 5 August 1850. Quoted in Schücking, *Lebenserinnerungen* (Breslau: Schottländer, 1886), 2:55.

true of his hero, Anton Wohlfahrt, in an extreme way: the central significance of the financial element, which completely dominates his education. Since after the middle of the century the middle class placed increasing trust in its own development, Freytag consistently and onesidedly emphasized the harmonizing aspects of the *Wilhelm Meister* model: the process of *Bildung* has reached its zenith when Anton has become the owner of the factory. The overpowering success of this novel, compared with that of Gutzkow, but also with that of the other competing models, indicates the path that the genre would follow in coming decades in Germany. Critics who helped form public opinion approved and welcomed this path.

After the middle of the century signs of a new interpretation of the Goethean model of the novel emerge. There is a gradual return to the interpretation of Morgenstern-Hegel with the two closely related focal points of *Bildung* and of the interior of the individual. The ideals of *Bildung* of the classic epoch are reduced in this period virtually to values of the middle class.

The "interior" of the individual moved in the 1850s into the center of the definition of the novel first of all in the philosophical works on aesthetics. Arthur Schopenhauer emphasized that the novelist did not describe great events but "with the least possible use of outer events was to set inner life into the strongest motion."⁴⁵ Schopenhauer thus intends largely to eschew the outer totality, the shaping of world and society, deeds and events; he steers the genre toward the inner life of the individual, toward the private sphere. For him it is decidedly true that "The more *inner* life and the less *outer* life a *novel* portrays the more noble and elevated it will be."⁴⁶ Similarly the aesthetician Moriz Carriere in his work *Das Wesen und die Formen der Poesie* (The Essence and the Forms of Poetry, 1854) sees the realm of the novel in "emotional development in private life."⁴⁷ In his opinion the

45 " . . . mit dem möglichst geringsten Aufwand von äußerem Leben das innere in die stärkste Bewegung bringen]." Cited by Steinecke, 69.

46 "Ein *Roman* wird desto höherer und edlerer Art seyn, je mehr *inneres* und je weniger *äußeres* Leben er darstellt." Quoted by Steinecke, 69.

47 " . . . dem *Roman* die Entfaltung des Gemüths im Privatleben als sein Gebiet."

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"circles of private existence" and "the realm of the heart" form the most important objects of the genre.⁴⁸ Rudolph Gottschall similarly takes the point of view in his literary history of 1855 [*Die deutsche Nationalliteratur in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Breslau] and in his *Poetik* of 1858 that the novel is to portray "inner developments," the "dialectic of feelings." The "secrets of spiritual life"; the "content" of the most important "modern novels" is "the inner '*Bildung*' of the individual."⁴⁹

These differing views are summarized, codified, and given some depth in Friedrich Theodor Vischer's *Ästhetik* of 1857. Closely following Hegel's definition of the novel, he develops the idea that the genre has the task of remaining poetic in a prosaic world, and that means seeking a replacement for the lost poetic world. Vischer too finds it primarily in the inner life of the individual, for "somehow, what Schiller had said of *Wilhelm Meister*" was true of every hero of the novel. The hero goes through his education via "the school of experience."

The struggles of spirit, of conscience, the deep crises of conviction, of Weltanschauung, which the significant individual goes through, combined with the struggles of emotional life: these are the conflicts, these are the battles of the novel. But naturally they are not merely inner conflicts, they grow out of experience, and the basic conflict is always that of the inexperienced heart which steps into the world with its ideals. . . .⁵⁰

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Cited by Steinecke, 69.

⁴⁸ Cited by Steinecke, 69.

⁴⁹ Gottschall, *Poetik: Die Dichtkunst und ihre Technik. Vom Standpunkte der Neuzeit* (Breslau: Eduard Trewendt, 1858), 379, 384.

⁵⁰ "Die Kämpfe des Geistes, des Gewissens, die tiefen Krisen der Ueberzeugung, der Weltanschauung, die das bedeutende Individuum durchläuft, vereinigt mit den Kämpfen des Gefühlslebens: dieß sind die Conflictte, dieß die Schlachten des Romans. Doch natürlich sind dieß nicht bloß innere Conflictte, sie erwachsen aus der Erfahrung und der Grundconflict ist immer der des erfahrungslosen Herzens, das mit seinen Idealen in die Welt tritt. . . ." *Ästhetik oder Wissenschaft des Schönen*, (Stuttgart: Carl Mäcken, 1857) Part 3, Heft 5, 1308f. Quoted by Steinecke, 70.

Goethe's work is for Vischer not only the model of the "inner" novel but also remains authoritative for the formation of the hero: the hero is passive, "the rather dependent, only 'processing' focus," and love constitutes "a main element in the maturing of his personality."⁵¹

Vischer emphasizes that the middle-class novel of this period represents "the actual normal species" of the genre, because "it leads us into the middle stratum of society."⁵² Of course, in the view of the aesthetician the burgher is also an individual. Therefore, Vischer can view the historical and the social novel only as a secondary form; the main form and thus the actual novel looks different:

The hearth of the family is the true center of the universe in the novel, and it takes on its significance only when emotions are united around it, emotions that provide a counterpoint to the hard truth of life.⁵³

In his *Ästhetik* Vischer takes up again the old interpretation of *Wilhelm Meister* as a Bildungsroman and declares in a programmatic way that its characteristics are peculiarities of the genre in general. It is certainly no accident that he and this has not been noted in any of the works that deal with the history of this term also "rediscovered," so to speak, the term Bildungsroman (very probably without knowing Morgenstern). As early as 1839 he defines the Bildungsroman, in a review of Eduard Mörike's novel *Maler Nolten* (The Painter Nolten, 1832), as "the story of the education of a person through life, through love namely; a psychological novel,"⁵⁴ but it is significant that this second use of the term, like the first, found no resonance. To be sure,

⁵¹ Ibid., 1308. Cited by Steinecke, 70.

⁵² Ibid., 1313f. Cited by Steinecke, 70.

⁵³ "Der Heerd der Familie ist der wahre Mittelpunkt des Weltbildes im Roman und er gewinnt seine Bedeutung erst, wo Gemüther sich um ihn vereinigen, welche die harte Wahrheit des Lebens mit zarteren Saiten einer erweiterten geistigen Welt wiedertönen." Ibid., 1314. Cited by Steinecke, 70.

⁵⁴ "Eduard Mörike, Maler Nolten," in *Kritische Gänge, Aesthetik oder Wissenschaft des Schönen*, Tl. 3, Heft 5, 2:7. Cited by Steinecke, 7071.

there was a growing number of aestheticians who took up the fight for the "internalized Bildungsroman"; and to be sure there appeared beginning with Adalbert Stifter's *Der Nachsommer* (*Indian Summer*, 1857) and with the novels of Wilhelm Raabe works that could have served to demonstrate the significance of this type of novel; but from the standpoint of the genre as a whole and of the development of literature, these tendencies for the time being played only a secondary role.

It is also true a decade later, when for the third time in the nineteenth century it was attempted to introduce the term Bildungsroman for the designation of the type of novel oriented on *Wilhelm Meister*. In 1870 Wilhelm Dilthey wrote in his work *Das Leben Schleiermachers*,

I would like to call the novels which make up the school of Wilhelm Meister . . . "Bildungsromane." Goethe's work shows human cultivation (Ausbildung) in various stages, forms, stages of life.⁵⁵

Although this definition generally is seen as the *locus classicus* of research on the Bildungsroman, there was obviously even at that late date no inclination of literary criticism to use the term and thereby to agree to this narrowing of *Wilhelm Meister* interpretation and of the type of novel modeled on it. Only after the turn of the century did the term Bildungsroman emerge more and more frequently in discussion and gradually become widespread. In 1906 Dilthey developed in his book *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung* (*Experience and Poetry*) his earlier statement in more detail and made more precise what he understood by this kind of novel. The Bildungsroman shows how a youth

steps into life, seeks related souls, experiences friendship and love, now struggles with the hard realities of the world, and thus made more mature by these manifold life-experiences, finds himself and

⁵⁵ "Ich möchte die Romane, welche die Schule des Wilhelm Meister ausmachen . . . Bildungsromane nennen. Goethes Werk zeigt menschliche Ausbildung in verschiedenen Stufen, Gestalten, Lebensepochen." Dilthey, *Das Leben Schleiermachers*, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 13:1, ed. Martin Redeker (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970), 299. *Das Leben Schleiermachers* was originally published in 1870.

becomes aware of his task in the world. The task of Goethe was the story of a person who is educating himself for action. . . . These Bildungsromane thus express the individualism of a culture limited to the private sphere. . . . The dissonances and conflicts of life appear as necessary transitional stages of the individual on his path to maturity and to harmony. The 'greatest happiness of earthly children' is the 'personality' as a united and firm form of human existence. Never has this optimism regarding personal development . . . been expressed more cheerfully and optimistically than in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*. . . . 56

If one regards the history of the reception of *Wilhelm Meister* in the discussion of the novel of the nineteenth century, the characteristic nature of the statements of Dilthey and also their historical significance can be more precisely determined.

Dilthey is, of course, a very sensitive interpreter but he is also an idealistic literary scholar of the bourgeois epoch. And so he takes at face value and that seems to me the key to his *Meister* interpretation Wilhelm's statement that he sought the "harmonic development" of his nature not only as the program of the novel but also as the goal which he reaches at the end of the work. It should be noted that Dilthey, in order to prove his point, takes the quotation out of context and at the same time adds another quotation to his definition; "greatest happiness of earthly children is the personality" is a phrase not found in Goethe's novel but in a poem, in the *West-östliche Divan*.

56 "in das Leben eintritt, nach verwandten Seelen sucht, der Freundschaft begegnet und der Liebe, wie er nun aber mit den harten Realitäten der Welt in Kampf gerät und so unter mannigfachen Lebenserfahrungen heranreift, sich selber findet und seiner Aufgabe in der Welt gewiß wird. Die Aufgabe Goethes war die Geschichte eines sich zur Tätigkeit bildenden Menschen. . . . So sprechen diese Bildungsromane den Individualismus einer Kultur aus, die auf die Interessensphäre des Privatlebens eingeschränkt ist. . . . Die Dissonanzen und Konflikte des Lebens erscheinen als die notwendigen Durchgangspunkte des Individuums auf seiner Bahn zur Reife und zur Harmonie. Und 'höchstes Glück der Erdenkinder' ist die 'Persönlichkeit', als einheitliche und feste Form des menschlichen Daseins. Nie ist dieser Optimismus der persönlichen Entwicklung . . . heiterer und lebenssicherer ausgesprochen worden als in Goethes *Wilhelm Meister*. . . ." Dilthey, *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung* 14th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965), 272f. Quoted by Steinecke, 7172.

One could say, in short, that Dilthey read *Wilhelm Meister* from the vantage point of Schiller and Körner. Whether he understands it the way Goethe did is questionable. He ignores the ironic tone of the book and one-sidedly emphasizes the novel's pedagogical aspect, its harmonic, optimistic side, its tendency to internalize the action and to stress the personal. This interpretation found broad acceptance; with the publication of his essay the view that *Wilhelm Meister* was a Bildungsroman in the sense that it portrays the harmonic cultivation of the individual began its victory march.

This revival of the classical concept of *Bildung* as understood by Schiller and Goethe was of the greatest importance for the field of German studies [Germanistik] that was developing rapidly in the Wilhelminian period. Dilthey's interpretation emphasizing the harmonic and the private aspects of the novel prevailed in the rapidly growing scholarship on Goethe and in literary histories for quite a long time. In surveying the theoretical-literary discussion about Goethe's novel in the nineteenth century, one could describe the situation this way: with Dilthey begins the narrowing of the view of *Wilhelm Meister* to a very specialized type of novel, namely, the Bildungsroman.

In addition to this fixation on one aspect of the novel, a second element entered into the interpretations that is not to be found in Dilthey but which is all too much a part of the spirit of the time in which he wrote: the naively patriotic pride which viewed the novel as "typically German" and that celebrated the Bildungsroman as the sort of novel particularly well-suited for Germans. This idea was promulgated enthusiastically by the more nationalistically inclined Germanists, but the quotations cited at the beginning of this essay show that even significant and sensitive interpreters shared this way of viewing the book, people such as Thomas Mann, who, like a large number of patriotic gymnasial teachers of the Wilhelminian period, praised the "typically German" element in *Wilhelm Meister* and in the Bildungsroman.

These interpretations were not new: both the emphasis on *Bildung* and on the "typically German" had been present long before. But the narrowing on these two concepts is new. And this meant that the novel subgenre which one traces to Goethe was itself robbed of essen-

tial aspects. The critics of the novel of the nineteenth century and likewise the great novelists (Immermann, Keller, Raabe, and to a certain extent even Stifter), who, as recent research has determined correctly, did not write *Bildungsromane* in the sense implied by Dilthey saw an abundance of characteristics that were lost because of this narrowing: social problems, financial questions, literary expression of ideas of the then-developing liberalism, emphasis on possible conflicts between ego and world, between *Bildungsutopie* and social utopia. Only the most recent *Wilhelm Meister* research has again emphasized these aspects: they are therefore, as an analysis of the reception could seem to show, not arbitrary interpretations of these critics, but rather they clearly have their basis in Goethe's novel itself.

To summarize: novels written in the tradition of *Wilhelm Meister* were an extremely important factor in the history of the German nineteenth-century novel. The term *Bildungsroman* is, however, too narrow to include the abundance of forces that influenced both the poetics of the genre and also numerous novels of the century. One could, of course, disengage the concept from the narrow definition of the Dilthey school and define it more broadly, so that it also, in a dialectical way, would include its opposite the impossibility of *Bildung* and its parody. But the term then would become far too general. In addition, it has been used so much that it is an ideologically loaded word, and assigning a new meaning to it would be difficult indeed.

I have previously suggested for the novel of the *Wilhelm Meister* tradition the term "Individualroman" (individual-novel). Since the reaction of scholars to this suggestion has been rather positive, I would now like to give more precise reasons for using it. The term has the advantage that it is not intellectually laden with interpretations from the past, and that it emphasizes the characteristic of this type of novel generally agreed to be determinant: the role of the individual. Above all, the concept of the individual-novel does not emphasize from the outset as does the term *Bildungsromane* contrast to the social novel. For in the center of this type of novel is to be found the portrayal of the individual, of his development, of the person as an individual. But that does not imply a restriction to the private sphere, to the inner life of the individual, his psyche, where the epoch and

society play only the role of background and foil (as in the artist's novel, in the psychological novel, or in the Bildungsroman, if one views it as narrowly as Dilthey and those of his school). Rather, the social role of the individual and his confrontation with society assumes considerable significance. In this sense description and criticism of society and of reality becomes an essential element even of the individual-novel. It shows what possibilities the society of a period offers the individual for the unfolding of his or her unique personality, or rather which limitations it may place on such development. Precisely since the individual cannot mature in a state of quietude to a harmonically cultivated personality but is exposed to the pressures of society and is tossed around by it, indeed may be deformed by it, the individual-novel broadens its scope and becomes a social novel.

The social novel can also, because of its aim to show the social life of all strata, replace the individual hero by a multiplicity of heroes of equal stature and concentrate on a multiplicity of more or less simultaneous events. But it can also illuminate the problems of society through individuals who do not only function as representatives of views and opinions, representatives of groups, that is to say, types, but who can also stimulate the reader's interest as individuals.

And thus, in summary, the type of the individual-novel that was dominant in Germany in the nineteenth century is by no means opposed to the social novel as interpretations under the rubric of a narrowly understood Bildungsroman have frequently suggested. The difference between the German and the western European novel is, to be sure, recognizable, but this genre in Germany if one regards it broadly and without allowing one's view to be clouded by literary mythology by no means took its own unique path.

The controversy about terms and terminology was taken up here only because it has played such an important role in the previous history of research. More important, however, are the characterizations and definitions connected with it. This essay has shown how quite a few aspects of the genre were seen, described, and analyzed in the discussions of critics and aestheticians of the nineteenth century. Since Goethe's novel includes such an abundance of characteristics considered significant in the history of the Bildungsroman, it stimulated novel poetics in a way unlike any other individual-novel of the nine-

teenth century; as an "individual-novel" it proved to be extremely important not only for the development of the Bildungsroman, but also for that of the social novel in Germany.

Translated from the German by James Hardin

The Apprenticeship of the Reader: The Bildungsroman of the "Age of Goethe"

Dennis F. Mahoney

When dealing with the novels of German Classicism and Romanticism, sooner or later one must consider the question whether the term Bildungsroman is useful for understanding and interpreting these works.¹ That the term has a long history no one can deny; as Fritz Martini has shown, Karl Morgenstern had begun to use the word Bildungsroman as early as 1810 to describe the novels not only of Goethe and the Romantics, but specifically those of his friend Friedrich Maximilian Klinger.² Above all, however, it was Wilhelm Dilthey who brought the term into general usage. In the Hölderlin essay in his book *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung* (1906), Dilthey provided the definition that largely determined the direction future scholars were to follow:

Hyperion is one of the *Bildungsromane* that reflect the interest in inner culture that Rousseau had inspired in Germany. Among the novels that have established their lasting literary value since Goethe and Jean Paul are

1 This essay is an expanded version of theses first published in my "Hölderlins *Hyperion* und der Bildungsroman: Zur Umbildung eines Begriffs," in *Verlorene Klassik? Ein Symposium*, ed. Wolfgang Wittkowski (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1986), 224-32, and later developed in my book *Der Roman der Goethezeit (1774-1829)*, Sammlung Metzler: Realien zur Literatur No. 241 (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1988). My thanks go to the publishers at Niemeyer and Metzler Verlag for permission to incorporate this material into my arguments here.

2 See Martini's essay in this volume, which takes up Klinger as the author of presumed Bildungsromane.

Tieck's *Sternbald*, Novalis's *Ofterdingen*, and Hölderlin's *Hyperion*. Beginning with *Wilhelm Meister* and *Hesperus* [a novel by Jean Paul published in 1795], they all portray a young man of their time: how he enters life in a happy state of naiveté seeking kindred souls, finds friendship and love, how he comes into conflict with the hard realities of the world, how he grows to maturity through diverse life-experiences, finds himself, and attains certainty about his purpose in the world. Goethe's goal was the story of a person preparing himself for an active life; the theme of the two Romantic writers was the poet; Hölderlin's hero was a heroic person striving to change the world but finding himself in the end thrust back upon his own thought and poetry.³

Dilthey, the founder of *Geistesgeschichte* (the German forerunner of intellectual history), was concerned about anchoring his definition within a European context and in a specific historical time frame.⁴ Very quickly within Wilhelminian Germany, however, the Bildungsroman came to be viewed as a timeless and specifically German achievement that could only have been created by the folk of "Dichter

³ Wilhelm Dilthey, *Poetry and Experience*, in *Selected Works*, ed. Rudolf A. Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1985), 5:335. "Der Hyperion gehört zu den Bildungsromanen, die unter dem Einfluß Rousseaus in Deutschland aus der Richtung unseres damaligen Geistes auf innere Kultur hervorgegangen sind. Unter ihnen haben nach Goethe und Jean Paul der Sternbald Tiecks, der Ofterdingen von Novalis und Hölderlins Hyperion eine dauernde Geltung behauptet. Von dem Wilhelm Meister und dem Hesperus ab stellen sie alle den Jüngling jener Tage dar; wie er in glücklicher Dämmerung in das Leben eintritt, nach verwandten Seelen sucht, der Freundschaft begegnet und der Liebe, wie er nun aber mit den harten Realitäten der Welt in Kampf gerät und so unter mannigfachen Lebenserfahrungen heranreift, sich selber findet und seiner Aufgabe in der Welt gewiß wird. Die Aufgabe Goethes war die Geschichte eines sich zur Tätigkeit bildenden Menschen, das Thema beider Romantiker war der Dichter; Hölderlins Held war die heroische Natur, welche ins Ganze zu wirken strebt und sich schließlich doch in ihr eigenes Denken und Dichten zurückgeworfen findet." In Wilhelm Dilthey, *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung: Lessing, Goethe, Novalis, Hölderlin*, 10th ed. (Leipzig and Berlin: Teubner, 1929), 393f.

⁴ Cf. Dilthey, 33638 (German text: 39599), where he attempts to explain the peculiarities of *Hyperion* as a Bildungsroman in conjunction with the disappointed ideals of the European Romantic poets.

und Denker."⁵ Anglo-American literary critics have also adopted Dilthey's term, although they often employ it in connection with English and American fiction from the nineteenth century to the present.⁶ Martin Swales has attempted to reconcile the difference between the Bildungsroman as a specifically German creation, on the one hand, and as a type of novel appearing in other national literatures, on the other, by stressing the lack of political and social elements in the German Bildungsroman: whereas the English "novel of adolescence" documents the concrete societal and psychological constraints against which the youthful hero must struggle, in the German Bildungsroman the problems lie within the realm of human nature itself and therefore cannot be described realistically.⁷ Thus seen, the German Bildungsroman deviates markedly from the development of the European novel of the nineteenth century; instead of a suspenseful story or the extensive depiction of social conditions, the German Bildungsroman concentrates on introspective analyses of the inner life of the main character laden with philosophical depth and metaphysical seriousness.

Within the past decade a lively debate has taken place not only over the question whether individual novels are Bildungsromane but also over whether the genre itself is as important and prevalent as has been assumed. In his examination of the German novels of the nineteenth century, for example, Jeffrey Sammons comes to the conclusion that

5 For a selection of representative essays documenting the history of Bildungsroman-criticism, see Rolf Selbmann, ed. *Zur Geschichte des deutschen Bildungsromans*, Wege der Forschung No. 640 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1988).

6 Cf. Jerome Hamilton Buckley, *Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1974).

7 Martin Swales, *The German Bildungsroman from Wieland to Hesse* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1978), 35. For a discussion of the reception of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* in nineteenth-century England that takes account of social dimensions in both countries, cf. Wilhelm Voßkamp, "Der Bildungsroman in Deutschland und die Frühgeschichte seiner Rezeption in England," in *Bürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert: Deutschland im europäischen Vergleich*, ed. Jürgen Kocka (Munich: DTV, 1988), 3:25786.

the Bildungsroman is "a phantom genre," with at most three novels in the tradition of *Wilhelm Meister*.⁸ And while Hartmut Steinecke does not dispute the fundamental importance of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* for the development of the German novel in the nineteenth century, he contends that in the years between 1830 and 1870 German novelists and theoreticians attempted to find compromises between *Wilhelm Meister* and the Western European novel of society; only after Dilthey was *Wilhelm Meister* viewed as a narrowly conceived type of novel that was then praised as being typically German.⁹ Furthermore, if one surveys the development of scholarship on *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, it becomes clear that even for this novel of exemplary importance for the development of the theory of the Bildungsroman there is no consensus on the question of to what goal the hero is being educated.¹⁰ No wonder, then, that scholars such as Steinecke or Hans Vaget have proposed new categories such as the "Individualroman"¹¹ or "novel of socialization"¹² in the hopes of better describing the content and goals of the novels in question and linking them to developments within other European literatures.

My proposal is a different one: instead of attempting to define the novels of Goethe and the German Romantics according to their content, why not consider their intended effect upon the reader? In point of fact, Karl Morgenstern's early nineteenth-century definition includes a reader-reception component that is absent from Dilthey's later definition of the term: "It can be called a Bildungsroman, primarily because

8 Jeffrey L. Sammons, "The Mystery of the Missing *Bildungsroman*, or: What Happened to Wilhelm Meister's Legacy?" *Genre* 14 (1981): 239.

9 Hartmut Steinecke, "*Wilhelm Meister* und die Folgen: Goethes Roman und die Entwicklung der Gattung im 19. Jahrhundert," in *Goethe im Kontext: Ein Symposium*, ed. Wolfgang Wittkowski (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1984), 89-111.

10 Cf. Mahoney, *Der Roman der Goethezeit (1774-1829)* 57f.

11 Steinecke, 111.

12 Hans R. Vaget, "Goethe the Novelist: On the Coherence of His Fiction," in *Goethe's Narrative Fiction: The Irvine Goethe Symposium*, ed. William J. Lillyman (Berlin & New York: de Gruyter, 1983), 15.

of its content, because it depicts the formation [*Bildung*] of the hero up until a certain level of completion, but secondly because precisely by means of this depiction it promotes the cultivation [*Bildung*] of the reader to a greater extent than every other type of novel."¹³ In a recent study, Georg Stanitzek has shown how Morgenstern attempted to tie together two hitherto separate eighteenth-century traditions novels in the wake of Rousseau's *Émile* that depict either exemplary or problematic lives and works by means of which the reader might judge the author's (and one's own) degree of education and cultivation.¹⁴ But whereas Morgenstern's definition represents more an aggregate than a synthesis of these two traditions, I would argue that Goethe and his Romantic contemporaries attempted to create a new type of reader by means of innovative and daring narrative strategies that challenge the reader to unlock the meaning of their poetic texts; this goal, not the simple telling of a story, constitutes the educative value of these novels. It is in this context that I propose to investigate what the novelists of the Age of Goethe understood by the "cultivation of the reader," how they intended to bring it about, and what they expected to gain from such an enterprise.

As a point of departure, let us consider the novel that Dilthey used in establishing his own definition of the Bildungsroman, namely Hölderlin's *Hyperion*, published in two parts in 1797 and 1799. As a result of Lawrence Ryan's studies of the novel there has been a significant change of direction in research on *Hyperion*. Instead of interpreting the novel from a biographical, experiential perspective, as did Dilthey, or understanding it as a lyrical epistolary novel in the tradition of Goethe's *Werther*, Ryan traces *Hyperion*'s development through the *narration* of his life story: it is not his calamitous life history which includes the deaths of Diotima, his beloved, and of Alabanda, his comrade-in-arms in the Greek war of liberation against the Turks

¹³ Cited by Martini [my translation] in his article in this volume.

¹⁴ Georg Stanitzek, "Bildung und Roman als Momente bürgerlicher Kultur: Zur Frühgeschichte des deutschen 'Bildungsromans,'" *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 62 (1988): 41650.

but his retelling of these events that transforms him into a poet.¹⁵ And thus the words of the dying Diotima in her farewell letter to Hyperion prove to be true: "Sorrowing youth! Soon, soon will you be happier. Your laurel did not ripen, your myrtles faded, for you shall be the priest of divine Nature, and your days of poetry are already germinating."¹⁶ Because of the high degree of self-reflexivity in *Hyperion*, Ryan suggests further that this novel should be freed from the framework of the Bildungsroman and instead be viewed in the context of the poetic theory and practice of the early Romantics in Germany, such as Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis.¹⁷

Ryan's placement of *Hyperion* in its contemporary literary context and his references to the "progressive Universalpoesie" (progressive universal poesy) of the Romantics are valuable contributions to which I shall return. Yet one should not forget why Hölderlin, after laborious and frequent revisions, returned to his original plan for an epistolary novel: by virtue of the long tradition of this genre in the eighteenth century, readers would be accustomed to view themselves as the recipients of Hyperion's letters and to follow with active concern the narration of his story.¹⁸ Not coincidentally, the person to whom

15 Lawrence Ryan, *Hölderlins Hyperion: Exzentrische Bahn und Dichterberuf* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1965). For an English-language study that develops and modifies Ryan's thesis, see Cyrus Hamlin, "The Poetics of Self-Consciousness in European Romanticism: Hölderlin's *Hyperion* and Wordsworth's *Prelude*," *Genre* 6 (1973): 142-77.

16 Friedrich Hölderlin, *Hyperion, or The Hermit in Greece*, trans. Willard R. Trask, with a foreword by Alexander Gode von Aesch (New York: Signet, 1965), 159. "Trauernder Jüngling! bald, bald wirst du glücklicher seyn. Dir ist dein Lorbeer nicht gereift und deine Myrthen verblühten, denn Priester sollst du seyn der göttlichen Natur, und die dichterischen Tage keimen dir schon." In Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Friedrich Beissner (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1957), 3:149.

17 Lawrence Ryan, "Hölderlin's *Hyperion*: A Romantic Novel?" in *Friedrich Hölderlin: An Early Modern*, ed. Emery E. George (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1972), 182f.

18 Consider, for example, the preface to Goethe's first novel, *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, which was intended to influence the reading of the novel itself: "And

(footnote continued on next page)

Hyperion's letters are addressed from Greece to Bellarmin, a German whom Hyperion had learned to know and love during his otherwise so dispiriting sojourn in that country. Wolfgang Binder has alluded to the symbolic significance of the name Bellarmin, which contains both a reference to Arminius, the liberator of the Germanic tribes from Roman oppression, and a contraction for the word "beautiful."¹⁹

Seen in this context, *Hyperion* represents not only the development of a character (Dilthey) and the process of maturation of a poet (Ryan), but also the envisioned formation of a reader who is to have a sense of the Beautiful, in contrast to the majority of Germans. Stages in the apprenticeship of such a reader are the narrator's addresses to Bellarmin, which not only illustrate Hyperion's own gradual maturation but which also suggest to the reader the meaning of the novel itself. Consider as one example Hyperion's words to Bellarmin near the beginning of part 2:

Why do I recount my grief to you, renew it, and stir up my restless youth in me again? Is it not enough to have traveled once through mortality? Why do I not remain still in the peace of my spirit?

It is, my Bellarmin, because every living breath that we draw remains dear to our heart, because all the transformations of pure Nature are part of her beauty too. Our soul, when it puts off mortal experiences and lives only in blessed quietness is it not like a leafless tree? like a head without locks? . . . O friend! in the end the Spirit reconciles us with all

(footnote continued from previous page)

you, good soul, who feel the same anguish as he, derive comfort from his sufferings, and let this little book be your friend, if your destiny or your own fault should prevent you from finding a more intimate one." In Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *The Sufferings of Young Werther*, trans. Harry Steinbauer (New York: Norton, 1970), ix. "Und du gute Seele, die du eben den Drang fühlst wie er, schöpfe Trost aus seinem Leiden, und laß das Büchlein deinen Freund sein, wenn du aus Geschick oder eigener Schuld keinen nähern finden kannst." In *Goethes Werke: Hamburger Ausgabe*, ed. Erich Trunz (Munich: Beck, 1973), 6:7. That the reader of *Hyperion* is intended to react with calmness of mind and not with tearful emotion to the narration of its hero's life is what distinguishes *Hyperion* as a Bildungsroman from the eighteenth-century cult of sentimentality (*Empfindsamkeit*) to which *Werther* still partially belongs.

¹⁹ Wolfgang Binder, "Hölderlins Namenssymbolik," in *Hölderlin-Aufsätze* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1970), 211.

things. You will not believe it, at least not of me. But I think that even my letters should suffice to show you that my soul is becoming stiller every day. And I will continue to tell you of it hereafter, until I have said enough for you to believe me.²⁰

Just as Hyperion comes to "the resolution of dissonances in a certain character"²¹ through the story of his life sufferings, so too should the attentive reader attain the point of view that the narrator has achieved for himself.

This narrative strategy may be compared with Novalis's procedure in his unfinished novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (1802, translated as *Henry von Ofterdingen*, 1964). Here the conversations and stories within the story not only play a major role in Heinrich's development into a poet but also illuminate the meaning of the novel by functioning as parallel narratives that provide a running commentary on the significance of the tale Heinrich as a character has yet to discover for himself. A prime example of this self-reflexivity of *Ofterdingen* is Heinrich's discovery of a mysterious, incomplete Provençal manuscript in the cave of a hermit that contains illustrations recalling his previous life history and providing intimations of what is yet to come. When asked

20 Hölderlin, *Hyperion*, 114f. "Warum erzähl' ich dir und wiederhole mein Leiden und rege die ruhelose Jugend wieder auf in mir? Ists nicht genug, Einmal das Sterbliche durchwandert zu haben? warum bleib' ich im Frieden meines Geistes nicht stille?"

Darum, mein Bellarmin! weil jeder Athemzug des Lebens unserm Herzen werth bleibt, weil alle Verwandlungen der reinen Natur auch mit zu ihrer Schöne gehören. Unsre Seele, wenn sie die sterblichen Erfahrungen ablegt und allein nur lebt in heiliger Ruhe, ist sie nicht, wie ein unbelaubter Baum? wie ein Haupt ohne Loken? [sic] . . . O Freund! am Ende söhnet der Geist mit allem uns aus. Du wirst nicht glauben, wenigstens von mir nicht. Aber ich meine, du solltest sogar meinen Briefen es ansehen, wie meine Seele täglich stiller wird und stiller. Und ich will künftig noch so viel davon sagen, bis du es glaubst." In Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke*, 3:102f. For a study illuminating the significance of *Ruhe* (stillness, peace, quiet) for Hölderlin's *Hyperion*, see Mark W. Roche, *Dynamic Stillness: Philosophical Conceptions of "Ruhe" in Schiller, Hölderlin, Büchner, and Heine* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1987), 63119.

21 Hölderlin, *Hyperion*, 171. "Die Auflösung der Dissonanzen in einem gewissen Karakter;" in Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke*, 3:5.

to recount the manuscript's contents, the hermit replies, "As far as I know, it is a novel about the wondrous fortunes of a poet, in which poesy is presented and praised in its manifold relations."²² That the conclusion of this manuscript is missing signals the fact that Heinrich (and with him the reader) is supposed to carry out these marvelous tales in his own day and age. In like manner, the merchants' tale about Atlantis and the poet Klingsohr's fairy tale in part 1 of *Ofterdingen* are meant to anticipate what Novalis had planned for the conclusion of his novel: that poetization of the world which was intended to so stimulate the reader that its "Fulfillment" (the title for part 2 of the novel) would become the reader's own "Expectation" (the title of part 1).²³ For Novalis, poetry was not intended to be a self-sufficient realm, but a means of activating already-present potential in his readers. In this respect Lawrence Ryan has done well to point out the affinities between *Hyperion* and *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*.

But might not one also consider further examples of an aesthetics of reception in other novels of the period? Todd Kontje, for example, has provided a link between the German novels of the Age of Goethe and the European tradition of self-conscious fiction from Cervantes to Nabokov by demonstrating that novels such as *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795/96), *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, and Jean Paul's *Flegeljahre* (1804/05) "are less realistic depictions of individuals than metafictional reflections on the function of reading and the institution of literature in society. . . . Reading in this view neither repeats reality nor does it escape reality: instead, it *transforms* reality, and the *Bildungsroman* is the genre that examines this transformation."²⁴ Ever since

²² Novalis, *Henry von Ofterdingen*, trans. Palmer Hilty (New York: Ungar, 1964), 91. "Soviel ich weiß, ist es ein Roman von den wunderbaren Schicksalen eines Dichters, worinn die Dichtkunst in ihren mannigfachen Verhältnissen dargestellt und gepriesen wird." In Novalis, *Schriften*, ed. Richard Samuel et al. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1960), 1:265.

²³ For a study detailing the importance of tales within a tale for the novel of the Age of Goethe, see Erika Voerster, *Märchen und Novellen im klassisch-romantischen Roman* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1966).

²⁴ Todd Kontje, "The German *Bildungsroman* as Metafiction: Artistic Autonomy in the Public Sphere," *Michigan German Studies* 13 (1987): 144.

Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, European fiction has thematized the hero whose reading of fiction causes him or her to construct an imagined reality and attempt to transform the world accordingly.²⁵ Some of the most stimulating recent interpretations of *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, Goethe's first novel (1774), have stressed Werther's misreadings of literature and dilettantish attempts to model reality according to the works of art he admires so much; his translation of *Ossian* that he reads aloud to Lotte, for example, is what precipitates their fateful embrace: "They felt their own misery in the destiny of the heroes, felt it together and were united in their tears."²⁶ But the reading habits of *Werther's* initial audience were so determined by religious devotional literature and the sentimental novels of the day that many readers were unable to grasp the subtle ironies of the text and instead uncritically admired Werther, sometimes even to the point of emulating his suicide.²⁷

Werther's tendency to fictionalize his own life is shared by figures in a number of major novels of the Age of Goethe, but in these later instances it is Werther himself who provides the model for them, and the aim is to steel the reader against an unreflected aesthetization of existence. In *Anton Reiser* (1785/90), the autobiographical novel by Karl Philipp Moritz, young Reiser is so influenced by his reading of

25 For a survey of this tradition in eighteenth-century Germany up to and including Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, see Lieselotte Kurth, *Die zweite Wirklichkeit: Studien zum Roman des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1969).

26 Goethe, *The Sufferings of Young Werther*, 88. "Sie fühlten ihr eigenes Elend in dem Schicksale der Edlen, fühlten es zusammen, und ihre Tränen vereinigten sich." In *Goethes Werke*, 6:114. In addition to Lieselotte Kurth's treatment of *Werther* (*Die zweite Wirklichkeit*, 16983), see Bruce Duncan, "'Emilia Galotti lag auf dem Pult aufgeschlagen': Werther as (Mis) Reader," in *Goethe Yearbook* 1 (1982): 4250; and Hans R. Vaget, "*Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*," in *Goethes Erzählwerk: Interpretationen*, ed. Paul Michael Lützeler and James E. McLeod (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1985), 3772.

27 Cf. Georg Jäger, "Die Wertherwirkung: Ein rezeptionsästhetischer Modellfall," in *Historizität in Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaft*, ed. Walter Müller-Seidel (Munich: Fink, 1974), 389409.

Werther that his own letters begin to sound like those of his fictional model; and Reiser's attempts to use literature and the theater as a substitute for his deprived and miserable existence receive so penetrating a criticism that the concluding part of *Anton Reiser* had a decisive impact on Goethe's remodeling of his *Wilhelm Meister* project into the *Lehrjahre* as we know it today.²⁸ The novels of Jean Paul²⁹ the most prolific major novelist of the Age of Goethe, whose initial novel, *Die unsichtbare Loge*, was published in 1793 with the help of Moritz abound in characters who lose themselves in the abysses of their imagination; perhaps the most prominent example is the figure of Roquairol in *Titan* (180003), who even as a child is obsessed with the figure of Werther and who, after seducing the fiancée of his former best friend, blows his brains out as the conclusion to a tragedy he himself has composed and performed. Similar to Roquairol is the figure of Ferdinand in Klinger's novel *Geschichte eines Teutschen der neusten Zeit* (History of a German of Our Times, 1798); infected by the *Werther* fever of the 1770s, Ferdinand is later to seduce the wife of his childhood friend Ernst and indirectly cause the death of his son: "here we are offered a variation on the Werther-Lotte-Albert situation with all the author's sympathies on the side of the wronged husband."³⁰

Klinger, who wrote in the context of the late Enlightenment's concern for moral betterment through literature, condemned without reservation. Moritz, on the other hand, provides a soul-searching analysis of Anton Reiser's flaws but leaves it to his readers to piece together a positive model of development from the negative image provided. Goethe employs the method of *gegenseitige Spiegelung* (mutual mirroring) as a means of encouraging his readers to arrive at a critical point of view that is no longer present in the form of a direct

28 Cf. Rudolf Lehmann, "*Anton Reiser* und die Entstehung des *Wilhelm Meister*," *Jahrbuch der Goethe-Gesellschaft* 3 (1916): 11634.

29 See Wulf Koepke's essay on Jean Paul in this volume.

30 H. M. Waidson, "Goethe and Klinger: Some Aspects of a Personal and Literary Relationship," *Publications of the English Goethe Society*, n.s., 23 (1953/54): 112.

authorial comment. One can observe this technique in his addition of the "peasant lad episode" as a parallel to Werther's story in the 1787 revised edition of *Werther*.³¹ As for Jean Paul, Goethe's great antipode, communication with the reader becomes so important that digressions and addresses to the reader in the tradition of Laurence Sterne predominate, and sometimes the speeches of the characters are directed more at the reader than at one another.³²

In the major German novels of the period between the publication of *Werther* in 1774 and the appearance in 1829 of the second version of Goethe's fourth and final novel, *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*, one can observe a multitude of styles and narrative strategies. But central to all of these efforts is the formation of an active, sensitive, and astute reader and not the depiction of the story of a main character, as Dilthey's understanding of the Bildungsroman would have one believe. If one views a novel such as *Hyperion* from Dilthey's perspective, as does Walter Silz, one is likely to come to the conclusion that *Hyperion*, while possessing great poetic beauty, is a failure as a novel.³³ By understanding *Hyperion*, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, and the novels of Goethe, Jean Paul, E. T. A. Hoffmann, and the other Romantics as Bildungsromane in my sense of the term, they become demanding but stimulating reading experiences. No wonder, then, that Eric A. Blackall writes in the preface to his major study on the novels of the German Romantics, "Something very important happened to the novel during the romantic period. And we of the last quarter of the twentieth century are better able to appreciate it than were the generations of 1850, 1890, or even 1920."³⁴ Free from

31 For a discussion of Goethe's employment of this practice of "gegenseitige Spiegelung" throughout his novels, see Hans R. Vaegt, "Goethe the Novelist," 716.

32 Cf. Kurt Wölfel, "Über die schwierige Geburt des Gesprächs aus dem Geist der Schrift," *Jahrbuch der Jean-Paul-Gesellschaft* 15 (1980): 727.

33 Walter Silz, *Hölderlin's "Hyperion": A Critical Reading* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1969).

34 Eric A. Blackall, *The Novels of the German Romantics* (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1983), 11.

the obligation to understand the Bildungsroman in a hidebound, restrictive sense, we can recognize the German novels of the Age of Goethe for what they are the immediate predecessors of the modern experimental novel. With the reception of such modern classics as Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus* and Günter Grass's *Die Blechtrommel* has come a renewed appreciation of long-neglected novels of the Age of Goethe that proved an inspiration to twentieth-century writers in devising their own literary experiments.

But the tastes of today's readers are obviously quite different from those of the literary public of the Age of Goethe, and it is equally evident that the authors of German Classicism and Romanticism wrote from quite different perspectives than those of present-day novelists. As a guard against an ahistorical understanding of the Bildungsroman of the Age of Goethe, let us call to mind what Goethe and his contemporaries understood when they used the word *Bildung* and what they hoped to gain by so educating their readers.

Although the words *Bildung* and *bilden* were already employed by the medieval German mystics in the sense of purging the soul of impurities and forming it according to its divine model, in the course of the eighteenth century these concepts became secularized and used in increasing frequency with the terms *Erziehung* (education) and *Aufklärung* (enlightenment). In contrast to the concept of education, however, *Bildung* was supposed not just to come from outside mentors but also to represent a process of self-development; contributing to this conception were the animistic views of nature developed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by German alchemists such as Paracelsus and theosophists such as Jakob Böhme that were to survive in modified form in such works as Leibniz's *Monadology* and Blumenbach's treatise on the *Bildungstrieb*, the drive for *Bildung*.³⁵ In contrast to the more reason-oriented concept of enlightenment, *Bildung* was understood as affecting the entire human being—mind, body, and spirit. Of further importance for the development of this concept

35 Cf. the essay by Thomas P. Saine, "Über Wilhelm Meisters 'Bildung,'" in *Lebendige Form: Interpretationen zur deutschen Literatur: Festschrift für Heinrich E. K. Henel*, edited by J. L. Sammons and E. I. Schürer (Munich: Fink, 1970), 6381.

was the German reception of Shaftesbury, whose term *formation of a genteel character* was translated regularly as *Bildung*.³⁶ While Shaftesbury was interested primarily in the preparation of the young nobleman for a life of public service, eighteenth-century German intellectuals such as Wieland and Herder broadened these ideas to encompass the middle class, or indeed all people possessing the requisite desire to attain such goals.³⁷

At the end of the eighteenth century young reformers like Wilhelm von Humboldt saw in *Bildung* the complete development of individual human potential unfettered by any state regulation; at the same time, this cultivation of the individual was envisioned as having beneficial effects on the state in which such citizens lived and worked ideas that decisively influenced Humboldt's reform of the Prussian university system in 1810 and in turn the development of American higher education in the later nineteenth century.³⁸ During the era of the French Revolution liberal German writers argued that the spread of *Bildung* would not promote revolutionary tendencies, as conservative critics maintained, but rather would enable moderate and necessary reforms and hence work against the spread of revolutionary violence.³⁹ Schiller's collection of letters, *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen*, published in 1795, can be understood in this light; by bringing the sensuous, intellectual, and moral sides of the individual into harmony with one another, Art prepares the way for the ideal state in the body politic as well:

Because the State serves as a representative of pure and objective humanity in the breast of its citizens, it will have to maintain towards those

36 See Franz Rauhut, "Die Herkunft der Worte und Begriffe 'Kultur,' 'Civilisation' und 'Bildung,'" *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift*, n.s., 3 (1953): 89.

37 Cf. Susan L. Cocalis, "The Transformation of 'Bildung' from an Image to an Ideal," *Monatshefte* 70 (1978): 403.

38 Cf. Rudolf Vierhaus, "Bildung," in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, ed. Otto Brunner et al. (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1972), 1:520f.

39 Cf. Vierhaus, 523.

citizens the same relationship in which they stand to one another, and it can respect their subjective humanity only in such degree as this is exalted to objectivity. If the inner man is at one with himself, he will preserve his idiosyncrasy even in the widest universality of his conduct, and the State will be simply the interpreter of his fine instinct, the clearer expression of his inner legislation.⁴⁰

Schiller's concept of aesthetic education became a milestone in the development of an idealist philosophy of art in Germany. The early Romantics adopted this idea and universalized it to the extent of expecting a cultural revolution for all mankind to be unleashed by their writings. In Novalis's essay "Die Christenheit oder Europa" (Christianity or Europe), which he delivered in 1799 as a speech to his literary associates in Jena, Novalis foresaw Germany playing a paramount role in spreading a new gospel of religion, peace, and culture to a fragmented and war-weary Europe: "Germany is proceeding, at a slow but sure pace, ahead of the other European countries. While the latter are occupied with war, speculation, and partisan spirit, the German is developing himself [bildet sich] with all industry into a partaker in a higher stage of culture, and this advance cannot fail to give him a great advantage over the others in the course of time."⁴¹

40 Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a Series of Letters*, trans. with an introduction by Reginald Snell (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954), 33. "Weil der Staat der reinen und objektiven Menschheit in der Brust seiner Bürger zum Repräsentanten dient, so wird er gegen seine Bürger dasselbe Verhältniß zu beobachten haben, in welchem sie zu sich selber stehen, und ihre subjektive Menschheit auch nur in dem Grade ehren können, als sie zur objektiven veredelt ist. Ist der innere Mensch mit sich einig, so wird er auch bey der höchsten Universalisierung seines Betragens seine Eigenthümlichkeit retten, und der Staat wird bloß der Ausleger seines schönen Instinkts, die deutlichere Formel seiner innern Gesetzgebung seyn." In *Schillers Werke: Nationalausgabe*, ed. Julius Petersen et al., (Weimar: Böhlau, 1962), 20:317f.

41 Novalis, *"Hymns to the Night" and Other Selected Writings*, trans. with an introduction by Charles E. Passage (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1960), 57. "Deutschland geht einen langsamen aber sichern Gang vor den übrigen Ländern voraus. Während diese durch Krieg, Spekulation und Partheygeist beschäftigt sind, bildet sich der Deutsche mit allem Fleiß zum Genossen einer höhern Epoche der Cultur, und dieser Vorschrift muß ihm ein großes Überge-

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By the end of the eighteenth century German intellectuals had developed a confidence in the transformational powers of *Bildung* and specifically of literature that has not been equaled since. Once this belief in aesthetic education became dimmed by the turbulence of the Napoleonic years, and even more so by the restoration of the old regime in Europe after the Congress of Vienna in 1815, *Bildung* degenerated into a status symbol for the politically powerless middle class,⁴² while the Bildungsroman later became used as a proof of the supposed innate superiority of German Wilhelminian "culture." But if one regards the Bildungsroman, as Fritz Martini has suggested, "not as a categorical aesthetic form, but rather as a historical form that arose out of definite and also limited historical presuppositions of world- and self-understanding,"⁴³ with the help of this term one can compare German novels of the Age of Goethe and even determine when and where the optimistic dream of *Bildung* began to lose its luster. It is indicative, for example, that Jean Paul's *Flegeljahre* whose fourth volume appeared in 1805, only ten years after Schiller's letters on aesthetic education and the initial books of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* contains a scathing critique of the ideal of education through the medium of literature.⁴⁴ Joseph von Eichendorff's novel *Ahnung und Gegenwart*, published in 1815, denounces as a charade the use of literature by an aristocracy ripe for downfall.⁴⁵ And E. T. A. Hoffmann's *Lebensansichten des Katers Murr* (1819 and 1821, translated as *The Educated Cat*, 1892), parodies the concept of *Bildung* by its depiction of the "Months of Apprenticeship" of a self-satisfied tomcat with its half-digested scraps of culture. Hölderlin's *Hyperion* stands at a turning point in this development from optimism to self-parody. The unfortunate result of the revolt

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wicht über die Andere[n] im Lauf der Zeit geben." In Novalis, *Schriften*, 3:519.

42 Cf. Vierhaus, 532.

43 See Martini's article in this volume.

44 Cf. Kontje, 149f.; and Gerhart Mayer, "Jean Pauls ambivalentes Verhältnis zum Bildungsroman," *Jahrbuch der Jean-Paul-Gesellschaft* 11 (1976): 5177.

45 See Gerhart Hoffmeister's essay in this volume.

against the Turks in the second part of the novel Hyperion's troops plunder, murder their Grecian compatriots, and flee at the first sign of serious resistance has to do with Hölderlin's conviction, based upon his and Schiller's interpretations of the Reign of Terror in France, that people first have to be changed before a republican state can be established. As the dialogue concerning Athens at the end of part 1 makes clear, Hölderlin believed it was the beauty in spirit of the ancient Athenians that made possible their extraordinary achievements in art, literature, religion, philosophy, and politics. Thus it is only logical that following their visit to the ruins of Athens, Diotima bids Hyperion to become the "teacher of our people,"⁴⁶ so that former glories may come again to a Greece presently dominated by greed, sloth, and cowardice.

On the other hand, Hölderlin's words in the preface to part 1 of *Hyperion* give evidence of the author's skepticism regarding his own chances for success among the German reading public: "I should be glad if I could promise this book the affection of the German people. But I fear that some of them will read it as a treatise and be too greatly concerned with the *fabula docet*, whereas others will take it too lightly, and that neither the former nor the latter will understand it."⁴⁷ Ulrich Gaier understands these prefatory words as a challenge to *Hyperion's* readers; if they pass the test, they, like Bellarmin, are no longer to be counted among those Germans against whom Hyperion inveighs so fiercely near the conclusion of the novel: "It is a harsh thing to say, and yet I say it because it is the truth: I can think of no people more at odds with themselves than the Germans."⁴⁸ The almost total neglect of *Hyperion* among Hölderlin's contemporaries con-

⁴⁶ Hölderlin, *Hyperion*, 101. "Erzieher unsers Volks;" in *Sämtliche Werke*, 3:89.

⁴⁷ *Hyperion*, 171. "Ich verspräche gerne diesem Buche die Liebe der Deutschen. Aber ich fürchte, die einen werden es lesen, wie ein Compendium, und um das *fabula docet* sich zu sehr bekümmern, indeß die andern gar zu leicht es nehmen, und beede Theile verstehen es nicht." In Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke*, 3:5.

⁴⁸ *Hyperion*, 164. "Es ist ein hartes Wort und dennoch sag' ichs, weil es Wahrheit ist: ich kann kein Volk mir denken, das zerrißner wäre, wie die Deutschen." In Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke*, 3:153. Cf. Ulrich Gaier, "Hölderlins *Hyperion*: Compendium, Roman, Rede," *Hölderlin-Jahrbuch* 21 (1978/79): 90.

firmed his skepticism; only a few critics deigned to take brief and disparaging notice of it, while for the broad spectrum of readers interested in a suspenseful story or a tear-filled plot, *Hyperion* was unappetizing from the start. Only in the twentieth century, particularly in the past thirty years, has this novel received the attention it deserves.

Examples of the scant reception accorded most of the novels written by Goethe and the Romantics can be replicated almost at will. For it was the literary efforts of these writers that raised the serious novel in Germany to a hitherto unknown level but at the same time deprived it of the mass popularity accorded the sentimental family romances, tales of knights and robbers, and Gothic novels of the day.⁴⁹ In 1798 Friedrich Schlegel proclaimed in the *Athenäum*, the literary journal of the early Romantics, "The French Revolution, Fichte's *Theory of Knowledge*, and Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* are the three greatest tendencies of the age."⁵⁰ That Schlegel would elevate a novel and the founding document of German philosophical Idealism to the same level of importance as a revolution that was already altering the face of Europe is itself indicative of the emphasis many German writers of the period placed upon transforming the consciousness of their audience. But perhaps of even greater significance for the direction of the avant-garde German novel are the concluding words of this celebrated aphorism, in which Schlegel expresses his scorn for the "noisy rabble" who often overlook the importance of a great book in their midst.⁵¹ Such was to be the fate of many a novel during the Age of

49 For a study of the book market and popular fiction in Germany during the eighteenth century, see Albert Ward, *Book Production, Fiction, and the German Reading Public: 1740-1800* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1974).

50 Friedrich Schlegel, *"Dialogue on Poetry" and Literary Aphorisms*, trans., introduced, and annotated by Ernst Behler and Roman Struc (University Park and London: Pennsylvania State UP, 1968), 143. "Die Französische Revolution, Fichtes Wissenschaftslehre, und Goethes Meister sind die größten Tendenzen des Zeitalters." In *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*, ed. Ernst Behler et al. (Munich, Paderborn and Vienna: Schöningh, 1967), 2:198.

51 *"Dialogue on Poetry,"* 143. "Die lärmende Menge" in *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel Ausgabe* 2:198f.

Goethe ignored by its contemporaries and only later awarded canonic status.

If one follows the reception history of Goethe's four novels, it becomes clear that in the course of time between *Werther* (1774) and *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* (1829) they became ever more inaccessible to the public at large. Towards the end of his life, as he completed work on the *Wanderjahre*^{52a} a sequel to the *Lehrjahre* that has hitherto resisted every effort to be accommodated into the Diltheyan concept of a Bildungsroman Goethe remarked to Eckermann on 11 October 1828,

*My works cannot be popular. He who thinks and strives to make them so is in error. They are written, not for the multitude, but only for individuals who desire something congenial, whose aims are like my own.*⁵³

Ehrhard Bahr, alluding to the full title of Goethe's final novel, *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre oder die Entsagenden*, correspondingly speaks of a "poetics of renunciation" in the *Wanderyjahre*, whereby the abandonment of traditional forms of narration gives far more freedom to the reader than do the novels of the eighteenth century.⁵⁴ And once the elderly Goethe saw and accepted his lack of popularity, he gained the advantage of being able to experiment more boldly with the limits of the novel as a genre than could other novelists of the nineteenth cen-

⁵² See Ehrhard Bahr's essay in this volume, which analyzes the distinctly modern quality of the difficult novel. And it goes without saying that the *Wanderjahre* is much more than just a sequel to the *Lehrjahre*. Ed.

⁵³ Goethe, *Conversations with Eckermann*, trans. John Oxenford (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1984), 220. "*Meine Sachen können nicht popular werden; wer daran denkt und dafür strebt, ist in einem Irrtum. Sie sind nicht für die Masse geschrieben, sondern nur für einzelne Menschen, die etwas Ähnliches wollen und suchen und die in ähnlichen Richtungen begriffen sind*" [Eckermann's emphasis]. In Johann Peter Eckermann, *Gespräche mit Goethe in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens* (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1982; Munich: Beck, 1984), 253.

⁵⁴ Ehrhard Bahr, "*Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre oder die Entsagenden*," in *Goethes Erzählwerk*, 37989.

ture, who were writing for an already-existing public and who therefore had to work within the accepted conventions. Bahr sees in the *Wanderjahre* the same thematic and formal "revolutionary realism" as in shorter prose works by Heinrich Heine and Georg Büchner;⁵⁵ indeed, he even compares Goethe's description of the production of wool in the *Wanderjahre* with a passage in James Joyce's *Ulysses*.⁵⁶

If Kant's phrase *sapere aude*"dare to know"was the motto of the Enlightenment, one might consider *legere aude*"dare to read"the hidden motif uniting the novels of the Age of Goethe. In this attitude toward the reading public lies the explanation for the initial failure of novels such as *Hyperion* and *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* and for their critical rediscovery in the past few decades. The literary avant-garde of the Age of Goethe wrote for an audience that comprised only a small segment of the general reading public and that even there had to be cultivated in conjunction with the new type of novel they were creating. As Friedrich Schlegel observed in 1797,

The analytical writer observes the reader as he is; accordingly, he makes his calculation, sets his machine to make the appropriate effect on him. The synthetic writer constructs and creates his own reader; he does not imagine him as resting and dead but as lively and advancing toward him. He makes that which he had invented gradually take shape before the reader's eye, or he tempts him to do the inventing for himself. He does not want to make a particular effect on him but rather enters into a solemn relationship of innermost symphilosophy or sympoetry.⁵⁷

55 Ehrhard Bahr, "Revolutionary Realism in Goethe's *Wanderjahre*," in *Goethe's Narrative Fiction*, 174f. And see his contribution in this volume.

56 Bahr, "*Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*," 36774.

57 *Dialogue on Poetry*, 131f. "Der analytische Schriftsteller beobachtet den Leser, wie er ist; danach macht er seinen Kalkül, legt seine Maschinen an, um den gehörigen Effekt auf ihn zu machen. Der synthetische Schriftsteller konstruiert und schafft sich einen Leser, wie er sein soll; der denkt sich denselben nicht ruhend und tot, sondern lebendig und entgegenwirkend. Er läßt das, was er erfunden hat, vor seinen Augen stufenweise werden, oder er lockt ihn es selbst zu erfinden. Er will keine bestimmte Wirkung auf ihn machen, sondern er tritt mit ihm in das heilige Verhältnis der innigsten Symphilosophie oder Sympoesie." In *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe* 2:161.

Through such ambitious goals Goethe and the Romantics overtaxed even educated readers of their day, but their rigorous "apprenticeship of the reader" has borne fruit in our century. At the same time, these writers were instrumental in creating the rigid division between "high" and "low" culture that is a feature of literary modernism in general but which has been more typical of German intellectual life than that of other European countries. In this respect the German Bildungsroman of the Age of Goethe does occupy a special, if ambiguous, position in the development of the Western novel.

Was *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* Really Supposed to Be a Bildungsroman?

Thomas P. Saine

There is hardly any German novel in which more is said about *Bildung* than *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, especially, but not only, in the last two books. Some of the facets of *Bildung* that are mentioned or talked about in the *Lehrjahre* include the *Bildung* of the child and preparation for adulthood, the *Bildung* of the individual, the *Bildung* of humankind, the *Ausbildung* (development or unfolding) of innate talents, perceptions, and proclivities in the individual, *Bildung* as education and training, *Bildung* as maturation and the achievement of form (for example in the biological sense conveyed in Goethe's theory of metamorphosis).

Bildung is not something invented by Goethe; although the concept with all its connotations was not yet fully developed when he began working on the *Lehrjahre* in the early 1790s, it was generally available for use at the time.¹ It derived originally from the religious

¹ Surely Herder and Wilhelm von Humboldt are at least as responsible as Goethe for the conception of *Bildung* as cultural attainment, self-cultivation, and personal development. See for example W. H. Bruford, *The German Tradition of Self-Cultivation: 'Bildung' from Humboldt to Thomas Mann* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1975). Bruford devotes his first chapter to Humboldt. For a brief recent survey of the history of the term *Bildung* see Rolf Selbmann, *Der deutsche Bildungsroman*

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sphere (Pietism) but had also already been put to use in scientific terminology, as for example in Johann Friedrich Blumenbach's 1781 treatise *Über den Bildungstrieb und das Zeugungsgeschäft* (On the Drive for *Bildung* and the Act of Reproduction). The notion of the *Bildungstrieb* had also already made its way into aesthetics (for example in the work of Georg Forster and Friedrich Schiller) by the time *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* was first published. Still, since the *Lehrjahre* is one of the first two great modern German prose narratives Wieland's *Geschichte des Agathon* is the other there is no reason to be surprised if Goethe's novel, because *Bildung* plays such a large role in it, has come to be regarded as the earliest and the greatest, the epitome of the German Bildungsroman, a model for itself and all its brothers.² What a Bildungsroman actually is, however, and how many of them there are in German literature or in world literature at large, are questions still under discussion and probably unresolvable.³ Jeffrey Sammons, for example, a radical among the skeptics, searched for the elusive German Bildungsroman and came up with only one totally satisfactory example, the *Lehrjahre* itself.⁴ It remains to be seen, however, whether, and in what sense, even the *Lehrjahre* can properly be called a Bildungsroman. The label may be marginally useful for describing certain products and paradigms of fiction but should be applied with extreme caution.

By now (in recent criticism, at least) it is well known that the term Bildungsroman was introduced by the Dorpat professor Karl von

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(Stuttgart: Metzler, 1984), 18.

² See Jürgen Jacobs, *Wilhelm Meister und seine Brüder: Untersuchungen zum deutschen Bildungsroman* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1972). Rolf Selbmann titles his *Lehrjahre* chapter "Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre als Muster der Gattung."

³ There is more literature on the subject of defining and ordering examples of the Bildungsroman than can profitably be listed. For the most recent comprehensive review of the state of the question, see Selbmann.

⁴ Jeffrey L. Sammons, "The Mystery of the Missing *Bildungsroman* or: What Happened to Wilhelm Meister's Legacy?" *Genre* 14 (1981): 229-46.

Morgenstern and that Wilhelm Dilthey first gave it general currency.⁵ Further, it is well known what a great role the concept of *Bildung* played in the ideology of German cultural nationalism in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, so that the Bildungsroman came to be viewed and is often still viewed as a peculiarly German genre and achievement (for example by Thomas Mann and other early twentieth-century writers). In light of the high cultural connotations absorbed by the concept of *Bildung* in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it is worthwhile to keep in mind also that in the wake of Max Wundt's monograph, *Goethes Wilhelm Meister und die Entwicklung des modernen Lebensideals* (1913) the *Lehrjahre* came more and more to be interpreted in the sense of the classical ideology of "Humanität," with emphasis on the ideal of "harmony." This is of course possible only if one interprets the novel teleologically, looking from the end back to the beginning and imputing to Wilhelm Meister at the end a developmental niveau supposedly attained as a result of the *Bildung* he has achieved or undergone in the course of the novel. (There are two aspects to *Bildung*: one can strive to achieve *Bildung*, but one can also receive it at the hands of others and undergo it under the influence of external forces.)⁶ One must ask, however, how much

⁵ See for example Jacobs, 10ff., who bases his discussion largely on Lothar Köhn's "Forschungsbericht" in the *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift* 42 (1968), which also appeared as a book in 1969, and on Fritz Martini, "Der Bildungsroman: Zur Geschichte des Wortes und der Theorie," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift* 35 (1961): 4463, which has been reprinted in translation in this volume. Also Selbmann 933. Excerpts from Morgenstern and Dilthey are most readily accessible in Ehrhard Bahr, ed., *Erläuterungen und Dokumente. Johann Wolfgang Goethe: Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1982), 33840 and 34547. Bahr's volume contains the most extensive recent bibliography on the *Lehrjahre*. See now also Dennis F. Mahoney, *Der Roman der Goethezeit (1774/1829)* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1988), 4656 for a capsule discussion of the state of the Bildungsroman art.

⁶ Melitta Gerhard is typical for this point of view: "In der Vereinigung mit Natalien, im Bündnis mit ihrem Bruder und seinen Freunden gewinnt Wilhelms Streben nach harmonischer Ausbildung seiner Natur seine Verwirklichung, schließt sich die unübersehbare Mannigfaltigkeit des Lebens, durch das sein Weg führte, zur gestaltenden Einheit zusammen" (Gerhard, *Der deutsche Entwicklungsroman bis zu Goethes "Wilhelm Meister"* [Halle/Saale: Niemeyer, 1926], 142).

real optimism with regard to harmonious human development is actually warranted by what goes on in Goethe's novel, and whether it is not put there for the most part by its interpreters. Certainly even if Wilhelm Meister himself is blessed with a kind of happiness at the end of the novel there is enough gloominess and death surrounding his progress through life to give the thoughtful reader pause. It is astonishing, in fact, how many people the narrator allows to die, unhappy and unfulfilled, in the course of the novel, and how much guilt is loaded onto Wilhelm by the end.⁷

Claims that Wilhelm aspires to harmonious development are usually based on a reading of the novel that lays great stress on the letter to Werner in book five in which Wilhelm announces his decision to become an actor. Two passages in the letter seem to support the contention that Wilhelm strives for and therefore one supposes, by virtue of the logic that whatever is truly sought must be found by the end of the novel also achieves this development. Toward the beginning of the letter Wilhelm writes, "Let me put it quite succinctly: even as a youth I had the vague desire and intention to develop myself fully, myself as I am."⁸ Toward the end of the letter, after discoursing on the differences between aristocrats and normal people that are enforced by the social order and claiming that aristocrats have an opportunity and freedom for harmoniously developing their potential

⁷ Clearly, killing off a character is often the most convenient way for the narrator to dispose of him or her once the character's usefulness is at an end, but the number of deaths in the *Lehrjahre* would still seem somewhat excessive. This is a subject which deserves to be analyzed at length. The list of decedents in the novel itself includes Wilhelm's father, Mariane, his mistress, Aurelie, Mignon, and the harper. A number of others die of something other than old age in the stories and life histories of individual figures narrated in the course of the novel. One should perhaps also include among the sufferers figures who renounce the world for imaginary reasons, like the count and countess who go off at the end to join the religious community at Herrnhut.

⁸ *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, ed. and trans. by Eric A. Blackall in cooperation with Victor Lange, vol. 9 of *Goethe's Collected Works* (New York: Suhrkamp Publishers, 1989), 174. Further references to this translation will appear in parentheses in the text. While I quote from the Blackall translation of the *Lehrjahre* throughout, all other translations in the article are my own.

as public personages that is denied to ordinary folk, Wilhelm roundly declares his intention to become as good as an aristocrat by becoming an actor: "I have an irresistible desire to attain the harmonious development of my personality such as was denied me by my birth" (175).⁹

Any interpretation of the *Lehrjahre* that claims Wilhelm must of necessity achieve some harmonious development in the novel enough to qualify it as a Bildungsroman just because he proclaims this as his goal in the letter to Werner flies in the face of the maxims contained in Wilhelm's *Lehrbrief* ("certificate of apprenticeship"), passages of which are read aloud and thus incorporated into the text of the novel following his initiation into the Tower Society. The *Lehrbrief* stresses that it is impossible for the individual to fulfill all one's capabilities and attain all the goals of humanity alone and that it is therefore desirable and necessary for each individual rather to concentrate on one greatest and most productive talent: "All men make up mankind and all forces together make up the world. . . . All this, and much else besides, lies in the human spirit, waiting to be developed, and not just in one of us, but in all of us. Every aptitude is significant and should be developed. One man cultivates the beautiful and another what is useful, but only the combination of both constitutes the true man" (338). Specialization is the hallmark of modern times, and the group of individuals we find at the end of the *Lehrjahre* is hardly a collection of Renaissance universalists: each person has his or her own leaning, special talent, and attributes. That is, with the notable exception of Wilhelm. As the novel reaches its happy ending, the future of the hero is still quite undetermined. Various possibilities have been visualized for him: he could manage the estate that Werner has just purchased for him in partnership with Lothario and other members of the Tower Society; he could also set off on a new tour of Germany to give depth and shape to his *Bildung* and then perhaps

⁹ This is not to deny, of course, that the desire to emulate the nobility plays a significant role in the cultural aspirations of the middle classes in general their desire both to attain and to be in a position to display *Bildung* from the eighteenth century on. But one certainly has some cause to be skeptical of Wilhelm's own peculiar mode of imitating the nobility via the theater.

even go on to visit Italy. He himself seems to have no real preference, and he leaves it up to those who know better to tell him what to do. At the conclusion of the novel even Wilhelm's marriage to Natalie has been agreed to only in principle; there is no indication as to how she will fit into any of Wilhelm's possible plans. In *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* (1821 and 1829, translated as *Wilhelm Meister's Journeyman Years*) presumably as a result of the interest in doctors' satchels that he developed in the course of the *Lehrjahre*, Wilhelm has become a peripatetic practitioner of the medical arts, leaving Natalie at home.¹⁰

At the moment when he writes the letter to Werner, Wilhelm is convinced that he is embarking on the right path and that this path will lead him to the goal he sets out in the letter. A character in a novel is entitled to believe in what he is doing. It is, however, surprising that so many interpreters of the *Lehrjahre* have taken Wilhelm's

¹⁰ Kurt May argued strenuously against the common assumption that the *Lehrjahre* demonstrate a positive harmonious development on Wilhelm's part ("*Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre, ein Bildungsroman?*", *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift* 31 (1957): 137). A basic weakness of May's argument, however, is that he still takes the letter to Werner quite seriously as a statement of the novel's aim, and some of his conclusions are questionable, for example his contention that the decisive choice for Wilhelm since he obviously cannot develop everything in himself all at once is between the direction represented by the Uncle and that represented by Natalie: "Am Schluß des sechsten Buches und von da an wird im Zusammenhang der Bildungsgeschichte Wilhelm Meisters nur noch danach gefragt, darum gerungen, ob der Oheim als neuer Repräsentant des ästhetischen Menschen oder ob Natalie als Verkörperung der selbstlos tätigen Menschenliebe das Übergewicht und für Wilhelm Meister die Vorherrschaft gewinnen, oder darum, ob die ästhetische und die ethisch soziale Tendenz sich noch eindeutig und überzeugend zur Harmonie, zum Gleichgewicht, zur Einheit und Ganzheit verschmelzen werden" (May, 2627). See the discussion of May in my article, "Über Wilhelm Meisters 'Bildung,'" in *Lebendige Form: Interpretationen zur deutschen Literatur. Festschrift für Heinrich E. K. Henel*, ed. J. L. Sammons and E. I. Schürer (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1970), 6468. In the end May has simply inverted the normal expectation placed on Wilhelm Meister. His argument against "harmonious development," for all its soundness, does not appear to have dramatically changed scholars' perception either of the *Lehrjahre* or of the Bildungsroman in general. The idea still plays a considerable role in recent discussions of Goethe's novel and of the genre of the Bildungsroman.

statements in the letter at face value, assuming that they also stand for the author's intentions and will be validated by the end of the novel. A disgruntled young man from the middle class, unhappy at the prospect of spending his life buying and selling things and making money, he thinks he has a calling to the artistic life and that he will serve himself and the world best as an actor, working to realize the dream of a German national theater. This was not at all an unusual ambition, either in real life or in German literature in the eighteenth century, as Rolf Selbmann has pointed out.¹¹ In the process, Wilhelm imagines according to the letter to Werner that as an actor he will be able to achieve the development and representation of his personality that is otherwise denied to the middle and lower classes: "The nobleman tells us everything through the person he presents, but the burgher does not, and should not. A nobleman can and must be someone who represents by his appearance, whereas the burgher simply is, and when he tries to put on an appearance, the effect is ludicrous or in bad taste. The nobleman should act and achieve, the burgher must labor and create, developing some of his capabilities in order to be useful, but without it ever being assumed that there is or ever can be a harmonious interplay of qualities in him, because in order to make himself useful in one direction, he has to disregard everything else" (175). The outcome of the novel makes clear, however, that it was a serious mistake on Wilhelm's part to think that he could ever achieve his goal by associating with actors, who represent a class of social outcasts, egotists, and misfits about whom he finally expresses harsh opinions in a conversation with Jarno in book 8.

We can assume that Wilhelm, having grown up in a large city (presumably an imperial free city like Frankfurt am Main, where Goethe grew up), has little or no experience of aristocrats when he sets out into the world. The sketchy ideas he has about aristocrats at the time of writing the letter to Werner are derived from what he has seen during his stay at the count's castle in book 3. The aristocrats at the count's castle are, however, hardly idealized: rather, they are vain, absorbed in themselves and their daily rituals, not terribly interested

¹¹ Rolf Selbmann, *Theater im Roman: Studien zum Strukturwandel des deutschen Bildungsromans* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1981), especially chapter 1.

in culture apart from its representational or entertainment value,¹² themselves unable to distinguish between appearance and reality. Any suggestion that such aristocrats represent the highest form of nobility is erased later in the novel when Wilhelm and the reader are introduced to the "*schöne Seele*" ("beautiful soul") and the Uncle in book 6, and in book 7 to Lothario and his circle of progressive modernists, who have eschewed mere appearances and counterproductive hereditary privilege for the sake of more effectively achieving their goals in the world. Here Wilhelm, ever receptive to new impressions, finds new models for emulation.

Was it a Bildungsroman in anything approaching the sense in which it has so often been a topic of discussion that Goethe had in mind to write about Wilhelm Meister? We can be sure that such a goal was at least not crucial to his original intention. When he began work on the book in early 1777, he aimed to write a novel about the theater, and the social milieu and historical setting the first version of the novel, *Wilhelm Meisters theatralische Sendung*, (1777/85, literally, Wilhelm Meister's Theatrical Mission) is set in the 1750s or the 1760s were no place for thoughts of higher *Bildung* on the part of the hero or of anybody else. *Bildung* was not even a topic of conversation in the period in which the novel was originally set, much less something that the hero would know he should strive for. Most of the evidence usually cited to support the assertion that Goethe wrote a Bildungsroman comes from the last books of the *Lehrjahre*, the work into which Goethe transformed the *Sendung* between 1794 and 1796. *Bildung* was talked about much more then, in the period in which the novel was completed, although still an anachronism for the period in which the novel now seems to be set: the action of the *Lehrjahre*, while retaining most of the material contained in the *Sendung*, has been moved forward in time only as far as the middle or late 1770s.¹³

12 The nondescript group of actors is engaged only because no French players are available for the occasion (to entertain a prince).

13 See my article "What Time Is It in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*?" in Hannelore Mundt, Egon Schwarz, William J. Lillyman, eds., *Horizonte: Festschrift für Herbert Lehnert zum 65. Geburtstag* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1990), 5269.

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How Goethe might have concluded the novel, had he finished it in the 1780s without a long delay, is of course a matter of speculation. He claimed on 9 December 1785 in a letter to Charlotte von Stein that he had written out the plan for the whole novel, although at the time he left for Italy he seems to have actually finished only little more than the first 6 of the twelve books he had planned. It is not at all so clear that it was really difficulties in working out the ending that initially made him interrupt work on the novel rather, he was forced to turn his attention more singlemindedly to preparing the eight-volume edition of his collected works (which began appearing in 1787) that he had contracted with the Berlin publisher, Göschen, and then he left for Italy in September 1786. During his stay in Italy he rethought many things and collected insights and experiences for the benefit of his future works. The novel certainly did not remain untouched by Goethe's Italian experiences,¹⁴ but since he did claim to have a plan for the whole work and he did lay the groundwork in the *Sendung* for most of the essential action of books 7 and 8 of what eventually became the *Lehrjahre*, it is somewhat rash to claim, as scholars have so often done, that he was finally able to finish the novel only by transforming the original theater novel into a Bildungsroman.¹⁵

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Also Detlev W. Schumann, "Die Zeit in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahren*," *Jahrbuch des freien deutschen Hochstifts*, n.s., 7 (1968): 13065, especially 156ff.

¹⁴*Wilhelm Meister* plays a certain role in Goethe's letters from Italy, and by the end of his second stay in Rome, at least, he considered the novel something of a general receptacle for his ideas: "I have had the opportunity to think a lot about myself and other people, about history and the world, and I will communicate much of the best of this, even if it is not new, in my own way. In the end everything will be contained and rounded off in *Wilhelm*" (second sojourn in Rome, 2 October 1787; see *Hamburger Ausgabe* 11:411).

¹⁵Lothario and Natalie already figure in the *Sendung* along with the other members of their immediate family Natalie as the "Amazon" who succors Wilhelm as he lies wounded in the forest, Lothario as Aurelie's friend and lover (although in the *Sendung* Lothario has not fought in America). Felix, Wilhelm's son, is present as well. It is hardly to be expected that Goethe did not intend from the very beginning for Wilhelm to meet and wed Natalie or that Wilhelm was not supposed to find out that Mariane was dead and that Felix was his son. It would

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It is not recorded that Goethe ever said he was writing or had written a Bildungsroman, or that he spoke or wrote of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* in terms that would be directly congruent with the opinion of strict adherents of the notion that the novel is a Bildungsroman. To be sure, Goethe was not in the habit of interpreting his works for other people. What he *did* have to say about the novel, however, is anything but a claim to have written a Bildungsroman. His brief description of the novel was simply that it was *inkalkulabel* (not to be explained rationally), and he claimed that he almost did not understand it himself.¹⁶ Chancellor von Müller reports that Goethe had conceded in a conversation that Wilhelm was "admittedly a poor dog" ("freilich ein 'Armer Hund' ") but had maintained that it was necessary for the novel to have that kind of hero, that it was not possible to show all the vicissitudes of life and the "thousand different life tasks" with a hero who had already attained a solid character.¹⁷ This is something of a functional poetological statement: Wilhelm is a passive rather than an active hero, because a passive hero is better suited to reflect a range of different situations. This would seem to indicate that Goethe had indeed been interested in portraying a wider

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therefore seem problematical to claim, like Selbmann, *Bildungsroman* 63, that the *Sendung* was originally intended to achieve a "theaterinterne Lösung."

¹⁶ We note, however, that he only claimed he *almost* did not understand the novel in fact, he *did* know pretty well what he had done. In his annals, the *Tag-und Jahreshefte*, for the year 1796 he writes, "It remains . . . one of the most incalculable productions, whether one looks at it as a whole or at its parts; even I almost don't have the measure to judge it by." For 18 January 1825 Eckermann reports a conversation in which Goethe had claimed, in much the same words, "This work belongs to the most incalculable productions, to which I myself almost don't have the key. One seeks after the focal point, and that is difficult and not even a good thing to do."

¹⁷ "Nur an solchen lasse sich das Wechselspiel des Lebens und die tausend verschiedenen Lebensaufgaben recht deutlich zeigen, nicht an schon abgeschlossenen festen Charakteren." This, as well as the citations in the previous note, is most easily accessible in the materials printed by Erich Trunz in the commentary to his edition of the *Lehrjahre* in *Goethes Werke*, Hamburger Ausgabe in 14 Bänden, 10th rev. ed. (Munich: Beck, 1981), 7:619 (also the citations in the previous note).

world, not just the fortunes of his picaresque Wilhelm Meister. Goethe doesn't seem to have thought highly of certain aspects of his hero, either, whom at least once he called "Wilhelm Schüler" ("William Pupil"). He certainly meant to make clear that Wilhelm's career and his progress through life contain at least as many false choices and misconceptions as sound decisions and realistic ideas. In the annals, in his account for the years up to 1786, he wrote, "The origins of *Wilhelm Meister* sprang from a dim perception of the great truth that a person often wants to try something for which nature gave him no talent, undertake and practice something for which he cannot develop any capability; an inner feeling warns him to leave it be, but he can't make up his mind to do so and is carried along on a false path toward a false goal without knowing how it happens. This includes all those things that people have called false inclination, dilettantism, and the like. If, from time to time, he halfway sees what is going on, he begins to feel something like despair, and yet when the occasion arises, he again allows himself to be swept on by the wave, putting up only feeble resistance."¹⁸ Goethe would seem to have considered Wilhelm Meister essentially unteachable, hardly a fit subject for a novel in which he might be expected to *achieve* harmonious *Bildung* by his own efforts at imitating aristocrats (or anyone else).

One of the major themes of the *Lehrjahre* is Wilhelm's belief in fate. At crucial points in the odyssey from his parents' home to Natalie's castle, whenever he stands at a crossroads and must choose a course of action, he looks to the heavens for guidance and is strengthened in his determination by omens which he interprets according to his present desire. And after Mariane has yielded to his love and he is making plans for his future with her in the realm of the theater: "Fate, he decided, was extending its helping hand to him, through Mariane, to draw him out of that stifling, draggle-tailed middle-class existence he had so long desired to escape" (16). When representatives of the Tower Society speak with him in the first two books of the novel in book 1 the stranger who talks with him about his grandfather's art collection, in book Two the country pastor who joins Wilhelm and the actors on an outing they seek to impress upon him how irre-

18 HA 7:618.

sponsible it is to give oneself up to unquestioning faith in the providential nature of accidental externals, since man fulfills his purpose only by taking command of his destiny: "Woe to him who, from youth on, is prone to find arbitrariness in necessity and ascribes a certain reasonableness to chance and accepts this religiously. For that amounts to denying one's rational self and giving free play to one's feelings. We think we are god-fearing people if we saunter through life without much thought, we let ourselves be carried along by happy chance, and then finally declare that our wavering existence was a life governed by divine guidance" (38).¹⁹ The resemblance here to Goethe's late comments about Wilhelm Meister quoted above is obvious: "He allows himself to be swept on by the wave, putting up only feeble resistance." Wilhelm does indeed follow his inclinations at every turn, usually justifying his lack of firm resolve by appealing to fate, in spite of all the efforts of members of the Tower Society in the course of the novel to teach him otherwise. On the one occasion when he does form a firm resolve on his own, it turns out to be a serious mistake: he proposes marriage to Therese at exactly the wrong time, when the Tower Society is in the process of clearing up the obstacles to her marrying Lothario, and soon after proposing to Therese he realizes that it is not she but Natalie that he loves.

Wilhelm is not only passive; he is a surprisingly empty vessel, and in fact, except perhaps for his discussions with Serlo and others about Shakespeare and the theater, the novel is devoid of momentous issues

¹⁹ The concession by this presumed rationalist that there is such a thing as accident or chance in the world is in itself rather remarkable. Enlightenment rationalism was normally concerned to deny the role of chance in the universe or at least to reduce it to the barest minimum (without of course embracing the opposite doctrine that everything in the universe happens of necessity, which was identified in the eighteenth century with Spinozism). The emissary from the Tower Society had begun with a discourse on chance, necessity, and the role of reason: "The texture of this world is made up of necessity and chance. Human reason holds the balance between them, treating necessity as the basis of existence, but manipulating and directing chance, and using it. Only if our reason is unshakable does man deserve to be called a god of the earth." For a more detailed discussion of Wilhelm's belief in fate see my article "Wilhelm Meister's Homecoming," *Journal of English & Germanic Philology* 69 (1970): 450-69, especially 451-54.

until we get to book 6, the "Confessions of a Beautiful Soul." Nor is the empty vessel ever filled up in any satisfactory fashion. When we meet Wilhelm at the beginning of the novel, the only obvious source of any education he may have had, any views he may have formed about life and the world, is the literature he has read. Coming from a well-to-do, middle-class family, he obviously had some schooling probably by tutors at home, like Goethe but we hear nothing about anything he has ever studied. We see no groundwork that has ever been laid for further development, harmonious or otherwise, we hear nothing of attendance at church, religious training, or any belief in a deity, we hear nothing of his views on social or ethical issues, or any strong opinions held by his father or other adults that might have left their traces on his mental outlook. He has no relationship to history or other arts besides the theater. He would appear to be totally unequipped to converse on any of the weighty issues of the day. As a child he was fascinated by the pictures in his grandfather's collection but he lacks criteria by which to judge them and does not appreciate their true value, as is clear from his inability to comprehend the artistic deficiencies of the painting of the sick prince which was his favorite. Wilhelm has apparently never even given any thought to studying at the university, which one might think would be the normal thing for an aspiring young gentleman of his day. The novel drastically restricts the cultural and intellectual opportunities open to its hero. How can Wilhelm Meister possibly have any reasonable idea what *Bildung* is, when he has none to start with, only the desire to attain it? Certainly he often looks for it in the wrong places.

Wilhelm never gives up his belief in fate, and the members of the Tower Society never give up trying to convince him that there is no such thing as fate. Wilhelm is particularly averse to being instructed by Jarno, whose penetrating intellect is unbearable to him. He continues to follow his inclinations, never really learning, only experiencing the world. By the beginning of book 8 he can perhaps be said to be ready to learn something about self-restraint, subordinating himself and his own desires to the insights and the more encompassing plans of those in a position to judge the world better than he. Especially after the untimely marriage proposal to Therese he seems to resign himself to doing nothing at all without the express sanction of the Tower Soci-

ety. In the end, however, in spite of his lack of reasoned (or developed) moral principles, his character and the goodness of his heart keep him out of serious trouble, although his goodness leads him more than once to do things he probably should not do. Yet, although some take advantage of him because of his goodness, he also wins affection and respect, becoming involved with people who turn out to be important for him. Good things happen to him in the last books of the novel because of things he has done earlier with never a thought of any future reward. Although by rights Werner should be extremely upset with him for having abandoned his responsibilities to firm and family and joined the actors, he has to forgive him in book 8 because it is precisely Wilhelm's abandonment of responsibility that has brought about the new and profitable connections that now make it possible to buy a large estate on highly favorable terms. At the end of the novel Wilhelm receives a magnificent reward for caring for Mignon; he is promised a share of her inheritance. In the last analysis it is also this goodness (his tie to Mignon) that gains him the opportunity finally to meet the "Amazon" he has dreamed of finding for so long. He may not be terribly smart, and it is not easy to teach him anything, but he *is* lucky; he goes forth into the world and finds fortune and riches beyond his imagining. On the issue of whether to trust fate the outcome of the novel seems to demonstrate clearly that the Tower Society is wrong.

Wilhelm does not reach the happy ending of the novel because of any *Bildung* he has either attained or undergone, although all in all he has at least proven himself worthy of happiness. Thus the novel is not by any stretch of the imagination a Bildungsroman in the teleological sense. Wilhelm gets to the happy end because the author intends for him to do so, and he finds fortune and riches because that simply happens sometimes. In fact, fortune and riches are seldom earned or deserved in literature but often bestowed by the caprice of fate or by the will of the author. In his late comments on the novel Goethe is quite clear on this point. At the end of the entry in his annals covering the period up to 1786, from which I have already quoted, he goes on, "And yet it is possible that all the false steps lead in the end to an inestimable good: a presentiment which develops, reveals itself, and is gradually confirmed in *Wilhelm Meister*, and is finally clearly expressed

in the words: 'You remind me of Saul, the son of Kish, who went forth to seek his father's asses and found a kingdom.' " In the comment about Saul, Goethe is quoting Friedrich, the irresponsible runaway nobleman, as it were a younger brother to Wilhelm, who has the last word at the end of the novel. In the conversation with Eckermann from which I quoted above, Goethe once again cites Friedrich, this time appending what he seems to want to give out as the moral of the story: "Basically the whole thing seems to say nothing less than that, in spite of all his mistakes and all the dumb things he does, man, guided by a higher power, still reaches a happy end." Although Wilhelm's happiness may not be "fated," there is a providence at work in the novel: the author himself.

There *is* a kind of *Bildung* that takes place in the novel, but it is not necessarily of the kind that the interpreters usually seek there. It is a kind of *Bildung* that reflects rather Goethe's interests and concerns after his return from Italy. Two of the Italian accomplishments that he himself rated most highly were 1) finally learning to "see" and 2) finding what he called the "key" to the development of plants and by extension of all living beings. While Wilhelm does not seem to achieve the harmonious development of his talents and faculties that has been posited by so many interpreters of the novel, he does achieve a kind of inner harmony that is worth more than anything that could be attained by seeking to emulate a nobleman: he finds himself, and he finds a new, more meaningful relationship to the world.

Throughout the novel there are numerous indications, noted also by other characters, that Wilhelm has no eye for the world, for external reality, or for the moral and emotional state of other people. He is so concerned with his own feelings and the products of his imagination that he takes note only of what touches something inside him, and *Innigkeit* (inwardness) long remains for him a highly positive value. He sympathizes deeply with Mignon without ever really understanding her, and his relationship to the harper is paradigmatic of his inability to see; he imagines it is the harper's artistic creativity which touches him when he sings, when in reality it is the harper's obsession with his own internal torment and his burden of guilt that give rise to his touching songs. It is a long time before Wilhelm realizes that the

harper is not a person to be admired, but someone to be pitied and in dire need of spiritual assistance.²⁰

If he does not ever learn to see correctly, Wilhelm is still allowed moments of significant symbolic insight in the last book of the novel. At the end of book 7 he is released from his apprenticeship by the Tower Society and assured that he is in fact the father of Felix. At the beginning of book 8 he is in Lothario's garden with Felix and experiences his child's boundless curiosity for the first time: "They finally went up to the gardener, who could tell them the names and uses of various plants. Wilhelm was observing nature through a new organ, and the child's curiosity and desire to learn made him aware how feeble his interest had been in the things outside himself and how little he knew, how few things he was familiar with" (305). Wilhelm had been especially ashamed to have to admit earlier to Werner, in the famous letter quoted above, that the travel diary he had sent home full of observations about the places and people encountered during his journey had been cribbed from books and not personally experienced at all. Now it will be different: "On this day, the happiest of his entire life, his own education seemed also to be beginning anew: he felt the need to inform himself, while being required to inform another."

The highest intuitive insight attained by the worthier persons of the novel is experienced in a symbolic moment that transcends time, combining past, present, and future in one. Lothario attains this moment when he sees his former love, her daughter, and her cousin together and marvels at the simultaneity of likeness and differential development among them: "I found myself presently situated between past and future, strangely like being in an orange grove where in one small area blossoms and fruits are ranged side by side" (288).²¹ The

²⁰ For a more detailed discussion of Wilhelm's chronic lack of perceptiveness, see my article "Wilhelm Meister's Homecoming," 45457.

²¹ See Günther Müller's 1948 essay, "GestaltungUmgestaltung in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahren*," in Müller, *Morphologische Poetik: Gesammelte Aufsätze*, ed. Elena Müller in cooperation with Helga Egner (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1968), 421ff. The figure of the orange grove obviously stems from Goethe's Italian experience. See for example the letter of 2 December 1786 in the *Italian Journey*: "The strawberry tree (*arbutus unedo*) is now blossoming again while the last of its fruits ripen, and one finds the orange tree with blossoms, half-ripened, and fully

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father of the "*schöne Seele*" experiences a similar moment at the sight of his first grandson (Lothario). Wilhelm is finally vouchsafed the same intuition, first when comparing art with life (when he sees the portrait of the "*schöne Seele*" and at first thinks that it is a portrait of Natalie), and a second time in the Hall of the Past among the archetypal statuary figures of regeneration and recurrence (mother, father, child, bride, and bridegroom). Here Wilhelm senses the meaning of human existence: " 'What life there is in this Hall of the Past!' he cried. 'One could just as well call it the Hall of the Present, and of the Future. This is how everything was, and this is how everything will be. Nothing perishes except him who observes and enjoys' " (331).²²

The archetypal figures in the Hall of the Past represent familial relationships. Past, present, or future, the family is the eternal, smallest natural unit and building block of society. The intuitive insight attained here by Wilhelm certifies that he is ready to achieve fulfillment and personal growth. In accepting the responsibilities of fatherhood, along with its joys, Wilhelm senses that he himself will grow along with his child; and because of his child he is determined to give up the aimless pursuit of inwardness, put the past behind him, and take his place in society: "Everything he planned was now to mature for the boy, and everything he built was to last for several generations. His apprenticeship was therefore completed in one sense, for along with the feeling of a father he had acquired the virtues of a solid citizen. His joy knew no bounds" (307). He has become the head of a family (although he still needs to find a mother for his son).

It is impossible to overemphasize the importance of the family in Goethe's later works: its health and well-being are crucial both for the individual and for society, the larger whole. Goethe's ideal of the family is strongly patriarchal, with ramifications also for the organization of society, as can be seen in the figure of Lothario, who aspires to have his effect on society and be a leader, once he has married Therese and settled his affairs at home. Therese, his ideal woman, is

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ripened fruit . . . " (HA 11:146).

²² See also my article "Über Wilhelm Meisters 'Bildung,' " 7379.

someone absolutely qualified to care for home, hearth, and family, the entire domestic economy, including his estates and possessions, thus freeing him to act the part in society at large that she fulfills at home. Significantly albeit somewhat ironically, in view of his past Lothario functions as a teacher of *Bildung* when he talks about family relationships and fatherhood. Urging Wilhelm to go back to the city to fetch Felix whose paternity has not yet been established at this point in the novel and care for him himself, he emphasizes the profit the father or father-substitute derives from caring for a child, "for what even women leave unfinished in our education, children complete by our association with them" (287). A person who is fully *gebildet* has become fully equipped to play a role in the world at large. At the close of the novel Lothario proposes a partnership with Wilhelm, now that they are to be brothers-in-law: "Since we encountered each other in such an extraordinary way, let us not live ordinary lives, let us work together in a worthy enterprise. It is beyond belief what a cultivated man can achieve for himself and others, if, without trying to lord it over others, he has the temperament to be the guardian of many, helping them to find the right occasion to do what they would all like to do, and guiding them toward the goals they have clearly in mind without knowing how to reach them. Let us then join together in a common purpose that is not mere enthusiasm, but an idea which can quite well be put into practice, and is indeed often implemented, though not always consciously" (372).²³

23 See the illuminating recent article by Bengt Algot Sorensen, "Über die Familie in Goethes *Werther* und *Wilhelm Meister*," *Orbis Litterarum* 42 (1987): 11840. Sørensen regards Lothario's views on the family and on the division of roles between father and mother inside the family and outside the family in society (the larger family) as utopian. According to Sørensen, Wilhelm's introduction to fatherhood and the founding of a family are the true culmination of the novel: "Im achten und letzten Buch verbindet sich Natalie als Frau und Mutter mit Wilhelm und Felix, der Kreis hat sich geschlossen, und Wilhelms Familie ist gegründet. Damit ist zweifellos auch ein Abschluß und ein Wendepunkt in Wilhelms innerer Entwicklung erreicht. Die ichbezogene, narzisstische und wirklichkeitsferne Haltung hat er überwunden, indem er sich von nun an für das Wohl anderer Menschen verantwortlich fühlt" (13233). The problem with this (utopian) interpretation in practice is, of course, that we never see Wilhelm and Natalie living together in a family, only agreeing to marry, just as we never

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The *Lehrjahre* is the first major work by Goethe in which the idea of the family plays such a central role. Surely this reflects his insights in the field of morphology and the law of metamorphosis he had derived from the observation of plants in Italy and sought to apply to other living phenomena as well (although one must also remember that he himself had only recently become a father and was presumably, among other things, thinking out his own role to himself). Whenever a person's life history is related in the novel, the kind of family from which that person came turns out to be the most crucial element in the life history, for a person's present situation is inevitably the result of his or her development from those earliest beginnings. Conversely, the characters of the novel are best to be interpreted in "genetic," developmental terms, beginning from their beginnings. In order for the people in the novel to understand themselves and one another, it is necessary for them to tell each other their life stories, and the archive of the Tower Society is filled with scrolls containing the *Lehrjahre* of its members. Wilhelm tells his story on several occasions, for example to Mariane and to Therese. In the *Sendung* none of the principal characters had much of a life history except for the hero himself; a good part of the total mass Goethe added to the *Lehrjahre* in the process of revising and continuing the novel consists precisely of these life histories of the characters.²⁴ The lengthiest of these, the "Confessions of a Beautiful Soul," is primarily an autobiography which helps us to understand and appreciate the "*schöne Seele*," but it also provides our knowledge of the family background of Lothario, Natalie, the beautiful countess (who has no name), and Friedrich. In addition to the "Confessions," the *Lehrjahre* contains newly composed life stories

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actually see Lothario as a leader in society, fulfilling the role to which he aspires. The *Lehrjahre* begs for a continuation, and *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* is not necessarily that continuation; it skips over a number of essential stages of development.

²⁴ To tell the life histories of the characters is, of course, common in eighteenth-century novels, but the kind of emphasis Goethe seems to place on the role of the family in the formation of character is something very much his own.

of Therese, Mignon, and the harper,²⁵ and the life stories of Serlo and Aurelie show a significant difference in comparison with what had been told about them in the *Sendung*. Serlo's story has also been considerably lengthened.

The direction of the changes Goethe made in Serlo's and Aurelie's stories indicates the heightened importance attached to family relationships in the *Lehrjahre*. In the *Lehrjahre* both Aurelie and Serlo have become what they are in large part because of a negative family situation during their formative years. Both lacked a proper father figure to safeguard their development and set them on the right path in life. Aurelie spent her early years with an aunt who was the picture of depravity: "After the untimely death of my mother I spent the best years of my growing up in the house of an aunt who made it a rule to disregard all principles of honesty. She abandoned herself blindly to every emotion, no matter whether she controlled its object or was enslaved by it, so long as she could forget herself in the whirl of enjoyment" (150). Because of her aunt Aurelie despises both men and women, and as an actress she has found it difficult to relate professionally to her audience, because her admirers have always put their personal expectations of her ahead of their appreciation of her art. To be sure, in the *Lehrjahre* Aurelie's actual description of the aunt is essentially the same as it had been earlier in the *Sendung*. But in the *Sendung* Aurelie had benefited from the attention and advice of an elderly friend who had stood in the role of father to her: "An elderly friend who treated me like a daughter completely opened my eyes. I also became acquainted with my own sex, and as a girl of sixteen I was

²⁵ To be sure, the harper's life story is not a separate story; it is entwined with Mignon's. A truly enigmatic and unpredictable character like Philine who is "herself" rather than what any of the other characters in the novel want her to be also has no history that can be told.

truly smarter than I am now."²⁶ In the *Lehrjahre*, by contrast, Aurelie has always been on her own, without family support. Similarly, in the *Lehrjahre*, her brother Serlo ran away to seek his fortune because of the way he had been mistreated by his father: "As soon as he was fairly sure of his own powers, he thought it perfectly natural to run away from his father who, as the boy's intelligence developed and his skill increased, thought it necessary to advance these still further by even harsher treatment" (160).²⁷

Many of the misfortunes suffered by the characters in the novel and the false directions they set out on in life can be attributed to weak family support, particularly to weak, irresponsible, or absent fathers. Wilhelm Meister's own family background is a case in point. Although in the *Lehrjahre* Wilhelm's father is a much more positive figure than in the *Sendung*, and the unpleasant and selfish mother of the *Sendung* has become a good and loving mother in the *Lehrjahre*, Wilhelm Meister has not benefited from strong parental guidance, and he has not been able to find his proper place in life at home with his loved ones. If he were comfortable he would hardly want to leave home to become an actor. The very desire to cut all ties with his upbringing is sign enough of the incompleteness or deficiencies of his family surroundings. Wilhelm escapes the ultimate confrontation with his father and his father's displeasure only because the father dies at a convenient

²⁶ Book 6, chapter 10, quoted according to volume 2,2 of Goethe's *Sämtliche Werke nach Epochen seines Schaffens*: Münchner Ausgabe (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1987), 309. The corresponding passage in the *Lehrjahre* does away with the "elderly friend" and now reads: "Unfortunately I also on these occasions formed some negative opinions of my own sex. As a girl of sixteen I was more sensible than I am now, when I can hardly understand myself" (150).

²⁷ In the *Sendung* there is no mention of Serlo's family situation. He runs away for other reasons: "Restlessness and fear of the consequences of some thoughtless pranks drove him to leave home when he was hardly fourteen years old" (book 6, chapter 12, Münchner Ausgabe 2,2:322). In the *Lehrjahre* there is some discrepancy between Serlo's and Aurelie's stories at least Aurelie's story does not mention her father at all. On the other hand, it may simply be gender and role typing that are at work here: for Aurelie it is important that the mother is dead and that she grew up with an aunt; in Serlo's case it is important that he was mistreated by his father.

juncture. Appropriately enough, Wilhelm must still endure a confrontation with the ghost of the father of Hamlet's father on stage, who reminds him acutely of his own father, and for Wilhelm to be released from the tutelage of the Tower Society, it is necessary for the ghost to appear again and absolve him.

Therese is the victim of a loving but weak father who is unable to stand up to his demanding wife (who turns out not to have been Therese's real mother) and thus allows his daughter to be cheated out of her social standing and her share of his estate. Mignon, the child of an incestuous relationship, and her parents are all ultimately the victims of her very unfatherlike father and grandfather; this gentleman, unable to endure the thought of being laughed at for siring a daughter at his advanced age, hides her, passing her off as the child of an old friend. Not knowing of their family relationship, the daughter and her brother (the harper) fall in love, and Mignon is the unfortunate offspring of this union. The sins and omissions of the fathers *are* visited on the children and the children's children. When a father dies before the children have been reared, their upbringing becomes a problematic matter, as demonstrated by the family of Lothario and Natalie; although the Uncle makes the best possible arrangements for bringing up all four of the children according to his own beliefs and predilections, only Lothario and Natalie can be said to have turned out well and to be or have become *gebildet*. The beautiful countess, who seems to have married a weak father-substitute, eventually falls victim to superstition, while Friedrich has run away from his teachers to follow Philine and live as a carefree vagabond. (There may be some possibility that Friedrich will improve once he has become a father, as presumably does Wilhelm, but one should not count on it.)

Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre is a novel about *Bildung*, although it is not a Bildungsroman in the sense in which the term has come to be used by critics and scholars. It is a novel about both true and false *Bildung*, as Friedrich Schlegel pointed out in 1808, defending the novel against the Romantics.²⁸ The book is, among other things, a

28 "Wie leicht würde aber derjenige, der den höhern, ja den höchsten Begriff der Bildung dem Werke absprechen wollte, durch das Ganze sowohl, als durch Stellen desselben zu widerlegen sein! Daß wahre und falsche Bildung in dem Buche oft so nah aneinander grenzen, so ganz ineinander verfließen, dürfte auch kein Tadel sein, denn es ist dies die eigentliche Beschaffenheit der feinern Gesellschaft, die hier

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novel about people seeking to find their way, new directions, new forms of social organization in a changing world. Traditional society, based on the traditional patriarchal family structure, is threatening to come apart at the seams. What Goethe portrays in the *Lehrjahre*, as opposed to the *Sendung*, which does not yet depict such a broad cross section of the world, is a time of social crisis, of the new contending against the old. It is not only the aristocracy that finds itself threatened by the new world,²⁹ the middle class has to find its way as well. That the novel ends with four weddings or engagements, all of them involving a mésalliance—three marriages between aristocrats and commoners, and the fourth, Lothario's, between a leading aristocrat and the illegitimate daughter of a nobleman—is not a happy ending fit for just any comedy. It is an outcome of the *Bildung* that goes on and is portrayed in the novel, most significantly in the family sphere.

Of late there seems to be a certain fondness for quoting a passage from Hegel's lectures on aesthetics in order to disparage the end of the novel as an enthronement of patriarchal sexist values and to explain it as a coming-to-terms with the expectations of traditional society in spite of all the attempts on the part of Wilhelm Meister, Lothario, and the others to find something better than the old, stodgy, and cumbersome social and family environment.³⁰ There is no reason to condemn Goethe for not being able to transcend patriarchalism except by

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dargestellt werden soll." Quoted from Bahr, ed., *Erläuterungen und Dokumente*, 33435. The passage is taken from Schlegel's review of an 1806 Cotta edition of Goethe's works.

²⁹ See, for example, Hans R. Vaget, "Liebe und Grundeigentum in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*:" Zur Physiognomie des Adels bei Goethe," in *Legitimationskrisen des deutschen Adels 1200/1900*, ed. Peter Uwe Hohendahl and Paul Michael Lützeler (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1979), 13758.

³⁰ "Mag einer auch noch so viel sich mit der Welt herumgezankt haben, umhergeschoben worden seyn, zuletzt bekömmt er meistens doch sein Mädchen und irgend eine Stellung, heirathet, und wird ein Philister so gut wie die Anderen auch; die Frau steht der Haushaltung vor, Kinder bleiben nicht aus, das angebetete Weib, das erst die Einzige, ein Engel war, nimmt sich ohngefähr ebenso aus wie alle Anderen, das Amt giebt Arbeit und Verdrüßlichkeiten, die Ehe Hauskreuz, und so ist der ganze Katzenjammer der Übrigen da" (quoted from Bahr, 34142). While Hegel has been talking about "*Lehrjahre*" in this passage, it has not been with reference to Wilhelm Meister.

turning it in Lothario's plans for the future into a utopian ideal, and there is no reason why Goethe should have been a modern feminist. What he has portrayed, especially in the ambitions of Lothario, which Wilhelm and other cultured (*gebildete*) persons are invited to share with him, is the dream of a future in which although men will remain men and women will remain women, and their roles will not change appreciably there will be more stability, more happiness, and more equality for all, at least in social and family terms, than in the tired old worlds that Wilhelm Meister and young Master Friedrich had run away from.

The Theatrical Mission of the *Lehrjahre*

Jane K. Brown

It has always seemed odd to me that Goethe and Schiller should engage in extended dialogue on the difference between narrative and drama. Surely such a fundamental distinction ought to have been obvious to Germany's greatest living novelist and greatest living dramatist by their forty-sixth and thirty-sixth years respectively.¹ And yet precisely this topic is the subject of the seventh chapter of book 5 of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, of a joint essay, "Über epische und dramatische Dichtung" (1797, On Epic and Dramatic Literature), and of an extended interchange in the poets' correspondence.² Furthermore Goethe translated and Schiller published, in 1795, Mme de Staël's *Essai sur les fictions*, which glorifies the novel as *the* great genre, using the neoclassical or neo-Aristotelian theory of drama as its framework of discussion (these terms will be used synonymously here). The eighteenth century had had a long tradition of theorizing about the

1 This essay first appeared in *Goethe's Narrative Fiction: The Irvine Goethe Symposium*, ed. William J. Lillyman (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1983), 6984. It has been slightly revised for this volume.

2 A thorough description and discussion of this extended theorizing may be found in Eric A. Blackall, *Goethe and the Novel* (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1976), 76100. Blackall analyzes the development and inconsistencies in Goethe's theorizing and reminds us that the *Lehrjahre* material must be understood primarily in terms of its function in the novel.

relation of novel and drama. Forty years earlier Richardson had defended *Clarissa* as astonishing as it may seem in terms of neo-Aristotelian dramatic theory.³ Closer to home the critic Friedrich von Blanckenburg (1744-96) drew freely on the same theory in his *Versuch über den Roman* (1774, literally *Essay on the Novel*). Furthermore, since Goethe was engaged at the time in writing *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, a major novel about drama, it behooves us to take his theorizing seriously, superfluous as it may seem on first view.

What conclusions did Goethe reach? we might ask. Precious few, as recent studies have shown.⁴ The joint essay of 1797 distinguishes five types of motifs in literature: progressive, regressive, retarding, retrospective and proleptic. But of these only the regressive is exclusively characteristic of epic, and only the progressive is exclusively characteristic of drama; the other three, including the famous "retarding," are considered common property of both genres. In subsequent correspondence Goethe displays increasing impatience with the whole endeavor. Blackall has also shown how the preliminary conclusions in the *Lehrjahre* book 5, chapter 7 are relativized and eventually effaced first by their status in the novel, then by the different position taken in the essay of 1797.⁵ Nevertheless, more can be drawn from the treatment of drama in the *Lehrjahre* itself and from the curious subliminal relationship between the *Lehrjahre* and *Faust* with regard to the connection of novel to drama. As it turns out, Goethe was not the only writer to explore this theoretical question in his literary work. The tradition of discussion to which he attaches himself, the way he relates to it, and what he does with it are the subjects of this essay.

Shakespeare is central to the *Lehrjahre*. Wilhelm is introduced to Shakespeare by Jarno in book 3; Wilhelm casts himself first as Prince Hal, then as Hamlet in book 4; Wilhelm defends and analyzes the unity of *Hamlet*; finally, Wilhelm and all the rest really play themselves when they think they are playing Shakespeare. But *Hamlet* is not the only play in which the actors play themselves. The last performance of

3 Postscript to *Clarissa*.

4 Blackall, *Goethe and the Novel*, 1069.

5 *Ibid.*, 109f.

Wilhelm's acting career is in Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Emilia Galotti* (1772), in which the main characters in this part of the novel once again play themselves Wilhelm the more or less well-meaning but weak seducer and Aurelie the betrayed Countess Orsina. Indeed Serlo is furious with his sister for playing the role with such passion, for the audience knew that Lothario had betrayed her and doubtless recognized the personal element in her playing "next thing you know she will go on stage stark naked," he chides.⁶ And yet even in real life Aurelie plays a role, one more famous in the eighteenth century than that of Orsina; for as the abandoned mistress of the irresistible Lothario, she plays the proud Calista of Nicholas Rowe's *The Fair Penitent* (1703).

I shall describe Rowe's play briefly since much of the discussion will center on it. At the beginning of the play passionate Calista has already been seduced and abandoned by Lothario, a notorious rake. Despite her professed rage Lothario easily rewoos her on the day of her marriage to the devoted, handsome, virtuous choice of her father. The new husband, Altamont, kills Lothario. In return Lothario's faction murders Calista's father, but not before the "fair penitent" has promised to restore her tarnished honor by suicide. Calista is a literary ancestor of Lessing's pure heroine Emilia as well as of Orsina. Calista does indeed keep her promise, but only over the corpse of the beloved seducer, while Altamont vainly offers forgiveness and a new life. There can be little doubt that we are to recognize the allusion to Rowe in the *Lehrjahre*. Like Rowe's gay Lothario, whose name had already become synonymous with *seducer* in English by the end of the eighteenth century, Goethe's Lothario is also a womanizer. The day Wilhelm arrives to reproach him for his callous treatment of Aurelie, Lothario is injured in a duel over another woman he had abandoned;⁷ shortly afterward Wilhelm helps Lothario disentangle himself from his current mistress Lydie by taking her to all people

⁶ "Sie wird noch ehstens ganz nackt auf das Theater treten": *Goethes Werke* (Hamburg: Wegner, 1965), 7:354. All further citations will be indicated in the text.

⁷ A colonel's wife. Ironically, the husband challenges Lothario not because he had seduced her but because he had abandoned her.

Lothario's former fiancée. The latter, Therese, cannot marry him because he once casually slept with her mother; nevertheless she remains warmly devoted to him. So, too, does the peasant woman, Margarethe, whom he had seduced many years before. Small wonder some of Goethe's contemporaries questioned the morality of the novel. There were also those who questioned the morality of Rowe's play; this, too, will be part of our story.

Wilhelm escapes the toils of *Hamlet* only to become enmeshed in *The Fair Penitent* in real life. Thus, there is a sense in which *Wilhelm Meister* remains drama even when it claims not to be. But this is not the point I am immediately interested in; for the time being I am more interested in the specific juxtaposition of the two seduction plots, Hamlet-Ophelia and Lothario-Calista. In the terms of the novel, Hamlet-Ophelia equals Wilhelm-Aurelie, Lothario-Calista equals Lothario-Aurelie. Are we to identify gentle Wilhelm and rakish Lothario as equivalent figures? Surely in some sense we are, for Wilhelm has begun his career by seducing and abandoning Mariane; he is to marry, ultimately, not Therese, whose name is associated with a saint, but Lothario's sister Natalie, whose name is associated with birth and generation. The ideal of the *Lehrjahre* combines the reflective imagination of a Hamlet with the restless activity of a Lothario.

But the connection of Hamlet and Lothario has implications beyond the *Lehrjahre*, for it is also to be found in *Faust*. The *Hamlet* parallels in the Gretchen tragedy are well known. Gretchen's madness is modeled on Ophelia's, and the serenade that provokes the death of Gretchen's brother, Valentin, is adapted from Ophelia's Valentine's Day song. Both melancholy lovers are associated with the university at Wittenberg. Both girls lose a parent and a brother to their lover; Ophelia dies by drowning, while Gretchen drowns her child. Gretchen also reveals the unconscious sensuality attributed to Ophelia in the *Lehrjahre* (book 4, chapter 14).

The parallels to *The Fair Penitent* are also present in *Faust*, for the Gretchen tragedy is in many respects a typical eighteenth-century seduction drama; its plotting is unilinear (unlike the fragmented Ophelia subplot), it takes place in the same domestic settings—gardens and rooms—and ends in the same place. (*The Fair Penitent* ends not, it is true, in a prison, but in a black-draped Hall of Death deco-

rated with skull and bones.) Like Calista, Gretchen continues to love her seducer, even as she is condemned to death for the murder of their child. Rowe's Lothario is undeniably Faustian in his insatiability. In what was to become typically Goethean language he cries out early in the play, "I snatched the glorious golden opportunity" (I, 156). And like Faust, Lothario finds his ultimate justification in the "naturalness" of his behavior:

But I am like the birds, great Nature's happy commoners,
That haunt the woods, in meads, in flow'ry gardens,
Rifle the sweets, and taste her choicest fruits,
Yet scorn to ask the lordly owners leave. (II, ii, 12427)

Calista is very much the *grande dame*, which Gretchen correctly claims not to be; nevertheless the model for Gretchen's devoted domesticity is to be found in Lavinia, the other important woman in the play. In the course of the eighteenth century these two roles coalesce, so that Gretchen combines Calista's absolute love with Lavinia's humble devotion. Clearly then, there are central issues in the Gretchen tragedy that derive from *The Fair Penitent* as well as from *Hamlet*.

Faust embodies in himself the Wilhelm-Lothario pairing in the *Lehrjahre*; he is at once the dreamy speculator and the man devoted to restless activity. There is nothing unusual about works in different genres dealing with the same theme, but it is indeed interesting for the problem of the relationship of novel to drama that Goethe exploits the identical dramatic sources for both the *Lehrjahre* and *Faust*. The implications can be understood only by exploring the historical context at greater length.

With *The Fair Penitent* and *Jane Shore* (1714) Rowe unleashed a flood of seduction tragedies "she-tragedies" as they were called on the English stage. And out of this flood developed a tradition that can be easily traced from Rowe to Goethe. One high point is Lillo's *London Merchant* (1731), where the theme is treated in prose and in a middle-class environment. In *Clarissa* (1747) Richardson translated the theme into an epistolary novel, which, however, remains oriented toward drama in its use of gesture, in its scenic technique and in its

structure of references to dramatic literature.⁸ In *Clarissa* the firmness of Calista and the gentleness of Lavinia have already begun to coalesce. In 1755 Lessing brought the tradition to Germany as *Miß Sara Sampson*. His title betrays its English origins: the play is deeply indebted to *Clarissa*, as well as to Rowe, Lillo and several other of their successors.⁹ But Lessing was by no means the only German to be reading in this tradition; in 1759 he accused no less a contemporary than Germany's best-known poet, Christoph Martin Wieland (1733-1813) of plagiarizing from Rowe.¹⁰ The most interesting aspect of this tradition for our purpose is the modulation through *Clarissa*, without doubt one of the most influential novels of the eighteenth century.

Clarissa offers not only a model for the incorporation of the seduction plot into the novel but also establishes a tradition of interest in Shakespeare in the English novel, a tradition we shall pursue in Goldsmith and Fielding. Indeed, *Clarissa* explicitly contrasts *The Fair Penitent* with *Hamlet*. Both the contrast and its association with Richard-

⁸ There has been considerable work done on Richardson as a dramatic novelist, ranging most recently from the source studies of Ira Konigsberg, *Samuel Richardson and the Dramatic Novel* (Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1968) to Margaret Doody's work on dramatic reference in *A Natural Passion: A Study of the Novels of Samuel Richardson* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1974), 107-27; Mark Kinkead-Weekes's discussion of novel as drama in *Samuel Richardson: Dramatic Novelist* (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1973), 395-461; and John Traugott's analysis of Richardson's manipulation of the rake-hero in "Clarissa's Richardson: An Essay to Find the Reader," in *English Literature in the Age of Disguise*, ed. Maximilian Novak, Publications from the Clark Library Professorship No. 4 (Berkeley: University of California, 1977), 157-208. Konigsberg argues that one direct source for *Clarissa* was Charles Johnson's seduction tragedy of 1733, *Caelia*.

⁹ See, for example, Steven R. Cerf, "Miss Sara Sampson and *Clarissa*: The Use of Epistolary Devices in Lessing's Drama," in *Theatrum Mundi: Essays on German Drama and German Literature*, ed. Edward R. Haymes, Houston German Studies No. 2 (Munich: Fink, 1980), 223-0. On the many sources for *Miß Sara Sampson*, see C. C. D. Vail, *Lessing's Relation to the English Language and Literature* (New York: Columbia UP, 1936; reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1966), 129-38.

¹⁰ *Literaturbriefe* 6364, in *Lessings Sämtliche Schriften*, ed. Karl Lachmann and Franz Muncker, 3rd ed. (Stuttgart: Göschen, 1892), 8:166-78.

son's mode of incorporating a dramatic plot into the novel are illuminating for Goethe's practice at the end of the century.

Considering the ultimate importance of Rowe for Richardson's plot, his discussion of the dramatist is at first glance startling. It occurs in a letter from Belford to Lovelace after Lovelace has raped Clarissa; it reads, in part:

I have frequently thought, in my attendance on [Clarissa], that if Belton's admired author, Nic Rowe, had had such a character before him, he would have drawn another sort of a penitent than he *has* done, or given his play, which he calls *The Fair Penitent*, a fitter title. . . .

The whole story of [Rowe's] is a pack of damned stuff! Lothario, 'tis true, seems such another wicked, ungenerous varlet as thou knowest who [i.e., Lovelace himself]: the author knew how to draw a rake, but not to paint a penitent. Calista is a desiring luscious wench. . . . Her passions are all storm and tumult; nothing of the finer passions of the sex, which, if naturally drawn, will distinguish themselves from the masculine passions by a softness that will even shine through rage and despair.

Richardson continues in this vein, identifying Calista's husband as an "amorous blockhead."¹¹ Whatever "anxiety of influence" might be at work here, Richardson's explicit grounds for rejecting Rowe are moral.¹² Clarissa is "virtuous, noble, wise, and pious,"¹³ but Rowe's Calista has "no virtue";¹⁴ she is guilty of lust, passion, and pride. In a footnote to this passage Richardson lists five virtuous women from heroic and Shakespearean tragedies who, like Clarissa, have suffered innocently. The sixth and final name on this list is Ham-

¹¹*The History of Clarissa Harlowe* (London: Dent, 1976), 4:118.

¹² Clearly one function of this passage is, as Margaret Doody asserts, to forestall the inevitable comparison of *Clarissa* to Rowe's play (*A Natural Passion*, 113, note).

¹³*Clarissa* 4:119.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 118.

let. Shakespeare thus represents "virtue" in contrast to Rowe's immorality.

But we have here what Harold Bloom might call a "swerve": Ophelia, who is clearly the parallel figure to Cordelia and Desdemona, the two other Shakespearean examples Richardson uses, is replaced by Hamlet and indeed by the least interesting possible interpretation of Hamlet. Richardson's suppression of Ophelia illuminates Wilhelm's interpretation of her in the *Lehrjahre* (book 4, chapter 14). There we are told "[Ophelia's] whole being hangs in ripe, sweet sensuality . . . and should the easy-going goddess Opportunity shake the young tree, the fruit would fall down at once."¹⁵ Goethe portrays her rather more as the "luscious wench" than as Richardson's model of virtue. Richardson sets up Shakespeare in his footnote, then, as a model of virtue, while Goethe sets him up as a model of nature "Nothing so natural as Shakespeare's people," as he had put it earlier.¹⁶ From Goethe's perspective at the end of the century Richardson's virtuous Shakespeare would have looked like a radical limitation of the dramatist's greatness.

Richardson introduces his critique of Rowe with "What a fine subject for tragedy would the injuries of this lady . . . make!"¹⁷ He implies ultimately that *Clarissa* constitutes a far better tragedy than *The Fair Penitent*. This is not a casual reference. I have already indicated that the novel is oriented toward drama in its use of gesture and scenic construction, as well as in its constant allusion to drama. In his postscript to the novel Richardson justifies his "history (or rather *dramatic narrative*)" explicitly in the terms of the theory of tragedy.¹⁸ Citing Aristotle in the version of Addison and Horace in the translation of Pope, Richardson touches on all the topoi of neo-

15 "[Opheliens] ganzes Wesen schwebt in reifer, süßer Sinnlichkeit, . . . und sollte die bequeme Göttin Gelegenheit das Bäumchen schütteln, so würde die Frucht sogleich herabfallen" (247).

16 "Nichts so Natur als Shakespeares Menschen," in "Zum Shakespeares-Tag," *Goethes Werke* (Hamburg: Wegner, 1963), 12:226.

17 *Clarissa* 4:117.

18 Quotation from *Clarissa* 4:554. Emphasis mine.

Aristotelian poetics the supremacy of tragedy, poetic justice, pity and terror, the teaching of proper compassion, pathos, nobility of character, unity, and verisimilitude or probability. But in viewing his novel as a neoclassical tragedy, Richardson overlooks a fundamental problem: the demand for unity and verisimilitude prohibits the discursiveness, self-reflexiveness, and capacity for analysis that constitute *Clarissa's* unique contribution to the development of the novel. He has not provided an adequate poetics of this novel at all.

Thus, not only Richardson's view of Shakespeare but also his poetics must have seemed limited to a thoughtful reader of the latter part of the century, who would be able to see in the digressions of Fielding and Sterne the real implications of Richardson's naive self-reflexiveness. Because the tragedy-novel problem and the Rowe-Shakespeare problem are adumbrated here in tandem, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that they are related and that in some sense the Rowe-Shakespeare juxtaposition comes to signify the tragedy-novel issue.

Hamlet was the most-performed and we therefore conclude the most popular Shakespeare play of the eighteenth century.¹⁹ It might be worth reflecting for a moment on why this should be so. Surely the reason cannot be that among the Shakespeare canon it conforms most closely to the tenets of the prevailing poetics; rather, *Romeo and Juliet*, which has neither subplot nor double plot, has this dubious honor. And indeed, up until midcentury *Romeo and Juliet* was the most popular of Shakespeare's plays. The emergence of *Hamlet* coincides with the emerging hostility to neoclassical dramatic theory, and in this respect Wilhelm Meister's proposed revisions of the text for the stage are telling. In book 5, chapter 4 Wilhelm describes a stage version that would emphasize the inner unity of the main action by revising the centrifugal details into a single coherent background plot invented by Wilhelm. In other words, Wilhelm claims he can turn *Hamlet* into a neoclassical tragedy without damaging the essence of Shakespeare's play.²⁰ Indeed he characterizes the cuts as details,

¹⁹ Louis Marder, *His Exits and Entrances: The Story of Shakespeare's Reputation* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1963), 64.

²⁰ In fact English eighteenth-century stage versions of *Hamlet* do tend to cut all of the political background figures that Wilhelm cuts in his version. I have not

(footnote continued on next page)

"which make a novel broad and rich, but which . . . damage the unity of this play in the extreme and are quite incorrect."²¹ Goethe points here to a crucial aspect of *Hamlet*. In its tendency to subplot, to centrifugal detail, to retardation, it is much more like a novel than a drama. Blackall has noted the ironic fact that the theory of drama offered in the *Lehrjahre* does not apply to *Hamlet*;²² we should also note that the theory of the novel offered there *does* fit *Hamlet* it deals with sentiments and events, it moves slowly, the sentiments of the main character retard the action, the hero is passive. Part of *Hamlet's* fascination for the eighteenth century would seem to be the play's affinities with the novel.

Everything we have seen so far fits in with our knowledge that Goethe did not display any extraordinary interest in Richardson. But he did remain a life-long admirer of Goldsmith and Fielding. In these two novelists we find an alternative model to Richardson's for the incorporation of the seduction plot into the novel. Their novels are basically picaresque in structure the seduction tragedy enters as subplot into a larger and looser structure, much as it does in the *Lehrjahre*. Both *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766) and *Tom Jones* (1749) confront Shakespeare with the seduction plot in ways that are significant for our problem.

I shall begin with *The Vicar of Wakefield*, where the connections are still relatively straightforward. In chapter eighteen of *The Vicar of Wakefield* the vicar falls in with a company of players: together they mourn that only the Elizabethans are popular now and that no one will come to see Dryden or Otway. But strangely enough, when the troupe then performs a play, it is Rowe's *The Fair Penitent*, not an Elizabethan play or one by Dryden or Otway. The play has thematic

(footnote continued from previous page)

found any that actually add the new background plot that Wilhelm suggests. However, Nahum Tate's version of *King Lear*, which was the standard stage version into the nineteenth century, added a successful love relation between Edgar and Cordelia to unify the play and to motivate Cordelia's fateful silence in the first scene.

21 "die einen Roman weit und breit machen können, die aber der Einheit dieses Stücks . . . auf das äußerste schaden und höchst fehlerhaft sind" (296).

22 *Goethe and the Novel*, 93.

connections with *The Vicar of Wakefield*; nevertheless, the preceding discussion about the ascendancy of the Elizabethans remains troubling. We can begin to understand it, however, when we realize that the germ of the plot and the source of the hero's Reverend Primrose's name is probably a speech in *Hamlet*.

But good my brother,
Do not, as some ungracious pastors do,
Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven,
Whiles, like a puffed and reckless libertine,
Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads,
And recks not his own rede. (I, iii, 4656)²³

This reference is oblique indeed, but it is especially significant, for it identifies the "real" level of action in the novel with Shakespeare's play, while the players and the vicar, who prefer not to face the realities of their time, are associated with the neoclassical play. Furthermore, it develops that one of the actors is the vicar's own lost son, George: the transition from lost to restored corresponds to the movement from association with Rowe's play to entry into the *Hamlet*-like plot of the novel.²⁴ Goldsmith's view and use of Shakespeare are clearly quite different from Richardson's. His Shakespeare is not cut down to size but belongs to the "real world" in the novel. Rowe does not need to be attacked; it is sufficient to confine him to the stage.

Fielding was unquestionably interested in the difficulties of applying neo-Aristotelian theory to the novel: I will consider only a few examples here. Even before he began writing novels this problem surfaces in the comedy *Don Quixote in England* (1733). The title character identifies this concern; as in Cervantes's and in Fielding's novels the scene is an inn and the action is determined by the succes-

23 That the plot and name derive from *Hamlet* is argued by Ronald Paulson in "Life as Journey and as Theater: Two Eighteenth-Century Narrative Structures," *New Literary History* 8 (1976): 5456. One wonders, indeed, if the heroine's name, Olivia, might not have been chosen for its similarity to Ophelia.

24 George is cast as Horatio in *The Fair Penitent*, the only character whose name is also used in *Hamlet*; in both plays Horatio is comrade to the hero.

sion of arrivals. Furthermore, because Don Quixote is already known in England by reputation and because he emerges as the *raisonneur*, as the one sensible figure in a pack of madmen, the effect is to give a special dignity and authority to the novel in the shallow world of the play. The play has a prologue played by a manager, author, and player of the sort popularized by *The Beggar's Opera* (and familiar to us from *Faust*). Otherwise there is no technical experimentation to accompany the hints of hostility to the form. By the time of *Tom Jones*, however, the situation is quite different. Each book of the novel begins with a chapter of authorial comment; most of these are devoted in some way to the poetics of the novel. But what the reader will not find is the standard neoclassical theory we saw in Richardson. Rather he will find anything but that, ranging from persiflage for example, instead of a poetics a bill of fare to a feast (I, 1) or mock-serious analysis of verisimilitude (VIII, 1) to open attack on the basic rules of the prevailing theory (V, 1).

As we might expect, where there is a nondramatic theory of the novel, Shakespeare is not far behind. For example, the pointless anecdote with which Fielding burlesques the idea of the probable includes apparently casually the visit of a murderer to a performance of *Hamlet* (VIII, 1). Much more important, however, is the way in which Fielding commandeers Shakespeare to defend the coherence of his novel in book 10. And in this context we must remember that neo-Aristotelian critics among them J. C. Gottsched (1700/66), the leading literary authority in Germany in his time did not admit life history as an adequate principle of organization in narrative, nor could they tolerate digressions.²⁵ The first chapter of book 10 begins disingenuously enough: "Reader, it is impossible we should know what Sort of Person thou wilt be: For perhaps, thou may'st be as learned in Human Nature as *Shakespeare* himself was, and, perhaps, thou may'st be no wiser than some of his Editors."²⁶ Lest Fielding

²⁵ Gottsched, *Versuch einer Critischen Dichtkunst* (Leipzig: Breitkopf, 1751; reprint, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1962), 515.

²⁶ I cite from the Norton Critical Edition, ed. Sheridan Baker (New York: Norton, 1973), 398. Further references to this edition will be in parentheses in the text.

be so egregiously misunderstood as Shakespeare was, he offers his reader some admonitions, the first of which is not to condemn any incidents as irrelevant "This Work may, indeed, be considered as a great Creation of our own; and for a little Reptile of a Critic to presume to find Fault with any of its Parts, without knowing the Manner in which the Whole is connected, and before he comes to the final Catastrophe, is a most presumptuous Absurdity" (398). Shakespeare is thus invoked to legitimate untraditional forms of organization. And just two paragraphs later Fielding admonishes his reader "not to condemn a Character as a bad one, because it is not perfectly a good one" (399). This is precisely Richardson's "misunderstanding" in his critique of Rowe, where he had argued that Clarissa was a much better heroine than Calista because she was morally perfect. In *Shamela* and *Joseph Andrews* Fielding had uncovered the moral weakness of Richardson's first great heroine in open attacks; now the polemics are subliminal. But for our purposes the most important aspect of this subliminal attack on Richardson is the way it is connected to the anti-Aristotelian strain of *Tom Jones*.

It might at first seem paradoxical that Rowe, a conventional enough neoclassical dramatist, should share honors with Shakespeare in these polemics. In Goethe, certainly, he seems to embody the more conventional eighteenth-century version of the seduction theme in contrast to Shakespeare. Nevertheless, he looked different at closer temporal quarters. For one thing, as we have already seen, his shetragedies modulated very quickly into middle-class tragedies; thus he would have appeared as an innovator responsible for the demise of the Aristotelian requirement that tragic figures belong to the upper classes. Furthermore, Rowe had produced in 1709 the first major edition of Shakespeare subsequent to the Folios; he also had compiled the life of Shakespeare that was to remain standard throughout the eighteenth century. To Richardson and Fielding, then, he would have appeared much less innocuous than to us or even to Goethe.

Let us consider now the *Hamlet* performance in *Tom Jones*. It does not appear to relate to the concerns we have been discussing in any obvious way, but there is much that is not obvious in Fielding. First, there is no explicit contrast or reference to *The Fair Penitent*. Nevertheless, the visit to the theater takes place immediately after Fielding's

heroine, Sophia, is freed from confinement by her father, who had removed her in turn from the house of Lady Bellaston (the name is the Latin equivalent, we may note, of Calista), where she had been a virtual prisoner and was given over to be raped in a thumbnail parody of the seduction motif. Second, like Richardson, Fielding shows no interest in the Ophelia subplot of *Hamlet*. But, unlike Richardson, he also shows no interest in the prince. He is most interested in the ghost; the description of the performance focuses on Partridge's belief in ghosts and his inability to distinguish what happens in the play from reality. This treatment of *Hamlet* turns out to be central to our discussion, for it strikes at the heart of neoclassical poetics: the principle of verisimilitude. Earlier I mentioned that VIII, 1 burlesques this principle: at the *Hamlet* performance it is exposed in all its absurdity. If what appears on the stage must be not only possible but also probable the standard neo-Aristotelian position then it should be the ultimate measure of success if what is on stage is mistaken for reality. Now we suddenly understand that Goethe is placing himself in a tradition when in *Wilhelm Meister* he uses a *Hamlet* performance for characters to play themselves. And we understand why, when Aurelie plays herself in the neoclassical *Emilia Galotti*, it kills her.

Thus in *Tom Jones* Fielding expands the question beyond the matter of novel versus drama; the way the *Hamlet* performance is presented undercuts the neoclassicist poetics of the drama as well. Book 7, chapter 1 presents this question in more abstract, though equally oblique, terms. There Fielding reflects on the common comparison of the world to a stage. "It may seem easy enough to account for all this," he suggests,

by reflecting that the theatrical Stage is nothing more than a Representation, or, as *Aristotle* calls it, an Imitation of what really exists; and hence, perhaps, we might fairly pay a very high Compliment to those, who by their Writings or Actions have been so capable of imitating Life, as to have their Pictures in a Manner confounded with, or mistaken for the Originals. (247)

Nevertheless, as the chapter proceeds, it becomes clear that Fielding has something quite different in mind. By turning the metaphor inside out, into "all the world's an audience," Fielding in effect returns the

metaphor of world as stage to its original meaning, which places human life into a cosmic and religious context in which it is evaluated. This is important, because the stage in this meaning refers to a kind of drama in which the audience is constantly reminded of the representative nature of the stage and of its own role in interpreting what is represented. The neoclassical probabilistic stage, on the other hand, is naturalistic; the illusion is so convincing that the spectator forgets himself for the reality of the illusion. The first meaning evokes the stage of ritual and religious drama, of morality and mystery play, of masque and opera, even of Shakespeare, whose stage was decorated as an emblem of the cosmos. It is the stage that has been effectively repressed, reinterpreted, or misunderstood since the advent of neo-Aristotelian poetics in the late seventeenth century.

In book 12 Fielding's position emerges clearly as a historical statement. There Tom Jones runs into a travelling puppet show, which is performed "with great Regularity and Decency" (488). The play is "the fine and serious" part of a play recently performed on the London stage: it is, we are told, "indeed a very grave and solemn Entertainment, without any low Wit or Humour, or Jests; or, to do it no more than Justice, without any thing which could provoke a Laugh" (488). The puppet master takes great pride in having rationalized and purified the puppet stage by banishing Punch and Judy. We are reminded, of course, of how Gottsched banished the Hanswurst from the stage in Germany. So far the satire. Tom Jones, whose heart is always in the right place, loses the respect of the puppeteer when he asserts flatly that the absence of Punch has spoiled the show. The puppeteer's theneoclassical position is completely discredited when it develops that the performers in the company do not practice the "good Morals inculcated by his Exhibitions" (491). The indignant landlady, whose maid has been debauched, attacks the company, however, not for performing puppet plays at all, but for performing the wrong kinds:

It is the only Way to teach our Servants Idleness and Nonsense; for to be sure nothing better can be learned by such idle Shows as these. I remember when Puppet shows were made of good Scripture Stories, as *Jephthah's* Rash Vow, and such good Things, and when wicked People were carried away by the Devil. There was some Sense in those Matters; but as the Parson told us last *Sunday*, no-

body believes in the Devil now-a-days; and here you bring about a Parcel of Puppets drest up like Lords and Ladies, only to turn the Heads of poor Country Wenches; and when their Heads are once turned topsy-turvy, no wonder everything else is so. (491)

In effect the landlady advocates a return to the popular drama which lasted longer on the puppet stage than on the regular stage before finally succumbing to the hostility of the Enlightenment. As she points out, this form depends not on verisimilitude ("nobody believes in the Devil now-a-days"); it depends rather on exploiting the mythology of the culture ("Scripture Stories . . . and such good Things"). In this respect the episode is a fundamental and wide-ranging rejection of the neoclassical position: it rejects not simply the neo-Aristotelian rules, but implicitly also the rationalist secularization of the cultural tradition.

This may seem a strange way to read Fielding, but it seems to me a possible one, especially for a thinker opposed to neoclassical poetics. In order to test the validity of this reading and the relevance of all this material to our initial problem, it is necessary to investigate the poetics of the *Lehrjahre*. It is immediately obvious now that *Hamlet* is associated with the Shakespeare-Rowe contrast, and thus with the priority of novel over drama; it is equally associated with the reality-illusion problem and thus with Fielding's concerns, because, as mentioned earlier, the main point about the performance is that everyone plays himself. Can it be coincidence that Goethe, like Fielding, describes only the ghost scenes in the performance and that the point turns, once again, on actually believing in the ghost? For Wilhelm is not only genuinely terrified of the spirit but even seems to recognize its voice as the voice of his own father. Goethe has done Fielding one better by having his own actor succumb to the illusion. It is not long before we realize that, despite the excitement of the initial performance, the play is not really a success for Wilhelm. We have already noted that Wilhelm's *Hamlet* is a neoclassical *Hamlet*, not Shakespeare's play. The failure of the play to reform either its actors or its audience must be attributed in part to these two factors: its reduction to neoclassical size and its assimilation into the illusion-of-reality tradition. And although *Hamlet* marks a crucial point in Wilhelm's realization that the theater

is not his real mission, it is not the last play in which he performs. That dubious honor is reserved for *Emilia Galotti*, one of the greatest of neoclassical dramas. And when he leaves the theater, Wilhelm finds himself in the middle of Rowe's play, while Goldsmith set *his* characters into *Hamlet*. Wilhelm leaves the theater because it becomes clear that it is not his "mission" (as it is, say, for Serlo); but this Wilhelm who has no mission for the theater is one dedicated to a neo-Aristotelian conception of the stage.

It is illuminating now to consider the other forms of drama in the *Lehrjahre*. In the purity of his childhood Wilhelm's taste for drama is nurtured on puppet plays and stage versions of romances. Romance plots dominated the Spanish stage in the seventeenth century in what is widely recognized as the greatest flowering of the nonverisimilar, allegorical dramatic tradition destroyed by the Enlightenment; the relation of puppet plays to this tradition has already been discussed. In his adulthood, however, Wilhelm responds with enthusiasm to contemporary neoclassical comedy, but his reasons are independent of the quality of the play: either he is in love with the leading lady, or he is thrilled with the energy of well-meaning amateurs. Altogether, contemporary forms of drama fare badly in this novel, for neither the *Ritterdrama* nor Wilhelm's little masque in honor of the prince is treated with much respect. However, of the three contemporary types the masque is treated most seriously and at greatest length; masque is, of course, another non-Aristotelian form. Wilhelm leaves the theater after book 6, but the theater still does not leave him his initiation into the *Turmgesellschaft* (Society of the Tower) and Mignon's funeral both involve theatrics. The first is, in effect, a series of allegorical scenes with a didactic purpose; the second is dramatized ritual rather along the lines of the earliest church drama. In the parts of the novel where Wilhelm mistakenly pursues his theatrical mission, we find contemporary Aristotelian forms; where he pursues more important things the drama is non-Aristotelian. The theatrical mission of the *Lehrjahre* is to return the drama from Aristotelian, neoclassical forms to the indigenous tradition of allegorical and festival drama which

Mignon's funeral approaches, to drama that still has a religious and social function.²⁷

This conclusion requires us to reexamine the fate of Serlo's company after Wilhelm leaves it. During Wilhelm's visit to Lothario, Melina and Serlo reorganize the company as an opera company. We are led to believe that this is a terrible decline from the high ideals of Wilhelm's tenure, but if we look carefully, we realize it is only Wilhelm and Madame Melina who see opera as a decline. Both of these have some interest in thinking Wilhelm indispensable. Neoclassicists in Germany under the leadership of Gottsched waged ferocious war on opera and operetta for most of the century;²⁸ but Goethe, we remember, wrote opera libretti himself, even in the 1790s; and in act III of *Faust II* he was to define opera as the modern equivalent of tragedy. Once again, Wilhelm represents the limitations of the neoclassical point of view. We must understand, then, that Serlo's company, once freed of Wilhelm's limited theatrical imagination, actually steps *up* to opera, which is, even in Wilhelm's own words, "wo nicht . . . etwas Besseres, doch . . . etwas Angenehmeres" (474) (If not . . . something better at least . . . something more pleasant).

But what, after all this, about novel and drama? It was the treatment of the Shakespeare-Rowe contrast in both the *Lehrjahre* and *Faust* that first raised all these questions. Let us return to that point. In the seduction play of the eighteenth century the drama usually begins after the heroine has been abandoned or is, at least, well on her way to being abandoned. Both Wilhelm's relation to Mariane and Lothario's to Aurelie begin this way, indeed all of Lothario's women

²⁷ Hans Reiss has recently demonstrated the presence of typical stage-comedy elements in *the Lehrjahre* ("Lustspielhaftes in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*," in *Goethezeit: Studien zur Erkenntnis und Rezeption Goethes und seiner Zeitgenossen. Festschrift für Stuart Atkins*, ed. Gerhart Hoffmeister [Bern and Munich: Francke, 1981], 129-44). Although Reiss does not identify it as a progression, in fact the pattern that he uncovers shows Wilhelm progressing from typical Enlightenment comedy situations at the beginning (his relationship with Mariane) through more dispersed interactions of stage situations with real life (Philine) to the typical comic-opera ending of the double marriage. This is the pattern I have identified.

²⁸ Documented extensively by Gloria Flaherty, *Opera in the Development of German Critical Thought* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1978).

have been abandoned by the time they appear in the novel. But not so *Faust*, which presents the entire course of the seduction, with, of course, discreet omissions. This is the normal mode of treatment in the novel; and, indeed, in the *Vorspiel auf dem Theater* (Prelude in the Theater) the clown describes the plot of the play to come as a *Roman*.²⁹ Goethe's drama treats the seduction theme after the manner of novels; his novel treats it after the manner of plays. The irony that Wilhelm moves from *Hamlet* not into the real world but into another play reminds the reader at a crucial point that *Wilhelm Meister* cannot be read as a probabilistic study in human character. It is not, in other words, what might be termed a "neo-Aristotelian novel" like *Clarissa*, which could be (albeit not fully adequately) justified in terms of neoclassical dramatic theory and which could take pride in accurate portrayal of character.

The theatrical mission of the *Lehrjahre*, then, is to advocate a non-Aristotelian drama and a non-Aristotelian novel. The "novel versus drama" discussion owed its existence to neo-Aristotelian theories of the novel in the first place: small wonder, then, that Goethe's interest in drawing distinctions between the genres eventually flagged. Even a brief reading of "Über epische und dramatische Dichtung" reveals how it transforms the standard neoclassical categories. The first paragraph lists qualities common to both genres: the "laws of unity" and "laws of development," "subject matter" (*Gegenstände*) and motifs, and the fact that the laws of each genre derive from human nature. All of this is standard Aristotelian doctrine. But then comes a subtle transition, for human nature is invoked, not to justify the behavior of characters (as even in Aristotle himself), but to explain the respective stances of the rhapsode and the mime: Goethe is much more concerned with formal issues, with issues involving the medium rather than the subject matter. This characteristic concern dominates the rest of the essay. Aristotelian theory distinguishes epic from drama largely on the basis of scopethe number of episodes that can be included; Goethe and Schiller distinguish them rather on the basis of the poet's

29 L. 165. I realize that the first meaning of *Roman* here is probably "romance." Nevertheless the novellike treatment of the seduction theme in the play justifies hearing the meaning "novel" as well.

temporal viewpoint. Their distinctions among character types and plot motifs are also strictly functional, not based on content. The development away from Aristotle is most telling where the essay discusses the worlds common to both genres. Goethe and Schiller distinguish three worlds: the physical, the moral, and a world of "phantasies, intuitions, appearances, coincidences and destinies."³⁰ The first two worlds accommodate the concerns of neoclassical theory and even include a bow in the direction of the three unities, for Goethe and Schiller suggest that the dramatist usually remains; in one place. But the third world of phantasies, intuitions, and so forth is precisely the world banned from literature by the insistent probabilism of the Enlightenment. It is not an easy world to achieve, the essay recognizes, because the modern world lacks the mythology of the ancients; nevertheless it stands as the climax of the subject matter of poetry.

We all know that Goethe was hostile to neoclassical categories in the 1770s. Most of us would probably not think of German Classicism as a late blooming of neoclassicism. We might rather see it as a rarified compromise between neoclassicism and Romanticism, if not as a special form of European Romanticism. What we must understand is that the episodic structure of the *Lehrjahre* is *not* an aberration from Goethe's otherwise disciplined Classicism, nor is the form of *Faust* the unique result of a theme that overflowed all normal bounds, just as later on we cannot understand the structure of *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* as the senile poet's lack of control. The *Lehrjahre* works not in terms of psychological causality and continuity, but through juxtaposition of a series of distinct but parallel happenings. All the elaborate closure in the plot is a matter of the most extravagant coincidence. This is the norm, I maintain, for Goethe after about 1775. Our energies should go not into "justifying" the form of *Faust* or *Wilhelm Meister*, but into investigating the apparent "classical form" of *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*, even *Tasso* and *Iphigenie*, and into reinterpreting these works against this new standard.

Similarly, the apparently questionable morality of the *Lehrjahre* and of *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*, and the amorality of *Faust* must be

30 "Phantasien, Ahnungen, Erscheinungen, Zufälle und Schicksale." *Goethes Werke* (Hamburg: Wegner, 1963), 12:250.

understood at least in part as deliberate violations of the neoclassical demand that literature educate to virtue; for Goethe insists on the strict autonomy and self-sufficiency of the work of art. Indeed, he does this nowhere more explicitly than in the essay "Nachlese zu Aristoteles' Poetik," (Gleanings from Aristotle's Poetics) where he emphatically denies that tragedy has any effect whatsoever on the emotions of the spectator and thus denies any possibility of catharsis as the eighteenth century understood the term:

The complication will confuse [the spectator], the denouement will enlighten him, but he will go home unregenerate; if he were sufficiently introspective, he would rather wonder at himself that he arrives home again just as frivolous or stubborn, just as irascible or weak, just as loving or unloving as he was when he set out.³¹

This raises the question, of course, of the nature, or rather locus, of *Bildung* in the novel. The autonomy upon which Goethe so firmly insists as early as the 1790s makes any concept of *Bildung* presented within the work for example, whatever *Bildung* Wilhelm may be said to experience more or less irrelevant to the reader, because such a direct impact of the content upon him is, Goethe flatly asserts, nonexistent.³² It can only be, then, an effect generated by the reader's intellectual response to the work. This meaning of *Bildung* is, in effect, Goethe's substitute for the neoclassical conception of catharsis. The *Lehrjahre* is not a *Candide* against poetry, as Novalis claimed, but against a particular poetics, a poetics from whose normative power we have yet completely to liberate ourselves.

31 "die Verwicklung wird [den Zuschauer] verwirren, die Auflösung aufklären, er aber um nichts gebessert nach Hause gehen; er würde vielmehr, wenn er asketisch-aufmerksam genug wäre, sich über sich selbst verwundern, daß er ebenso leichtsinnig als hartnäckig, ebenso heftig als schwach, ebenso liebevoll als lieblos sich wieder in seiner Wohnung findet, wie er hinausgegangen" *Goethes Werke* 12:345.

32 For Goethe's insistence on the autonomy of art in the 1790s, see "Über Wahrheit und Wahrscheinlichkeit der Kunstwerke," first published in 1798.

Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre, oder die Entsagenden (1821/1829): From Bildungsroman to Archival Novel

Ehrhard Bahr

And we have, have we not, those priceless pages of Wilhelm Meister?

James Joyce: *Ulysses*

In his essay "James Joyce and the Present" (1936) the Austrian novelist Hermann Broch argued that Goethe established in *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre, oder die Entsagenden* (1829, translated as *Wilhelm Meister's Journeyman Years, or The Renunciants*) the foundation of modern literature and the new novel. Broch thought it "quite possible, even probable" that Goethe presaged the development of modern literature, especially the fundamental changes of consciousness within the modern novel. Broch boldly hypothesized that Goethe's *Wanderjahre* had already accomplished what James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) did one hundred years later: the conception of the modern world in a single work of art.¹ Broch substantiated his thesis

¹ Hermann Broch, "James Joyce und die Gegenwart," in *Schriften zur Literatur 1: Kritik*, vol. 9/1 of the Kommentierte Werkausgabe, ed. Paul Michael Lützeler (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1975), 6391. On Joyce's influence on Broch, see Heinz Politzer, "Zur Feier meines Ablebens," *Der Monat* 3, no. 36 (1951): 63032; and Breon Mitchell, *James Joyce and the German Novel, 1922/1933* (Athens: Ohio UP, 1976), 15174.

with the Hegelian term "totality."² For Broch, totality in a literary work of art constituted a view of the world that compounded "all knowledge of infinite human development into a single, simultaneous act of recognition." This conception of the world stands in contradistinction to a "totality of being" that requires "entirely new forms of expression" in the work of art. Broch argued that the grasping of the totality was the task of literature and art in general. The stronger this "totality of being" is realized in the work of art, he said, "the more timeless the work will prove itself to be." Thus, the "adequate totality of form" plays a particular role for Broch in "the complete command of all aesthetic means of expression, subordinated to the universality of content." He viewed Goethe's *Wanderjahre* and *Faust* as "art works of totality" (*Totalitätskunstwerke*). Both works realized this "adequate totality of form" insofar as they transcended the traditional genre forms of the novel and drama.³

Without treating in detail the question of literary reflection, Broch placed special emphasis on the "periods of destruction of values" (*Epochen des Wertzerfalls*), which are characterized by the problem of "representation" (*Abbildbarkeit*):

The further the destruction of value continues . . . the greater the artistic cost necessary to handle and manage the collection of powers; indeed, the cost will become so great and so complicated that the works of totality within the general production of art in clear contrast with genuine periods of value will not only become increasingly rare . . . but also increasingly complicated and inaccessible. This condition raises the problem of whether a world with constant destruction of value must not ultimately renounce its concept of totality in the work of art, in so doing becoming "nonrepresentational" (*unabbildbar*).⁴

² Broch 64ff., as well as Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, "Die Poesie," Part 3 of *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, ed. Rüdiger Bubner (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1971), 15878.

³ Broch, 87.

⁴ Broch, 66.

In order not to fall into flat naturalism or fashionable "modernity," the "art work of totality" is rendered difficult to understand by virtue of its "advanced reality" (*vorausseilende Realität*) The "advanced reality" has the peculiar and characteristic property that it is a condition of totality unrecognized by contemporaries, one that has been observed only with the historical retrospection of a later period.

Accordingly, Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (*Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*)⁵ of 1795/96 was written in a "value-centered" period in which the "niveau of totality," and with it, the "niveau of quality," were still determined by a pervasive unity. In Broch's words, "the classical novel [was content] to observe real and physical circumstances in life, content to describe these circumstances by the means of language."⁶ But in the *Wanderjahre*, language and narration themselves became problematic. This novel clearly fits Broch's definition of "period of destruction of values." Although *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* of course was written at the time of the French Revolution, Goethe sought to develop with this novel an alternative to the events in France, that is, to provide new values.⁷ Not until the *Wanderjahre* did Goethe represent in the novel the break and the change of consciousness resulting from the French and industrial revolutions.

The destruction of values after the French Revolution was reflected by the disintegration of narrative forms in the traditional novel. The problematic nature of the *Wanderjahre* is clearly documented by the history of its reception.⁸ The chain of misunderstandings and incor-

⁵ Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, ed. and trans. by Eric A. Blackall in cooperation with Victor Lange, vol. 9 of *Goethe's Collected Works* (New York: Suhrkamp, 1989).

⁶ Broch, 77ff.

⁷ Hans R. Vaget, "Liebe und Grundeigentum in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahren*: Zur Physiognomie des Adels bei Goethe," in *Legitimationskrisen des deutschen Adels, 1200/1900*, ed. Peter Uwe Hohendahl and Paul Michael Lützel (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1979), 13757; and Karl-Heinz Hahn, "Zeitgeschichte in Goethes Roman *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*," in *Deutsche Klassik und Revolution*, ed. Paolo Chiarini and Walter Dietze (Rome: Ateneo, 1981), 16994.

⁸ Hans Rudolf Vaget, "Johann Wolfgang Goethe: *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* (1829)," in *Romane und Erzählungen zwischen Romantik und Realismus: Neue*

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rect interpretations of the *Wanderjahre* continued unabated into the twentieth century. A reliable edition was, in fact, not available until 1950; a complete, faithful English translation not until 1989. Excepting the early socialist interpretations between 1832 and 1852 (Varnhagen von Ense, Hermann Hettner, Ferdinand Gregorovius, Karl Grün, and others), and Broch's essay on Joyce, the "advanced reality" of this novel was not recognized until the end of the 1960s.⁹

In Broch's interpretation the nineteenth century constituted a period of incubation, during which traditional narrative forms could still be cultivated despite Goethe's new concept of the novel. Old value systems remained, as did the hope that theology and philosophy would answer the "burning questions of the epoch." However, this hope had dissipated by the end of the century. Philosophy and the sciences had returned to a kind of Goethean skepticism.¹⁰ These disciplines had given up trying to answer the metaphysical and central mysteries that had existed since time immemorial. Broch said of Goethe that "his intuition and knowledge . . . were one hundred years ahead of his time." His successors in the nineteenth century for example, Balzac, Zola, or Flaubert were still tied to the age of restoration: "They allowed themselves to be restricted, indeed they had to restrict themselves, to the entertaining and educating of their public." This was, so Broch writes, no longer possible in the twentieth century, as the spirit of this period did not allow this type of entertainment any longer. In Broch's time the writer was compelled to "fulfill the Goethean challenge by approaching the legacy that human striving for knowledge had handed over to him." This legacy was "the philo-

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Interpretationen, ed. Paul Michael Lützeler (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1983), 13642.

⁹ Klaus F. Gille, *Wilhelm Meister im Urteil der Zeitgenossen: Ein Beitrag zur Wirkungsgeschichte* (Assen: van Gorkum, 1971), 30612.

¹⁰ This is a translation of Broch's term *Goethesche Skepsis*, referring to Goethe's rejection of pat answers of dogmatic theology and the traditional sciences to the problems of his time. Goethe favored skepticism as an approach over dogmatism in his scientific studies and writings.

sophical comprehension of being in the universal representation of the world."¹¹

Broch's bold hypothesis sheds a special light on the "adequate totality of form" in the *Wanderjahre* and has frequently been alluded to by recent Goethe scholarship to demonstrate the modernity of the work.¹² Yet the direct comparison with James Joyce has yet to be fully appreciated, not even by Broch, who maintained that direct comparisons of modern works of art with those of Goethe were bound to be flawed. According to Broch modern literature had to reckon with the Goethean ambition of "raising the poetic to the level of knowledge (*Erkenntnis*)."¹³

In a comparison of Goethe with Joyce, two things may be kept in mind. First, the long development of the *Wanderjahre* between 1798 and 1829 must be seen as a continuation of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, that is, of a traditional epistolary novel, to an "archival novel." Second, a comparison of two works is quite problematic when they are separated by almost a century. Nevertheless, one may perhaps recognize some particular relationships that reveal similar applications of the technique and theory of the novel. Thus, the description of the cotton industry in Lenardo's diary in Goethe's *Wanderjahre* (book 3, chapter 5, 33342)¹⁴ correlates with the description of Dublin's wa-

11 Broch, 87.

12 Joseph Strelka, "Goethes *Wilhelm Meister* und der Roman des 20. Jahrhunderts," *German Quarterly* 41 (1968): 33855; Heidi Gideon, *Zur Darstellungsweise von Goethes Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969), 13840; Ehrhard Bahr, "Goethe's *Wanderjahre* as an Experimental Novel," *Mosaic* 5, no. 3 (1972): 6171; Bahr, "Realismus und Totalität: *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* als Roman des 19. Jahrhunderts," in *Formen realistischer Erzählkunst: Festschrift für Charlotte Jolles in Honour of Her 70th Birthday*, ed. Jörg Thunecke (Nottingham: Sherwood Press, 1979), 8892; and Bahr, "Revolutionary Realism in Goethe's *Wanderjahre*," in *Goethe's Narrative Fiction: The Irvine Symposium*, ed. William J. Lillyman (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1983), 16175.

13 Broch, 88.

14 *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* is hereafter cited parenthetically in the text by book and chapter and by the page numbers of the English translation by Krishna

(footnote continued on next page)

terworks in the Ithaca chapter of *Ulysses*.¹⁵ In both cases, factual prose (*Sachprosa*) is laden with technical details and exact numbers. The passage in *Ulysses* reads as follows:

From Roundwood reservoir in County Wicklow of a cubic capacity of 2,400 million gallons, percolating through a subterranean aqueduct of filtre mains of single and double pipeage constructed at an initial plant cost of £5 per linear yard by way of the Dargle, Rathdown, Glen of the Downs and Callowhill to the 26 acre reservoir at Stillorgan, a distance of 22 statute miles, and thence, through a system of relieving tanks, by a gradient of 250 feet to the city boundary at Eustace bridge, upper Leeson street, though from prolonged summer drouth and daily supply of 12 1/2 million gallons the water had fallen below the sill of the overflow weir for which reason the borough surveyor and waterworks engineer, Mr Spencer Harty, C. E., on the instructions of the waterworks committee, had prohibited the use of municipal water for purposes other than those of consumption (envisaging the possibility of recourse being had to the impotable water of the Grand and Royal canals as in 1893) particularly at the South Dublin Guardians, notwithstanding their ration of 15 gallons per day per pauper supplied through a 6 inch meter, had been convicted of a wastage of 20,000 gallons per night by a reading of their meter on the affirmation of the law agent of the corporation, Mr Ignatius Rice, solicitor, thereby acting to the detriment of another section of the public, self-supporting taxpayers, solvent, sound. (655)

In the final edition of Goethe's *Wanderjahre*, similar technical language accounts for some twenty pages. I will quote two passages.

For right-spun yarn there are 25 to 30 to a pound; while for left-spun yarn 60 or 80, sometimes even 90. A loop on the winder will run about seven quarter-ells or slightly more, and my slim,

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Winston, edited by Jane K. Brown, and published under the title *Wilhelm Meister's Journeyman Years or The Renunciants*, vol. 10 of *Goethe's Collected Works* (New York: Suhrkamp Publishers, 1989), 93436.

¹⁵ The Joyce quotation is taken from *Ulysses* (New York: Modern Library, 1934), 655.

diligent spinner claimed that she spun 4 or even 5 skeins a day on her wheel, which would be 5000 loops, amounting to 8 to 9000 ells of yarn. (book 3, chapter 5, 336)

An especially nimble and diligent weaver can, if she has help, produce a 32 ell piece of not particularly fine muslin in one week; that, however, is very rare, and if there are other household chores, it is usually two weeks' work. The beauty of the cloth depends upon the even operation of the treadles, on the even pressure of the beater, and also on whether the weft is laid in wet or dry. Completely even and strong tension also contributes, to which end the weaver of fine cotton cloth hangs a heavy stone from the nail of the cloth beam. If the cloth is pulled very tight during the weaving (the technical term is high tension), then it lengthens noticeably, by $\frac{3}{4}$ of an ell on 32 ells and about $1\frac{1}{2}$ ells on 64. This excess is the property of the weaver; she is paid extra for it or she saves it for kerchiefs, aprons, etc. (book 3, chapter 5, 341)

In both cases, the factual or technical language seems out of place in the novel. It is a clear break in style. For Joyce as well as for Goethe, the technical language functions as a kind of slice of reality in the novel, which remains largely unmediated in relation to the novel's plot. This plot, developed in the pertinent chapters by highly intimate forms of human seeking and returning home, stands in clear contrast to the objective, mathematically exact numbers in the passages cited. Bloom-Ulysses, while looking for his son, returns from ill-fated journeys through Dublin to his Ithaca at Number 7 Eccles Street, accompanied by his spiritual son Stephen-Telemachus, whom he serves the ritual meal of a cup of cocoa before the destruction of the suitors and reunion with his spouse Molly-Penelope. The description of the Dublin waterworks follows the question put by the anonymous narrator, whether the water flows ("Did it flow?"), as Bloom placed the kettle on the boiler in order to heat the water for the cocoa. In the *Wanderjahre*, the young aristocrat Lenardo, the leader of a group of emigrants en route to America, seeks the love of his youth, Nachodine, now thought to be lost. At issue is a "love arising from a troubled conscience" (book 3, chapter 14, 409). Lenardo is erotically and guiltily tied to the tenant farmer's daughter, because she and her father were dismissed and driven off the land to finance Lenardo's education

abroad. Lenardo stands just before the goal of his desires. How and in which situation he ultimately relocates his lover is not related until the diary continues some forty pages later in chapter 13. Chapter 5 restricts itself to the report of Lenardo's trip to the mountain as he recruits the spinners and weavers for the American project. Here the descriptions of spinning and weaving stand in the foreground.

In *Ulysses* and the *Wanderjahre*, the technical language (*Sachprosa*), which has its own verifiable precision and authenticity, functions as a fictional part of the novel. Joyce probably appropriated his text from the daily press in 1904, while Goethe got his text from the painter Heinrich Meyer, of whom Goethe requested a "continued technical description" [fortgesetzte technische Beschreibung] of the Swiss cottage industry in 1810.¹⁶ Goethe appropriated this description almost verbatim for Lenardo's diary in the *Wanderjahre*, as the following comparison shows:

Heinrich Meyer:

For right-spun yarn there are 2530 to a pound. While for left-spun, 60, 80, even 90 skeins; for [so-called] "letter yarn" 120 and even more. A loop on the winder will run about one quarter ell or slightly more, and a diligent spinner can spin 4 or even 5 skeins, that is, 5000 loops, amounting to 8 to 9000 ells of yarn a day on her wheel. ¹⁷

Goethe:

For right-spun yarn there are 25 to 30 to a pound; while for left-spun 60 or 80, sometimes even 90. A loop on the winder will run about seven quarter ells or slightly more, and my slim, diligent spinner claimed that she spun 4 or even 5 skeins a day on her wheel, which would be 5000 loops, amounting to 8 to 9000 ells of yarn. (book 3, chapter 5, 336).

¹⁶*Goethes Werke*: Hamburger Ausgabe, ed. Erich Trunz, 10th ed. (Munich: Beck, 1981), 8:520. Hereafter cited as HA.

¹⁷*Werke*, Weimar edition, Part. 1, vol. 25/2 (Weimar: Böhlau, 1905), 264.

As Goethe wrote to Meyer on 3 May 1810, he had "studied cotton well" in Meyer's "primer."¹⁸ Similarly, it is known that Joyce had conceived the Ithaca chapter as a form of "mathematical catechism."¹⁹

Both Goethe and Joyce disrupt the continuity of the novel's action in order to attain a higher degree of reality. This heightened reality serves above all to confirm the given reality, be it in the city of Dublin in 1904 or in the Swiss cottage industry in 1810. Such a precise reflection of the external reality, however, does not permit the depiction of the protagonists' inner world. For Joyce the non-technical aspects of the texts are only heightened by the repeated reports of nearly scientific precision. Explanations of phenomena other than technical data prove to be impossible. The reader gets no clue what is going on inside of Bloom-Ulysses or Stephen-Telemachus. For Goethe the objective language of the passage conceals the protagonists' emotional state. This narrative strategy succeeds especially well when Lenardo actually becomes interested in spinning and weaving and when he must accomplish the emigrants' mission. His remark that "we always mirror ourselves in everything we produce" (book 3, chapter 4, 332) still creates confusion for the reader, as the continuation of his diary in chapter 13 shows. Lenardo couches himself and his reader in this case Wilhelm Meister behind the technical language.

The structural differences between both passages in the *Wanderjahre* and *Ulysses* are a matter of degree rather than kind. For Goethe the technical language is still integrated with Lenardo's introductory remarks to the novel's plot. As first-person narrator, Lenardo reports that he took "careful notes" and that he has decided "to use

18 HA 8:520.

19 On the genesis of the Ithaca chapter, see Phillip F. Herring, "Zur Textgenese des *Ulysses*: Joyces Notizen und seine Arbeitsmethoden," in *James Joyces Ulysses: Neuere deutsche Aufsätze*, ed. Therese Fischer Seidel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), 80104, especially 98100; Wolfgang Iser, "Der Archetyp als Leerform: Erzählmodalitäten und Kommunikation in Joyces *Ulysses*," in *Der implizite Leser* (Munich: Fink, 1972), 30058; R. M. Adams, *Surface and Symbol: The Consistency of James Joyce's Ulysses* (Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 1962); and Stuart Gilbert, *James Joyce's Ulysses: A Study* (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), 36984.

the time as well as possible" so as to be introduced "into the antechamber of the art of weaving" (book 3, chapter 5, 336 and 337). For Joyce, by contrast, the anonymous narrator's mechanical questions are simply followed by the Ithaca chapter. The technical language no longer has a mimetic function but merely presents itself as is. It retains a function in the frame of the novel's disintegrated plot only by virtue of the narrator's game of question-and-answer, while the continuity of plot is maintained by the analogy to the Ulysses myth.²⁰ By contrast, the mythological deep structure of the *Wanderjahre* is only sporadically realized. By that I mean that at one level mythological figures can be perceived in some of the novel's characters: for example, in Wilhelm and his son Felix, Castor and Pollux; in Natalie, Minerva; in Hilarie, Psyche; in Flavio, Orestes; and so on.²¹ This fact alone requires a greater integration of plot in Goethe's novel, since the fundamental continuity of a single, underlying myth, as in Joyce's *Ulysses*, does not exist in *Wanderjahre*.²²

On the whole, we may agree with Hermann Broch's hypothesis regarding Goethe's poetics of the novel in the *Wanderjahre*: the novel is the forerunner of a technique and theory whose perfection was achieved by Joyce in *Ulysses*. In both novels motivations and explanations of occurrences in the traditional sense are abandoned. By means of various types of nonfictional prose a more complete representation of various layers of reality and perceptions within literary fiction is achieved. This gain in the levels of reality and consciousness is paid

20 Iser, 300306.

21 Hannelore Schlaffer, *Wilhelm Meister: Das Ende der Kunst und die Wiederkehr des Mythos* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1980), 16674. See also review in *Goethe Yearbook* 2 (1984): 244ff.

22 Klaus Detlef Müller, "Lenardos Tagebuch: Zum Romanbegriff in Goethes *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 53 (1979): 27599. Müller correctly objects to understanding Goethe's procedure as an "anticipation of modern montage technique." On the problem of mythological continuity in the modern novel, see Gregory L. Lucente, *The Narrative of Realism and Myth: Venga, Lawrence, Faulkner, Pavese* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1979).

with a loss in aesthetic unity, which we may associate with Goethe's concept of renunciation (*Entsagung*).

The double title, *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre, oder Die Entsagenden* (*Wilhelm Meister's Journeyman's Years, or The Renunciants*), is a conspicuous clue to the problematic meaning of this theme in the novel. The meaning is first expressed by the characters of the novel, because the protagonists learn and teach renunciation. For Goethe the concept of renunciation (*Entsagung*) is determined philosophically, ethically, and historically but is synonymous neither with resignation nor expediency.²³ Erich Trunz and Arthur Henkel have shown that Goethe's sense of renunciation is neither stoicism nor asceticism, although perhaps they have emphasized the "happiness of renunciation" too strongly.²⁴ However, speaking of a Goethean "misery of renunciation" is surely an exaggeration in the opposite direction, because Goethe understands renunciation in the Hegelian sense of being historically necessary.²⁵ As Helmut Brandt has shown, the term "renunciation" originated from Goethe's stay in Italy and his second decade in Weimar, which was influenced by the French Revolution. According to Brandt, the timely development of the term belongs "among the really fruitful consequences of Goethe's response to the Revolution, if not of the Revolution itself."²⁶ Goethe had recognized that historical development could not be halted and that it even had a certain regularity. He anticipated the development of nineteenth-century bourgeois society without ever identifying himself with it or propagandizing for it. In many respects his picture corre-

23 Melitta Gerhard, "Ursache und Bedeutung von Goethes Entsagung," *Jahrbuch des Freien Deutschen Hochstifts* (1981): 11015.

24 HA 8:53638; Arthur Henkel, *Entsagung: Eine Studie zu Goethes Altersroman*, 2d ed. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1962), 14268.

25 Thomas Degering, *Das Elend der Entsagung: Goethes Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1982). See also the review in *Germanistik* 23 (1982): 803.

26 Helmut Brandt, "Entsagung und Französische Revolution: Goethes Prokurator- und Ferdinand-Novelle in weiterführender Betrachtung," in *Deutsche Klassik und Revolution*, ed. Paolo Chiarini and Walter Dietze (Rome: Ateneo, 1981), 198.

sponded to the developing society as posited in the Hegelian design of bourgeois society in *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts (Basics of the Philosophy of Law)* of 1821.²⁷ Yet it appears that Goethe's reaction to this development was ambivalent, even critical. In his fiction he tried to portray alternatives for creatively overturning this development. In the *Wanderjahre* the project of the European resettlement as well as that of the emigration to America are such alternatives, presented nevertheless with ironic distance and guarded criticism.²⁸

Given the figures and episodes within the novel, a simple formula informs the term *renunciation*: it always begins as rejection and then leads ultimately to compromise, wherever possible to a gain at another level. Renunciation is especially manifest in the area of eros, where it is first determined physically by the renunciation of possession of a loved one, then by a psychic compromise that means neither resignation nor surrender but continuation and transcendence in the Goethean sense. As the titular protagonist, Wilhelm Meister is the first to undertake, by means of the vow of the wandering years, the eventual renunciation of Natalie, who had been promised as his wife at the end of the first novel, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. With the injunction "not to remain more than three days under the same roof" and to leave no hostel without "travelling at least one mile from the spot" (book 1, chapter 1, 101), Wilhelm travels with his son Felix through the novel's landscape. While traveling to Mignon's homeland is depicted only as a subordinate goal, the purpose of the emigration to America remains indefinite and hazy in the background until the end of the novel.

27 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts oder Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft im Grundrisse*, ed. Bernhard Lakebrink (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1970), 32786; Degering, 61105.

28 Ehrhard Bahr, *Die Ironie im Spätwerk Goethes: Diese sehr ernstesten Scherze: Studien zum Westöstlichen Divan, zu den Wanderjahren und zu Faust II* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1972), 116 and 127ff. On the question of utopia, see Wilhelm Voßkamp, "Utopie und Utopiekritik in Goethes Romanen *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* und *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*," in *Utopieforschung: Interdisziplinäre Studien zur neuzeitlichen Utopie*, ed. Wilhelm Voßkamp (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1983), 3:22749.

The intermediate stations of longer duration are of greater importance, for they show Felix enrolled several years in the educational institute of the Pedagogic Province and Wilhelm undergoing his own education as a surgeon. For this purpose Wilhelm is released from his journeyman's vow of not staying more than three days under the same roof, although the physical separation from his wife Natalie continues. Even at the end of the novel there is no reunion. Rather, we are told that Natalie has already gone "to sea" on her way to America with the rest of the members of the Society of the Tower (book 3, chapter 14, 401). Nevertheless, Wilhelm is emotionally that much more drawn to Natalie in their many messages and letters. Ultimately, his last letter, documenting his life's confession and release from the trauma of a fisherboy's drowning, reveals a major step in his development: he now realizes that his calling is that of surgeon.²⁹ Natalie's remoteness allows Wilhelm to sublimate his attraction for a friend from youth, erase a guilt-ridden homoerotic development, and insure his own identity, thus forming the relationship with Natalie anew so that for the first time a feeling of pride and real worth affects him (book 2, chapter 11, 283294).

This gain at a higher level cannot be readily equated with traditional concepts of happiness or misery, as the following story involving Lenardo, aristocrat and Wilhelm's counterfigure, proves. Lenardo likewise seems to be separated from his lover. Like Wilhelm, he is bound to a life of wandering by an ethical failing. He hopes to find his lover again and to atone for his failure. Yet Wilhelm dissuades Lenardo from this passionate seeking with the advice of renunciation, so that Lenardo does not neglect his responsibility toward "the great life-task" (book 2, chapter 6, 254), that is, the emigration to America, because of his personal desires. Rather, Lenardo is able to unite mission and longing, as is manifest from his diary, so that he again finds his lover among the spinners and weavers whom he wishes to enlist for the emigration. Based on her previous marriage and the command

²⁹ Valet, 15557; K. R. Eissler, *Goethe: A Psychoanalytical Study, 1775-1786* (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1963), 2:144857; H. M. Waidson, "Death by Water: or, the Childhood of Wilhelm Meister," *Modern Language Review* 56 (1961): 4453.

her father gave them both on his death bed namely, love each other "like brother and sister" (book 3, chapter 13, 399) "a closer tie" between Lenardo and Nachodine does not occur, although it is not completely precluded in the distant future (book 3, chapter 14, 408). As with Wilhelm and Natalie, the prospect of a reunion beyond the borders of the novel is suggested. Lenardo maintains that he felt strengthened in his project mainly by the thought of summoning his lover to come over to America, "if not fetch[ing] her himself," once he has secured a foothold over there (book 3, chapter 14, 409).

A modified example of renunciation is found in the tale entitled "Der Mann von funfzig Jahren" ("The Man of Fifty Years"). There the titular protagonist rejects, for the benefit of his son Flavio, the possession of his cherished niece Hilarie, while he wins the hand of the beautiful widow, who had earlier dismissed the son as too stormy a lover. Refusal and painful rejection ultimately lead to marriage for the "man of fifty" and the widow, as well as for Flavio and Hilarie.

Not all figures in the novel succeed at renunciation: painful rejection is observable in the cases of the deranged pilgrim woman in the tale of the same name ("Die pilgernde Törin"), the barber cum narrator of the Melusina fairy tale ("Die neue Melusine"), and Odoardo. However, Odoardo's unsuccessful renunciation does not disqualify him from the European resettlement project. The only figures who seem to stand outside the spell of renunciation are Felix and Hersilie. In spite of the tempestuous dissolution of their relationship at the end of the novel and although they are not spared from pain and doubt, the hope for an union without renunciation is offered by the symbol of the mysterious casket and the undamaged key, which function in the text as a semiotic sign (book 3, chapter 2, 320-321; book 3, chapter 17, 416). The key, thought-to-be broken, which is held together invisibly by magnetism, is reproduced in the text (book 3, chapter 2, 321).³⁰ It is designed for the initiate to unlock the secret of the casket, signifying the future of the owners. Hersilie and Felix are not ready to unlock their immediate future Felix actually be-

30 Grete Ruthenberg, "Der Schlüssel in *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*," *Erziehungskunst* 25 (1961): 370-73; A. G. Steer, *Goethe's Science in the Structure of Wanderjahre* (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1979), 126-40.

believes he has broken the key during his last encounter with Hersilie and leaves her to kill himself but the key is magnetically joined and the lovers are bound together by the mystery of the casket (book 3, chapter 17, 41516). Because of Hersilie's desperate warning, Wilhelm Meister is able to save his son from self-destruction in a moving scene at the end of the novel, when father and son embrace as Castor and Pollux, reborn from death.

In its general form renunciation is expressed in the epistle or so-called paper (*Blatt*), summarizing Wilhelm's admonition to Nachodine-Susanna. In it the limitation of human beings is defined in three ways: existentially, epistemologically, and ethically as well as metaphysically. This paper is of central significance for the novel and at the same time functions as a pendant to Kant's three critiques: first, every human being is "continually limited, restricted in his [or her] position;" second, he or she "generally does not achieve clarity;" and third, he or she is referred to a "direct attention to the task of the day" to gain "a proper attitude toward the Sublime" (book 3, chapter 13, 39394). Thus, renunciation is proscribed in the *Wanderjahre* in the sense of Kant's *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* (*Critique of Practical Reason*).³¹

Much more important, if not as obvious, is renunciation as it is expressed in the novel's narrative technique and narrative theory. It first results from the changing narrative situation. The omniscient auctorial narrator of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* is replaced by a fictitious editor in the *Wanderjahre*. Thus, the novel of education, or Bildungsroman, for heuristic reasons, one may satisfactorily use this term here is superseded by the "archival novel."³² Erich Trunz's earlier inter-

31 Bernd Peschken, "Das 'Blatt' in den *Wanderjahren*," *Goethe* 27 (1965): 20530; Peschken, *Entsagung in Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahren* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1968), 67ff. and 28283.

32 Since studies by Kurt May (1957) and Hans Eichner (1966) the debate about the *Bildungsroman* has been enlivened by the monographs of Monika Schrader (1975), Martin Swales (1978), Michael Beddow (1982), Ivar Sagmo (1982), and Klaus-Dieter Sorg (1983). For a brief survey, see Rolf Selbmann, *Der deutsche Bildungsroman* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1984); Jürgen Jacobs and Markus Krause (eds.), *Der deutsche Bildungsroman: Gattungsgeschichte vom 18. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Beck, 1989). For a contrastive view, cf. Jeffrey L.

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pretive model of frame story and novellas as in *A Thousand and One Nights*, which Goethe greatly admired, does not do justice to the structure of the *Wanderjahre* in the same way as Volker Neuhaus's more recent model of the "archival novel."³³ Goethe's arrangement of single narratives within the frame story can be much more adequately explained by the model of the archival novel. As Neuhaus has shown, approximately twenty fictitious persons provide collected narratives, reports, drawings, diaries, letters and speeches for Makarie's archives and for the emigrants' archives. In addition, there are aphorisms from the collections "Reflections in the Spirit of the Wanderers" (294312) and "From Makarie's Archives" (41736), as well as from the philosophical instructional poems "Vermächtnis" ("Testament") and "Im ernsten Beinhaus wars" ("There was in the solemn burial vault"), also known as "Lines Written upon the Contemplation of Schiller's Skull."³⁴ The fictional editor includes these texts for the purpose of producing the fiction of the novel, because it is *about* a

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Sammons, "The Mystery of the Missing *Bildungsroman*, or What Happened to Wilhelm Meister's Legacy?," *Genre* 14 (1981): 22946. Norbert Ratz has introduced the term *novel of identity* in his *Der Identitätsroman: Eine Strukturanalyse* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1988).

33 Volker Neuhaus, "Die Archivfiktion in *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahren*," *Euphorion* 62 (1968): 1227. Erich Trunz has stayed with the model of the frame story also in his tenth edition (HA 8: 52732). By contrast, Eric A. Blackall has appropriated the model of the "archival novel" for his chapter on the *Wanderjahre* (*Goethe and the Novel* [Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1976], 22435).

34 See "Prefatory Note" in *Wilhelm Meister's Journeyman Years*, vol. 10 of *Goethe's Collected Works*, page v, and Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Selected Poems*, vol. 1 of *Goethe's Collected Works*, ed. Christopher Middleton (Boston: Suhrkamp, 1983), 25659, 26669. The English translation of *Wanderjahre*, vol. 10 of *Goethe's Collected Works*, translated by Krishna Winston, follows the example of the so-called Hamburger Ausgabe (HA) and does not print these two poems, which were included as part of the novel in the original edition of 1829 (*Vollständige Ausgabe letzter Hand*, vols. 2123 [Stuttgart and Tübingen: Cotta, 1829]). The Reclam edition of *Wanderjahre* (Stuttgart, 1982) follows the original edition in printing the poems: the first at the end of "Reflections in the Spirit of the Wanderers," and the second at the end of "From Makarie's Archives." The novel is concluded with the sentence "Ist fortzusetzen" ("To be continued") which is also missing from the Hamburg edition as well as from the English translation.

novel, as the editor explicitly assures his readers: "Our friends have taken a *novel* into their hands" (I 10, 176; emphasis mine). As Klaus Detlef Müller has indicated, the fictitious editor of the *Wanderjahre* stands in contrast to the eighteenth-century novel, in which the fictitious editor was intended as the verification of the "truth" of fiction, as, for example, in Wieland's *History of Agathon* or in the *Sorrows of Young Werther*. In the *Wanderjahre*, on the other hand, the editor is assigned the task of producing and preserving the fiction of the novel. Therefore, the editor in fact has no auctorial responsibility, but rather an editorial responsibility for the narrative ordering and sorting of isolated texts.³⁵

The problem of the *Wanderjahre* is that the fiction of the editor, though tangible throughout, can be recognized as an edition only relatively late. Only at the end of the first bookpage 118 of the Hamburg edition, page 176 of the English translation does the first clearly editorial comment appear. Earlier interventions and commentaries go back to the traditional figure of an auctorial narrator. By contrast, the fictive editor in Goethe's *Werther* (1774) is introduced immediately in the foreword. For the first ten chapters of the *Wanderjahre*, the fiction of the editor is observable only in retrospect. This rejection of an immediately recognizable narrative structure informs the poetics of renunciation.

But as soon as the editor of the *Wanderjahre* intervenes for the first time, his responsibility is unmistakable. For example, he intervenes in order to spare the reader the reading of an oral report on mathematics at Makarie's and to reestablish the suspense of literary fiction. "We intend to have the papers at our disposal printed elsewhere," the editor explains, suggesting that on this occasion we "shall proceed with our history without further ado, since we ourselves are impatient to see the riddle before us finally explained" (book 1, chapter 10, 176). With the introduction of the narrative "The Man of Fifty Years," editorial reasons are cited for "an uninterrupted presentation" instead of "a number of installments," although the story is not presented without interruption (book 2, chapter 3, 212). The duration of narrated time between Wilhelm's first and second visits to the Pedagogic Province

³⁵ Müller, 280ff.

is demarcated by an editorial "interpolation" that indicates "to the reader an intermission, and indeed one of several years," for which reason the editor would have liked "to end the volume here, had that been compatible with typographic conventions" [mit der typographischen Einrichtung] (book 2, chapter 7, 26667). During the discussion of the dangers of the theater for the pupils of the Pedagogic Province, the editor intermediates, confessing "that he has allowed this odd passage to slip by with some reluctance." Without addressing the time of narration in a longer discussion, the editor points to the continuation of literary fiction: "We have no time to dwell on such painful memories and afterthoughts, for our friend [Wilhelm Meister] is agreeably surprised to see one of the Three [supervisors of the Pedagogic Province] coming toward him" (book 2, chapter 8, 277). In spite of these editorial interruptions, the tension of literary fiction remains intact as the degree of reality in the fiction of the editor increases.

The editorial collation of texts, too, is unrecognizable at first reading. The prelude of the *Wanderjahre* under the titles "The Flight into Egypt," "Saint Joseph the Second," "The Visitation" and "The Lily Stalk" can be seen only in retrospect as a fictional transmission of Wilhelm's diary from the first-person narrative to an impersonal, third-person mode of narration. The reader learns only indirectly of the transposition of the text, with the insertion of Wilhelm's letters to Natalie in the introductory chapters.³⁶ During Odoardo's narrative "Nicht zu weit" ("Not Too Far"), which is made available in a transcript by a stranger, the editorial intervention is more obvious, since the editor expressly states that he has "usurped the rights of the epic poet" to transform the text into a "passionate recital" (book 3, chapter 10, 371).

Two of the most important texts in the *Wanderjahre*, the American utopia (book 3, chapter 11, 37880) and the "ethereal fiction" of Makarie's position in the solar system (book 3, chapter 15, 40911), assume their full meaning only by way of editorial remarks. The editor apologizes for submitting the American utopia simply as the "quintessence" of a conversation between Wilhelm Meister and Friedrich. The

³⁶ Veget, 145; Neuhaus, 1821.

brief document, however, is announced as "a rich text with limitless application" (book 3, chapter 11, 378), whereby the terse account of institutional anti-Semitism, as well as the twenty-four-hour police surveillance and the criminal justice of deportation and confiscation of property, is recommended for careful consideration by the reader. These statements are alarming in their implications for the controls over social, economic, and political life. Granted, the "merry Friedrich" cannot be regarded as a reliable informant, yet his account of the American utopia gives cause for deep concern about this future society.³⁷

Makarie's "ethereal fiction" is presented by the editor as "a page from our archives," which cannot be regarded as entirely authentic, since it is "written from memory, long after its contents were communicated" (book 3, chapter 14, 409). The character of Makarie is one of the boldest fictions of the novel. She is a modern type of saint, representing cosmic love.³⁸ On the one hand, she appears as a good old aunt and "family confessor" in a wheelchair; on the other hand, as an entelechy on a planetary orbit, extending past the limits of the solar system. On the basis of astronomic computations it is concluded "that she had long since passed beyond the orbit of Mars and was nearing the orbit of Jupiter." Nevertheless, the hope is expressed that she will long to return, "in order to exercise her influence upon earthly life again, to the benefit" of those who seek her assistance. Even the anonymous author of this text voices some reservations about this figure (book 3, chapter 15, 411). By admitting to the utter fictitiousness of the text as a fairy tale, "suitable perhaps for a novel," the author is able

37 Degering, 111; Gert Mattenklott, "Der späte Goethe," in *Vormärz: Biedermeier, Junges Deutschland, Demokraten*, vol. 6 of *Deutsche Literatur: Eine Sozialgeschichte*, ed. Horst Albert Glaser (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1980), 296; Heinz Schlaffer, "Exoterik und Esoterik in Goethes Romanen," *Goethe Jahrbuch* 95 (1978): 224ff. Hans R. Vaget compares the *Wanderjahre* in mood to Franz Schubert's *Winterreise* (157).

38 For Eric A. Blackall, Makarie represents "the highest form of order presented in this novel" by virtue of the fact that she "both mirrors and figures in the cosmos" (*Goethe and the Novel*, 242). See also Clark S. Muenzer, *Figures of Identity: Goethe's Novels and the Enigmatic Self* (University Park and London: Pennsylvania State UP, 1984), 12023.

to maintain its value as a "metaphor for the highest good" (book 3, chapter 14, 407). The contrasting of the sidereal saint with the good old aunt produces an ideal image that does not require a proof of truth.³⁹

Near the end of the novel editorial interventions proliferate. The farce "Die gefährliche Wette" ("The Perilous Wager") is inserted because the editor fears that "we are unlikely to find room further on for irregularities of this sort" (book 3, chapter 8, 360). The novel's conclusion presents special problems for the editor, since "here the task of communicating, portraying, amplifying, and pulling together becomes ever more difficult." He decides on a form of simultaneous representation in order to summarize what "we knew or had learned of at that time, as well as of what we were later informed, and in this spirit to bring the solemn business we have undertaken, of being a faithful chronicler, to a fitting conclusion" (book 2, chapter 14, 40001). He fulfills his task by editing the impersonal narration of Felix's salvation by his father, as well as by providing the aphorisms from Makarie's archives.

The fiction of the editor represents an important part of the poetics of renunciation. A realistic structure of sorting and combining the isolated passages is established after aesthetic integration has been rejected. Goethe had originally conceived the *Wanderjahre* as a frame story with inserted narratives, as his letter of 2728 May 1798 to his publisher Johann Friedrich Cotta indicates.⁴⁰ For this purpose he had studied around 1807 narrative techniques in larger frame stories such as Boccaccio's *Decamerone*, the *Heptameron* of Margarete von Navarra, the *Cent nouvelles* of Antoine de la Sale, *A Thousand and One Nights*, as well as his own *Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten* (*Conversations of German Refugees*). At the same time, he began to publish in Cotta's *Taschenbuch für Damen* single narratives later used

³⁹ Bahr, *Die Ironie im Spätwerk Goethes*, 127ff.

⁴⁰ "Letters of a traveler and his pupil, under romantic [i.e., fictitious] conditions, next to Wilhelm Meister." Attached to a letter to Cotta on 2728 May 1798, *Goethe and Cotta: Briefwechsel 1797/1832*, ed. Dorothea Kuhn, 3 vols. (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1980), 1:23.

in the *Wanderjahre*.⁴¹ But as early as 1821 he had abandoned the traditional model of a frame story with the publication of the first version of the *Wanderjahre*, as the fiction of the archive took its place. In the final version of 1829 the fiction of the archive was not strengthened but rather concealed, as can be seen by the deletion of several of the editor's mediating texts in the second version of 1829.⁴²

However, the editor's technique represents only a part of the fiction of the archive. Based on the rejection of narrative integration and auctorial judgment, the other part of creating the fiction is assigned to the implied reader.⁴³ The fiction of the archive requires the reader's active participation. The demands placed on the reader's power of imagination in the *Wanderjahre* go far beyond the norms of the eighteenth-century art of narration and depict the other important point of the poetics of renunciation. Hans R. Vaaget has wittily called the novel an exercise in reading.⁴⁴ Instead of being provided with signals for interpretation, readers are left to their own resources. They are forced to approach the text of the novel in the same way they empirically experience reality. The various types of text passages confront the readers with facts and processes of consciousness which they must assess to understand the novel. What Wolfgang Iser has said with regard to the means of interpreting literature applies to the reader of the *Wanderjahre*:

41 Bahr, *Die Ironie im Spätwerk Goethes*, 101ff.; Katharina Mommsen, *Goethe und 1001 Nacht* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1960), 11821.

42 See the *Wanderjahre* in Reclams Universal-Bibliothek, ed. Ehrhard Bahr (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1982), 2058.

43 According to Wolfgang Iser, at issue here is not a typology of possible or fictitious readers, but the "text's strategies for the process of reading" (*Der implizite Leser*, 9). On the reader in the *Wanderjahre*, see Manfred Karnick, *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre oder die Kunst des Mittelbaren* (Munich: Fink, 1968), 18691; and Bahr, "Goethe's *Wanderjahre* as an Experimental Novel," 6667. The author is indebted to Benjamin Bennett, who was the first to apply convincingly Iser's theory to the *Wanderjahre* in a lecture at the MLA Convention in 1982.

44 Vaaget, 142.

The reader is meant to become aware of the nature of his or her faculties of perception, of his or her own tendency to link things together in consistent patterns, and even the whole thought process that constitutes his or her relations with the external world.⁴⁵

The condition for this is posited in the *Wanderjahre* insofar as the novel no longer confines itself to telling a story but represents various types and levels of reality and of reflections of consciousness produced by the fiction of the archive. Thus the reader's expectations, formed by the auctorial novel of the eighteenth century, are disappointed and confused. The disparity of archival texts compels the reader to establish connections between perception and thought which, based on the complicated transmission of various types of text, require constant revision.

The reader's irritation begins with the novel's prelude. To one's consternation, one learns only from Wilhelm's second letter that the impersonally narrated story "Saint Joseph the Second" was written down by Wilhelm for Natalie and changed here and there by the anonymous editor for inclusion in the archive (book 1, chapter 3, 112). Thus the reader must consider layers of narrative perspective, emphasized by the double revision of the original first-person narrative of Saint Joseph the Second, without ever receiving reliable information with respect to the transmission of the text. This irritation continues with the secretive allusion to Wilhelm's fetish, "something that looked half like a wallet, half like a set of instruments," in conversation with Jarno-Montan (book 1, chapter 4, 120). Only nineteen chapters later does it become clear to the reader that it involves the surgeon's instruments in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, which Wilhelm had acquired as a memento and used now to justify his "true vocation" (book 2, chapter 11, 292). The reading of interrupted and isolated pieces of narrative and making the connection between the childhood experience of the fisherboy's drowning and the trivial objects of the surgeon's instruments reflect the process of analyzing a repressed trauma.⁴⁶ Another example is the mysterious casket with its mag-

⁴⁵ Iser, 10.

⁴⁶ Eissler, 2:144857.

netic key, which has the function of mediating the development of the relationship between Felix and Hersilie. Since the content of the box remains a secret, the reader's imagination is provoked to speculate.⁴⁷ Numerous examples of things that irritate readers may be given, such as the overlapping of narrative perspectives and levels of reception, or the transcendence of linear narration and the withholding of information.⁴⁸

The balance of reading freedom and reading control belongs to the traditional expectation of reading. While the effort to strike this traditional balance is unmistakable within the editorial comments regarding the American utopia and Makarie's fairy tale, reading freedom is increased in both collections of aphorisms. Here in the truest sense of the word one deals with texts with "limitless applications" (book 3, chapter 11, 378). The linear process of reading a novel is disrupted or abandoned via the discontinuity in reading the aphorisms, as in the "Reflections in the Spirit of the Wanderers" as well as in the aphorisms "From Makarie's Archives." The aphorisms require from the reader the ability to participate in the jump of thoughts in content and arrangement. While the rest of the texts in the novel remain bound to the ongoing plot despite the simultaneity of the archival fiction, the collections of aphorisms are presented as "coexisting compositions" in the novel's plot, in contrast to Lessing's definition of poetry in *Laokoon*.⁴⁹ In the tradition of the gnomic verses of classical antiquity, the reader is provided with psychological experiences, rules to life, as well as scientific, aesthetic, and philosophical information for infinite speculation and combination within the novel's action. Several apho-

47 The function of the mysterious casket or little box as a Goethean symbol has often been overestimated. In my opinion the casket constitutes a form of metonymy. See my article "Revolutionary Realism in Goethe's *Wanderjahre*," 169; cf. Volker Dürr, "Geheimnis und Aufklärung: Zur pädagogischen Funktion des Kästchens in *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahren*," Monatshefte 7 (1982): 1129; and Wilhelm Emrich, "Das Problem der Symbolinterpretation im Hinblick auf Goethes *Wanderjahre*," in *Protest und Verheißung* (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 1960), 4866. Steer 13032 offers a good summary.

48 Gidion, 10625.

49 I am indebted to Benjamin Bennett for the reference to Lessing's *Laokoon*.

risms agree almost exactly with words in the novel's plot (book 2, chapter 9, 280 and 312; book 2, chapter 9, 260 and 429).⁵⁰ Here we find a peak in the poetics of renunciation. The raw material of the archive depicts a maximum of narrative disintegration. Yet with this rejection of narrative integration, a gain is again to be had: in this case, a maximum of reading freedom, namely "sagacity and penetration," so admired in the Irish novelist Laurence Sterne. "His sagacity and penetration are boundless," as it is quoted in an aphorism from "Makarie's Archives" (434). In this sense, perhaps the novel's last sentence, "Ist fortzusetzen" ("To be continued"), refers to the maximal liberation of the reader from the text.⁵¹

Goethe was quite conscious of the uniqueness of his work, as can be seen from remarks to his real readers. To Josef Stanislaus Zauper, a professor of rhetoric, he wrote on 17 September 1821,

Coherence, aim and purpose lie within the little book itself; if it is not of One piece, then it is still of One meaning, and this was precisely the task: to bring strange external events together so that the reader may feel that they belong together.⁵²

In a letter from 28 July 1829 Goethe explained to Johann Friedrich Rochlitz, a writer himself and music critic in Leipzig,

A work like this one, which proclaims itself a whole by seeming to be in a certain sense only put together for the purpose of linking

50 See HA 8:638.

51 As previously pointed out, this sentence was deleted from the Hamburg edition and is also missing from the English translation of 1989. For comparison, cf. Reclam edition (Stuttgart, 1982), 525. See also Karl Viëtor, "Goethes Gedicht auf Schillers Schädel," *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 49 (1944): 14283; Franz Mautner, 'Ist fortzusetzen': Zu Goethes Gedicht auf Schillers Schädel," *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 49 (1944): 115662.

52 "Zusammenhang, Ziel und Zweck liegt innerhalb des Büchleins selbst; ist es nicht aus Einem Stück, so ist es doch aus Einem Sinn; und dies war eben die Aufgabe, mehrere fremdartige äußere Ereignisse dem Gefühle als übereinstimmend entgegenzubringen" (HA 8:521).

disparate entities, permits and even demands more than another work, that each reader appropriates the work as he or she sees fit.⁵³

And in a letter of 23 November 1829, following the same idea, Goethe wrote again to Rochlitz,

Such a little book is like life itself: located in the complex of the whole are necessity and chance, preordination and adherence, now successful, now futile, through which it achieves a type of infinity that does not completely allow itself to be summarized in understandable and reasonable words.⁵⁴

In conversation with Chancellor von Müller on 18 February 1830 Goethe characterized the form of the *Wanderjahre* as a "mere aggregate."⁵⁵ Goethe was especially conscious of the demands on the reader. Even in the *Lehrjahre* he had indicated in a letter to Schiller of 26 June 1796 that the reader had "to supply something according to his or her intention." These demands increased considerably in the *Wanderjahre*. Goethe knew well that much would remain puzzling for readers, yet he hoped that "the genuine reader will again sense and think through everything."⁵⁶ He wrote to a reader in Berlin, expressing the hope that the *Wanderjahre* "provided much to mull

53 "Eine Arbeit wie diese, die sich selbst als kollektiv ankündigt, indem sie gewissermaßen nur zum Verband der disparatesten Einzelheiten unternommen zu sein scheint, erlaubt, ja fordert mehr als eine andere, daß jeder sich zueigne, was ihm gemäß ist" (*Goethes Briefe*, ed. Karl Robert Mandelkow [Hamburg: Wegner, 1967], 4:339).

54 "Mit einem solchen Büchlein aber ist es wie mit dem Leben selbst: es findet sich in dem Komplex des Ganzen Notwendiges und Zufälliges, Vorgesetztes und Angeschlossenes, bald gelungen, bald vereitelt, wodurch es eine Art von Unendlichkeit erhält, die sich in verständige und vernünftige Worte nicht durchaus fassen noch einschließen läßt" (HA 8:526).

55 *Goethes Gespräche*, ed. Flodoard von Biedermann (Leipzig: Biedermann, 1910), 4:217.

56 "Der echte Leser wird das alles schon wieder herausfühlen und -denken" (HA 8:522).

over."⁵⁷ In response to the positive critique of his young friend Sulpiz Boisserée, a writer and collector of medieval art, Goethe answered with the following reference to form and effect:

The serious and careful efforts will not remain hidden to the intelligent reader whereby I attempted this second experiment (*Versuch*) to unite, manipulate, and modulate such disparate elements, and I have to be happy when such a risky undertaking appears fairly successful to you.⁵⁸

These letters provide the biographical argument for the complex poetics of the *Wanderjahre*. They show that Goethe had conceived that changing relationship of structure and reception which would grant the implied reader a maximum of freedom with the reduction of the form of the novel to an "aggregate." In the open form of the *Wanderjahre* the implied reader was given the opportunity to realize a total and, at the same time, individually conceived fictitious world.

This form corresponds to the concept of totality in Hegel's *Aesthetics*. There this concept serves first to characterize epic poetry, which is defined as "unified totality" (*einheitsvolle Totalität*). Then the term is applied to the novel as "modern bourgeois epic." With respect to the form of representation, it is also said that "the true novel, like the epic, requires totality as the basis of its view of the world and life, whose manifold materials and forms appear within the individual event, which supplies the focal center for the entire complex."⁵⁹ Goethe

57 "[Ich hoffe, meine *Wanderjahre*] . . . haben Ihnen mancherlei zu denken gegeben" (HA 8:525).

58 "Dem einsichtigen Leser bleibt Ernst und Sorgfalt nicht verborgen, womit ich diesen zweiten Versuch, so disparate Elemente zu vereinigen, angefaßt und durchgeführt, und ich muß mich glücklich schätzen, wenn Ihnen ein so bedenkliches Unternehmen einigermaßen gelungen erscheint" (HA 8:52526).

59 "Der eigentliche Roman [fordert] wie das Epos die Totalität einer Welt-und Lebensanschauung, deren vielseitiger Stoff und Gehalt innerhalb der individuellen Begebenheit zum Vorschein kommt, welche den Mittelpunkt für das Ganze abgibt" (Hegel, *Vorlesungen über Ästhetik*, 3:178).

Friedrich Spielhagen in 1864 was the first to apply the term *totality* to the *Wanderjahre*, followed by Max Wundt in 1913. See Anneliese Klingenberg, *Goethes Roman Wilhelm Meisters*

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may have heard of Hegel's lectures on aesthetics or philosophy of art, but he did not read the *Aesthetics*, since it did not appear until 1835. On the other hand, the *Aesthetics* displays enough examples to prove that Hegel was quite familiar with Goethe's work and that he developed his theory of the novel based on the model of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*.

Goethe's thought in old age exhibits an affinity with Hegel's philosophy. His concept of totality is thoroughly grounded in the Hegelian sense, and in fact Goethe and Hegel corresponded.⁶⁰ Their most important meetings took place during the second working period of the *Wanderjahre* between 1821 and 1829. After Goethe's death an unopened copy of *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (*The Phenomenology of the Mind*) was found in his library. In 1821 Goethe sent Hegel a dedication with the words, "The primary phenomenon (*Urphänomen*) recommends itself most graciously for friendly reception by the absolute." Later Goethe declared that he agreed with Hegel's basic thought and sensibility and that "one could quite well approach and join each other in the mutual development and exchange of ideas."⁶¹

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Wanderjahre: *Quellen und Komposition* (Berlin: Aufbau, 1972), 22ff.

⁶⁰*Lexikon der Goethe-Zitate*, ed. Richard Döbel (Zurich: Artemis, 1968), 924: ". . . denn nur durch Zusammenstellen des Verwandten entsteht nach und nach eine Totalität, die sich selbst ausspricht und keiner weitem Erklärung bedarf" [Because only by arranging the related parts does a totality gradually come into existence, speaking for itself and needing no farther explanation] (*Entwurf einer Farbenlehre*, 2d Part, 228) and "Es gestaltet sich gewiß immer wieder im Universum derselbe besondere Mensch . . . damit es nie und zu keiner Zeit an diesem Supplement der Totalität fehle" [Certainly, the same special human being appears again and again in the universe . . ., so that there is never a lack to provide totality with this supplement] (*Riemer*, 25 November 1824).

⁶¹ "Dem Absoluten/empfiehlt sich/schönstens/zu freundlicher Aufnahme/das Urphänomen/" (*Goethes Briefe* 3:694). "Daß . . . man also in beiderseitigem Entwickeln und Aufschließen sich gar wohl annähern und vereinigen könne" (*Goethes Briefe* 4:260). See the afterword to the *Wanderjahre* edition in Reclams Universal-Bibliothek, 553ff.; and especially Karl Löwith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche: The Revolution in Nineteenth-Century Thought*, transl. David E. Green (Garden City: Doubleday, 1964), 228; and Hans Mayer, *Goethe: Ein Versuch über den Erfolg* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973), 13460.

To Hegel the problem of the novel involved the "*original* poetic condition of the world," out of which the epic originated. This "poetic condition of the world," however, is no longer present in modern times: "The novel in the modern sense presupposes a basis of reality already organized in its *prosaic* form." In the modern novel, therefore, poetry reclaims its lost right on the basis of prosaic conditions.⁶² Nobody recognized this dilemma better than Goethe, who pointed out a solution with the example of technical prose from the *Wanderjahre*, as Hegel had described in the *Aesthetics*. Hegel stated, "One of the most common, and for the novel most fitting, collisions is therefore the conflict between poetry of the heart and the contrasting prose of external conditions antagonistic to it."⁶³ Exactly this was at hand when Goethe asked his friend Heinrich Meyer for the "technical description" of the Swiss cottage industry. He endeavored "to craft a lengthy realistic yarn into a poetic web." The weaving process is used as a metaphor for literary production. Still, Goethe was concerned whether "this interweaving of strictly dry technical matters and aesthetic and sentimental events could bring about a good effect."⁶⁴ According to Hegel, this conflict between technical factual prose and poetry of the heart is resolved.

On the one hand, the characters who in the first instance contend with the ordinary course of life learn to recognize the genuine and substantial in the usual world order, coming to terms with their conditions and ready to cooperate with them; on the other hand, however, they strip off the prosaic aspect of all that they do and accomplish and thereby replace the prose with a reality allied and congenial to beauty and art which they have found there.⁶⁵

62 "Der Roman im modernen Sinne setzt eine bereits zur *Prosa* geordnete Wirklichkeit voraus" (Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, 3:177).

63 "Eine der gewöhnlichsten und für den Roman passendsten Kollisionen ist deshalb der Konflikt zwischen der Poesie des Herzens und der entgegenstehenden Prosa der Verhältnisse" (Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, 3: 177).

64 HA 8:520.

65 "Einerseits [lernen] die der gewöhnlichen Weltordnung zunächst widerstrebenden Charaktere das Echte und Substantielle in ihr anerkennen . . . , mit

(footnote continued on next page)

These words can be read as an abstract explanation of Lenardo's and Nachodine-Susanna's individual fate. The prose of conditions is allowed to enter into the fiction of the novel with Susanna's concern about the dangers of the "increasing dominance of machine production." This passage holds an important aspect of totality in the *Wanderjahre*: the impoverishment among spinners and weavers as a result of the industrial revolution is included in the novel. Goethe became familiar with this problem during his first decade in Weimar. Among his official duties was the supervision of the stocking manufacturers in Apolda. The manufacturing, which was based on the cottage industry, had been exposed to fluctuations in cotton prices and, therefore, tended to exploit the workers. In his diary Goethe noted in March 1779 that one hundred looms were not operating and that the people lived "from hand to mouth." Because of competition by the mechanized English textile industry, the situation became completely untenable. Uprisings among the weavers had to be suppressed with the help of the military in 1784 and 1797.⁶⁶

While Goethe excluded the hungry "stocking weavers from Apolda" from the text of his drama *Iphigenie auf Tauris* (in order to, as he said, let the king of Tauris speak), the impoverishment of the Swiss spinners and weavers is taken up in the text of the *Wanderjahre*. The novel's totality is manifested in the fact that the novel is open to everyday reality. The artwork's totality in Goethe's post-Classical period, always consciously directed at recording and shedding light on the tendencies of the age, superseded the closed form of the Classical work of art, which always represents a loss of reality. We can recognize other problems in Goethe's achievement of the *Wanderjahre*:

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ihren Verhältnissen sich aussöhnen und wirksam in dieselben eintreten, andererseits aber von dem, was sie wirken und vollbringen, die prosaische Gestalt abstreifen und dadurch eine der Schönheit verwandte und befreundete Wirklichkeit an die Stelle der vorgefundenen Prosa setzen" (Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, 3:177f.).

⁶⁶ Effi Biedrzyński, ed., *Mit Goethe durch das Jahr: Ein Kalender für das Jahr 1983*, (Zurich: Artemis, 1982), 93.

problems having to do with bourgeois society, work, education, humanity and Christianity.⁶⁷

The integration of events into the plot through the various documents of the archival novel clearly shows one of the problems Goethe had in mind when he wrote *Wanderjahre*, namely, the relationship between man as a private individual and as a member of society. This dualistic aspect has been the "fundamental problem of all modern theories of the state and society," as Karl Löwith has pointed out (232). For Rousseau this relationship was incongruous, true harmony between the private individual (*homme*) and the citizen (*citoyen*) being impossible. Goethe, on the other hand, tried to overcome this incompatibility in *Wanderjahre* through renunciation, thus establishing a balance between the two basic aspects of human existence in modern society. The function of society, as presented in one document by the collector and arranger of the papers in *Wanderjahre*, is "to maintain uniformity in the most important matters, and to let everyone have his own will in less crucial ones" (book 3, chapter 11, 380). This train of thought parallels that of Hegel, who in his *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts (Basics of the Philosophy of Law)* of 1821 similarly tried to reconcile the principles of individuality and commonweal in his design of the modern state. Admittedly, some of Hegel's ideas are not devoid of authoritarianism. But then, the document about the American utopia in Goethe's *Wanderjahre* contains unmistakable characteristics of a police state. The utopia is described as consisting of people who "concern themselves not with justice but rather with police powers. . . . Anyone who proves a nuisance shall be removed" (book 3, chapter 11, 379).

Other problems, discussed in various documents of *Wanderjahre*, concern work and education. Both, according to Karl Löwith, "become the substance of the life of bourgeois society" in the nineteenth century (260). The dangers of industrialization and the threat of

⁶⁷ See Bahr, "Goethe's *Wanderjahre* as an Experimental Novel," 6871. A glance at Karl Löwith's analysis of nineteenth-century philosophy from Hegel to Nietzsche may suffice to show that Goethe conceptualized almost all tendencies of his age in *Wanderjahre*.

unemployment are discussed in detail. Lenardo records the following statement by a manufacturer of linen goods in his diary:

But what weighs on my mind is an economic problem, unfortunately not of concern for the moment, no, for the entire future. The increasing dominance of machine production torments and frightens me: it is rolling on like a thunderstorm, slowly, slowly; but it is headed this way, and it will arrive and strike. . . . People think about it, people talk about it, and neither thinking nor talking can help. And who likes to picture such calamities! (book 3, chapter 13, 396)

The alternatives offered to industrialization are resettlement in Europe or emigration to America. In a speech before the emigrants their leader explains that people used to believe in "the high value of land ownership (*Grundbesitz*) and [made] us regard it as the first and best asset man can acquire." But this concept is replaced by the idea of work and achievement when the following statement is added: "Even though a man's property is of great worth, even greater worth must be ascribed to his deeds and achievements" (book 3, chapter 9, 364).

Education in *Wanderjahre* is related to work. In various conversations, documents and letters, the figures of the novel and hence the readers are urged to acquire a useful skill that can be applied for the common good. As Wilhelm reports in a letter to Natalie, he is told in no uncertain terms that "the day for specialization" has come: "Fortunate is he who comprehends this and labors in this spirit for himself and others. . . . To restrict oneself to one craft is the best thing" (book 1, chapter 4, 118). Therefore, Wilhelm becomes a surgeon, a profession which at that time was still considered a craft. Liberal education is renounced in favor of specialization, which foreshadows the division of labor in industrial production.

Nineteenth-century criticism of religion, specifically of Christianity, is reflected in various documents of *Wanderjahre*. Religion is transformed into a kind of "secular piety" (*Weltfrömmigkeit*), as it is called in a letter of the abbé (book 2, chapter 7, 266). In the Pedagogic Province, attitudes of "reverence" (*Ehrfurcht*) are taught. Three types of religion are acknowledged: an ethnic religion based on reverence for what is above man; a philosophical religion, which is based on reverence for that which is equal to man; and the Christian religion, which

is founded on reverence of that which is below man (book 2, chapter 1, 2025). However, Christ's sufferings and death, the central component of Christianity, are withheld from the sight of the students of the Pedagogic Province, being hidden by a veil (book 2, chapter 2, 210). On the frescoes of the inner sanctum of the Pedagogic Province, Christ appears as "a true philosopher . . . as a sage in the highest sense" (book 2, chapter 2, 209). Thus, Christianity becomes secularized and is transcended by philosophy, as in Hegel's writings, where religion, in fact, becomes the highest form of philosophy (Löwith 32429).

All these problems, as they are presented by the fictional editor of the papers of the novel's archives, testify to the "advanced reality" of the *Wanderjahre*. The novel becomes a true representative of the tendencies affecting its century. With Goethe's striving for totality in thematics, structure, and reception, the *Wanderjahre* approaches the twentieth century to the extent that Hermann Broch was able to see this novel realize the demand expressed by him in his essay on "James Joyce and the Present": "to raise the poetic to the level of knowledge (*Erkenntnis*) ."68

68 Broch, 88.

Rewriting the Social Text: The Female Bildungsroman in Eighteenth-Century England

Eve Tavor Bannet

"Let me make the novels of a country, and let who will make the systems."

Mrs. Barbauld, 1810

During the last decades of the eighteenth century in England, the language of *Bildung*—the language of instruction, of moral and sentimental education, and of self-cultivation—was applied, not to the lives of characters in novels, but to the desired effect of novels on the lives and characters of their largely female readership. The term *Bildungsroman* is, of course, problematical, as is abundantly shown in several of the essays in this volume. But if we say, for the sake of argument, that the nineteenth-century English *Bildungsroman* was a realistic novel focussing on the social and moral education of a character who evolves over time as a result of encounters with others, one that places the reader in the relatively neutral position of observer and judge, we must say that the eighteenth century understood the *Bildungsroman* in a very different way. It is a mistake, frequently made, to impose nineteenth-century assumptions on eighteenth-century novels, and it seems to me that a clearer view of what the eighteenth century did with the *Bildungsroman* can both enrich our understanding of that term and extend its usefulness.

The eighteenth century was no stranger to modern, poststructuralist assumptions that "our life comes from books" and that "to change

the book is to change life itself".¹ Eighteenth-century lady-novelists, literary theorists, reviewers, essayists, moralists, and educationists well understood the power that fictions exercise over life. It was because they held that fictional narratives have the power to "excite the actions they describe"² that lady-novelists and male reviewers paid so much attention to the principles and morals governing fictional actions and to the potentially beneficial or harmful effects of the novels they discussed. It was because they believed that books have the power to fashion the manners, the sentiments, and the characters of their readers that eighteenth-century clergymen, moralists, and educationists either proscribed novel reading altogether or insisted that parents carefully select the novels their daughters read. And, as Clara Reeve and Maria Edgeworth tell us, it was because they considered that women readers were already modelling their lives, their behavior, their expectations, and their values on the shoddy and fantastic novels and romances they borrowed from the circulating libraries that lady-novelists from mid-century on set out to change the book that women were imitating in order to change their very lives. The eighteenth-century female Bildungsroman was not always designed to give a minute account of the *Bildung* of its heroine; but it was designed to effect the *Bildung* of its readers and thus to effect changes in the manners and morals of the times.

In what follows I will consider some of the ways in which this design helped to determine both the structure and development of the Bildungsroman and some of the directions in which eighteenth-century lady-novelists were endeavoring to rewrite the social text. But it will be useful first to sketch out some of the positions currently taken on these issues and to mark the differences in the approach I shall take here.

¹ Roland Barthes, *Sollers écrivain* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1979), 20, 39.

² Clara Reeve, *The Progress of Romance*, (1785; reprint, New York: Facsimile Editions, 1974), 1:97.

Recent new historicistfeminist critics have tended to assume that eighteenth-century lady-novelists were spoken of more than they spoke. Following Foucault or Derrida, they have tended to argue that where eighteenth-century lady-novelists departed from the gender roles imposed by the patriarchy and depicted in sermons and conduct books, they did so unconsciously, subversively, or in such a way that they were divided against themselves.³ They have also argued that the gender roles defined in sermons and conduct books and repeated in women's novels produced "a new kind of woman, a domestic woman," gave her power (especially the power of surveillance) over the household and over sexual relations, and produced "a single idea of the household," which not only served the interests of emergent capitalism but also "helped to generate the belief that there was such a thing as the middle class well before one existed in any other form."⁴

In fact there was considerable debate throughout the eighteenth century about what constituted female nature, female virtue, female propriety, and female roles, and as Marilyn Butler demonstrated some time ago,⁵ eighteenth-century women's novels were very much part of this debate. During the course of the eighteenth century, preachers, moralists, essayists, conduct book writers, and novelists, feminist and nonfeminist, were all engaged in inventing new female typologies.⁶ But they were doing so dialogically, and there was considerable dis-

3 See for instance: Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987); Judith Lowder Newton, *Women, Power, Subversion: Social Strategies in British Fiction 1778-1860* (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1981); Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley and Jane Austen* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1984); and Kristina Straub, *Divided Fictions: Fanny Burney and Feminine Strategy* (Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1987).

4 Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse, eds., *The Ideology of Conduct* (London: Methuen, 1987), 9, 12.

5 Marilyn Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975).

6 For the role of typologies in eighteenth-century thought and fiction, see Paul K. Kerskin, *Typologies in England: 1650-1820* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1982); and John K. Sheriff, *The Good-Natured Man: The Evolution of a Moral Ideal* (Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 1982).

agreement, for instance, about whether women were to be ruled by their hearts or by their heads, about whether it was really to their advantage to be fashioned as gentle and sentimental creatures, about how women's minds should be educated and used, and indeed about whether women could not and should not be able to lead happy single lives. Moreover, lady-novelists often used very similar sounding idealsthat of domestic happiness, for example to very different political ends. In Mrs. Inchbald's *Nature and Art* (1796) the ideal of domestic happiness serves a radical politics, one that would overthrow the extant class structure and level everyone with the lower and middle orders; in Fanny Burney, it serves rather to level the aristocracy, the gentry, and the newly wealthy trading classes and, not to invent the middle class, but more probably to provide a format and a justification for the marriages between new money and old name which had begun to proliferate.

It is possible to show that there were great shifts in the representation of women between the end of the seventeenth century and the end of the eighteenth. If at the end of the seventeenth century women had been portrayed as vain, lustful, and inconstant, by the end of the eighteenth century they were being portrayed as virtuous, modest, and chaste. If at the end of the seventeenth century, women had been conceived as having satanic powers of temptation and social destruction, by the end of the eighteenth they were given almost messianic powers of moral influence and social reconstruction. And if marriages had once been portrayed as based on money and convenience, they came increasingly to be portrayed as based on domestic companionship, mutual affection, and mutual consideration.

But to conceive of the broad shift in the portrayal of women merely as a shift in the concept of what constituted a desirable woman is to ignore the extent to which lady-novelists were engaged in rewriting relationships: relationships among women, relationships between parents and daughters, relationships between women and men. And to dismiss what is often called the cult of "romantic love" and the "companionate marriage" in eighteenth-century women's novels either as wish fulfillment fantasies, or as a return to subjection, or as some sort of failure to imagine the modern feminist ideal of complete female autonomy is to overlook the extent to which lady-novelists were ac-

tively engaged in carving out areas of freedom for women and relations of equality with men.⁷ As Lee Edwards reminds us, marriage can be "a sign of triumph, not capitulation" even if, once the heroine's life is over and her quest achieved, she and her attainments become "one of the many ritualized objects guaranteeing social consensus, preserving stability and order and a fixed notion of reality."⁸

Ideals of women's conduct and of women's lives which can arguably be said to have become "ritualized objects" in the nineteenth century were still revolutionary in the eighteenth. They were revolutionary in the sense that they were constructed in binary opposition to extant norms and practices and designed to displace the latter.⁹ And they were revolutionary in the sense that they involved a clearly defined strategy for bringing about social change not social action as in the nineteenth century, but social reeducation. In the eighteenth century education served both as the means and language for social transformation. Writing in 1774, Dr. John Gregory insisted that in his conduct book "no sacrifices are made to prejudices, to customs, to fashionable opinions," and he contrasted his typology of female conduct with mankind's "falsehood, their dissipation, their coldness to all

⁷ For wish fulfillment fantasies, see J. M. S. Tompkins, *The Popular Novel in England 1770-1800* (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1961); Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley and Jane Austen* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1984); and Katherine M. Rogers, *Feminism in 18th Century England* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1982); for subjection and autonomy, see note 3 above.

⁸ Lee Edwards, *Psyche as Hero: Female Heroism and Fictional Form* (Middletown, CT.: Wesleyan UP, 1984), 11, 7.

⁹ Treated as minors in law, women had no right to property, but passed from the tutelage of fathers to that of husbands. The increasing take-over by men of work which had traditionally been done by women left women increasingly dependent on fathers, brothers, and husbands. Educated to dress and to please and to have superficial "accomplishments," in marked contrast to men's education, women were largely left even without resources to occupy their leisure this, of course, was one of the reasons for the great popularity of the circulating libraries.

duties of friendship and humanity."¹⁰ In other words, Gregory opposed the ideal he was elaborating both to extant social norms ("fashionable opinions," "prejudices") and to social practices ("customs," "falsehood, dissipation, etc."), and he couched reform in the language of conventional morality and *Bildung*. Writing in a genre that transgressed the fixed boundary between the ideal and the real in a way the conduct book did not, eighteenth-century lady-novelists nevertheless proceeded in a similar way, contrasting the real and the ideal, refashioning the latter, and presenting even their radical innovations in the language of conventional morality and *Bildung*.

Lukács and Bakhtin have both argued that the male Bildungsroman also works extensively with the contrast between real and ideal or idyllic elements, but they emphasize the element of critique rather than that of social reeducation and reconstruction. Both argue that the ideal, the "love idyll," or the "family idyll" serve primarily as a critique of the social world, whose evils are shown up by "the deep *humanity* of idyllic man," by "the humanity of his human relationships" and by the *wholeness* of idyllic life."¹¹ Lukács locates the ideal in the hero of the Bildungsroman conceived as a single, problematical individual with a "beautiful soul" who can find no adequate place for himself in the world, while Bakhtin locates it in "the small but secure and stable little world of the family" which the hero acquires after his wanderings through an alien and depersonalized world. But both conceive of the ideal in static, Hegelian, and essentially abstract terms, and assume that it was always and everywhere the same. Bakhtin allows the possibility of a critique of the idyll within the Bildungsroman when he argues, for instance, that in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* the family idyll is shown to be too narrow and limited to establish society on a new basis and to "humanize it." This is why, he says, Goethe makes his hero "expatriate himself" and "sever all previous ties

¹⁰ Dr. John Gregory, *A Father's Legacy to His Daughters* (1774; reprint, New York: Garland, 1974), vvi, 3.

¹¹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, ed. Michael Holquist (Austin: U of Texas P, 1981), 233. See also Georg Lukács, *Die Theorie des Romans* (Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1971) and *Goethe and His Age*, trans. Robert Anchor (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1969).

to the idyllic" before learning to function in the social world by "mak[ing] it his own, domesticat[ing] it."¹² But because he allows of no possible continuous debate in fictional form about the nature and conditions of the love or family idylls, Bakhtin is forced to think of Bildungsromane that involve a critique of the idyll as constituting a later, separate subcategory of Bildungsromane, and he is precluded from any differential reading of idylls.

The eighteenth-century female Bildungsroman, which conceived of the social world as constituted by a multitude of families and by a multitude of diverse types of family relationships, was engaged in a permanent critique both of the love idyll and of the family idyll. To mention only the most immediately obvious examples, Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote* (1752) and *Henrietta* (1758), Charlotte Smith's *Emmeline* (1788) and Mary Hays's *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796), to say nothing of Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), all involve a critique of the love and family idylls as presented by their predecessors as well as a critique of social norms and practices.¹³ Before Jane Austen, orphaned and expatriated from a happy childhood home, the heroines of the eighteenth-century female Bildungsroman journey through a series of social and familial relationships, meeting a variety of what Greimas would call "helpers" and "opponents," and overcoming all those features of characters and manners which each novel defined as constituting obstacles to free and equal interpersonal intercourse. In the process each novel not only honed a particular version of the ideal and turned it into a model for social reconstruction; each also gave it much more complex relations with the real than those suggested by Lukács or Bakhtin.

Eighteenth-century lady-novelists were still writing in the exemplar tradition of literature, in the tradition that conceived of literature as "philosophy teaching by example." They were, therefore, in their own words "making entertaining stories the vehicle to convey to the young and flexible heart wholesome truths that it refused to receive under the

¹² Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 234.

¹³ For *Emmeline's* critique of the Wertherian love idyll, see Syndy McMillen Conger, "The Sorrows of Young Charlotte: Werther's English Sisters 1785-1805," *Goethe Yearbook* 3 (1986): 2156.

form of moral precept and instructions"; they were "temper[ing] the *utile* with the *dulce*, and under the guise of Novels, giv[ing] examples of virtue rewarded and vice punished;" they were awakening in the woman reader "a sense of finer feelings than the commerce of ordinary life inspires," giving her "ideas of delicacy and refinement which were not, perhaps, to be gained by any society she had access to," and inculcating sentiments which "served to counteract the spirit of the world, where selfish considerations have always more than their due weight."¹⁴ Similar claims were made for both factual and fictional histories in the eighteenth century.¹⁵ No one pretended that morality was practiced as it was portrayed in exemplar narratives or that narratives which showed virtue rewarded and vice punished reflected life. They said instead that such narratives "supply the defects of experience" or "supply the want of experience."¹⁶ Such narratives reflected the ideal.

At the same time, eighteenth-century lady-novelists were writing in a genre, the novel, which distinguished itself from the older romance by eschewing the fabulous and the fantastic and by embracing the probable and the familiar. The emphasis on the probable and the familiar served the needs of *Bildung* too. As Hanna More pointed out, it was "the profession of ladies" to be daughters, wives, mothers, and mistresses of families and they needed to be "furnished with a stock of ideas and principles and qualifications and habits ready to be applied and appropriated, as occasion may demand to each of these respective

¹⁴ Clara Reeve, *The Progress of Romance*, 2:41 and Mrs. Barbauld, "An Essay on the Origin and Progress of Novel Writing" in *The British Novelists* (London: J. C. & G. Rivington, 1810), 1:48, 49.

¹⁵ For exemplar theory in factual and fictional histories, see "Historical Faith and Aesthetic Delusion," in Eve Tavor, *Scepticism, Society and the 18th Century Novel* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 15058.

¹⁶ Henry St. John Bolingbroke, "Letters on the Use of History," in *Works* (Philadelphia: Carey & Hart, 1841), 2:186 and Hugh Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (London: 1812), 3:1718. Blair's work first appeared in 1763.

situations."¹⁷ What better instrument could there be for furnishing women with the requisite stock of ideas and principles than a genre which portrayed women in their familiar situations as daughters, wives, mothers, and mistresses of families, and which showed them contending with the sort of issues and choices which they would have, in all probability, to confront themselves? The more the novel was "familiar, practical, and probable," the more it dealt with characters and situations "to be met with in the course of common life," the better it could serve as "pilot's charts or maps of those parts of the world which everyone may chance to travel through,"¹⁸ and the more useful, pleasant, and effective its instruction. As Dr. Johnson said of the male Bildungsroman,

when an adventurer is levelled with the rest of the world, and acts in such scenes of the universal drama, as may be the lot of any other man; young spectators fix their eyes upon him with closer attention, and hope by observing his behaviour and success to regulate their own practices, when they shall be engaged in like part. For this reason these familiar histories may perhaps be made of greater use than the solemnities of professed morality, and convey the knowledge of vice and virtue with more efficacy than axioms and definitions.¹⁹

When eighteenth-century novelists carried the exemplar tradition into the domain of the familiar, the practical, and the probable, they laid the groundwork for what Malcolm Bradbury has described as "the novel of manners and morals, the prime theme of which is the ethical conduct of man [or woman!] in a society relatively stable and se-

¹⁷ Hanna More, "Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education," in *18th Century Women: An Anthology*, ed. Bridget Hill (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1984). More's work first appeared in 1799.

¹⁸ John Cleland, "Review of Peregrine Pickle" in *The Monthly Review* 4 (March 1751).

¹⁹*The Rambler*, No. 4, 1751.

cure"²⁰ and for that mixture of real and ideal elements which, according to Lukács, characterizes the novel as a genre. They laid the groundwork in the sense that they defined the Bildungsroman's fundamental thematic issues and made the intermixture of real and ideal elements inevitable. But they neither fully accepted the naturalness, the necessity, the moral and instructional validity of the intermixture nor felt as free as later novelists would to "confuse" what they still regarded as largely incompatible opposites.

The issue of "mixed character" is a significant case in point, for a mixed character is one who transgresses the clear boundary between morality and reality by possessing both exemplary virtues and the more familiar and probable vices of selfishness, meanness, falsehood, or depravity. Mixed characters could certainly be justified insofar as familiar histories were "engaged in portraits of which everyone knows the original, and can detect any deviation from the exactness of resemblance," for even the good people with whom we are familiar are likely to have some admixture of faults. But could mixed characters really be justified insofar as familiar histories "are written chiefly to the young, the ignorant and the idle, to whom they serve as lectures of conduct and instructions into life"? Dr. Johnson thought not. He argued that "as we accompany them through their adventures with delight, and are led by degrees to interest ourselves in their favor, we lose the abhorrence of their faults, because they do not hinder our pleasure, or perhaps regard them with some kindness for being united with so much merit." And he insisted that to serve as "lectures of conduct and instructions into life," novels should ensure that their chief protagonists exhibit "the most perfect idea of virtue" and show vice in such a way that it "should always disgust."²¹ Later reviewers and theorists of the novel simply repeated these sentiments.

Those eighteenth-century lady-novelists who were most frequently cited for being "solicitous of the morals of their readers" tended, ac-

²⁰ Malcolm Bradbury, "The Comic Novel in Sterne and Fielding," in *The Winged Skull: Papers from the Lawrence Sterne Bicentenary Conference*, ed. Arthur Cash and John M. Stedmond (New York: Proceedings of the Laurence Sterne Bicentenary Conference, 1971), 124.

²¹*The Rambler*, No. 4, (1751).

cordingly, to center their narratives on characters who portrayed what Mary Hays described as "a sort of ideal perfection, in which nature and passion are melted away and jarring attributes wonderfully combined."²² Heroines like Henrietta, Evalina, Cecilia, Camilla, Emmeline, or Matilda in Mrs. Inchbald's *A Simple Story* (1791) demonstrate a wide variety of social, domestic, and intellectual perfections: they have benevolent and feeling hearts; they are dutiful and patient under adversity; they are capable of close and loyal friendships; they are pure, artless, chaste, and beautiful; they are gentle, amiable, accomplished, and interesting; they have delicacy and sensibility and usually considerable formal education as well. Surrounded by a number of wholly or partially idealized mentors and friends and by a wide variety of nonidealized characters who display humankind's more vicious practices all of whom are disposed according to what the century called "a general plan" of contrasting virtues and vices these perfected heroines serve as the standard against which society is judged. The more they are victimized by unjust or avaricious guardians, by false or disloyal friends, by devious or violent libertines, and by selfish and indelicate persons of all sorts, the more society is shown not to be made to their measure and the more forcible the critique. The repeated victimization of the exemplary heroine in the eighteenth-century female Bildungsroman served both to bring out her virtues and to make the reader "feel" the evil of a wide variety of social norms and practices. It was, therefore, doubly instructive as a "lecture of conduct."

Because the ideal heroine was designed as "a model" rather than as a "warning," to borrow Mary Hays's words again, and consequently allowed only one flaw—ignorance of the ways of the world—she was incapable of real moral or intellectual development. Often brought up in seclusion outside society by some ideally perfect mentor, she represented the perfection of Nature (in Rousseau's sense she was "above nature" in Dr. Johnson's sense) as opposed to society's depraved Art. This served to make her exceptional qualities seem vaguely more probable—she had had an exceptional education and

²² In the preface to *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796; reprint, London: Pandora, 1987), xviii.

upbringing, she was "unspoiled" by society. It also served to make her exposures to society "instructions into life" both for herself and for young women readers who, it was argued, could attain "knowledge of the world" with "more ease" and "less danger" by reading such novels than by "mixing in real life."²³ The ideal heroine could be allowed to make the worldly errors it was hoped her example would help other young women to avoid, and she could be shown learning the prudence or judgement necessary to guard her in society; but since in other respects she was already all she ought to be, she could not otherwise develop.

This didactic formula appears restrictive to us today because our aesthetic preferences and expectations have changed and because established methods of reading, which are appropriate to nineteenth-century realist novels or to modernist novels, blind us to the strengths and the beauties of the exemplar novel. And it is in part because we have forgotten how to read the exemplar novel that we fail to see how eighteenth-century lady-novelists used the didactic formula to rewrite the social text.

One way of rewriting the social text, favored by Fanny Burney and Charlotte Smith among others, consisted in freeing the heroine of as many as possible of the circumstances and dependencies which would normally curtail a young woman's freedom of choice and action. As long as a young woman was constrained, like Clarissa, by the sacred authority of parents and by filial duty, there was virtually nothing she could do on her own volition. And enough has been written about the economic constraints under which women lived in the eighteenth century and about how these affected their lives.²⁴ By eliminating the heroine's parents and often by giving her not "a room of her own" but "money of her own," eighteenth-century lady-novelists could not

²³ Mrs. Barbauld, "Essay on the Origin . . .", 51.

²⁴ See for instance, H. J. Habbakuk, "Marriage Settlements in the 18th Century" (London: Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 4th series, 32, 1950); Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England: 1500-1800* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977); and Randolph Trumbach, *The Rise of the Egalitarian Family* (New York: Academic Press, 1978).

only significantly increase her freedom of choice and action but also delineate alternative modes of relation between the generations.

Her mother dead, deserted by her father and by all her relations, Fanny Burney's Evalina is brought up by her mother's old tutor, Mr. Villars, who represents the parental ideal. Evalina addresses him as "my most revered, most beloved father! for by what other name can I call you!" The pattern of authority and subjection which modern feminists call "the patriarchy" is exemplified in this novel by Mme Duval, Evalina's grandmother (not an isolated example in the eighteenth-century Bildungsroman of women occupying this position). And in accordance with eighteenth-century "general plan" of parallel but contrasting characterizations of virtues and vices, Mr. Villars's and Mme Duval's modes of parenting are opposed throughout the novel.

Mme Duval had "tyrannically endeavoured to effect a union" between her own daughter and her husband's nephew, and then, "when she found her power inadequate to the attempt, enraged at her noncompliance, she treated her with the grossest unkindness" and left her to "poverty and ruin." But Mr. Villars leaves Evalina to make her own choice of partner, is never enraged or unkind, and determines to leave Evalina "a moderate fortune" (all he has) when he dies. Mme Duval refuses to let anyone "dispute her authority to guide [Evalina] by her own pleasure"; but Mr. Villars "aims not at an authority which deprives [Evalina] of liberty," and his views for her are guided, not like Mme Duval's, by "ambition" and her own "pleasure," but by concern for Evalina's happiness. Mme Duval has shown herself uninterested in Evalina's early education but thinks that the blood tie now gives her the right to command; Mr. Villars, on the other hand, has taken charge of Evalina's early education, "cherished, succoured and supported her from her earliest infancy to her sixteenth year," and now continues his care by acting as her guide and counselor. Where Mme Duval is "violent," obstinate, "uneducated and unprincipled," Mr. Villars is gentle, persuadable, principled and wise. Evalina obeys Mr. Villars, not because she has to, but voluntarily, because she loves him and respects his judgement; and she flees Mme Duval.

In *Evalina* (1778), then, Fanny Burney not only subjects "tyrannical" patriarchal family patterns to a critique reinforced by the constant satirizing and humiliation of Mme Duval she also

delineates a radical alternative. One of the most revolutionary moments in the book occurs when Mr. Villars speaking, as always, in the voice of morality and righteousness tells Evalina that while she must outwardly show Mme Duval "all the respect and deference due to so near a relation," she need not in fact obey her because of "the independence I assure you of." By assuring Evalina an independence (the "moderate fortune" he will leave her), Mr. Villars makes her economically independent of Mme Duval's fortune and frees her from all subjection to her family. This freedom is confirmed at the end of the novel by the self-confessed "humiliation" of Evalina's natural father, by his consequent abdication of paternal authority, and by Mr. Villars's retention of the parental role. In displacing and replacing her natural family, Mr. Villars also displaces parental authority based on the tie of blood, on scripture, and on a parent's absolute and supposedly God-given right to dispose of the life he has given. In Mr. Villars parental authority derives instead from parental care and support, from superior wisdom and understanding, and from the affection and respect he has inspired, so that if Mr. Villars governs Evalina, he does so with her consent. Iterating the political principles which inspired the Glorious Revolution in the microcosm of the family, Fanny Burney designed an alternative to authoritarian relations between the generations where divine right and arbitrary power play no part and voluntary relationship is all.²⁵

²⁵ In emphasizing that parental authority derives from care, support, and education rather than from the act of generation, Burney was also placing herself in the vanguard of a movement to dignify and empower women. If the care, nursing, and education of children could be made the essence of parenting and if women could only be persuaded to undertake these tasks and to see them as "the profession of ladies," then women could begin to lead more useful lives, they could develop an autonomous sphere of their own, and they could begin to participate in fashioning the physical and mental constitution of society. Jacques Donzelot has argued that "it was this promotion of woman as mother, educator and medical auxiliary which was to serve as a point of support for the main feminist currents in the 19th century." (Jacques Donzelot, *The Policing of Families* [New York: Pantheon, 1979], 21.) But it also served the feminist currents in the eighteenth century. Mary Wollstonecraft, for instance, depicted the evils of the current practices of allowing wet nurses and servants to bring up children and tried to persuade women to start suckling, educating, and guiding the development of their

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Cecilia (1782) opens with a repetition of Mr. Villars's gesture and with the issue of voluntary relationship. An heiress and an orphan who has been brought up by "an aged and maternal counsellor, whom she loved as her mother," Cecilia sets off for London to choose which of the three trustees to her fortune she will live with until she attains her majority. Accordingly, she visits each of her trustees to "observe their manners and way of life, and then, to the best of her judgement, decide with which she would be most contented." "Rich without connections, powerful without wants," Cecilia need submit to no one's authority. When Mr. Harrel, for instance, tries to play the heavy-handed guardian and opposes one of her actions, she is "amazed at this authoritative speech" and removes herself to Mrs. Delvile's house. Showing the outward respect and deference due to her hosts, Cecilia obeys only those who can win her affections or her respect. Consequently, of her three sets of guardians only Mrs. Delvile can occupy the parental position. Like Mr. Villars, she governs Cecilia by her qualities and by influence, not by authority: "You will not, I think, act materially without consulting me, and for your thoughts it were tyranny, not friendship, to investigate them more narrowly." But unlike Mr. Villars, Mrs. Delvile is a mixed character; for all her sense, her accomplishments, her virtues and her seductiveness, she is afflicted by family pride and ambition, and by "the want of that lenity which is the milk of human kindness, and the bond of society." Consequently, she can never assume that ascendancy over Cecilia's mind and heart which Mr. Villars exercised over Evalina's, and Cecilia remains free to decide and act for herself.

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own children. Mary Hays shows Emma Courtney nursing her daughter and educating her children (indeed her *Memoirs* were written to educate her adoptive son) and she emphasizes Emma's medical knowledge and competence. Charlotte Smith shows Mrs. Stafford in competent sole charge of the care and education of her children and so on. In the eighteenth century displacement of the essence of parenthood from the act of generation to the acts of care, support, and education served to shift parental authority from fathers to mothers, while in the twentieth century the same view of the essence of parenthood has been used by women who no longer desire exclusive sway over the sphere carved out for them by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century feminists to insist that fathers should at least share equally in the care, education, and nurturing of their children.

In deciding and acting for herself, Cecilia gives the lie to Belfield's assertion that "man is brought up, not as if he were the noblest work of God, but as a mere ductile machine of human formation." She gives the lie to the assertion that a human being, most particularly a woman, is necessarily nothing but a "docile body" formed by what Foucault called "disciplines" and Fanny Burney "the tyranny of perpetual restraint." Cecilia shows herself immensely capable of following her own understanding and her own inclinations and of using her riches and her power for her own benefit and that of others. She avoids all the snares that are laid for her, refuses unsuitable matches, goes to moneylenders by herself, efficiently assists the needy, manages everything when Mr. Harrel commits suicide at Vauxhall, and, like a country gentleman, with one week of her minority left, "take[s] possession of a large house that belonged to her uncle . . . and employ[s] herself in giving orders for fitting it up, and in hearing complaints, and promising indulgences to various of her tenants." Her behavior, which is unconventional for a woman Mortimer Delvile calls her "exceptional," Lady Honoraria, "odd" also gives the lie to Mr. Monckton's assertion that "the opposition of an individual to a community is always dangerous in the operation, and seldom successful in the event." Cecilia is, on the whole, enormously successful. And her success demonstrated not only that a woman could govern herself but also that she could do things with her time and money that were unquestionably worthwhile.

Stephen Greenblatt has argued that individuals like More or Tyndale who opposed the community and resisted power in the Renaissance always did so in obedience to another "higher" power, and that their resistance was always an inverted mirror image of the authoritarian "disciplinary paradigm" they were resisting.²⁶ The same might be said of Cecilia. The "higher power" in obedience to which Cecilia resists the proprieties and the conventions she finds in the community around her is represented in the novel by Mr. Albany, a strange, Old Testament, prophetlike figure, who sternly observes the world, utters "sentences of rigid morality . . . or indignant reproof,"

²⁶ Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1980).

acts as Cecilia's "unknown mentor," and directs her to humility and good works. And it might be argued that for the idealized heroine of an eighteenth-century female Bildungsroman the sentences of rigid morality were as authoritative and as constraining as sentences dictated by propriety and practice were for women in the community at large.

But to leave the argument here is to overlook the extent to which at least in the eighteenth century innovations were masked as tradition and political revolutions justified by appeal to authority, and it is to confuse function and form. Presenting the new as "what oft was thought but ne'er so well exemplified" and justifying social change by appeal to the authority of morality may be regarded as two of the female Bildungsroman's most successful strategies for opposing the power of social norms and practices and for making radical alternatives seem acceptable as everyone very well understood. Eighteenth-century readers and reviewers did not take such an extraordinary interest in the "morality" of novels because they found morality less boring than we do. The morality of novels was interesting because that was where the real action lay; and invoking morality in their turn, readers and reviewers were quick to protest when a novel's "morality" masked innovations with which they disagreed. They did so in the case of *Emmeline* (1788):

Is it the business of the moral writer, who should strengthen the young mind in habits of virtue, to invent situations where every event is supposed to concur in making such temptation [Adelina's] irresistible, and such breach of engagement [Emmeline's] excusable; to draw the characters eminently virtuous, yet contrive to make them err without incurring our blame for it to make adultery amiable and perfidy meritorious, and dismiss the perpetrators of both to respectability, to honour and to happiness?²⁷

As may be apparent from this passage, Charlotte Smith was using morality in *Emmeline*, among other things, to extend voluntary relationship to a woman's right to leave a man fiancé or husband who has proved himself unworthy of her love or respect.

²⁷ Henry James Pye, *The Spectre* (London, 1789).

In many respects *Emmeline* can be described as a response to *Cecilia*, a novel that is actually read aloud to Emmeline and to her friend and mentor, Mrs. Stafford, in the course of the book. On the one hand, Charlotte Smith uses methods similar to those of Fanny Burney to discredit relations of authority and force between the generations and to stress the importance of voluntary relationship. She orphans Emmeline at birth and surrounds her with a variety of parental figures disposed according to the usual "general plan" of parallel but contrasting forms of parenting. She displaces the blood tie to the patriarchal family (represented here by Emmeline's uncle and aunt, Lord and Lady Montreville) and replaces it with two Mr. Villars-like figures (first Mrs. Carey, the housekeeper who brings up Emmeline at Mowbray Castle, then Mrs. Stafford). And she shows Emmeline resisting Lady Montreville and voluntarily submitting to Mrs. Stafford, "referring herself entirely to Mrs. Stafford," to the point where even the otherwise unperceptive Delamere is "well aware of the power a woman of her understanding must have over an heart like Emmeline's."

But on the other hand, Charlotte Smith subjects Fanny Burney's solution to the shortcomings of the patriarchal family to a critique. Smith does not deny that a woman can govern herself by her own understandingshe gives Emmeline not only intelligence but also "a native firmness in a degree very unusual to her age and sex" and shows her using both quite independently of Mrs. Stafford. And she does not deny that woman can use her riches to very worthwhile ends. But she does deny that the miraculous acquisition of a financial independence is likely to be a universally applicable panacea; she looks instead to what women can do by simply helping each other. In *Emmeline* Mrs. Stafford, Emmeline, and Adelina are constantly helping each other in every way they canby lending each other countenance and counsel, by giving material and mental support, by speaking for each other, and by promoting each other's interests. And it is as a result of this reciprocal help that Mrs. Stafford is able to leave her awful husband; that Emmeline is able to break her engagement to Delamere and marry Adelina's brother, Godolphin, instead; and that Adelina is not only reconciled first to Godolphin and then to the father of her illegitimate and adulterously conceived child but also enabled to marry the father

in the end. In *Emmeline*, then, the bond of friendship, support, and assistance among women who are not related to each other by family ties all but replaces family and makes it possible for both Emmeline and Mrs. Stafford to live outside the confines of family when they must.

One way that the female Bildungsroman could exploit the conventional exemplar narrative to rewrite the social text, therefore, was by orphaning the idealized heroine, displacing normal family constraints, and replacing them with alternative forms of familial relationship based on care, support, and consent. Another way was by using the exemplar narrative's requirement that virtue be rewarded and vice punished to rewrite relations between women and men. Together with the establishment of a "general plan" of parallel but contrasting men-women relationships, this moralizing convention provided lady-novelists with a convenient way of marking what they found vicious in relations between men and women and what they considered conducive to happiness. What they found vicious may prove surprising to those who have assumed too readily that all evils were rooted in what John Stuart Mill called "the legal subordination of one sex to the other,"²⁸ and what they praised suggests that the "love idyll" cannot be dismissed as a mere matter of "romantic love."

Mrs. Inchbald's *A Simple Story* (1791) provides a particularly telling statement about what was perceived to be vicious in relations between men and women because the statement is made in the framework of a love match. Miss Milner and Dornforth, to whom the first half of the novel is dedicated, have to overcome enormous obstacles before they can confess their love and get married, if only because Dornforth begins the novel as a Catholic priest who has been appointed Miss Milner's guardian. Since Miss Milner is both an orphan and an heiress and Dornforth eventually inherits a title, a fortune, and an estate, both are free to marry where they will; there is no question that their relationship is both voluntary and based on love. But it is marred, almost from the first, by what the narrator describes as "the various, though delicate, struggles for power between Miss Milner and her guardian." No sooner are they engaged, for instance, than Miss

²⁸ John Stuart Mill, *The Subjection of Women* (London: Dent, 1965), 219.

Milner determines to get the upper hand in the relationship by exploiting Dornforth's love for her: "I will do something that no prudent man *ought* to forgive; and yet with all his vast share of prudence, *he* shall forgive it, and make a sacrifice of just resentment to partial affection." If she can get Dornforth to love and give way to her no matter what she does, then she has him in the palm of her hand. Dornforth, on the other hand, does not play along. Stubborn and wilful in his turn, he expects to keep the authority of the guardian even when he becomes the lover, and as Miss Woodley tells Miss Milner, "He will not indulge you with any power before marriage, to which he does not intend to submit hereafter." The struggle for power between Dornforth and Miss Milner almost breaks their engagement; it eventually does break up their marriage, leaving both with broken hearts. The point here is not merely that Dornforth's and Miss Milner's struggle for power is uncondusive to their happiness together but also that from the beginning each seeks the wrong thingan unequal relationship, a relationship in which he or she has the ascendancy.

In *Emmeline*, too, marriages in which one partner has the ascendancy are invariably shown to come to a bad endand there are quite as many examples of women having the ascendancy as the other way around. "Accustomed to undisputed power in her own family," Lady Montreville "intimidates" her husband not only into preventing Emmeline's marriage to her son but also into actions to which he "could not entirely reconcile his heart." Her wilful government of her family leads to her son's death, to her husband's broken heart, and to the destruction of their "house," while her lack of government of herself is fittingly punished by a burst blood vessel that kills her. Her daughter, Lady Frances, also has the upper hand in her marriage, but this time in part because she has married beneath her and because her husband defers to her so that her family will not withhold her fortune. Contemptuous of her husband, Lady Frances sets up a separate establishment and flaunts a lover, whom she eventually follows to France. Here she is finally incarcerated in a convent by a *lettre de cachet* taken out against her by her husband. Adelina and Mrs. Stafford too have the ascendancy in their marriages in the sense that both are married to men who are their moral and intellectual inferiors and whose careless or irresponsible mismanagement of family finances bankrupts them.

This makes Adelina dependent on Fitz-Edward, whose child she eventually bears, and it leaves Mrs. Stafford to see the officers at law, the tradesmen, and the moneylenders and to do what she can to buy time and to retrieve her family's fortunes. As Mrs. Stafford says, "Where others have in their husbands protectors and friends; mine, not only throws on me the burthen of affairs which he has himself embroiled, but adds to their weight by cruelty and oppression." Here too inequality leads to the breakup of both marriages. Examples could be multiplied from other novels.

By contrast with such unequal matches, the relationships rewarded with happiness could be said to demonstrate what John Stuart Mill described as "a principle of perfect equality, admitting no power or privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other."²⁹ In the idealized relationships rewarded with happiness, both partners are given power over each other's hearts and minds. When Delvile learned that Cecilia loved him, he "became acquainted with his power, and knew himself the master of her destiny," but he in turn immediately tells Cecilia: "I give you the direction of my conduct, I entreat you to become my counsellor and guide." They subsequently wrestle together with his parents' opposition to their marriage, discussing the pros and cons of marrying without parental consent, and finally persuade Mrs. Delvile to give them "a separate consent." Similarly, Godolphin tells Emmeline that her "power over his heart . . . is absolute and fixed," and he "promise[s] to be guided wholly by you," while Emmeline confesses to him "his power over her mind" and that she has made him "in the same measure the director of her actions."

In the idealized relationships rewarded with happiness, both partners are also given the same "disabilities." While male moralists and educationists were preaching the *difference* between the sexes and condemning those who transgressed the sexual boundary "a masculine woman . . . that throws off all the lovely softness of her nature" or "an effeminate fellow, that, destitute of every manly sentiment, copies the inverted ambition of your sex"³⁰ lady-novelists were basing hap-

29 Ibid.

30 Dr. James Fordyce, "Sermons to Young Women" (1766) in Hill, 23.

py relationships on a transgressive, composite, *hermaphroditic* ideal. They were giving both partners to the happy relationship both "masculine" sense and "feminine" softness and showing that women can have "manly sentiments" of honor, courage, and determination, while men can both fulfill a nurturing role and devote themselves to the good of others.³¹ Evalina praises Lord Orville in both masculine and feminine terms: "So steady did I think his honour, so *feminine* his delicacy, and so amiable his nature! I have a thousand times imagined that the whole study of his life, and whole purport of his reflections, tended solely to the good and happiness of others." Lord Orville, in turn, praises Evalina both because "She is gentle and amiable, a true *feminine* character," and because she is, like a man, "informed, sensible and intelligent." The problem with Mrs. Selwyn, who serves as a contrast to both Evalina and Lord Orville, is that, while "her understanding, indeed, may be called *masculine*," she "has lost all the softness" and "gentleness" of the "female character" which ought to accompany it both in women and in men. Godolphin too has both the masculine and the feminine virtues. He had many times in the service of his country demonstrated "a courage undaunted by danger . . . *sans peur et sans reproche*," and his sense of honor is irreproachable; but he also "possesses a softness of heart" which the sight of Adelina and her infant son "melted into more than feminine tenderness," and he spends most of the novel nursing and nurturing both, while Emmeline wanders the world, proving in her relationships with Delvile and Lord Montreville that she has a sense of honor as nice as his own. Emmeline also shows physical courage and competence "to personal inconvenience she was always indifferent when the service of those she loved engaged her to brave fatigue and cold" as well as the requisite "softness."

Using exemplar conventions to rewrite the social text, the eighteenth-century female Bildungsroman "punished" relations between

³¹ Modern feminists have objected to the 'feminine man' (see for instance Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1977); or Janet Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction* (London: Methuen, 1986), but it seems to me that, like so much else that eighteenth-century lady-novelists imagined and elaborated in their fictions, we are still deconstructing sexual differences.

men and women based on subjection and on inequalities of power, character, delicacy, or honor, while it "rewarded" relationships based on "a principle of equality," in which both partners have equal power over each other, equal softness and equal sense. How effective it really was in changing the social text in this respect can be disputed now, as indeed it was disputed in the eighteenth century. On the one hand, there are sufficient plaintive eighteenth-century male voices to testify to the fact that female Bildungsromane of this type were having a marked effect on women's desires and expectations of their relationships with men. Here are two amusing examples of such voices:

Why do we suffer those who were born for the purpose of living in society with men endued with passions and frailties like their own, to be bred up [by novels] in daily expectation of living *out* of it with such men as have never existed? . . . I know several unmarried ladies, who in all probability, had been long ago good wives and good mothers, if their imaginations had not been early perverted with the chimerical ideas of romantic love . . . [and] by the hopes of that ideal happiness, which is nowhere to be found but in novels.³²

The most tender romances hinder marriages instead of promoting them. A woman, while her heart is warmed by the languors of love, does not seek a *husband*. . . .³³

What these gentlemen really meant was that they were quite happy with the "frailties" which extant practices allowed them and resented the demands inspired by novels and made by ladies refusing to marry that they change. But perhaps they did change a little despite their resentment, for Mrs. Barbauld, writing in the first decade of the nineteenth century, attributed to the eighteenth-century female Bildungsroman "much of the softness of our present manners, much of that tincture of humanity so conspicuous amidst all our vices."

³² Ioan Williams, *Novel and Romance 1700-1800: A Documentary Record* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1970), 214-15. The original work was published in 1754.

³³ 1773 in Williams, 279.

On the other hand, and increasingly as the eighteenth century drew to a close, reviewers and theorists of the novel complained that readers' *Bildung* was not served by idealized heroes and heroines whom no human person, endued with passions and frailties, could ever hope to emulate. Writing in 1785, Richard Cumberland, for instance, argued that

girls will be tempted to form themselves upon any characters, whether true or fictitious, which forcibly strike their imaginations, and nothing can be more pointedly addressed to the passions than many of these novel heroines. . . . I think some amongst them may be apt to lead your female readers into affectation and false character by stories where the manners, though highly charged, are not in nature: and the more interesting such stories are, the greater will be their influence: in this light, a novel heroine, though described without a fault, yet if drawn out of nature, may be a very unfit model for imitation.³⁴

Using *nature* in Dr. Johnson's sense to mean the world as familiarly available to observation, Cumberland claimed that faultless heroines are basically inimitable because "out of nature" and that such heroines cannot therefore provide female readers with "lectures of conduct and instructions into life." Writing in the same year, Mrs. Reeve was concerned lest exemplar novels create in young woman readers "false expectations" of men and encourage "an expectation of peace and happiness which disqualifies them from sustaining the reverse."³⁵ And Mrs. Barbauld complained both that the "danger" of reading sentimental fiction "lies in fixing the standard of virtue and delicacy too high" and that a course of such novels ill "prepares a young lady for the neglect and tedium of life which she is perhaps doomed to encounter." Such novels may, she says, prepare a young lady to fend off the advances of her lovers or to behave well when she is run away with; but "she is not prepared for indifference and neglect."³⁶

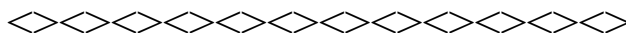
³⁴ Williams, 333.

³⁵ *The Progress of Romance* 1:25.

³⁶ Mrs. Barbauld, "Essay on the Origin . . .," 54.

This sort of argument and this sort of concern led, it seems to me, to a gradual but permanent transformation of the structure of the female Bildungsroman in England. It led to a rethinking of the instructional mileage to be got from the portrayal of "mixed characters," to a displacement of the faultless, idealized heroine who was "out of nature" by a heroine "in nature," who had faults that she had to learn to correct, and to a revision of the Bildungsroman's formula. It led, by the same token, to the gradual obliteration of the distance preserved in the exemplary eighteenth-century female Bildungsroman between ideal alternatives and familiar norms and practices, to the increased confusion of these opposites, and I would argue to a gradual strengthening of the novel's power of social criticism at the expense of its revolutionary power to imagine and elaborate alternatives to the status quo. It even led eventually to greater concern in the novel with the tedium, indifference, neglect, and suffering of women's lives.

Although it is impossible to fully describe or explain this process of transformation here, it will be valuable, I think, to briefly reconstruct one of its largely forgotten early phases.



The Memoirs of Emma Courtney (1796) appears to have been a direct response to the debate about the instructional value of the exemplary female Bildungsroman and, at least on one level, represents a continuation of this debate in fictional form. Writing a year after Richard Cumberland and Clara Reeve's objections to exemplary heroines who are "out of nature," Mary Hays fashioned a seriously flawed heroine who is supposed to be very much "in nature": "In delineating the character of Emma Courtney," she writes in her preface, "I had not in view these fantastic models: I meant to represent her as a human character, loving virtue while enslaved by passion, liable to the mistakes and weaknesses of our fragile nature." Significantly, the passion to which Emma is enslaved is sensibility, and in the novel Emma is shown to derive both her sensibility and her expectations of men and marriage from an early *Bildung* which consisted largely of a diet of sentimental novels. Her "imagination had been left to wander unrestrained in the fairy fields of fiction," and she "sighed for a romance

that would never end" which is hardly surprising, since at one point she was reading between ten and fourteen novels from the circulation library each week. Emma's character and thoughts therefore illustrate the power of novels to fashion women's sentiments and expectations as she says, "We are all creatures of education" while her unhappy fate demonstrates not only the evil, but also the practical impossibility, in the world as it was, of modelling oneself and one's expectations of life on the exemplary heroines of sentimental fiction.

Memoirs of Emma Courtney represents an interesting milestone in the transformation of the female Bildungsroman in England both because it repeats and revises elements of the exemplar formula and because it produces a format which the female Bildungsroman would not take up again until mid-nineteenth century in novels like *Villette* and *Middlemarch*, for example.

As always in the exemplar formula, Emma is abandoned by her parents at birth and then provided with a number of parent substitutes who are organized according to the usual "general plan" of good and bad forms of parenting. She is thus freed from the constraints of the patriarchal family and allowed to stand on her own. Her dying father reappears in her life only to give her her freedom by leaving her without guardians because, as he says, "I chose to leave you unfettered, and at your own discretion"; while Mr. Francis, her self-selected mentor, tells her, "You are capable of standing alone, and your mind, by so doing, will acquire strength." Emma also has to choose between the requisite minimum of two lovers, one representing the marriage of convenience and one the marriage based on equality, compatibility, and love.

But *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* also draws on an alternative structure for fictions describing the progress of an individual's life. Popularized in seventeenth-century criminal autobiographies and taken up by Defoe and Smollett earlier in the century, this structure involved choosing a principal character from the "purlieus of treachery and fraud," trying to make him or her "the object of our detestation and abhorrence" and demonstrating the awful consequences of his or her iniquities and faults. As Smollett pointed out, fictions with this structure taught "by fear" rather than by example, "terrifying those on the brink of iniquity from plunging into it." They were cautionary tales

rather than patterns for emulation. Both by her title and in her preface, Mary Hays placed her *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* in the cautionary tradition.³⁷ She expounded the "usefulness" of fictions "delineating the progress and tracing the consequences, of one strong, indulged passion, or prejudice" and explained that the errors of her heroine are "calculated to operate as a *warning*, rather than as an example." But she placed the passions deriving from sensibility in the position occupied in the traditional cautionary tale by iniquity or crime.

Consequently, as in the cautionary tradition, Emma's sensibility is repeatedly shown ruining her life. Desiring all the freedom and independence enjoyed by the exemplary heroine of sentimental fiction, Emma mourns when she finds that her father has left her only a pittance "insufficient to preserve me from dependence *Dependence!* I repeated to myself and felt my heart die within me." She observes, quite correctly, that without a larger fortune all the options open to her, such as officiating as an assistant in a school, were "a species of servitude" and blames society for not allowing women to work like men:

Cruel prejudices! I exclaimed hapless woman! Why was I not educated for commerce, for a profession, for labour? Why have I been rendered feeble and delicate by bodily constraints, and fastidious by artificial refinement? Why are we bound, by the habits of society, as with an adamant chain?

But because she lacks the sense of an Emmeline or a Cecilia, Emma neither makes the best of the fact that she sometimes has to reside with people whom she finds distasteful nor finds any useful occupation. Instead, she is led by her sensibility to complain of the Mortons, who have taken her in, "I could not love them, and my heart panted to expand its sensations," and to weep, "To be esteemed and cherished is necessary to my existence: I am alien in the family where I reside." And when she does finally go to stay with her cousin in London and finds herself in a situation where she is both living with someone she

³⁷ Whereas we might be inclined to think of *Clarissa* in the cautionary tradition, eighteenth-century commentators seem to think of her as an exemplary heroine.

likes and earning her "independence" by giving private lessons, she makes herself ill by indulging her sensibility and by fostering an unrequited passion.

Like the heroine of exemplar fiction, Emma refuses the marriage of convenience in favor of the love match based on equality and compatibility, and like Cecilia she rejects the proprieties, considering herself superior to convention and relying on her own innocence and integrity to carry her through. But in choosing Augustus Harley as her partner in the love match, Emma falls in love with the sentimental ideal, not with the fallible man: "I felt that I loved an ideal object (for such was Augustus Harley to me) with a tender and fervent excess." Emma cultivates both her sentiments and her expectations of ideal happiness with Augustus, wandering through leafless groves, "absorbed in meditation fostering the sickly sensibility of my soul, and nursing wild, improbable chimerical visions of felicity, that, touched by the sober wand of truth, would have melted into thin air." Convinced that "happiness is surely the only desirable end of existence" and that Augustus is the key to her happiness, she refuses to accept that he is prepared to be her friend and brother, but not her husband and lover: "My ardent sensibilities incite me to love to seek to inspire sympathy to be beloved! My heart obstinately refuses to renounce the man, to whose mind my own seems akin." And she perseveres bombarding him with letters, breaking all the proprieties by being the first to confess her love, by being the one to pursue him, even by offering herself to him without marriage and generally behaves like a cross between Werther and Don Quixote. Werther-like in her passion and quixotic in her refusal to accept or understand either the signals Augustus sends her or his references to "insuperable obstacles" to their marriage, she is, in Augustus's words "a romantic enthusiast" who "wanted a world made on purpose for [her], and beings formed after one model."

In her excesses of "romantic enthusiasm" Emma does not behave like the general run of exemplary heroines, whose sensibility is a matter of delicacy, tact, and kindness as well as of feeling and whose feelings are admixed with liberal doses of sense and self-control. Emma behaves instead like the exemplary heroine fashioned by Mary Hays's close friend, Mary Wollstonecraft, some years before, for in Wollstonecraft's *Mary: A Fiction* (1788) the exemplary heroine's sensibility

becomes "romantic" in the proper sense.³⁸ Neglected by her parents and left to spend all her time "reflecting on her own feelings," Mary cultivated what the eighteenth century called a sense of the "sublime." She would spend hours contemplating "the grand or solemn features of Nature"; she "would stand and behold the waves rolling, and think of the voice that could still the tumultuous deep"; she would meditate on the fact that "only an infinite being could fill the human soul;" and she would always find in nature an echo of her sentiments. Her beloved Henry appears to her as an earthly reflection of the sublime ideal. As she tells him, "The same turn of mind which leads me to adore the Author of all Perfection, which leads me to conclude that he only can fill my soul, forces me to admire the faint image the shadow of his attributes here below." With Henry, Mary is able to "unfold all the faculties of her soul," and like Emma, she is totally absorbed in her feelings and sensations as other exemplary heroines are not. Like Emma, Mary "cannot live without loving;" like Emma, Mary is "prompted" by her "sensibility" to "search for an object to love" and is always "comfortless if not engrossed in a particular affection." Like Emma, Mary has sentiments which are "indelible, nothing can efface them but death," and like Emma, Mary "builds a terrestrial paradise liable to be destroyed by the first serious thought." For Mary has already embarked on a marriage of convenience when she meets Henry, and Henry is ill and dying besides; and although Mary manages to stay near him until he dies in her arms, she must then return to her husband, a man she cannot love and with whom she cannot be happy. Emma's "visions of felicity" are "chimerical" for the same reason. Unable to marry Augustus, who is already secretly married and will have nothing to do with her, Emma makes a marriage of convenience until Augustus reappears to disrupt the "tranquility" of her marriage and to die in her arms.

In some respects the upshot of the two works is the same. For instance, Emma would agree with Mary in looking forward to "a world where there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage." But in other ways, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* is clearly a critical rewriting of Woll-

³⁸ The influence of Rousseau is marked in *Mary: A Fiction*. Wollstonecraft later severely criticized Rousseau in her *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792).

stonecraft's novel, and these dimensions of the novel are, it seems to me, intimately connected with the profound difference in their form.

Mary: A Fiction remains in the exemplar tradition, despite the author's avowed "attempts to develop a character different from those generally portrayed." For one thing, *Mary* is a fictional representation of ideals of female conduct and views of human life which Mary Wollstonecraft first developed in *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787), a work that modern critics are too ready to dismiss as unworthy of serious attention. For instance, in *Thoughts* Wollstonecraft points out that because "a woman's sphere of action is not large," her occupations and pursuits will be "trivial" unless "she is taught to look into her own heart," and she suggests that daughters be taught to reflect on their dominant passion to help them strengthen their good dispositions and give them a character they lack. She also recommends cultivation of the mind, development of a taste for nature, contemplation of the divinity and of the sublime in music and art, and the practice of benevolence and charity beyond the narrow limits of the family circle. Mary illustrates this course of education, demonstrating besides other assertions made in *Thoughts* that "love and compassion are the most delightful feelings of the soul, and to exert them to all that breathe is the wish of the benevolent heart;" that the benevolent heart is bound to meet with "ingratitude and selfishness" and to be disappointed in human nature; that early marriages, embarked upon before a woman has time to think, will be regretted later; and that death must not be "treated in too slight a manner and sought, when disappointments occur, with a degree of impatience, which proves that the main end of life has not been considered."³⁹

Mary remains in the exemplar tradition not only because she is a fictional representation of an ideal of female conduct and education but also because her character and life are elaborated in binary opposition to extant norms and practices and represent a possible alternative. Different though she is from an Emmeline or Cecilia, Mary exemplifies traits which Wollstonecraft both says and shows that women lack and could and should develop. Mary's relationship with Henry, which

³⁹ Mary Wollstonecraft, *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787; reprint, New York: Garland, 1974), 115, 116, 93, 150.

occupies the major portion of the novel, is equally exemplary. It not only celebrates the delights of equality, mutual compatibility, intellectual sharing, and reciprocal care; but it also teaches that "sensibility is the most exquisite feeling of which the human soul is susceptible" and that "sensibility is indeed the foundation of all our happiness." The fact that Mary and Henry's love is doomed to be "a short-lived delight" serves to expose the evils of a social world where narrow views, superficiality, economic considerations, and marriages of convenience establish men-women relations on a different basis. As Mary says, their love is "an ethereal beam which only serves to show my present misery." At the same time, the fact that Mary has also had her love and explored all its facets "I have experienced the most rapturous emotions" means that structurally it can figure not only as a standard but also as a possibility of being to which women readers can aspire if, like Mary, they "reflect on their feelings" and cultivate their sensibilities.

Even when sensibility is displaced in *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* from its position in the exemplar novel to the position occupied in the cautionary tale by iniquity or crime, it continues to operate as a standard. Emma's capacity for loving "with no mean, nor common attachment" shows the evil of basing marriages on expediency and economic imperatives, just as it demonstrates that even "tranquil" companionate marriages based on "a rational esteem and grateful affection" can only ever be second best. Emma's cultivation and expression of her sensibilities show the evil of basing society on insensibility and on "a principle of deception." And the fact that Emma's "mind panted for freedom, for social intercourse, for scenes in motion, where the active curiosity of [her] temper might find a scope wherein to range and speculate" shows the narrowness and tedium of the lives women were condemned to live within the "magic circle" of the family and the impossibility for a woman in the current "constitution of society" of sublimating her passions in satisfying work.

But if sensibility continues to operate as a standard against which the constitution of society can be judged, it ceases, in its new cautionary position, to constitute a recommended possibility of being. "The struggles, the despairing though generous struggles, of an ardent spirit denied a scope for its exertions" are very moving, but they also needlessly ruin Emma's life. As her mentor, Mr. Francis, points out, Emma

has known no "real substantial misfortunes"; she has instead applied the asp to her own veins. "You addressed a man as impenetrable as a rock," he tells her, "and the smallest glimpse of sober reflection, and common sense, should have taught you instantly to have given up the pursuit." If "happiness is the only desirable end of existence," as Emma claims, then her cultivation of sensibility has brought her only misery. It has also not taken her one step closer to that "rational independence" which two of her principal mentors suggest is the only path to happiness. But then no way of attaining this "rational independence" is presented in the novel. In fact, it is shown to be largely unattainable given the current "habits of society."

In its new cautionary position, then, sensibility both deconstructs society and is deconstructed by it. The constitution of society makes the pursuit of sensibility, the desire for private happiness, and the notion that the mind's "true dignity and virtue consist of being free" nothing but "moon-struck madness, hunting after torture" and the ruination of a woman's life; while the failure of sensibility either to achieve happiness or to find a scope for its exertions shows that there has been "something strangely wrong in the constitutions of society a lurking poison that spreads its contagion far and wide a canker at the root of private virtue and private happiness." And no third term, no potential imagined solution to this impasse, is offered.

Consequently, where the exemplary novel concretely showed its ideals in operation in the heroine's relationships with others, Emma can only assert an abstract value: "The social affections were necessary to my existence, but they have been only inlets for sorrow *yet still, I bind them to my heart!*" And where the exemplary novel embodied its vision of alternative possible futures in a fictional present, Emma can only leave us on a vague and undefined hope: "But men begin to think and reason; reformation dawns, though the advance is tardy." Without an alternative possibility of being, Emma is left like Villette, Dorothea Brooke, and Isabel Archer after herto pay the price both for the evils of society and for her own at once admirable and foolish errors and aspirations; and like them, she is left saddened, solitary, somewhat the wiser, but without any real way out.

Using this more ambiguous formula in which the critique points both ways, the female Bildungsroman could bear witness to the psychological and social ills that women are heir to and caution them against allowing their highest aspirations to lead them to misery. But

it could no longer imagine and elaborate for its women readers an alternative possibility of being. It could no longer rewrite the social text and by rewriting it change the book that women were imitating in order to change their lives. The new, more ambiguous formula made the female Bildungsroman literarily "respectable" even as it made it safe. *Bildung*, reeducation, could now be viewed as something that happened to the heroine rather than to the reader and through her to the social text.

Bildung and the Transformation of Society: Jean Paul's *Titan* and *Flegeljahre*

Wulf Koepke

In 1795, when Goethe was completing and publishing *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, the prototypical Bildungsroman, a novel appeared that took Weimar by storm: *Hesperus, oder fünfundvierzig Hundsposttage: Eine Biographie* (translated as *Hesperus; or Forty-five Dog-post-days: A Biography*, 1864). It was written by an author unknown to the reading public: Johann Paul Friedrich Richter, who used the *nom de plume* Jean Paul. Born in 1763 in the remote town of Wunsiedel in the Fichtelgebirge, Richter tried his luck as a freelance writer and after many years of producing unsuccessful satires, gained a modest success with his first novel, *Die unsichtbare Loge* (1793, translated as *The Invisible Lodge*, 1883). *Hesperus*, however, made its author famous. Although it was not a best-seller, it had ardent fans, especially among the women of the upper classes. Richter followed this novel with a stream of other publications, narrative and theoretical or both, among them the novels *Siebenkäs*¹ (1796), *Titan* (1800/03, translated as *Titan: A Romance*, 1862), *Flegeljahre: Eine Biographie* (1804/05, translated as *Walt and Vult; or, The Twins*,

¹ The full title is *Blumen-Frucht-und Dornenstücke oder Ehestand, Tod und Hochzeit des Armenadvokaten F. St. Siebenkäs im Reichsmarktflecken Kuhschnappel*. Its English translation has a similarly baroque title: *Flower, Fruit and Thorn Pieces; or, The Married Life, Death, and Wedding of the Advocate of the Poor, Firmian Stanislaus Siebenkäs*, 1845.

1846), and *Der Komet, oder Nikolaus Marggraf: Eine komische Geschichte* (1820/22). Jean Paul also produced a poetological treatise, *Vorschule der Ästhetik* (1804, translated as *Horn of Oberon: Jean Paul Richter's School for Aesthetics*, 1973) and a book on education, *Levana* (1807, translated as *Levana; or, The Doctrine of Education*, 1848). After years of restless wanderings, Richter married and settled down in Bayreuth in 1804, where he remained until his death in 1825.

If the story of *Bildung* portrays a young person's initiation into adulthood through a series of adventures in search of self and of one's proper place in society, an initiation seen as *Entwicklung* (development, evolution), or in the terms of German Pietism, as rebirth, palingenesis, Jean Paul's major novels clearly deal with such a process. Whereas *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* and its distant cousins in the nineteenth century treat the question of artistic creativity and whether, if it is genuine, it can coexist with bourgeois society or even change it, Jean Paul had absorbed an earlier model: the story of the education of a young prince destined to become an optimal ruler. This was the *Staatsroman* (literally, novel of state), of which young Jean Paul Richter had ingested a conspicuous example: *Usonia* (1771) by Albrecht von Haller. He also had read Christoph Martin Wieland's famous novel *Agathon* (1766/67, translated as *The History of Agathon*, 1773) another of the few German novels available to him then. He knew Rousseau's *Émile* (1762) and Platonic dialogues such as Moses Mendelssohn's *Phädon* (1767) equally well.

For Jean Paul and his novelistic world he created quite a few fictitious principalities and small towns in his fictional Germany the center of political power was the ruler's court. The young prince had to prove himself there while still ignorant of his real status and future mission. The nature of vice at court was such that these vicious courtiers were bent on "converting" every virtuous and innocent person by whatever means possible. Virtue and innocence seemed irresistible for them. Thus, characteristics reminiscent of Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* (1747/48) or those of Laclos's *Liaisons dangereuses* came into the story of the making of a philosopher-king and the process of *Entwicklung*.

With this background of literary or political and social models, Jean Paul kept on writing about the making of a philosopher king

even after the death of Frederick II of Prussia in 1786, that of Joseph II of Austria (1790), and, most important, the outbreak in 1789 of the French Revolution, which he had welcomed enthusiastically. Thus Günter de Bruyn, the best biographer of Jean Paul to date, can write that the social structures portrayed in *Titan* were already a thing of the past when the novel was published.² But if *Titan* seems to ignore the advent of the bourgeois age, *Flegeljahre* certainly does not, and the problem of the artist and artistic creativity versus bourgeois capitalism dominates Jean Paul's late works after *Flegeljahre*. Moreover, it is surprising that the readers of *Hesperus* and the other earlier novels until *Titan* considered Jean Paul's depictions of life at court realistic in spite of his obvious literary borrowings and elements of the clichés of the trivial novel of the time. Maybe the society he portrayed was on its way to extinction, the last gasp of the Holy Roman Empire, but this soon-to-be-obsolete society seemed very relevant for his contemporaries. Thus the questions need to be asked whether the process of *Bildung* described in *Titan* qualifies the novel as a Bildungsroman and whether the initiation to bourgeois life imposed on the poet Walt through the last will of Van der Kabel really generates a process of *Bildung*.

Jean Paul himself, in the second edition of his poetological treatise *Vorschule der Ästhetik*, published in 1812, distinguished three classes of novels: the "Italian," "German," and "Dutch" type. The names are taken from different schools of painting: *Italian* means a classical style, idealized, portraying gods, heroes, and kings; *Dutch* signifies a drastically realistic portrayal of everyday life of common folk; *German*, a new term in this context, implies a middle-class world portrayed in a medium style yet with Romantic elements. *Titan* belongs to the Italian class, whereas *Wilhelm Meister* and *Flegeljahre* are prime examples for the German type. In other words: although *Titan* was clearly written with *Wilhelm Meister* in mind and in good measure as a *Gegenentwurf*, an alternative model, it may belong to a different category. *Flegeljahre*, fragmentary as it is, may have more affinities with the tradition of what may be termed Bildungsroman.

² Günter de Bruyn, *Das Leben des Jean Paul Friedrich Richter* (Halle/Saale: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 1975).

Most studies on the Bildungsroman, Georg Lukács's *Die Theorie des Romans* included, see the maturation process of the protagonist in a psychological light: the young hero grows up in a narrow milieu and dreams of the great world. He sets out on his life's journey as an adolescent with many youthful dreams, aspirations, and illusions, and his experiences lead him to a healthy realism, to the abandonment of such dreams as illusions. It is to a high degree a process of acculturation, of adapting to existing societal structures. The German social hierarchy presented specific roadblocks for middle-class men: they could only rise to a higher station if they were integrated into the aristocracy, an aristocracy willing to change. Thus, if *Bildung* was to have the desired outcome, society had to be portrayed as benevolent.³ This view of the genre leaves out two important questions: one, whether society ought not to be changed fundamentally, and two, if the protagonist is a creative person, whether there is really an opportunity for creative energy or whether "maturation" may not involve a stifling of such energies. All of Jean Paul's books describe a society in need of radical change. The only question is how such change can be initiated or, in the late works, whether such change is possible. One of the lessons of the French Revolution for the Germans was that a mere change of power and institutions, even a constitution, might not really change a society unless *people* change, and that could only be a slow and gradual process. Thus Jean Paul talked of "quiet revolutionaries" instead of the loud ones, using the German word *still*, a key concept of German Pietism. He found support for this idea of the quiet revolution in Herder, who maintained that those who really changed humanity, the founders of religion, the reformers, the lawgivers, poets, and philosophers, were usually recognized only much later. They had planted seeds that needed to grow.

Bildung, for Jean Paul, is specifically connected both with a transformation of self and society, and with creativity. As is well known, the concept of the Bildungsroman was not yet current among Jean

³ Georg Lukács, *Die Theorie des Romans: Ein geschichtsphilosophischer Versuch über die Formen der großen Epik* (Berlin/Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1963); cf. especially: Jürgen Jacobs, *Wilhelm Meister und seine Brüder: Untersuchungen zum deutschen Bildungsroman* (Munich: Fink, 1972).

Paul's contemporaries, but that of *Bildung* was. It is a basic idea in *Levana*, Jean Paul's treatise on education that parallels yet contrasts with the doctrines found in Rousseau's *Émile* (1762). Its first edition was completed in 1806, after the publication of both *Titan* and *Flegeljahre*. *Bildung* and the verb *bilden* are, of course, formed from *Bild*, "image" or "picture." To form a *Bild* or *Gestalt*, thus to create a harmonious shape, underlies all meanings of *bilden*. The ultimate goal of education, the formation of an *Idealmensch*, or rather the realization of the best potential in oneself, is then defined as the formation of an *Urbild* (5:556).⁴ Jean Paul stresses the difference between *Erziehung* and *Unterricht*, "education" and "instruction." His treatise does not deal with instruction and is skeptical of schools as institutions. He stresses the formation of the personality and the integration of knowledge into it. The term *Ausbildung* for him does not at all carry the modern connotation of training but means the unfolding, the development of potential forces (5:560, 683, 848, etc.). In all compounds of *Bildung*, such as *Ausbildung*, *Vorbildung*, *Einbildung* (5:826), the words retain their verbal power; they designate a process, not a result. This process, while it may be induced through education, is self-generated; *Bildung* is essentially self-formation based on the potential of freedom. Furthermore, *Bild* and *Bildung*, while referring to psychological processes, retain their connection with the sense of vision: *schönegebildete Völker* (literally, beautifully educated peoples) (5:680) is not only a quote from Herder's *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (1784/91) but implicitly links physical and the mental powers. But it is significant that *Bildung*, the realization of potential, refers mostly to areas such as religion (5:576), ethics (5:769), and love (5:796). *Bildung* could not occur without a fundamental drive, a *Bildungstrieb* (5:826). *Bildung* in a twentieth-century meaning, as knowledge and broad educational background, seems to occur in only one passage, where Jean Paul discusses the problematic value of *klassische Bildung* (5:860), familiarity with the texts of Greek and Roman antiquity. Even here the point is how useful or harmful the knowledge of such languages and texts can

⁴ Quotes are taken from Jean Paul, *Werke*, ed. Norbert Miller, 6 vols. (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1959/63).

be for boys at certain ages, meaning for the development of their personalities. All in all, *Bildung* is self-formation to bring the hidden *Urbild* of oneself into a real appearance and to realize one's potential *Humanität*.

If one adopts Jean Paul's concept of *Bildung* as found in *Levana*, it is almost a truism to say that Jean Paul's novels deal with the process of *Bildung*. Both *Die unsichtbare Loge* and *Titan* also describe a boy's education and thus could be termed *Erziehungsromane* (novels treating education in a narrower sense). It is clear, however, that *Erziehung* and *Bildung* are elements in the plot of novels like *Die unsichtbare Loge*, *Titan*, as well as *Hesperus* that demonstrate how a new, more humane, society could begin. Whereas the customary definition of Bildungsroman involves how the protagonist is brought to the point of maturity so that he or she is now able to select the appropriate type of activity, the social destination of the hidden prince, the young man who unknown to himself will be the ruler one day and who is the hero of these novels, is predetermined. In his famous distinction of nobility and *Bürgertum*, Wilhelm Meister laments the advantages that nobility confers on its members. However, Jean Paul would respond that such advantages carry a heightened responsibility with them, especially for a future ruler. This responsibility limits the freedom of choice: Albano, the protagonist of *Titan*, will not be allowed to fight in the French revolutionary army. *Bildung* as *bürgerlich*, as a middle-class value and concept, involves a social indeterminacy which may be as much of a problem as it is an opportunity.

A major problem connected with generic considerations is the question of the individuality of the protagonist. While scholarship has always wondered about the "passivity" of the protagonist of the Bildungsroman who seems at times more like a medium than an energy center of its own it has never doubted that this protagonist was an individual searching for an individual way of life and a personal goal. In the case of the *Staatsroman*, however and this has generated criticism of the aesthetic value of such novel the ideal prince looks rather like a typified person than a true individual. He provides a model to be emulated, not an example of one particular

and unique person. In *Titan*, a meeting place of these two genres, this question takes on special significance.

Jean Paul was aware of this problem even before his acquaintance with *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. In *Hesperus*, his first novel with a fully developed plot, the protagonist and the hidden prince are two different persons: Viktor and Flamin. Also, the protagonist is a much more complex, interesting, and individualized person, whereas Flamin is characterized mainly by his impatience to be active, his wild temperament, and his jealousy. He is a true revolutionary, ready to act and to sacrifice himself and others for what he views as right. Viktor, on the other hand, the humorist and physician, unites contradictory traits within himself. He is reflective and contemplative, able to see the other side. While agreeing with the "republican" ideology of Flamin, Viktor is attracted by the glittering life at court and is genuinely torn between an urge for political action and a penchant for the simple peace of the idyllic village. The urge for political action is a longing for the "second world," that is, the world beyond this world that will be more meaningful and "real" than this trifling life world symbolized by a beautiful park named "Maienthal" where Viktor's former teacher, Dahore, a sublime sage from India, lives. The happy ending of the novel, which includes his union with Klothilde, seems to replace such inner contradictions with a new harmony, just as it restores his friendship with Flamin; but this is more apparent than real. Viktor, in fact, goes through a process of maturation and would be ready to serve Flamin, once the latter becomes the ruler; but it cannot be said that he is in search of himself. He is trying to establish a trusting relationship with his putative father, the lord, only to discover later that he is in reality the son of a Lutheran minister, a somewhat ridiculous figure like Fixlein, the lovable yet funny figure in Jean Paul's most popular idyllic story. But his origins do not really matter. Viktor will remain a respected member of Flamin's circle and can marry Klothilde in spite of her noble birth. *Hesperus* portrays an idealized group of people who find out that social rank is an illusion, and that liberty, equality, and fraternity is what really matters.

If *Hesperus*, like *The Invisible Lodge* and *Titan*, portrays an ideal meritocracy across social boundaries, it still focuses on the life at

court and how to transform society from above. The plot of the hidden prince implies that the future ruler needs to learn about all stations in life and see society from different perspectives. And such a future ruler must go through authentic and lasting human experiences such as love and friendship to mature as a human being and become a model for others. *Hesperus*, furthermore, is a demonstration that German conditions are not ripe for a revolution of the French type, and if society is to be metamorphosed, the stimulus has to come from the center of political power.⁵ This may be unrealistic, since it means a voluntary relinquishing of power and authority, but it is exactly this miracle which Jean Paul claims to be necessary for a true renewal of social life.

The conception of *Titan* goes back to 1792, the period of work on *Hesperus*. The nucleus for *Titan* was the problem of the genius, the extraordinary human being who by his very personality went beyond the boundaries of human intercourse. Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, whose philosophy had impressed Jean Paul, had portrayed such a genius in his fragmentary epistolary story *Allwill* (1775). The character of Allwill was evidently a portrait of young Goethe, Jacobi's friend of the 1770s who had hurt him as much as he attracted and fascinated him. Thus, in a very complex way the novel represents a critique of the concept of the *Genie* prevalent in the German Sturm und Drang and a questioning of the merits of unbridled individualism.⁶ From this point of departure, *Titan* went through many phases of gestation. The most momentous change was the separation of the original core of the story into two complementary halves centering on two figures: the good genius Albano and the evil genius

⁵ This is one of the uncontested statements in the otherwise so very controversial book by Wolfgang Harich, *Jean Pauls Revolutionsdichtung: Versuch einer neuen Deutung seiner heroischen Romane* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1974).

⁶ On the stages of the novel before publication, cf. Richard Rohde, *Jean Pauls Titan*, Palaestra, 105 (Berlin: Meyer & Müller, 1920). Some of Rohde's readings and statements were subsequently contradicted and corrected by Edward Berend in his "Einleitung" to vol. 8 (1. Abteilung) of *Jean Pauls Sämtliche Werke*, Historisch-kritische Ausgabe (Weimar: Böhlau, 1933). On Jacobi and *Titan*, cf. Herta Hartmannshenn, "Jean Pauls *Titan* und die Romane Friedrich Heinrich Jacobis" (Ph.D. diss., University of Marburg, 1934).

Roquairol. In spite of Jean Paul's good intentions and his own affirmations in his *Vorschule der Ästhetik*, evil is aesthetically more interesting than good thus Roquairol has proven to be one of the most memorable characters Jean Paul has created, while Albano is a rather forgettable one.

The creation of the pair of friends/enemies Albano/Roquairol from the idea of the *Genie* was, however, by no means the only enrichment for the story of a titan or titans. Between 1792 and 1800 when the first volume of *Titan* was published, Jean Paul had been a guest at different small courts. In particular he had visited Weimar in 1796 and lived there from 1798 to 1800. By now he knew personally Goethe, Herder, Schiller, Wieland, the Schlegels, Novalis, Fichte, and many other luminaries. A second significant factor was that he had had sometimes stormy relationships with impressive women. His books and personality appealed to dissatisfied married women of the upper classes, and women like Charlotte von Kalb and Emilie von Berlepsch proposed marriage to him. But he never carried his adventures to the end and finally married a girl much younger than himself and no threat to his ego. Thus, *Titan* became more saturated than the previous novels with personal experience. It also reflects Jean Paul's participation in the intense philosophical, literary, and political feuds that were then raging, especially in Weimar and Jena. *Titan* was intended by Jean Paul to be his critique of his age and its dangerous tendencies. From an aesthetic point of view, this expansion of the plan may not have been beneficial. If the foremost characters of the novel do not just stand for themselves but are supposed to represent a philosophical idea in allegorical garb or a historical trend, the author's direct intentions may interfere with the inner logic of the story; but in the case of *Titan* a specific philosophy of history is at work that informs the author's own view of his characters. The book is clearly more than just romance and excitement.

By 1800 Jean Paul, under the impact of Herder's ideas and personality, had evolved a view of his age which he expressed in the polar terms of *Allkräftigkeit* and *Einkräftigkeit*.⁷ *Kraft*, we may recall,

⁷ There is a curious parallelism between *Einkräftigkeit/Allkräftigkeit* and the distinction of *Talent* and *Genie* which Jean Paul develops in the *Vorschule*

(footnote continued on next page)

was a key concept of the younger Herder, who also bequeathed it to Goethe. The older Herder, the one whom Jean Paul came to know and respect, tempered the fundamental idea of *Kraft*, "energy," or "force," with that of *Maß*, measure, balance, moderation. While education, as Jean Paul maintains in *Levana*, should never try to weaken *Kraft*, it should see to it that one *Kraft* is balanced by another, approaching the ultimate ideal of *Allkräftigkeit*, an inner harmony through the balance of all forces. Extremism, the unchecked exercise of one *Kraft*, was Jean Paul's idea of the danger to humanity. Such tendencies could arise from originally good and welcome sources. *Titan* grew into a portrayal of such titanic forces or characters who ultimately would turn out to be self-destructive and hence tragic. In contrast to them, the new world of harmony would arise, respecting the *Maß* inherent in the universe of living beings. Again, it is understandable that *einkräftige* titans impress themselves more on the reader and thus have provided the attraction of *Titan* contrary to the author's intentions. He was already complaining about the reception of *Titan* in the second edition of the *Vorschule der Ästhetik* (5:253).

There is another layer of the story to be considered, especially in the context of *Bildung*. *Bildung* occurs not only through Albano's encounters with the different titans he encounters but also because his process of maturation takes place within a framework of predetermination which, however, ultimately self-destructs. This framework of the plot takes its elements from the Gothic novel. It operates with mysteries, omens, false leads, mistaken identities, and, at times, with horror. All of these mechanisms, some of them based on mechanical illusions, are part of a court intrigue. The plot of *Titan* reflects the evil, even demonic, nature ascribed to absolutistic politics and court intrigues by its middle-class critics. As a matter of fact, there is an evil plot and there are counterplots. The principality of Hohenfließ has a
(footnote continued from previous page)

(5:5067); this was already noticed by Lucie Stern, "*Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* und Jean Pauls *Titan*," *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft* 16 (1922): 3568 (repr. in *Jean Paul*, ed. Uwe Schweikert, *Wege der Forschung*, No. 336 [Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1974], 3373) based on her previous dissertation, which contains many interesting observations, although neglecting some generic differences.

treaty with the neighboring principality of Haarhaar that after the extinction of the ruling family in either country the neighboring country would inherit the state. Thus Haarhaar initiates an evil intrigue to kill off the ruling family of Hohenfließ, mainly through the diseases of pleasure. The "knight" von Bouverot is Haarhaar's agent. To counter this design, Albano is hidden from Haarhaar and educated under a different identity. His putative father, Gaspard de Cesara, a Spaniard, has a design of his own: he wants to engineer a marriage between his own daughter Linda and Albano and thus be the real ruler of Hohenfließ. Albano's life and *Bildung* are preserved, but Gaspard's plots and intrigues, as well as those of Haarhaar, fail.

Gaspard persuades Albano's parents not only to hide Albano and declare him his own son but also to let him guide Albano's upbringing. The process of Albano's upbringing, again, consists of two aspects. One aspect is the "Gothic" element. Gaspard directs Albano's attention and imagination through omens, illusions, predictions, and the words of his brother, a ventriloquist. This provides a framework of uncanny occurrences, both for the reader and Albano, and it adds the dimension of mystery, superstition, and horror. While these incidents reinforce the idea of guidance, if not predetermination, they do not meet with passive acceptance. Albano and others try to expose these intrigues and are at least partially successful. Thus Garpard's side of the counterplot causes Albano to confront the mystery and fight for "enlightenment" in a literal sense. In contrast to most Gothic novels, where fate and evil forces overwhelm the innocent, Albano is never intimidated, and in the end the entire mechanism of this guidance system loses its power and reveals itself to be largely counterproductive.

Gaspard also guides Albano's education and *Bildung* in a larger sense. He is farsighted enough to understand that Albano needs both freedom for self-development and strong mentors, mentors with diverse styles and points of view. But once again some of the decisive turns happen clearly against the intentions of the mastermind. Whereas the early village education of Albano proceeds according to plan, essential elements for his mental development are missing. It so happens that Dian, a Greek architect and harmonious personality who represents Herder's world view, makes Albano's acquaintance and

takes an interest in him, even introducing him to the texts with the most decisive impact on him (and on Jean Paul himself): Rousseau and Shakespeare.

There is more design in the appointment of Schoppe as Albano's mentor. Schoppe, whose name was Leibgeber in the previous novel *Siebenkäs*, is a free spirit who personifies humor, a successor of Jonathan Swift in his radical condemnation of evil and stupidity, but a fighter for human freedom and dignity, the crowning achievement in Jean Paul's list of memorable humorists. One major function of humor is the unmasking of social conventions and evils: Schoppe's criticism is sharp and biting. But there is much more to humor than satire.⁸ The humorist, while condemning *Ehrlosigkeit* and *Liebllosigkeit*, lack of honor and love, in people and institutions, is acutely aware of the smallness and insignificance of this finite world as opposed to a "second world." He is, however, not at all sure that such a second world (and God) exists, although it alone would make this world worthwhile. Thus humor is generated by a radical skepticism of one who really needs to believe in order to live. This contradiction, which in turn causes the humorist to be kind and tolerant to individuals, makes life a constant experiment at the edge of nihilism and self-destruction. Albano cannot help but be deeply impressed by Schoppe: he loves him as a friend and fears for him as a person, just as *Siebenkäs* did before. Whereas Dian had conveyed the great ideas and the ideals of humankind and had given Albano a wide perspective on human history, poetry, philosophy, and art, Schoppe destabilizes his world, undermines social and other prejudices, and ingrains a deep feeling of *Humanität* in him. Scholarship has customarily identified Dian with Herder,⁹ and there is some evidence for that, but it should not be overlooked that Schoppe, while going back to Jean Paul's earliest humorists and their biographical model, his deceased

8 Cf. *Vorschule*, especially 5:11519: "Unterschied der Satire und des Komischen." However, it has repeatedly been argued that Jean Paul's own radical separation of satire and humor and his reduction of the realm of satire does not square with the facts, even in his own novels.

9 Rohde, 13f. Dian was always a mentor figure, in its origin related to Gaspard, and understandable as his polar opposite.

friend Johann Bernhard Hermann, has also been enriched by some of the traits of Herder's personality and views.¹⁰

Other mentor figures enter more directly into Gaspard's design. Among them is Augusti, who introduces Albano to the court etiquette and who teaches him restraint and self-control. But the major mentor for teaching Albano the ways of the "great" world is Gaspard himself. Gaspard's role is ambiguous, if not contradictory. On the one hand, he teaches an overcoming of unbridled enthusiasm, a cooling of emotions, and a distanced, even indifferent, attitude toward other human beings. Gaspard enjoys human beings like works of art, aesthetically and without being concerned about their fate. He has no fear or pity, no love or real hate; but he is propelled by powerful emotions that he wants to instill in Albano: unlimited ambition and an enjoyment of political power, which is the power to direct people's destinies. His political vision is that of one who manipulates marionettes, or that of the builder and master of a machine: he enjoys seeing people act according to his dictates. His methods would generate a society devoid of freedom, thus a machinelike totalitarian society, which Herder abhorred so much.

In his indifference toward emotions, Gaspard tolerates the human experiences, decisive as they are, which Albano is having: friendship and love. From the outset Gaspard has determined that Liane and Roquairol are not the right kind for Albano, but he lets things run their own course, intervening only where he sees a danger to his plans. Thus Liane receives a warning that Albano is not for her, a revelation that contributes in no small measure to her final illness and death. In the case of Roquairol, Gaspard simply watches as, after the seduction of Albano's foster-sister Rabette by Roquairol, the two friends turn into deadly enemies. But contrary to Gaspard's calculations, Roquairol's hatred succeeds in deceiving and seducing Linda, thus destroying her intended union with Albano. She disappears from the scene as "Roquairol's widow."

¹⁰ Cf. my study, "Die Herder-Rezeption Jean Pauls in ihrer Entwicklung," in *Johann Gottfried Herder (1744/1803)* ed. Gerhard Sauder, Studien zum achtzehnten Jahrhundert, No. 9 (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1987), 403f.

What these instances indicate is a pattern of confirmation and interference between Albano's development and the political environment in which he grows up. Consistently, however, the designs and calculations fail. They have their effects, but rarely the intended ones. *Titan*, especially through its Gothic elements, demonstrates the self-destruction of the *ancien régime* and its materialistic, calculating spirit. It is free humanity which emerges from the ruins of the old system. However, it can very well be argued that the attitudes of Gaspard, Roquairol, Schoppe, even Bouverot, survive the demise of the old world and are transferred into the new bourgeois world. Although a regime like Albano's may have been obsolete in 1803, when the last volume was published, the question of a humane government versus one based on political calculation as we see it in the figure of Gaspard was more relevant than ever. Thus the plot, beyond the literary clichés and the historical limitations, may have a wider significance.

This wider significance is undeniably true for the characters and has long been apparent. The characters are exponents of modern attitudes. Whereas Albano, the prototypical model of *Humanität*, remains somewhat indistinct, the problematic characters, Roquairol in particular, have invited readers' identification. In *Titan* Jean Paul has defined the ills of his age and subsequent ages in human terms. Aestheticism is one of those primordial ills. It occurs in different forms. The simplest form is classicism, embodied by the *Kunstrat* (literally, art councillor) a uniquely German compound and idea Fraischdörfer, who borrowed some of his mannerisms and attitudes from August Wilhelm Schlegel. Fraischdörfer dehumanizes art by reducing it to a mere and pure form; the highest type of art: is art for its own sake, devoid of any content and relevance to nonaesthetic concerns, *l'art pour l'art* in a special way. This formalistic art, exemplified by classicism, the reflection of dead hearts and dead societies, is destructive insofar as it encroaches on life: for Fraischdörfer, war and suffering in general is only of interest as a possible inspiration for a work of art.¹¹ Thus social life is placed under the

11 On Fraischdörfer, cf. Kurt Wölfel, "Antiklassizismus und Empfindsamkeit: Der Romancier Jean Paul und die Weimarer Kunstdoktrin," in *Deutsche Literatur zur Zeit der Klassik*, ed. Karl Otto Conrady, (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1977), 36280.

criteria of aesthetics, human beings are "interesting" only through light and shadow, coloration, and proportions.

The same type of purely aesthetic pleasure is expressed by Gaspard. His formalistic view of the world and human beings is intensified by his moral indifference and social or human arrogance. He considers the world a spectacle, and most people count only for the pleasure that their act may provide the spectator. The role of the spectator is naturally the superior one. It is well known that Gaspard embodies what Jean Paul criticized in German *Klassik* thus Gaspard carries combined traits that his creator took to be those of Goethe and Schiller: ambition, egotism, and aesthetic indifference. At his first appearance Gaspard is defined as a "cherub at the point of turning satanic,"¹² an angel turning against God, or the Christian version of gigantomachia. Gaspard has greatness, but it is ultimately the greatness of classicistic sculpture, dead marble.

The most dangerous and diabolical kind of aestheticism is that of Roquairol. He is an exemplary case for what Nietzsche would have called "resentment," the hatred of healthy vitality (such as Albano's) out of inner weakness. Roquairol is not only an actor on life's stage; he can live only by staging his own life, and in order to get any kind of pleasure out of it, he has to take recourse to more and more elaborate stagings and intoxicating agents, thus making his way toward a *paradis artificiel* in the manner of Baudelaire, creating an artificial paradise for himself. This paradise involves also the sadistic pleasure of hurting other people and the pleasure of destruction and self-destruction. Jean Paul invented the fitting ending for such a life: Roquairol stages the seduction of Linda, using the mask of Albano, then he tells his life's story in a play written by himself where he plays the lead and finally actually shoots and kills himself on the stage. Roquairol is the exemplary "child and victim of the century" (3:262).

Although the critique of aestheticism analyzes what might be termed decadence (which Jean Paul dared to associate with Goethe and Schiller) and its life-threatening power, including the diabolical lust to kill what one loves, Schoppe embodies another danger of

¹² "ein Cherub mit dem Keime des Abfalls" (3:37). Jean Paul had used that pregnant formula first when he had seen the lithograph of a portrait of Schiller.

modern titanism, a danger even closer to Jean Paul's own heart. Schoppe becomes the adherent, proponent, and victim of transcendental idealism which in Jean Paul's interpretation posits the world as a creation of the *Ich*, the ego, and then appropriates this "nonego" as similar to the ego. This creation of the world, not by God, but *ex nihilo*, leads not to reality but to nothingness, and thus Jean Paul readily assented to Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi's labeling of Fichte and his Romantic followers as "nihilists." Schoppe, as was indicated above, comes to this untenable philosophy of the ego through radical skepticism (such as Jean Paul's own during the 1780s)¹³ and a secret, unfulfilled urge to believe in a real, not merely phenomenal, world created by someone outside the ego. Schoppe, searching in vain for Albano's true identity and pursued by the evil ventriloquist, goes insane by believing in Fichte's basic formula *Ich gleich Ich*, ego equals ego. When Siebenkäs, his look-alike, finally discovers his long-missing friend, Schoppe dies, believing he has seen himself. He thus symbolizes the modern world of mirrors (a potent image in *Titan!*) where the ego creating itself and its own world naturally can only encounter itself and its own creation.

In Schoppe's tragic fate, narrated with an empathy that betrays the narrator's closeness to his figure, a blasphemous dimension is clearest, but it is also present in Gaspard's immoralism and in Roquairol's diabolical sadism. Jean Paul sees as equally blasphemous the striving of modern women. Liane, Albano's first and real love, is *einkräftig* through her excess of emotion and religiosity. She is already living with one foot in her grave, as it were, and undermines her own health through her Pietism. It is indicative that she is the daughter of an immoral courtier and bureaucrat, and the sister of Roquairol. Her negation of their worlds is absolute and includes a negation of life in general. While she is the prime example of the suffering inflicted on people, especially women, by the absolutistic system, she also lacks basic vitality and common sense, a trait that all later works of Jean Paul ascribe to women. Liane, among others, is a critique of *Empfindsamkeit*, of sentimentality which equated goodness with violent

13 Cf. my study *Erfolglosigkeit: Zum Frühwerk Jean Pauls* (Munich: Fink, 1977), especially 7585.

emotions. She turns out to be the prime victim of intrigues, even attempted rapes. Her vulnerability is symbolized by a psychosomatic blindness that overcomes her after violent shocks. The opposite of Liane is Linda, Gaspard's daughter and the intended bride of Albano. Linda is a proud, independent, exceptional woman. Though very feminine in appearance, she has what was considered at the time a "masculine" mind. This is indicated by her affinity with the works of Madame de Staël, the emancipated woman par excellence for the age. Linda is not just an independent woman like Klothilde in *Hesperus* and Natalie in *Siebenkäs*; her need for freedom is absolute. She does not want to restrict her activities to the household, the "inner circle," as the then-prevailing theory about the role of women demanded, nor does she want to be subjugated by the bonds of marriage. Jean Paul sees her as transgressing "natural" boundaries set for women, and he does not really come to grips with the lamentable legal and social restrictions imposed on women, in contrast to writers such as Wilhelm Heinse and Gottlieb Theodor von Hippel.¹⁴ Linda oversteps her boundaries when she refuses to marry Albano and proposes a free union and partnership. Her illicit thirst for freedom leads her to be duped by Roquairol into a nocturnal rendezvous where, pretending to be Albano, he seduces her.

Albano, in the end, returns to Liane, who is reborn as it were in the look-alike princess Idoine, an independent and high-minded woman, however practical and unselfish, thus combining traits of Liane and Linda.

Since the characters and fates of Gaspard, Linda, Schoppe, Roquairol, and Liane impress themselves on the readers, it is easy to lose sight of the center around which these centrifugal forces move. This is what Jean Paul criticized in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*: Wilhelm, he said, did not really provide a real center for the action.¹⁵ Are we better off with Albano, the anti-Wilhelm Meister? In his first introduction Jean Paul describes Albano as an Apollo-like young man,

¹⁴ I have given a summary of these problems in my study "Die emanzipierte Frau in der Goethezeit und ihre Darstellung in der Literatur," in *Die Frau als Heldin und Autorin*, ed. Wolfgang Paulsen (Bern and Munich: Francke, 1979), 96110.

¹⁵ *Vorschule* 5:224.

handsome and statuesque but also temperamental and impatient. The setting of the first chapter is between North and South, at the border of the German and Italian spheres, on the shores and on an island in the Lago Maggiore south of the Alps. Jean Paul wants to associate his hero with greatness, the sublime, and with southern beauty and harmony. It is surprising how the process of *Bildung* for Albano, for the first time in Jean Paul's work, involves the integration of North and South, or, in cultural terms, of "Greek" and "Romantic" aesthetics and lifestyle.¹⁶ But it is advisable to keep in mind Jean Paul's warning in the *Vorschule der Ästhetik* that a revival of Greek antiquity is out of the question; what is possible in our time is the integration of Greek images, ideas, symbols, and forms into a "Romantic," that is, modern, framework. And what is possible or desirable as well is the integration of southern beauty and harmony into the northern (German), system of energy. Thus Dian, the Mediterranean man, can become Albano's mentor; and even Schoppe, embodiment of "German" humor, has travelled extensively in Italy, although North and South remain contradictory forces within his personality. Albano, in order to become an *allkräftige* person, has to leave Germany but needs specifically the experience of the South Rome and Naples.

While the opening chapter thus introduces the reader to the scope of the novel, the retrospectively narrated childhood reveals the patterns of development or maturation. It is a process of expansion to a point of crisis followed by a rebirth and a new phase of expansion. The narrowly circumscribed space of the village of Blumenbühl, Albano's boyhood nest, is followed by Pestitz, the capital where the plots and counterplots are played out, and the excursion into the grand panorama of Rome, Naples, Vesuvius, and Ischia. The end indicates a circular movement. There is a return first to Pestitz, where the denouement of the plots and subplots takes place, and then even

16 Cf. Wilfried Malsch, "Kunst und Geschichte in Jean Pauls *Ästhetik*," *Jahrbuch der Jean-Paul-Gesellschaft* 10 (1975): 10921; and my study "Jean Pauls Romantikkonzept und seine Auseinandersetzung mit Schiller und Herder," in *Perspektiven der Romantik, mit Bezug auf Herder, Schiller, Jean Paul, Friedrich Schlegel, Arnim, die Brüder Grimm, Gottfried Keller, Rilke und den Avantgardismus: Beiträge des Marburger Kolloquiums zum 80. Geburtstag Erich Ruprechts*, ed. Reinhard Görisch (Bonn: Bouvier, 1987), 3649.

to Blumenbühl, where Albano is united with Idoine, finds a successor for Schoppe in his "twin" Siebenkäs, and succeeds as ruler of his state. Periodically the expansion into larger spaces is countered by a retirement into idyllic refuges, such as the park or Idoine's arcadian village. Expansion and contraction are effective on all levels. So is palingenesis, rebirth. Thus the development schema is one of the familiar three phases: the state of original harmony, the state of conflict, seduction, and crisis, and a rebirth into a new world.

Jean Paul is evidently intent on demonstrating Albano's inner transformation, most graphically through Albano's life-threatening illness after Liane's death and his subsequent trip to Italy. However, while he shows the development of Albano's enormous energies into forces with an *allkräftige* personality, he seems to want to mesh greatness and sublimity in this character. Scholarship has always observed that a major problem with the portrayal of Albano is that, although he is intended to be a strong-willed, active person, he never has the chance to act. He is not allowed to become a soldier, and he has no governmental responsibilities as yet. Thus the potential remains just potential, and it is doubtful what he will do, especially after the French Revolution and in such a tiny principality. Albano is very much in the position of Hölderlin's friend Isaak Sinclair, whose mind and energy was much too large for the small state of Hessen-Homburg. Moreover, the ending of *Titan* sends a strangely ambiguous message. Albano feels rightfully surrounded more by the dead than the living. Schoppe has died, Roquairol has died, Linda is as good as dead, and his brother and predecessor are dead. Even the presence of Idoine and Siebenkäs reminds him of the dead. The globe appears to him now as a *Luftkugel*, a sphere made of air that has lost its substantiality or solidity.¹⁷ Thus he feels like a reborn person among reborns, living in a "second world," a world beyond death. He can ask, just as the Prinz von Homburg in Heinrich von Kleist's much-discussed play of the same title did when he was pardoned by the ruler and in effect recalled from the dead, "Is this a dream?" and, indeed, it is. Jean Paul's developmental scheme, in the end, is more

¹⁷ "Albano, dem die Erde, mit Vergangenheit und Toten gefüllt, eine Luftkugel geworden war, die in dem Äther ging" (3:824).

vertical than horizontal, more geared to the vision of the "second world" than the ideal society on this globe.

It is not always easy to separate these two dimensions. Jean Paul is not very helpful there. While he advocates a radical change of social and governmental structures, his emphasis on an inner transformation leads him to sublime rather than revolutionary visions. This is particularly baffling, since the entire *Titan* is a warning against undue attention to life after death, especially in the figure of Liane, and thus also a criticism of much of *Hesperus* and its Maienthal sublimity. Common sense and a good measure of realism if not pragmatism seem to characterize the first governmental actions in Albano's name, and the same moderation is embodied by the "nontitanic" survivors of *Titan*: Idoine, Siebenkäs, Augusti, Albano's foster-father Wehrfritz, and Dian. This is a human panorama promising goodwill and peace, and advocating work toward the realization of *Humanität*. But also presumably a world devoid of drama, of tension even, and possibly of innovation. In his eagerness for the sublime Jean Paul may have overstepped the boundaries of both the *Staatsroman* and *Bildungsroman*.

And hence the mixed reception of *Titan*, Jean Paul's greatest creative effort. Interestingly enough, *Titan* produced some of the most impressive spin-offs: the *Clavis Fichtiana*, Jean Paul's satirical critique of Fichte, *Des Luftschiffers Giannozzo Seebuch*, the exciting "diary" of a balloonist and humorist; and, much later, *Doktor Katzenbergers Badereise*. As Jean Paul well knew, *Titan* contained his vision of an ideal world, which he could and would never repeat. The portrayal of this ideal world is done in contrast to the "real" contemporary forces which prevent the ideal from being realized and which have drawn so much more attention than the positive side.

One might venture to say that *Titan* contains the elements of such genres as *Staatsroman*, *Bildungsroman*, *Erziehungsroman*, *Schauerroman* (sensational or horror novel), and others, but it transcends all of these. Although on the level of the story Albano will at the end of the work confront the "real" world actively and he hopes to transform it, the images and tone of the ending suggest that Albano and his circle have evolved beyond the ordinary human race and live in a sublime world of their own, not unlike the vision of *hohe Menschen*

(exalted personages) in the earlier novel *Unsichtbare Loge*. This may not be as much a contradiction for Jean Paul as it seems for us. But it suggests that behind the adventures and vicissitudes around the court of Pestitz a story of rebirth, in religious terms, palingenesis, may take place. The titans are rebelling against God, and Albano, in danger of becoming a titan himself, learns to come nearer to God by accepting his creation. This angelic attitude may be Jean Paul's real desire, but it calls into question the entire structure and intention of the story.

Jean Paul liked contrasts. He was by his own definition a "dualist." The Italian sublimity of *Titan* called for a contrasting mood and story. And thus he conceived of the story of a young man from the lower classes, one destined to become a minister: a typical idyllic setting like that of *Fixlein*. But that story of a different kind of *Bildung* cut itself loose from *Titan* and gained in independence and complexity during its gestation period. It became *Flegeljahre*, considered by many to be Jean Paul's highest artistic achievement. The original figure Walt received a twin brother, first identified as Jean Paul himself. Then a Jean-Paul-like figure, Van der Kabel (original name: Richter), willed his fortune to Walt, but only provided that he pass a good number of tests and chances are that he would lose most, if not all of the inheritance, in the process. Thus, an enforced process of encounter with the "real" world is set up, this time with the bourgeois world of money-mindedness. Seven distant relatives of Van der Kabel, who have been disinherited, are installed as watchdogs over the enforcement of the will. While they enforce Walt's worldliness, he has mentors to guide him: Van der Kabel himself, through the provisions of the will, the fair-minded Kuhnold, mayor, and also executor of the will, and finally his twin Vult, an unintended mentor who does his best to alert Walt to dangers and to guide him. But Vult the humorist and realist feels powerless in the face of Walt's power of illusion and trust. Walt persists in seeing the best of all possible worlds. He is a *Candide*-figure to begin with and may end up being a distant relative of Don Quixote. He simply refuses to adopt realism. This may not solely be because he is a stubborn idealist. He is a poet, and such idealism may be the *conditio sine qua non* for creating a poetic world.

Flegeljahre is not customarily associated with *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, but *Titan* is. If *Titan* opposes to the merchant and would-be actor and playwright Wilhelm Meister the successor to a throne as an exemplary figure, *Flegeljahre* presents a real poet whose attraction to the arts is not an illusion and a delusion; he is indeed endowed with real talent. Wilhelm Meister's disillusionment develops not so much in proportion to his disappointments as with his growing doubts about his vocation. When he is finally brought to the rude awakening from sweet poetic dreams, he is ready to be a modest participant in an apparently absolutistic reformist movement. Goethe, as the Romantics noted with chagrin, not only let Wilhelm Meister return to a world of affairs, but he abandoned poetry altogether. Mignon and the harper, authors of the lyrical gems in the book, died with a poetically dubious justification which Jean Paul also questioned. Thus Novalis could consider *Wilhelm Meister* a *Candide* directed against poetry. Jean Paul, who in turn pokes fun at the Romantics, for example, in his "Wirtshaus zum Wirtshaus,"¹⁸ has the poet struggle with the "real" world of bourgeois greed, selfishness, and meanness. Vult, who is most acutely aware of that ugly world of bourgeois prose, feels no compunction in paying it back in its own coin. He gives himself a noble title and makes his money as a flute virtuoso. Before his flute concert he cheats his audience by pretending to be blind to insure a full house. He is the trickster who combats the ugly tricks of the capitalist world. As long as he is carefree and only hates or despises the world, he is successful and enjoys himself. His problems start when he becomes reattached to his twin brother and when he loves Wina, who in turn loves Walt. He finally extricates himself from his growing jealousy by leaving. His departure at the end of the book signals a possibly irremediable break between poetry and reality. Walt is left alone with his extraordinary dreams and poetic visions, with his countless enemies or just people who take

¹⁸ Leo Tönz, "Das Wirtshaus 'Zum Wirtshaus': Zu einem Motiv in Jean Pauls *Flegeljahren*," *Jahrbuch der Jean-Paul-Gesellschaft* 5 (1970): 10523; see also Gerhart Mayer, "Zum deutschen Antibiildungsroman," *Jahrbuch der Raabe Gesellschaft* 15 (1974): 4164.

advantage of him. Will he ever inherit anything of an earthly fortune? Will he reach the goal to which he seems destined by the will: to become a Lutheran minister? Will he marry Wina? Will he be a great writer? These are unanswerable questions. The *Glück* fortune and happiness which became part of Wilhelm Meister's heritage eludes Walt. He is obviously not compatible with his environment. For him an adjustment to the bourgeois population of Haslau would not be self-fulfillment but a most acute self-denial. Whether poetry is beneficial, whether poetry is even possible in the present age, would be an arguable point, and in his late works, Jean Paul has provided different answers. But *Flegeljahre*, as exhilarating and masterful the existing text is, breaks off at a point of the plot when no solution is in sight.

Flegeljahre in its fundamental realism is a farewell to poetic dreams as they were embodied in *Titan*. It presents the beauty of poetry and empathizes with the hopeful poet, but it concludes very firmly that he has no place in a bourgeois world; his creativity and idealism are not wanted. Thus literary expression can be of two kinds: unworldly poetic dreams (Walt) or bitter satirical humor and social commentary (Vult), but no synthesis is in sight.

Ideally and this is what the age of Goethe had in mind *Bildung* transforms society to bring about the realization of *Humanität*. There are two major ways for an individual to achieve this: as a statesman-ruler, as exemplified by Agathon, or as an artist, as Wilhelm Meister set out to do. Both failed, at least in their original mission; and so Jean Paul took up the challenge in his own way. *Titan* is an attempt to disprove the failures of both Wieland and Goethe; but by proving them wrong, Jean Paul may have himself had to overidealize. *Flegeljahre*, then, is not the story of an ideal but of an idealist in a materialistic world, a story that breaks off with a well-articulated but nevertheless stridently disharmonious note. If *Flegeljahre* uses the model of the *Bildungsroman*, it negates both Goethe and the Romantics, whereas *Titan* demonstrates a process of *Bildung* but differs essentially from *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* both in content and structure. *Titan* is, in its own way, a historical novel, a novel about a turn in history, and a utopian novel. It is a fictional commentary on Herder's view of the age and of history and religion, as well as a critique of Herder. It rejects Goethe's perceived aestheticism and

moral indifference as well as his objections to political change; it also rejects Fichtean philosophy and egotistical excesses. It pleads for a return to a lost harmony, although Jean Paul knew well that such harmony would rather occur in another world, the second one. Thus it offers an array of very memorable titans or demons and a very much less memorable view of *Humanität*. In tackling all these problems at once, it achieves a complex and at times contradictory structure and causes interferences in its message. As opposed to *Flegeljahre*, *Titan* has greatness, but a very questionable unity. Moreover, the characters are not allowed to be just themselves; they have to carry a heavy load of symbolism. *Titan* shares a basic weakness with *Wilhelm Meister*: the relative pallid nature of the protagonist. In contrast, Walt is as memorable as any of Jean Paul's characters. Thus, aesthetically speaking, *Titan's* structure is in danger of falling apart and making its most significant components independent. *Bildung* as a structural principle is not strong enough to hold them together. If the story achieves unity, it is as the representation of their part tragic downfall of the world of the eighteenth century. Albano's world will prove to be a mere episode. *Titan*, in the course of its events, changes its structure from a one-center to a multi-center story, thus exhibiting a very fluid form.

In contrast, *Flegeljahre* sets out with an uncharacteristic goal that predetermines the life and development of the middle-class protagonist Walt; this is symbolized by Walt's delightful trip in the third volume (the model for Joseph von Eichendorff's light-hearted novella *Aus dem Leben eines Taugenichts*); all seemingly accidental adventures are either planned by Walt or are due to the designs of other characters, except for the moment of emotional unity with Wina under the waterfall. Walt's life, subjectively looking like an open adventure, is objectively swallowed up by bourgeois planning and orderliness. The predetermination of the future king in the *Staatsroman* is a statement of historical optimism, i.e., the advent of a better world. The predetermination of the bourgeois poet is a fundamental denial of his freedom and is designed, with whatever intentions, to end his dreams of a better world with better people; it is the seduction, as it were, of the bourgeois spirit to make him a realist who prudently manages his money and accepts the pedantic legalism that rules society. In

other words: it becomes increasingly clear that for Walt to accept the reality of Haslau as normative would be a serious moral degradation but that an escapist rejection is not a desirable alternative either. It is indicative that Van der Kabel alias Richter wants Walt to end up as a minister, conjuring up the idyllic image of a village parson's life; but Jean Paul Friedrich Richter, who had grown up in this milieu, knew full well how his father had suffered from poverty and lack of independence and that he himself had to refuse this career, which was expected of him. Still, in his stories he returns to a dream of a life of a village vicar that really did not exist. Even if the novel which the two twin brothers write together will eventually be published, as we can expect, it is doubtful whether it would grant a legitimate place for Walt, much less both Walt and Vult, in society. *Flegeljahre* leaves the reader (and probably its author) with fundamental, unanswered questions about both the protagonist(s) and the state of society. In terms of the customary discussion on the Bildungsroman: can Walt mature? Can he even change? And: is this a society which is worth adapting to? Is it even *possible* to adjust to the people of Haslau?

Bildung, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, under the impact of the crushing events and radical changes occurring then, remained an ideal and an idealistic concept. A novel designed to portray actual contemporary life in Germany, such as *Flegeljahre*,¹⁹ cannot present a model of a successful *Bildung* but only demonstrate the stumbling blocks during its process. Eventually, of course, *Bildung* was claimed as a possession of the state and identified with diplomas and "enriched" with a long list of duties to the state and thus "maturation" meant the acceptance of the status quo. This is most definitely not what Jean Paul had in mind; he hoped for better human beings and a better government (or no government at all, ideally). *Humanität* is still a very distant goal, but without a society

¹⁹ This is the crucial problem which Jean Paul's *Vorschule* (second edition) identifies for the "deutsche Schule" of the novel in general and for the *Flegeljahre* in particular (5:255); cf. also Marie-Luise Gansberg, "Welt-Verlachtung und 'das rechte Land': Ein literarsoziologischer Beitrag zu Jean Pauls *Flegeljahren*," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift* 42 (1968): 373-98.

committed to it, any literature of *Bildung* keeps moving in a vicious circle between the utopian goal and realistic nonclosure.

The Place of Inheritance in the Bildungsroman: *Agathon, Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre, and Der Nachsommer*

Michael Minden

*Man weiß nicht, was für
Dinge man im eigenen
Hause vorrätig hat.
Kafka, Ein Landarzt*

The Bildungsroman is a rich source of repeated, modulated, and varied thematic patterns.¹ The recent interest of which Martin Swales speaks, in narrative structure and perspective, in epistemological aspects, in short, interest in form,² tends to distract

1 This essay first appeared in the *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* in March 1983. I am grateful to the editors for permission to reprint this revised version of the essay.

2 *The German Bildungsroman from Wieland to Hesse* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1978), 4. Swales's own compromise between form and content is still predicated upon the primacy of the theme of the developing male adolescent so influentially inaugurated by Dilthey's pronouncements on the genre; see Lothar Köhn, *Entwicklungs- und Bildungsroman: Ein Forschungsbericht* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1969), 1ff. Another substantial recent monograph on the genre in English, Michael Beddow's *The Fiction of Humanity: Studies in the Bildungsroman from Wieland to Thomas Mann* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982), also deals with the topic from a formal and philosophical angle.

attention from the wealth of thematic possibilities within the genre. Genre studies still tend to concentrate on the explicit theme of the developing youth, as defined by Dilthey. Jürgen Jacobs, author of a recent, comprehensive study of the Bildungsroman, betrays his basic thematic allegiance to Dilthey when he talks of the "essential problems of orientation, which constitute the fundamental question governing the Bildungsroman."³ And even Monika Schrader, one of the critics most sensitive to formal considerations and questions of narrative perspective amongst those cited by Swales, dismisses Dilthey and his disciples (conscious and unconscious) in her opening remarks, only to reinstate the basic pattern (albeit with a shift of emphasis) a few pages later: "The fundamental theme of the German Bildungsroman from Wieland to Musil is that tension residing in the relationship between the thematic context of a given social structure and the individual powers of aesthetic spontaneity."⁴

At the same time there has been another development, mainly in work on *Wilhelm Meister*, consisting of radical rereadings of the genre and its Goethean paradigm.⁵ Although the overall picture has be-

³*Wilhelm Meister und seine Brüder: Untersuchungen zum deutschen Bildungsroman* (Munich: Fink, 1972), 77. Mention should also be made of the comprehensive survey by Rolf Selbmann, *Der deutsche Bildungsroman* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1984).

⁴*Mimesis and Poiesis: Poetologische Studien zum Bildungsroman* (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1975), 14. An exception can be found in a footnote in Jürgen Scharfschwerdt's book *Thomas Mann und der deutsche Bildungsroman: Eine Untersuchung zu dem Problem einer literarischen Tradition* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1967), in which the author points to similarities of overall structure as they are embodied in the aspirations of Meister, Heinrich Drendorf, and Heinrich Lee, and the final return of the values of their fathers (p. 24, note 41).

⁵ For instance: Stefan Blessin, *Die Romane Goethes* (Königstein/Ts.: Athenäum, 1979); Dieter Borchmeyer, *Höfische Gesellschaft und Französische Revolution bei Goethe* (Kronberg/Ts.: Athenäum, 1979); Kittler's study of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* in Gerhard Kaiser and Friedrich A. Kittler, *Dichtung als Sozialisationsspiel: Studien zu Goethe und Gottfried Keller* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979); David Roberts, *The Indirections of Desire: Hamlet in Goethe's Wilhelm Meister* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1980); Jochen Hörisch, *Gott, Geld und Glück: Zur Logik der Liebe in den Bildungsromanen Goethes, Kellers und Thomas Manns* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1983). Karl Schlechta's once heretical

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come confusing, these new readings are to be welcomed wholeheartedly because of the vigor they infuse into our sensitivity to details and alternative systems of meaning in this corpus of German writing.⁶ Here at last we are liberated from a view of these novels as variations on the teleology of male adolescence, and a picture is emerging of the genre properly situated within the history, or various histories, of bourgeois consciousness and the conditions of its existence.

Encouraged by the wealth of current activity, I wish to analyze here one alternative pattern of meaning in some of these works, namely that circularity of inheritance which, I shall argue, counterbalances the linearity of progression which we are more accustomed to discern in these novels. The impetus behind this analysis is the conviction that these novels are richer and more moving than the ominous word *Bildung* has come to suggest and that this richness and ability to move us is bound up with the place the Bildungsroman has in that history of the bourgeoisie to which I alluded above and which is to a significant extent our history, too.

I have taken Adalbert Stifter's *Der Nachsommer* (1857, translated as *Indian Summer*, 1985) as my point of departure and Christoph Martin Wieland's *Geschichte des Agathon* (1766/67, translated as *The History of Agathon*, 1773) and *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795/96) as my two further examples.

The plot of *Der Nachsommer*, described as "long and eventful" by the *Oxford Companion to German Literature*, is easily recounted. In a first-person narrative, Heinrich Drendorf tells the story of his for-

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interpretation, Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1953), has now aroused so much interest that it has been reprinted in paperback by Suhrkamp (1985), and Hans Jürgen Schings has written an article against the tide of rereadings and in defense of a more traditional interpretation but taking into account the main thought of what they say: "*Agathon Anton Reiser Wilhelm Meister: Zur Pathogenese des modernen Subjekts im Bildungsroman*," in *Goethe im Kontext: Ein Symposium*, ed. Wolfgang Wittkowski (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1984), 4268.

⁶*Wilhelm Meister* is read in psychoanalytic terms by Roberts and in socioeconomic contexts by Borchmeyer and Blessin. Kittler deconstructs the novel with reference to the discourse of the modern individual and Hörisch reads it as itself a deconstruction of German idealist philosophy.

mative years as the eldest child of middle-class parents in what is presumed to be Vienna. Each summer he goes to the mountains, studying geology. One summer he comes upon the country estate of Gustav von Risach, a retired civil servant. Risach's establishment is exemplary in its reverential orderliness, and Heinrich from now on returns to the *Rosenhaus* [literally, the rose house] each summer and, encouraged and guided by Risach, broadens his education. He falls in love with Natalie, the daughter of Mathilde, whom Risach had loved and lost as a young man and with whom he is now enjoying the Indian summer of a late friendship. The climax of the book is the meeting of Heinrich's family with the group around Risach on the occasion of Heinrich and Natalie's wedding.

Stifter's Bildungsroman suggests itself as a point of orientation for two reasons. It is, first, unusually explicit. It reveals a pattern of such great clarity that it seems appropriate to ask, If *Der Nachsommer* is a Bildungsroman (and I see no reason to doubt that), then does its insistence upon inheritance and formal circularity appear in modified form in other examples of the genre, in which the pattern is not so clear? Is this perhaps as essential to the genre as other, more obvious aspects?

The second reason that *Der Nachsommer* suggests itself as a point of orientation, really an elaboration of the first reason, is the novel's peculiar relationship to the literary culture of its own historical class. Although it *proclaims* the bourgeois message, it does so without *irony* but with a wholly unusual use of *pathos*, thus divesting itself of the two most characteristic supports of the sensibility of late eighteenth and nineteenth-century serious German fiction. That is, Stifter's narrative wears its meaning on the surface (this is, of course, another way of referring to its explicitness), and thus exhibits, with unequalled clarity, how *the* meaning congeals into *one* meaning amongst or more to the point, perhaps, is abandoned by many others. The reader consistently has the feeling that an interpretation is being demanded on every page by the evident absence of what has been left unsaid and at the same time has the sense that the novel's silences are vast enough to swallow up effortlessly and without echo the critical chatter he feels compelled to adumbrate. "But how to explain the sad isolation of Paradise?" wrote J. P. Stern, perhaps with something like

this in mind.⁷ Without the *Dichtung*, the "thickening," of irony and with a pathos which one may only contemplate at the risk of negating the construction of meaning that the book instigates and strives to maintain, *Der Nachsommer* becomes the catalogue of the terms of bourgeois meaning, the items of which, one is entitled to hope, will be present also in earlier examples of the genre.

In its very peculiarity, then, *Der Nachsommer* supplies us, before all the contemporary deconstruction, with the clue which leads us on to investigate other, seemingly less contradictory, Bildungsromane, in our search of hitherto neglected dimensions of significance. This is not, however, to want to devalue the novel by pointing out its contradictions,⁸ since not to take *Der Nachsommer* on its own explicit terms is not to dismiss it or to deny its unique qualities.

We can begin by reminding ourselves of Stifter's fascination with the topic of inheritance, simply as a concern that occupies his characters' minds. Both Drendorf senior and von Risach display an almost voluptuous love for testamentary detail, for example, in the chapter "Der Einblick." After the narrator has come to a realization about the value of his father's collection of art objects, he learns what is to become of it after his father's death, and a paragraph is devoted to the dispositions the elder Drendorf has made to cover all contingencies.⁹ Similarly, when Risach makes his official engagement speech, he does not neglect to provide a detailed account of his legal relationship to his "daughter" Natalie: "But because you call me Natalie's

7Idylls and Realities (London: Methuen, 1971), 105.

⁸ For the 'contradictions' of *Der Nachsommer*, see, for instance, Horst Albert Glaser, *Die Restauration des Schönen* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1965), and Herbert Kaiser, "Adalbert Stifter: *Der Nachsommer*. Dialektik der ästhetischen Bildung," in *Studien zum deutschen Roman nach 1848* (Duisburg: Walter Braun, 1977), 10760. Jacobs gives a fair account of the novel's ambiguities in his section on it (18394).

⁹ Adalbert Stifter, *Der Nachsommer: Eine Erzählung*, ed. Max Stefl (Augsburg: Adam Kraft, 1954), 45657. All future references are to this edition, page numbers are given in the text, or, in the case of quotations, after the original German in the relevant footnote. Translations are my own. There is a recent English translation of the work by Wendell Frye (1985, Bern: Peter Lang).

father you must also allow me to act like a father. As my heir, Natalie will inherit the Aspernhof along with all appurtenances and contents, and so too will she inherit everything I own, as I have no other relatives. . . ."10 One is tempted to quote at greater length, so compelling are the poetic qualities of what appears to be such a prosaic passage. It is vibrant with feeling, yet under strong rhythmical control; it is provided with powerful rhetorical checks and balances, yet offers an accumulated feeling that love has no stronger form of expression than that conveyed in the words, "you shall inherit everything I own."

So important is the securing and administering of inheritance that one feels justified in suggesting that the hero of *this* Bildungsroman does not develop into any specifically appropriate form of maturity (let alone any discernible social function); instead, he "comes into" an inheritance, and the book's denouement, its fulfillment, and a main element in its climax is the *size* of the marriage settlement, details of which figure prominently in the closing pages of the book: "When I had occasion to look at the papers which Risach and my father had given us, I was greatly astonished. Both contained far more for us than we had even remotely imagined," or, some lines further on: "But my father's bequest rivaled that of Risach's entire estate and considerably exceeded my expectations."11

This second comment from Heinrich Drendorf's startled registration of the content of documents associated with his marriage brings us to a further aspect of the place of inheritance in *Der Nachsommer*. Stifter has constructed *two* fathers for his hero to inherit from.12

10 "Weil du mich aber Vater Nataliens nennst, so mußst du erlauben, daß ich auch als Vater handle. Natalie erhält als meine Erbin den Aspernhof mit allem Zubehör und allem, was drin ist, sie erhält auch, da ich keine Verwandten besitze, meine ganze übrige Habe . . ." (800).

11 "Da sah ich auch gelegentlich die Papiere an, die uns Risach und der Vater gegeben haben, und erstaunte sehr. Beide erhielten für uns viel mehr als wir uns nur entfernt vermutet hatten. . . . Aber auch das von dem Vater uns Übergebene war der gesamten Habe Risach's ebenbürtig, und übertraf weit meine Erwartungen" (835).

12 Cf. Scharfschwerdt, 24; Herbert Kaiser, 150.

Heinrich, in the second phrase just quoted, is surprised to discover an equivalence between his own father and the spiritual guide he has found in his host Risach. The book as a whole, I wish to suggest, argues for an *identity* between these two figures. The point of stressing this identity between the two men in the context of a discussion of the Bildungsroman is that it modifies the role of the hero quite substantially. Instead of representing the exemplary course of development of a young man (as we are often thought to regard the genre), having "two fathers" in this case gives Heinrich Drendorf the function of demonstrating the identity between the points of his departure and arrival. In other words there is a principle of circularity in *Der Nachsommer* which needs to be considered alongside the principle of development, of progress, that we normally associate with the genre.

The point can perhaps be put most clearly with the aid of a simile: it is as if we were presented, in Drendorf senior and Freiherr von Risach, with two diagrams of the same thing, the latter simply an enlargement of the former, serving to highlight the details of the object's real nature. And because some of the congruences are less than immediately apparent, lines are provided that lead from one point in the smaller image to its equivalent in the larger picture. The function of these lines is the same as that of Heinrich Drendorf in the economy of the novel. The motion of direction (as the lines move from diagram to diagram or as Heinrich Drendorf makes his seasonal trips from father to father, town to country), reveals itself as the stasis of identity, for the very *function* of the movement from image to image, from Drendorf to Risach, is to insist upon the identity of these terminal points and not to describe any sort of progress.

The parallels between the two men and their respective establishments are prominent and explicit (see, for instance, 89, 173, 448). Most compelling of all is the revelation, in the chapter "Der Einblick," that they have identical art collections (although the scale is different). One may quote here, as the representative example of this strange parallel, Heinrich Drendorf's surprise at discovering that his father too has an equivalent to the pride and centerpiece of Risach's collection: "Here my astonishment was even greater than that caused by the paintings. Upon these stones I found the very

forms again, such as the one which stood upon the steps of my host's house."¹³

The sense of identity between these two fathers, then, reaches its climax in their appreciation and ownership of art. That it should be art in which their profound affinity should manifest itself is most significant. It points to what I suspect is the real resonance of the topic of inheritance in this novel. It supplies the model for what, to a conservative imagination like that of Stifter, is the most vital process of all: the transmission from generation to generation of that which is valuable, of spiritual wisdom and values, of the wherewithal of a good, virtuous, fulfilled, and fulfilling life. And this transmission, at least in Stifter's mind, would ideally take place in a legal, completely regulated way, without exposing the heir to the vagaries and dangers of experiences and mistakes before he may inherit from his father, thus becoming the beautifully realized poetic refutation of the saying "si jeunesse savait, si vieillesse pouvait."

And yet, this cherished notion can easily and imperceptibly become ensnared with the isomorphic but spiritually neutral concept of the inheritance of money, possessions, and estates.¹⁴ This can occur both because the pursuit of the valuable in Stifter's terms has certain material conditions without which it is impossible¹⁵ and because the system of regulated inheritance perpetuates a certain order, without which, again, the establishment and pursuit of a good life would be not feasible.

13 "Hier war meine Verwunderung fast noch größer als bei den Bildern. Ich fand auf den Steinen die Gestalten wieder, wie die eine war, welche auf der Treppe des Hauses meines Gastfreunds stand" (450). Stifter uses the equivalence between the two figures with great poignancy in the matter of their differences as well as their similarities. An examination of that aspect cannot be attempted in this context (but see notes 39 and 61 below).

14 Cf. Jacobs, 191 and Herbert Kaiser, 13235. It is interesting to note that James J. Sheehan mentions "the inclination to mix moral and material categories" as characteristic of the *Vormärz* as a whole in his *German Liberalism in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1978), 94.

15 For a detailed exposition of this point, see Glaser's chapter "Die soziale Sphäre" (5277).

Art is both the expression or even the shrine of spiritual values *and* something that can be possessed and thus passed on. By endowing both fathers with art collections which eventually come to his hero, either directly or via his possession of Natalie, Stifter is linking the nonmaterial values implicit in the collections with the social stability guaranteed by the laws of inheritance or transfer of property. And here a characteristic confusion may be located in which the "immortality" of art is vaguely, piously, and utterly erroneously superimposed on a dream of the social and family continuity which Risach's and Drendorf's tender dispositions seek to promote.

What is most characteristic of the treatment of art in Stifter's Bildungsroman can best be exemplified by reference to the character Roland. Apart from his clear heritage as the zither-playing descendant of Mignon who plays at Heinrich's wedding, Roland is the only character in the book who seems to be genuinely gifted as an artist. He is by implication a creative and gifted young man. But at the same time, of course, he is not without his disturbing aspects. Not only does he lead a nomadic existence, but he appears to desire Natalie, and he paints an incommensurately large, wild, and subjective picture.

The narrative, as we well know, renders Roland harmless, as harmless and obedient as the "mysterious" zither player. Roland, let us remind ourselves, does not really desire Natalie; he possesses her double. This is a splendid piece of stylization. What had apparently associated the *Genie*, the source of potential human creativity, with anarchy, with rampant desire in disregard of social, moral and (in this aesthetic universe)¹⁶ aesthetic constraints, identifies instead the artist as a representer, one whose fire is consumed in a likeness and thus does not threaten anything in the world outside his representations, or us, or that order without which morals and meanings would be released to tumble about in flux without top or bottom, without frame or title.

And while Roland's genuine talent is not disputed, it is nevertheless contained. Risach's wisdom circumscribes it: "[Roland] is capable of becoming an important artist or an unhappy man, if the

¹⁶ See Herbert Kaiser, especially 126 and 132.

fire which burns in the service of his art should turn away from its object and inward upon the young man's heart. I hope that I may yet be able to bring things to a happy conclusion."¹⁷ The proper attitude to artists in *Der Nachsommer* is not to learn from them, but to teach them, not to emulate them, but to employ them.

So it is too with the collections of art objects. They enshrine fire (as in, for instance, the magnificent image of the classical statue illuminated by lightning); they are aesthetically defined as "Ruhe in Bewegung" ("stillness in motion"), but above all they are collected and owned and can be left to a succeeding generation. The operation of the legal process, which preserves a specific social structure, is seen to be compatible with the transmission of true spiritual values.

Every reader of *Der Nachsommer* will be familiar with the characteristic ways in which spiritual and material values are superimposed upon one another. This blurring is perhaps at its most telling on Heinrich and Natalie's wedding day. On that occasion Heinrich Drendorf displays some of his remarkable capacity for self-restraint by refraining from reading the documents relating to financial dispositions, even though they are invitingly laid out on tables specifically erected for this purpose in the Hall of Marble. The clear narrative implication of this restraint is that the symbolic and spiritual or even religious aspects of a wedding day far outweigh the financial details of a marriage settlement. Even if the narrative itself cannot resist a tender mention of the legal and proprietary advantages of marriage (we are told about the documents), the characters can (Heinrich does not read them). Instead, Heinrich turns to the blushing bride, the *real* value on the wedding day. I am being only slightly unfair if I edit what follows in the text thus: "I took Natalie by the hand . . . 'this heart is yours forever' (she says) . . . 'You are my jewel and my most esteemed possession on earth' (he says)."¹⁸ It is Natalie who

17 "Er kann ein bedeutender Künstler werden oder auch ein unglücklicher Mensch, wenn sich nämlich sein Feuer, das der Kunst entgegenwallt, von seinem Gegenstand abwendet, und sich gegen das Innere des jungen Menschen richtet. Ich hoffe, daß ich alles werde ins Gleiche bringen können" (834).

18 "Ich aber nahm indessen Natalien an der Hand . . . 'dieses Herz gehört nun ewig dir' [she says] . . . 'Du bist mein Kleinod und mein höchstes Gut auf dieser

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is the most important thing, but it is by no means clear whether she is in a different category, as it were, or simply at the top of the list of treasured items, beating the classical statuary into a close second place. I have put this slightly facetiously, but the point is serious, and one thing is clear: legally Natalie is the key to all the possessions mentioned in the documents, even if they are unread, and ultimately the key to Heinrich's possession of practically all the objects mentioned in the book.

Although I hope that the terms and emphasis are unusual, what I have said so far has nevertheless been an account of qualities in *Der Nachsommer* which are immediately apparent to any reader (here we touch once again upon the book's unique explicitness). But what of the history of such matters in the Bildungsromane which preceded it? Is it perhaps instructive, I now want to go on to ask, to look again at *Agathon* and especially *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* in the light of what I have said about the place of inheritance and related matters in *Der Nachsommer*?

Wieland's *Die Geschichte des Agathon* does not display a tight pattern of circularity and doubling such as we found in *Der Nachsommer*. Agathon's journey, like Wieland's in writing the novel, is a genuinely adventurous search, in the depths of the mind and the complexities of human motivation, for unchanging criteria of morality and value. But there are parallels close enough to Stifter to bear mention and furnish material for comparison in our chosen context.

Agathon's father appears towards the beginning of the book in such a way that the hitherto anonymous eponym finds himself suddenly in possession of a name and a national identity: "driven out into an unknown world, I unexpectedly find a father and a fatherland, neither of which I have ever known."¹⁹ The country then proceeds

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Erde' [he says]" (818).

19 "in eine unbekannte Welt ausgestoßen, finde ich unvermutet einen Vater und ein Vaterland, die ich nicht kannte." Christoph Martin Wieland, *Werke*, ed. Fritz Martini and Hans Werner Seiffert, 5 vols. (Munich: Hanser, 1964/68), 1:399. All future references are to this edition; page numbers are given in the text or in the case of quotations after the original German in the relevant footnote. For reasons that support my choice of this edition (and hence the first version of the

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to deprive him of the inheritance associated with the father as Agathon continues on his endangered way. Some vicissitudes later we learn in an aside he is restored to enough of his paternal legacy to enable him to live according to his physical and spiritual needs. Wieland deals with this "ideal" financial security with the frank irony which predominates at the end of the book. We are not asked to believe it; we are asked to recognize that it is what Agathon deserves.²⁰ One might add that it is his father's influence, at least indirectly, which delivers Wieland's protagonist from the dangers of terminal cynicism and personality collapse via the intervention of Archytas of Tarent (Taranto) who, we are told, had been an intimate friend of Stratonicus, Agathon's father.

So much for the literal references to the financial aspects of Agathon's family background. They are sparse and need tracking down; there is no question of the kind of foregrounding such material receives in Stifter's work. That such matters are raised at all bears witness to Wieland's untroubled attitude to real things, while, as intimated, the pure idyllic simplicity of the final resolution of Agathon's story is another clue that Wieland is under no illusion concerning the fictionality of his ending.

Before leaving the literal references to the relationship between Agathon and his father's wealth and property, we can point out that, explicitly at least, there is absolutely no confusion in Agathon's mind concerning the definition of material as against spiritual values. For him his father's fortune only has value "as I thought it might enable me to live with greater freedom and in a manner more consistent with the principles I had imbibed" (2:233).²¹ Here and at other points where Agathon talks about this there *are* levels of self-decep-

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novel), see Martini's *Nachwort* (91819), and Swales, 55. The translation, here with some modifications, is from C. M. Wieland, *The History of Agathon*, trans. [John Richardson?], 4 vols. (London: printed for T. Cadell in the Strand, 1773), 1:40. Future references to this translation follow the quotations in the text.

²⁰ Cf. Beddow, 5759; Jacobs, 27374.

²¹ "weil sie mir das Vermögen zu geben schienen, desto freier und vollkommener nach den Grundsätzen, die ich eingesogen hatte, leben zu können" (595).

tion (as indeed is nearly always the case when Agathon speaks or thinks). But there is nothing, I think, which dims the clarity with which the value of wealth is discerned; it can provide *material conditions* under which virtue may be practiced. This is the distinction suppressed in *Der Nachsommer*, where wealth and virtue, as I tried to argue, are intended or tend to blur. There is no implication, as there is with Stifter, that it is somehow *good* in itself to be financially secure.

But there is more to be said in the context of *Agathon*. One needs to mention, for instance, that Stratonikus, Agathon's rediscovered father, is prominently the owner of an impressive art collection:

and so I followed him into the house, which by its dimensions, style of architecture, and magnificence bespoke both the wealth and taste of its owner. The salon into which we first entered was adorned with paintings by the most celebrated masters and several statues and busts by Phidias and Alcamenes. (2:217)²²

The link between the father figure and art could be taken straight out of Stifter and, as we shall see, anticipates *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* too. But in *Agathon* there is no word of the transmission of this art collection; it serves simply, and to my mind a little mysteriously, as a sign of paternal identity. It is against this background that the recognition scene is played out. There is a life-size portrait of Agathon's mother, Musarion, which bears a family likeness to Agathon and facilitates the recognition; it is as though art were the element in which father and son recognize their relationship.

Nevertheless, without the art-father relations in *Der Nachsommer* or *Wilhelm Meister*, this motif would scarcely warrant any attention at all, nor, probably, would it seem mysteriously to point to some as yet unrevealed connection between how we think of fathers and what we see as art. The less so, indeed, because far from being transferred

²² "und so folgte ich ihm in sein Haus, dessen Weitläufigkeit, Bauart und Pracht einen Besitzer von großem Reichtum und vielem Geschmack ankündigte. Der Saal in dem wir zuerst abtraten, war mit Gemälden von den berühmtesten Meistern, und mit einigen Bild-Säulen und Brust-Bildern von Phidias und Alcamenes ausgeziert" (587).

from father to son, this art collection receives no further mention, and when we arrive with Agathon at his geographical and spiritual destination (the equivalent of Drendorf's rural empire), we are confronted with a community that discourages anything other than an indulgent indifference towards art.

The sciences and fine arts were in no particular estimation among them; neither were they held in contempt. This indifference preserved the Tarentines from the errors and extravagances of the Athenians; among whom every man down to the tanner and the shoemaker would be a philosopher and an orator, a man of wit and a connoisseur. (4:163)23

In Wieland, then, there is no trace of one of the major disfiguring elements in Stifter's *Der Nachsommer*, namely the overloading of the concept of art so that it obscures more vital priorities and virtually renders itself meaningless in the process. In *Agathon*, despite the sense that there is some symbolic affinity between fathers and the ownership of (and hence the place and function of) art, we have instead an attempt to visualize a happy state of moderation. And that this view of art relativizes the medium in which it is transmitted, that is, the novel itself, is entirely consistent with the system of priorities the novel valiantly strives to embody (as well as displaying a characteristic irony).

We cannot, then, with respect to *Agathon*, make the same point about the transferal of art being a bogus transferal of values as we did in the context of *Der Nachsommer*. But there is another way in which the figure of Agathon's father prefigures the utopian sketch of Taranto, thus introducing a kind of what we called circularity into *Agathon* as well. The relationship between father and son in this novel is of course much freer than that in *Der Nachsommer*. Agathon is born out of wedlock but as the result of the triumph of natural

23 "Die Wissenschaften und schönen Künste stunden in keiner besonderen Hochachtung bei ihnen, aber sie waren auch nicht verachtet. Diese Gleichgültigkeit bewahrte die Tarentiner vor den Fehlern und Ausschweifungen der Athenienser, bei denen jedermann, bis auf die Gerber und Schuster, ein Philosoph und Redner, ein witziger Kopf und Kenner sein wollte" (833).

morality over a strict adherence to norms of social behavior which are empty of human content. To be more precise: his father has defied his grandfather and continued in his love for Agathon's mother in what is socially (and financially) a mismatch: "but the old man, who did not think the charms and virtues of the young Musarion sufficient to counterbalance her want of fortune, remained inexorable." That "natural morality" that springs from purity of feeling, however, is allowed to override this obstacle: "Stratonicus's love was too violent to suffer him to obey the command he had received, to think no more of his mistress." And even their sexual union, clearly an immoral one in conventional terms, is seen as the natural and fitting consummation of true feeling: "for enjoyment was never known to be the grave of real affection" (2:22829).²⁴

It is this moment of rebellion that gives Agathon his life, and it is from this union that his considerable inheritance will flow. Furthermore: his father *inherits* a farmstead on an island just in time for Musarion to give birth to Agathon there. We discover, in other words, a significant blend of, on the one hand, that which is official, legal, public, and, on the other, of that which is unofficial, illicit, private: an inherited estate upon an island under Athenian jurisdiction, but still an island (that is, a place clearly distinct from the mainland), a mistress and not a wife, and an illegitimate child.

The principle of order, as embodied in the principle of inheritance and related legal dispositions, is balanced, in Wieland's fiction, by an act of rebellion, which is seen as disobedient but morally right: "He would have thought himself the basest of men had he been capable of the least change in his sentiments towards her" 2:228.²⁵

24 "aber der Alte, welcher alle Reizungen und Tugenden der jungen Musarion für keinen genugsamen Ersatz des Reichtums, der ihr fehlte, ansah, blieb unerbittlich . . . Stratonicus liebte zu inbrünstig, um dem Befehl, nicht weiter an seine Geliebte zu denken, gehorsam zu sein . . . denn noch niemals ist der Genuß das Grab der wahren Zärtlichkeit gewesen" (59293).

25 "er würde sich für den Unwürdigsten unter den Menschen gehalten haben, wenn er fähig gewesen wäre, ihr nur das Wenigste von seinen Empfindungen zu entziehen" (59293).

There is a certain parallel to this in *Der Nachsommer*. Risach disobediently plucks a rose, disobediently desires where he should not. But his power to bequeath, to generate legacies, as it were, is based upon a denial of any natural morality such as Wieland optimistically (and not without a hint of characteristic sexual mischief) visualized. Risach suppresses that which it might not be too contentious or vague to call authentic (his feelings for Mathilde) in favor of legality. He would rather pierce *himself* with a rose thorn than enact an illicit desire, and upon what is seen in the text as a virtuous life of self-denial depend his ability to bequeath a great deal of money and the circumstances ensuring horizonless security to a symbolic son.

Agathon's father, morally upright but not a slave to rules, transmits his honesty and openness to his son. Indeed, it appears that in giving considerable details about the circumstances of Agathon's conception and birth, Wieland is attempting to formalize into a workable system that ebb and flow of order and rebellion, constraint and disobedience upon which alone rules of morality, and the spiritual values they are formulated to promote and protect, can realistically be founded.²⁶

And this principle, this recognition of the changeability of men, of the interaction of law and disorder in human life, is the very principle which informs the utopian Taranto.

[The Tarentines] had a reasonable confidence in those to whom they entrusted the care of the state; but they required that the confidence be merited. The spirit of industry, the most innocent and beneficent of any we are acquainted with in this sublunary sphere, which inspired this happy and estimable people, made each individual trouble himself less about his neighbor's affairs at Tarent than is usual in most small cities; provided they did not incur scandal by an illegal action or by any behavior notorious and inconsistent with morality, every man might live as he pleased. (4:16465)²⁷

²⁶ Cf. Jacobs, 58. One is also reminded of Schrader's formulation quoted above (Schrader, 14).

²⁷ "[Die Tarentiner] setzten ein billiges Vertrauen in diejenigen, denen sie die Vormundschaft über den Staat anvertrauten; aber sie forderten auch, daß man

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In similar terms, Plato's attempt at procrustean legislation in Syracuse is seen as wrong. In that sense there *is* a thematic parallel between Agathon's father and his goal; in that sense Agathon *does* end where he had begun, and the link between Stratonicus and Archytas of Taranto is thematically more substantial than the simple friendship of two men.²⁸ The connection between Agathon and his father is an important component in an orchestration of a vision of socially and morally defined progression from generation to generation based upon a fertile mingling of rebellion and constraint, concomitant with the political order and circumstances of Taranto. (It is well known that such an ideal is difficult, if not impossible, to formulate discursively and that this difficulty, or an uneasy awareness of it, underlies the more seriously disturbing moments in Agathon's psychological progress as well as Wieland's own inability to write a fully satisfying or convincing account of Archytas's philosophy in the later versions; I shall have cause to return to this ideal in our conclusion).

Most people agree that *Agathon*, although a fine and pioneering achievement, fails to resolve all the problems it raises. If Wieland's attempt to blend unshakable moral certainty with the capriciousness of the realistically observed psyche fails (for whatever reasons), Goethe's attempt in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* succeeds on its own terms. It offers a very subtle concept of constancy through change, and in this way it is the virtual opposite of *Der Nachsommer*, which only pays lip service to the concept of change and would prefer time

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dieses Vertrauen verdiene. Der Geist der Emsigkeit, der dieses achtungswürdige und glückliche Volk beseelte . . . machte, daß man sich zu Tarent weniger, als in den meisten mittelmäßigen Staaten zu geschehen pflegt, um andere bekümmerte; insofern man sie durch keine gesetzwidrige Tat, oder durch einen beleidigenden Contrast mit ihren Sitten ärgerte, konnte jeder leben, wie er wollte" (834).

²⁸ Cf. Wolfgang Paulsen, *Christoph Martin Wieland: Der Mensch und sein Werk in psychologischen Perspektiven* (Bern and Munich: Francke, 1975), 23943. It is interesting to note that Paulsen draws attention to this circularity in order to help make a case against the novel being read as a Bildungsroman. In our context, of course, such circularity is by no means a disqualification in this regard; quite the contrary in fact.

never to have started at all. Nevertheless, there are some interesting parallels.²⁹

The actual details of Wilhelm Meister's inheritance are easily set out. His paternal inheritance becomes his at the death of his father, who has left his affairs in the best of order (beginning of book 5). The estate plays a further role later, notably with the reappearance of Werner at the beginning of book 8, when Wilhelm's inheritance has to be suitably invested, and there is talk of a deal involving the Society of the Tower, Wilhelm's money, and Werner.

The novel also has the most prominent example of a *symbolic* inheritance in any of the Bildungsromane considered here. I mean, of course, Wilhelm's grandfather's art collection, which having been sold by his father for cash (and thus, one might say in passing, flowing into the actual paternal legacy), turns up again later in the possession of the heirs of its purchaser, the *Oheim*: "so he now found himself among his inheritance, as it were" ("so fand er sich nun auch gleichsam in seinem Erbteile wieder").³⁰

To the resonances of the *as it were* (*gleichsam*) we shall return, but we already begin to see herein the constellation of paternal line, art, and inheritance in a complex relationship with spiritual progress aspects that remind us of the kind of themes, albeit in different concatenations, which we have been discussing in the cases of the other two books. There is furthermore a motif in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* that bears a perhaps surprising resemblance to the one, related to inheritance and the principle of circularity, which we tried to pick out in *Der Nachsommer*. I refer to the motif of "doubling,"

29 For other treatments of inheritance and circularity in *Die Lehrjahre*, see Ronald Duncan Miller, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre: An Interpretation* (Harrogate: Duchy P, 1969), 3488; Thomas P. Saine, "Wilhelm Meister's Homecoming," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 69 (1970): 45069; Roberts, 50; Blessin, 1718.

30 Hamburger Ausgabe 7:520. References are to this edition throughout, page numbers appear in the text or, in the case of quotations, after the original German in the relevant footnote. The translation is by H. M. Waidson, *Wilhelm Meister's Years of Apprenticeship*, 3 vols. (London: John Calder; Dallas: Riverrun Press, 1979), 3:86. Future references to this translation follow the quotations in the text.

that consonance between groups of characters which argues for at least a kind of identity between the Bildungsroman hero's point of departure and his ending.

Although Wilhelm Meister's father seems to be a narrow materialist whose ethos and influence Meister escapes and leaves behind, there is nonetheless evidence that things might not be that straightforward. Meister senior identifies himself completely with the principle of inheritance in its most philistine bourgeois form but betrays a blending of the material and the spiritual which is closer to the wisdom of Goethe's novel than to the plight of Stifter's: "But old Meister wanted nothing so much as to give his son qualities that he lacked himself and to bequeath to his children goods on whose possession he laid the greatest value" (1:43).³¹ This formulation is a cliché; it is part of a satirical portrait, after all, but in the context of the novel it takes on a resonance beyond cliché. The same can be said of the following, also taken from the passage about Meister senior just cited: "Certainly he had a particular inclination towards what was sumptuous and showy but which at the same time should have inner value and permanence."³² This is not only another brushstroke in a satirical portrait but also a self-consciously flat and boring formulation of what nevertheless remains one of the fundamental insights of the book, namely that inner and outer should be harmonious in their reflection of that which is valuable, indeed, that that which is valuable has no other way of manifesting itself if not in both these areas simultaneously. In this case the flat formulation is a travesty of the principle it announces, but neither that, nor the fact that the ideal leads to an empty opulence in the elder Meister's case, devalues the parallel and its implication. The original Meister ethos, as has been noted before, is not one simply to be set aside, gone beyond, and forgotten; it is

31 "Nichts wünschte aber der alte Meister so sehr, als seinem Sohne Eigenschaften zu geben, die ihm selbst fehlten, und seinen Kindern Güter zu hinterlassen, auf deren Besitz er den größten Wert legte" (40).

32 "Zwar empfand er eine besondere Neigung zum Prächtigen, zu dem, was in die Augen fällt, das aber auch zugleich einen innern Wert und eine Dauer haben sollte" (4041).

one to be repeated, but so the book's message goes at a heightened and thus intrinsically more valuable level.

According to the interpretation of the Tower itself, Wilhelm's father sanctions his son's development from beyond the grave, acknowledging in a voice that appears to be, but is not, his own that his son has achieved what he had envisaged for him, but in terms beyond his own limited capacity for imagining: "I am your father's ghost, . . . and I go away comforted, since my wishes for you have been fulfilled more completely than I myself imagined" (2:66).³³ Hence, in a manner of speaking, Wilhelm grows up, not as a rebel and overthrower of the narrow world of his father, but in accordance with his father's wishes.

One can take the analogy with *Der Nachsommer* further, for the "doubling" can be extended to include on one hand Mariane and Wilhelm's father and on the other, Natalie and the Tower. I have tried to point to equivalences between Wilhelm's father and the book's overall wisdom, which might be said with some reservation to be betokened by the Tower. Mariane, for her part, is deemed by the Tower's wisdom to have been a worthy woman for Wilhelm: "And in her attitudes his late mother was not unworthy of you" (3:67).³⁴ We hear in the context of Wilhelm's letter of apprenticeship, and this sign that Mariane was in some sense an appropriate partner for Wilhelm makes her the equivalent of Natalie, who is the appropriate partner for him. But it is in Wilhelm's (second) dream, under the impact of his first contact with Lothario's circle, that a parallel between the two groupings (Mariane and Meister senior; Natalie and the Tower) seems to me to emerge. In this dream Wilhelm sees Mariane walking with his father, thus linking them and rendering them equivalent to the constellation of Natalie and the Tower, for in both instances we are dealing with an alliance between a desirable woman and a source, or regulating authority. In both constellations, that into which Wilhelm is born (his father and a worthy mother of

33 "Ich bin der Geist deines Vaters . . . und scheide getrost, da meine Wünsche für dich mehr als ich selbst begriff, erfüllt sind" (495).

34 "Und der Gesinnung nach war seine abgeschiedene Mutter Ihrer nicht unwert" (497).

his child), and that to which he aspires (a new source of authority, a woman worthy in all respects, to whom in the dream the child is then transferred), there is a complicity between the elements involved, and together they situate and define where and what Wilhelm Meister is and is becoming. That the roles of Natalie and the Society of the Tower function along these lines is self-evident; that his father and Mariane offer an analogy is less so. Particularly interesting is the confusion Wilhelm feels in his dream about leaving the first couple in order to join Natalie; this seems right and wrong to him at the same time, "Instinct and inclination invited him to come to their help, but the Amazon's hand held him back. How gladly he let himself be held!" (3:11).³⁵ In his confusion Wilhelm cannot yet be aware of the consonance which actually exists between the two constellations. They seem mutually exclusive, although the congruence is represented in the dream code by the motif of the child, who is saved from danger by the Amazon. Wilhelm is naturally drawn to both, for they are both limits and contours of his being, but within the natural model which is the book's conceptual reference, there is no contradiction.³⁶

We can, therefore, observe some parallels in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* to the circularity and doubling of its successor, *Der Nachsommer*. There are, however, important differences within the basic structural similarity, and these must be brought out. For Goethe employs these devices to enmesh the principles of circularity and progress, of inheritance and discovery, in a more complex and fluid way than had been or was to be within the Bildungsroman genre again.

The motif of the art collection, to begin with that most prominent motif in our context, does represent Wilhelm Meister's coming into his inheritance in a sense, but when he reencounters it, it has been incorporated into a much larger art collection, magnificently and commensurately housed (book 8, chapter 2). In other words it exceeds and enlarges what he might have expected. It both is, and is

35 "Natur und Neigung forderten ihn auf, jenen zu Hülfe zu kommen, aber die Hand der Amazone hielt ihn zurück. Wie gern ließ er sich halten!" (426).

36 Cf. Kittler, 97100.

more than, his own. Heinrich Drendorf also found his expectations exceeded and enlarged when he opened the papers relating to his marriage settlement, but Goethe's heavily symbolic treatment of this moment is a warning not to read any confusion between material and spiritual issues into the narrative. Wilhelm rediscovers his family heirlooms at a time of more general thematic climax. He literally "comes into" the collection as he ascends a stairway, bearing his son Felix, falling to his knees but refusing to cast off his symbolic burden. What is more, he is just about to encounter Natalie in her proper place (the uncle's house) for the first time, thus gaining perhaps his first proper glimpse of his own proper place in a context that had defined him without his knowledge until then.

In other words, as R. D. Miller has well argued, inheritance functions here as a way of expressing circularity and progress simultaneously. "Coming into his own" means much more than being heir to his father and grandfather, but it includes that meaning. The reference to Saul, son of Kis, to which such prominence is given,³⁷ is very apt, because Saul went out to search for his father's possessions which had gone astray, but he came into a spiritual inheritance of a greater Father instead: "Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?"³⁸ Saul inherits true spiritual meaning in its practical application, that is, he inherits a duty (to lead the Jews against the Philistines). The search for possessions resolves itself into the discovery of a holy duty. Wilhelm Meister, born to inherit his father's estates, property, and good intentions, becomes instead heir to a form of practical activity which is as much an expression of Goethe's profoundest beliefs (and most pious longings), as Saul's was of those of the Old Testament.

In this parallel with the Bible I think one can discern one of the constituent ambiguities upon which Goethe's book rests. It seems to me that the evocation of Saul, the son of Kis, both affirms the patriarchal authority to which it alludes, and transvalues and secularizes it,

³⁷ Both in Friedrich's words at the end of the novel and in Goethe's well-known comment to Eckermann of 18 January 1825 (Hamburger Ausgabe 7:619).

³⁸ 1 Samuel 10.1.

so that the reference to the Old Testament at once guarantees the presence of spiritual rather than just material value (as well as a sense of powerful moral conservatism), but distances itself from the actual content of that message by understanding itself as different, "natural," secular, humanist. That a related contradiction should stand out so much more clearly in *Der Nachsommer* is the result of the absence in that work of the very irony to which I earlier referred as characteristic of bourgeois literary sensibility and which enables Goethe to bring together two such apparently incompatible qualities within an ironic appeal to constituent ambiguities.

To return to the complexity with which Goethe enmeshes the principles of circularity and progression: they are co-harnessed in the equivalence which I mentioned above between Wilhelm's original background and the circles of the Society of the Tower into which he moves. The two sets of characters are vastly different, worlds apart, but revealed as intimately linked to those who can read the dream symbols. Indeed, the game of similarity and variation is played by Goethe with the very idea of the family itself. Wilhelm finds a substitute for paternal guidance in the assorted wise men of the Society of the Tower and a spiritual bride in Natalie, but the overall model of community that is projected is carefully distinguished from any conventional model of the family. One can illustrate this by drawing attention to the figure of the uncle (*Oheim*), from whom so much of the inspiration of the Society of the Tower comes, and for that matter, so much of its wealth. We learn details of his background in book 6, "The Confessions of a Beautiful Soul." It is as though his background were being distinguished from any simple family connections, for the uncle is the *step-brother* of the "beautiful soul's" (*schöne Seele*) father, no longer a family man (having lost his wife and son in the dim past) and a delightfully appropriate detail has inherited his great fortune from his mother. On the other hand he enjoys and expects the kind of authority one would sooner associate with the paternal role, for he insists upon the dominance of his own will; he has left the court at which he had served because things there had not gone according to his taste, and the loss of his own family has only rendered him more rigid. Similarly, the Society of the Tower, the equivalent in the economy of the book to Risach in *Der Nachsommer*,

is run by a group of men devoted to the application of enlightened methods of education (and thus fulfilling the function of the fathers in Stifter), but it is based at the same time upon principles of community at fundamental variance with the current form of social organization, and as we shall see, it concerns itself with, and wishes to see fundamental changes in, the economic system as they find it (including the laws pertaining to the transmission of estates and property).³⁹

There are two further aspects of Wilhelm Meister's symbolically modified family to which I wish to refer. These are his relationship with Felix and that with Natalie. In both cases the enmeshment we are talking about is realized with the greatest subtlety, which contributes to the enormously differentiated model of *Bildung* with which we are familiar from so many discussions of Goethe's novel. But in neither case, as I shall argue, can the interaction of circularity and progress finally be articulated except in the irony of constant relativization or the pathos of constantly deferred hope. Behind the complex and fascinating projection for human development, so complete in its own terms, the unsolved problems of Wieland and the eery arrestation of Stifter, in the wider context of the Bildungsroman, are unmistakable.

To take Felix first. It is a remarkable fact that neither Agathon, nor Heinrich Drendorf, nor Heinrich Lee achieves fatherhood. (Apart from Gotthelf's Uli, how many Bildungsroman heroes do?) And yet Wilhelm Meister's child is a figure of the very greatest thematic implications. It is in the figure of Felix that the continuity between Wilhelm Meister's past and his present state is confirmed. In recognizing and accepting the fruit of his union with Mariane, Wilhelm is seeing that his past has been anything but meaningless; he rediscovers an unbroken thread that connects his past with his present and his future. Felix also carries an implication which would accord with what we have just said about variations on the theme of the family, for

³⁹ There is a wealth of significance in the circumstance that Drendorf is *becoming* what Risach is, but the implications of this thematic variation are quite different from those in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*.

through him Wilhelm becomes a father, but a father outside matrimony (the circumstances surrounding Agathon's birth are similar).

What Felix means to Meister himself and to the whole idea of *Bildung* is expressed in one of the most famous passages of the book, and one that is thematically central. Here, at the beginning of book 8, Wilhelm is vouchsafed the insight that personal progress is a moment within a larger circularity, within an eternal recurrence of receiving and giving life. Here also, indeed explicitly, Wilhelm recognizes the principle of inheritance and the true importance of what he himself has just inherited: "Wilhelm never let Felix out of his sight and derived great cheer for the boy's sake from the possessions which awaited him" (3:72).⁴⁰ What in the child is pure desire becomes in the father the awareness of duty.

The child's craving for the cherries and berries that were about to ripen reminded him of his own childhood and of a father's multifarious duties to prepare, obtain, and retain the pleasures of life for his family. (3:72)⁴¹

But although the feeling of being a father brings with it "all the virtues of a citizen [eines Bürgers]," it does not confine Wilhelm to the concomitant limitations, for, to explain further, immediately following upon this awakening of paternal responsibility is a disavowal of a middle-class morality of *Bildung* in favor of a superior alternative sanctioned by the Goethean concept of nature (which, as is well known, legislates for the coexistence and cooperation of circularity and progression under a variety of names, of which polarity and intensification or heightening are the best known). Wilhelm understands the circularity, through generation, of our lives (together with the practical significance of the transmission of property) at the same

40 "Wilhelm ließ seinen Felix nicht von der Seite und freute sich um des Knaben willen recht lebhaft des Besitzes, dem man entgegensah" (501).

41 "Die Lüsterheit des Kindes nach den Kirschen und Beeren, die bald reif werden sollten, erinnerten ihn an die Zeit seiner Jugend und an die vielfache Pflicht des Vaters, den Seinigen den Genuß vorzubereiten, zu verschaffen und zu erhalten" (5012).

moment as he grasps the secret of *Bildung* ("Woe to any kind of education which destroys the most effective means of true development").⁴² The proximity of the two insights suggests how intimately the theme of inheritance is related to the more celebrated one of *Bildung*.

Yet here again, the authority for the exact terms of their interaction is obscured, for it is deferred to the realm of nature (" . . . since nature in her charming way molds us into everything that we ought to be . . . "),⁴³ where social and traditional forms and categories become indistinguishable from natural ones. This nature is understood, at least by Wilhelm, as the source and touchstone of all values and significance, but it may not be known absolutely, by virtue of its priority over the knowing consciousness of individuals.

It is tempting to suggest that the recourse to nature here is related to the twin devices of pathos and irony to which I referred at the outset. The pathos of Wilhelm's appeal to nature at this crucial moment ("Oh, how unnecessarily strict morality is . . . since nature in her charming way molds us into everything that we ought to be . . . "), is stylistically wedded to that narrative irony which resides in the reader's being unable to know whether he is to take the direct speech as it stands or as ironically inflected by the narrator. Together they invoke that realm of nature in which lies hidden the key to the secret of *Bildung*. But the very paradox and indeterminacy of the relationship between these two devices (irony and pathos would seem to be mutually exclusive) prevent the reader from entering to seek it.

This justly famous passage, although it ends Wilhelm's years of apprenticeship in a way ("In this sense his years of apprenticeship were at an end"),⁴⁴ does not, however, end the book, and Wilhelm's whole hard-won sense of the overall context of things is to be fundamentally threatened by his feelings for and about Natalie.

42 "Wehe jeder Art von Bildung, welche die wirksamsten Mittel wahrer Bildung zerstört . . ." (502).

43 "da die Natur uns auf ihre liebliche Weise zu allern bildet . . ." (502).

44 "In diesem Sinne waren seine Lehrjahre geendigt" (502).

Natalie and the theme of inheritance are linked by her symbolic affinity with the painting of the sick king's son Wilhelm's favorite painting among his grandfather's collection. It is well established that Natalie is the fulfillment of the longing Wilhelm associated with that picture as a child.⁴⁵ Natalie, it is commonly accepted, is the culmination of Wilhelm's progress, his "completion," if Goethe was willing or able to think in such static terms.

But what does this painting of the sick prince, or perhaps better, the sick king's son, actually represent? To the young Wilhelm, in conversation with the Society of the Tower's first emissary, it represents unfulfilled longing; it represents, that is, what he projects into it. What he does not explain at this point is that what the sick prince yearns for is in the possession of the king, his father, and indeed as the story tells, is in his gift. In view of this, the picture represents a son sick through the lack of what belongs to his father, while it also represents a part of Wilhelm's symbolic inheritance, for it belonged to his grandfather. In these complicated ways the figure of Natalie is associated with Wilhelm's paternal inheritance. The complexity is increased because Wilhelm rediscovers his favorite painting not only just before he encounters the real Natalie in her true place and identity but also, by an inversion of male and female precedent to which we shall return, in her possession. Furthermore, while he had once simply perceived the content of the picture, and a pretty subjectivized version at that, the new owners will help him to understand the form and thus to grasp the context of the image he had previously consumed with the "craving" of his own child for ripe fruit. As Felix, by repeating his father's youth, has done, they will situate Wilhelm's own desire in a larger context, without devaluing it. And in learning all this, Wilhelm will become one of the new owners of what, in an older form of ownership, had already once been his.⁴⁶

45 See, for instance, Christoph E. Schweitzer, "Wilhelm Meister und das Bild vom kranken Königssohn," *PMLA* 72 (1957): 41932; Saine, 46668; Scharfschwerdt, 19.

46 For the psychoanalytical implications of the figure of Natalie, see the studies of Kittler and Roberts.

Natalie's namesake in *Der Nachsommer* was to be Heinrich Drendorf's key to all the possessions cataloged in the book. Can something similar be said of Natalie and Wilhelm? To answer this question we must quote the following passage, which deals with that fresh loss of equilibrium suffered by Wilhelm of which we spoke above. Its cause is his feeling that he will never possess Natalie.

The presence of the old, familiar art works both attracted and repulsed him. He could neither take up what surrounded him nor leave it alone, everything reminded him of everything else; he surveyed the whole cycle of his life, only unfortunately it lay broken before him and seemed as if it would not close for all time. These works of art, which his father had sold, appeared to him to be a symbol, indicating that he was to be in part excluded from a peaceful and total possession of what is desirable in the world, and in part deprived of this through his own fault or the fault of others. . . . It was in vain that he recalled to his mind the happy position in which after all he found himself. "So everything is worthless," he exclaimed, "if man is lacking in the one thing he prizes above all else." (3:127)⁴⁷

This passage is noteworthy in several ways. For instance, it suggests how the rediscovered works of art inspire two apparently conflicting feelings in him ("both attracted and repulsed him"). These are like the apparently contradictory sensations that he had experienced in his dream and which I discussed above. The art collection represents both regression and progression, and here Wilhelm is unable to situate himself in the terms necessary to resolve this seeming contra-

47 "Die Gegenwart der alten bekannten Kunstwerke zog ihn an und stieß ihn ab. Er konnte nichts, was ihn umgab, weder ergreifen noch lassen, alles erinnerte ihn an alles; er übersah den ganzen Ring seines Lebens, nur lag er leider zerbrochen vor ihm und schien sich auf ewig nicht schließen zu wollen. Diese Kunstwerke, die sein Vater verkauft hatte, schienen ihm ein Symbol, daß auch er von einem ruhigen und gründlichen Besitz des Wünschenswerten in der Welt teils ausgeschlossen, teils desselben durch eigene oder fremde Schuld beraubt werden sollte. . . . Vergebens rief er sich den glücklichen Zustand, in dem er sich doch eigentlich befand, vors Gedächtnis. 'So ist denn alles nichts,' rief er aus, 'wenn das eine fehlt, das dem Menschen alles übrige Wert ist!'" (57071)

diction into a higher or deeper synthesis. (Their identity is to be understood as the principle which Wilhelm embodies but always fails to grasp.) The passage is further remarkable in that without Natalie in her proper place (paired with Wilhelm), nothing makes sense (the works of art are divested of their significance; an entirely subjective and arbitrary symbolic function is attributed to them) and Wilhelm's personality suffers a kind of dislocation, the hypochondria of the sick prince. A particularly striking symptom of this state is that "everything reminded him of everything else," which implies that the normal processes of the brain which order experience into sense have been suspended, leaving Wilhelm in a self-referential, nontranscendable trap akin to dreams and madness. When Natalie is not in her proper place (as Wilhelm concludes this passage by reflecting), all is vain; sense crumbles into a kaleidoscope of associations without organizing principle.

Perhaps the principle that crumbles without Natalie is suggested in the phrase "peaceful and total possession of what is desirable in the world." It is a state of unthreatened possession, the kind of state confirmed and perpetuated by the rules of inheritance and transfer of wealth and property. Without this kind of order there appears to be no access to something definable only as "what is desirable." And it would appear that "what is desirable" is closely associated with Natalie, as if she were the content and the quality of "assured possession," the form. What is clear is that without Natalie in her proper place the functioning of inheritance has no meaning at all. Natalie and the process of inheritance are equals and mutually validating. And the crucial difference between this novel and Stifter's can be made clearer by stressing that it is not Wilhelm, nor his father, nor any father substitute (not even the combined wiles of the Society of the Tower), which "places" Natalie, for in some mysterious way she "places" by the simple fact of being in place herself. Wilhelm, as vaguely and unconsciously as ever, feels this as he tries to come to terms with his discovery of Natalie in her true identity (and outside the subjective world of his own imagination).

He occupied himself by comparing the picture of the Amazon with that of his new, present friend. They would not as yet completely

converge; he had, as it were, created the former picture for himself, while the latter almost wished to remodel him (2:83).⁴⁸

In this case there is none of the uncertainty we experienced in the context of *Der Nachsommer*, as to whether Natalie was just another item in a list of items, or an autonomous being; Natalie in the *Lehrjahre* is distinctly signaled as being intimately complicit with the very coherence of the order of significance in which she too finds her own place and meaning.

The ebb and flow of which we spoke above in the context of Wieland is here integrated as the very principle of Goethe's fiction and his model of personal development, which Jacobs compares with the dialectical model of Hegel.⁴⁹ As with Saul the son of Kis, here one of the underlying and constituent ambiguities of the work is being touched upon. We are perched precariously between circularity and progress. Natalie embodies with a sustained and brilliant differentiation the possibility of a genuine escape from an existential (and indeed, as I shall argue below, an epistemological) model based on a stern and circular application of the rules of inheritance along the male line. Put another way, she promises escape from the undesirable aspects of both bourgeoisie and nobility, that is to say from a self-perpetuating patrilinearity common to both, which allows for no growth or forward development. And yet the strong continuity of those systems, their sure coherence, will be retained. As his social superior, Natalie frees Wilhelm by marrying him, for she is signally not a possession among others distributed and ordered by the laws of inheritance.

And yet, as will perhaps have become clear, the true mode of interaction between Natalie and the principle of inheritance remains obscured in the kind of mutually validating and mutually relativizing semantic relationship which we noted above in the context of nature

⁴⁸ "Er beschäftigte sich, das Bild der Amazone mit dem Bild seiner neuen gegenwärtigen Freundin zu vergleichen. Sie wollten noch nicht zusammenfließen; jenes hatte er sich gleichsam geschaffen, und dieses schien fast *ihn* umschaffen zu wollen" (516).

⁴⁹ Jacobs, 275.

as invoked by irony and pathos. Inheritance is meaningless without Natalie, but where or what is Natalie without the ordering principle of inheritance?

This leads us to a further question about the terms of Goethe's novel. Of course it does not matter that Natalie is not a convincing fictional character, as many critics, especially Anglo-Saxon ones, have complained. But, if we shift our perspective for a moment, we remember that Natalie, notwithstanding all the liberating qualities with which she is imbued as an aesthetic counter, is just another symbol devised by an author, and her thematic role is to serve as the key element in the self-possession of a male protagonist. Within the economy of the novel her role is perhaps not as different from that of her namesake in *Der Nachsommer* as might at first have appeared.

There is nonetheless one way in which Goethe's novel does distinguish itself from *Agathon* and *Der Nachsommer* quite clearly. In the question of values, spiritual and commercial, with which we concluded our discussion of the other two novels, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* exhibits a lucid and self-aware thematic resolution. This takes place in precisely the terms we have been discussing, circularity and progress, fruitfully combined.

This ground has been covered before, so we may make do with brief indications.⁵⁰ The central point is that the commercialism rejected by Wilhelm at the outset is revealed at the end of the novel to have its role to play. The point is made by the return of the slightly shop-worn Werner to do business with the Society of the Tower.⁵¹ To Wilhelm's surprisetypicallythe ethos of his childhood (not to mention his actual paternal legacy) returns to take up its place in the higher sphere of the Society of the Tower's activities; commercial canniness and expertise are perfectly compatible, in theory, with the pursuit of "what is desirable."

Nor is Goethe blind to the fact that spiritual values and economic circumstances can never be considered in complete isolation from one another. This surely is the implication of Lothario's economic theories

⁵⁰ See, for instance, Miller, 7883; Schrader, 1920.

⁵¹ For an informative account of Werner's business operations, see Blessin, 21; and Miller, 8283.

and intentions.⁵² Our interest is especially aroused by his outline for the dissolution of feudal laws and practices regarding land ownership, for here Lothario is linking directly the laws of inheritance with the book's ideal projection of free activity. Rigid and empty legal dispositions are to be loosened and varied in order to promote a greater social and economic freedom. In this work and this can hardly be said for the other two we have discussed the material conditions are visualized that will facilitate the existence of the new spiritual creed.

It is fitting that this discussion of Goethe's seminal novel should end on a note of synthesis, for as a projection of hope and a formulation of possibility or potential, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* has no equal among the Bildungsromane known to me. This analysis has, however, forcibly argued how immensely precarious Goethe's synthesis is.⁵³ I began by arguing that Stifter's Bildungsroman of half a century later displayed distorted values, then tentatively noted affinities in Goethe's novel with some of the unresolved difficulties reflected in Wieland and Stifter, despite the brilliance of Goethe's solutions. But if I am right in my belief that the theme of inheritance is a vital component of the Bildungsroman, indeed one which plays an indispensable part in its very coherence, in its very ability to signify at all, then one might argue that Goethe's balance was, historically, even more precarious than previously imagined. For during the period Goethe was publishing his first Meister novel, Friedrich Hölderlin was writing the novel in the context of which Dilthey, in *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung*, offered his famous definition of the genre. And Hölderlin's novel is remarkable for the fact that, alone among the heroes of such works, Hyperion is the only one to be disinherited. Whether *Hyperion* can sensibly be called a Bildungsroman has been

⁵² Hamburger Ausgabe 7:5078. For an account of Lothario's proposals, see Miller, 502. A more technical background can be found in Borchmeyer's chapter "Lehnrecht und Privateigentum (Goethe und Adam Müller)," in *Höfische Gesellschaft und Französische Revolution*, 17173.

⁵³ Cf. Georg Lukács, *Die Theorie des Romans* (Berlin: Paul Cassirer, 1920), 14056, *Goethe und seine Zeit* (Bern: Francke, 1947), 44. See also Jacobs, 27178; Köhn, 23; Roberts, 20; Scharfschwerdt, 2224.

and remains a matter for debate,⁵⁴ but whatever the verdict, that the account of a young man's development should be marked by so deep and hopeless a discontinuity at the same time as Goethe's hero appeared to be enjoying the profoundest continuity and the profoundest renewal, underlines once again, this time from the point of view of the inheritance theme, how shaky the foundations of the genre really are.⁵⁵

The early twentieth century was the age of the "disinherited mind," of Rilke's "disinherited ones" (*Enterbte*) and a generation of rabid expressionist father-haters. Thomas Mann and even Günter Grass have produced variations on the Bildungsroman which would need to be treated in a different context. It is, however, in Kafka that I see a (probably provisional) conclusion to the story I have attempted to tell in the foregoing.

The persistent link between father figures and art to which I drew attention in three Bildungsromane suggests that the genre perceives such a link and consequently understands itself, insofar as it considers itself "art," in terms of the configuration. In other words, the genre has a tendency to see itself as an authoritative embodiment of wisdom, spoken from a place of government and sovereignty; to see itself, that is, as the place where wisdom is manifest and as a medium through which wisdom may be transmitted under the validating notion that it is art.⁵⁶ To this configuration we can add the motif of inheritance and the related return of father figures, which I discerned as having an important ordering function in the novels I discussed. The form of order, I should therefore like to argue, which is administered from this place of authority is related to that circularity with which this analysis has been so extensively concerned. It

54 See Jacobs, 12023. Gerhart Mayer offers a more differentiated genre designation in "Hölderlins *Hyperionein* frühromantischer Bildungsroman," *Hölderlin Jahrbuch* 19/20 (1975/77): 244/57.

55 For the radical nature of Hölderlin in relation to modern European culture, see Michel Foucault, "Le 'non' du père," *Critique* 18 (1962): 195/209.

56 On the subject of the status of art within Weimar Classicism, see Christa Bürger, *Der Ursprung der Institution Kunst: Literatursoziologische Untersuchungen zum klassischen Goethe* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977).

supplies the regulating and controlling principle against which the more poetic theme of *Bildung* may be articulated without the risk of a riot of imagination or of the radical disorder of desire unfulfilled or uncontained (so powerfully intimated in *Hyperion*).

Agathon and especially *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* exist within this tension between freedom and control, poetry and prose. But they do not resolve it; they simply command that literary idiom, that use of irony and pathos which historically made it habitable for a while. *Agathon* proved unfinishable, and I have shown how *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* defers resolution at crucial points and how precarious its synthesis proved to be. This very ability to reside within an ultimately unresolvable tension is, at the same time, one of the strengths of *Agathon* and the *Lehrjahre*, for although they do attempt to erect a system of order in which development may be orchestrated (a system to which no explicit finishing touches are ever put but which nevertheless must be sound for the thesis of development, *Bildung*, to cohere), the devices of irony and pathos permit uncertainty and self awareness of limitation to be effective within the aesthetic construct. The system is thus relativized, situated within a larger context. Literature has the stylistic resources to allow itself to be penetrated by life.

As is typical for the literature they represent these two novels are based on a paradox. It is a paradox which must confront all those in authority with a desire to educate; the problem of needing to impart the wisdom of disobedience, to instill or impose the desire for autonomy and for freedom from such regulation.

Der Nachsommer, the linchpin of our argument, is without the capacity, desire, or courage to face and ride out this kind of uncertainty. This element of disobedience is missing in it. I remarked at the outset how it was without irony and how it made a wholly unusual use of pathos, thus revealing a single and vulnerable system of meaning. In Stifter's novel the model of *Bildung* appears with extraordinary explicitness and assumes under these conditions the form of a monolith without dynamism, an approximation to stasis.⁵⁷ Wieland, in his model, distrusted art; Goethe's Natalie expresses strong reserva-

⁵⁷ Cf. "Adalbert Stifter: 'Erhebung' without Motion," in Stern, *Idylls and Realities*, 97122, especially 111.

tions about it too (526, 3:91), while the male characters concern themselves with its proper appreciation and conservation; *Der Nachsommer*, however, is all art and no life. It is also *all* inheritance, *all* legality, it is all *control*. And it is here, when it is pushed to the extreme to which Stifter pushes it, that we can perceive most clearly how the notion of art implied in the genre of the Bildungsroman is characterized by an ordering through the control and regulation worked by its representations. It promotes its authority in the very activity of representation.

We might consider here for a moment the very concept of a Bildungsroman. Is it not a kind of novel that interprets the world in terms of a central, meaning-giving, male figure, who, as I have tried to show, tends to inherit materially or spiritually or ideally both from his father, thus in a sense repeating his father? Everything in such a novel (as Schiller so clearly saw) takes its meaning from its place relative to this hero, who is not a character, but an epistemological device through which the multifariousness of reality gains definition, meaning, and value. Thus the genre as a whole, in the way it articulates reality, in the kind of novel it is, can be said to rest ultimately upon an alliance between a notion of itself as art which is understood as a validating authority, the dominance of the figure of the father, and the law of inheritance.

The alliance experienced only a brief period of efflorescence.⁵⁸ It can be no accident that the two great nineteenth-century Bildungsromane, *Der Nachsommer* and *Der grüne Heinrich*, both begin with the words *Mein Vater*, and then go on to deal with stories of male failure. That this is so in the case of *Der grüne Heinrich* is evident enough to require no further gloss here, although it is worth making the point that in this "realist" Bildungsroman a legacy is squandered in a misguided pursuit of an artistic vocation; in other words, the principle of inheritance and the concept of art are clearly distinguished

⁵⁸ Franco Moretti has recently supplied a brilliant cultural-historical frame of reference for the classical Bildungsroman (by which he means principally *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* and *Pride and Prejudice*) as a transitional phenomenon in his *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture* (London: Verso, 1988).

from one another. Keller's novel, not unlike *Agathon* in this respect, is content to announce itself (somewhat paradoxically) as prose, not poetry; if as art, then with a lower case a.

Not so in the case of *Der Nachsommer*. Here inheritance and art are identified more closely than elsewhere in the genre. Indeed, I should wish to assert that art, in a sense, actually replaces fatherhood as the key to perpetuating the forms of a patrilinear society and culture. I can explain what I mean by returning briefly to the details of Stifter's story. Risach had the makings of a more typical Bildungsroman hero, for he had been capable of disobediently plucking a rose to offer to his love (*Der Nachsommer*, 747). But he throws in his lot with parental law, "for the parents' will is the children's law,"⁵⁹ and betrays the demands made upon him by a woman Mathilde who wishes to be recognized as such (762). He plunges the rose thorn into his own flesh (765); she experiences the disorientation Wilhelm Meister had felt when Natalie had appeared beyond his grasp: "I have lost my point of reference," she says, "and no longer understand the way things are."⁶⁰ Her truest self and womanhood are disregarded in favor of legality and a craven male adherence to it. Here again, as with Wilhelm Meister, at a time when sexual urgency is not directed within available channels, the very coherence of sanity is threatened. Mathilde threatens briefly (but of course in a very significant place in the novel) to refuse to take up her "proper place," and thus to escape the kind of organization and meaning the Bildungsroman in general loves to accord its female characters.

The novel as a whole appears to side with Risach and justify his course of action, although here is the single, monumental element of pathos in the book one can never be sure. He never attempts to make good his central, humiliating failure; instead, he endlessly repeats the symbol of that failure the rose. And his rose growing is representative of his function in later life as the controller, the owner, the organizer par excellence. If his "real" marriage is discounted, the story marks him as metaphorically impotent. Yet he has a son in Heinrich Drendorf, a son to whom he can pass on that

59 "denn der Wille der Eltern ist das Gesetz der Kinder" (762).

60 "Ich habe den Vergleichspunkt verloren, und weiß nicht, wie alles ist" (765).

legal and physical control without risking the exposure to women that biological fatherhood entails. In other words, he can bypass women on his route to fatherhood, while remaining master of the rules which ensure male domination by making women possessions.⁶¹

Heinrich, between paragraphs, celebrates his wedding night (830), and if the book permitted such an extrapolation, he may well proceed to fatherhood in due course. But he does not need to, for the book itself is his offspring: it represents him; he is its justification, its progenitor. The book's meaning is Heinrich Drendorf and the wish fulfillment he embodies; it is his *Bildung* as he was and became himself. Moreover, of course, the book is an art object, a time capsule; like art, it is unchallengeable. Stifter, the existential curator, has consigned what needs to be perpetuated to art; for in life . . . well, in life its days are indeed numbered.

What I began, disingenuously, by calling a thematic matter is of course also a matter of form. It is Stifter's style (like Risach's lifestyle) that shores up his content, (the riskless development) of Drendorf; Stifter's style signs, seals, and delivers it, bequeaths it to an heir who, he sadly hopes, will wait on the other side of the confusion of values and meanings, will survive the frightening vulnerability of a system which the novel strives to maintain in a pure form. But "the invisible worm that flies in the night, in the howling storm" has already found the rose; the enemy is within the sealed container values are tainted by a materialism so ingrained as to appear natural, feelings are tainted by sexual distortions which presumably arise from the excessive demands placed on men to maintain a system of values and meaning on the strength of nothing but their increasingly dubious authority.

It is style, it is form which links Stifter to Kafka, to return to the connection with which I shall conclude.⁶² It is characteristic of

61 This special quality of Risach is perhaps the key to the differences between him and the elder Drendorf, to which reference was made above (see notes 13 and 39).

62 For some aspects of the affinity between Stifter and Kafka, see the essay in J. P. Stern's *Idylls and Realities* already referred to, as well as the more extended treatment in *Re-interpretations* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, reissued 1981), 239-300. See too Christian Gooden, "Two Quests for Surety: A Comparative

(footnote continued on next page)

both writers to stylize and estrange reality, to display a fascination with objects beyond any simple realism, or, as Stifter does with his roses, to repeat and return to a symbol of failure. Common to both too is the narrative unself-consciousness which denies any perspective on the events of the fictions except that of the characters themselves at the time of the events. This is a very strange thing in the supposedly first-person *Nachsommer*, in which Drendorf exists as a kind of amputated memory, with no perspective from the implied narrative present.⁶³ In Stifter this device seems to be one of the ways to shore up a fiction against anything outside it: the story is finished, nothing can change it, it is safe. In Kafka the effect of the device is different.⁶⁴ We are confronted instead with the claustrophobic sense of imprisonment which is the logical other side to Stifter's attempts to close all the doors and bar all the windows.

Kafka, after all, was also familiar with the ambiguity of the rose as a metaphor, as witness "Ein Landarzt." But in Kafka the wound is open, an unintelligible display. With him, the failure of the male, his inability to inherit and replace his father, has taken the place of the continuity so basic to the Bildungsroman. The father no longer fills the role he had before. On the contrary, he is the source of the disruption, the unavailability of all meaning or legality (he makes laws his son cannot live up to).⁶⁵ With Kafka, *Bildung* is impossible,

(footnote continued from previous page)

Interpretation of Stifter's *Abdias* and Kafka's *Der Bau*," *Journal of European Studies* 5 (1975): 34161; Ursula Naumann, *Adalbert Stifter* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1979), 25.

63 See Gerhart von Graevenitz, "Die Ich-Form in *Der Nachsommer*" in *Die Setzung des Subjekts: Untersuchungen zur Romantheorie* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1973), 6873, in which this point is made (68). Victor Lange has also commented upon the technical oddness of Heinrich Drendorf ("Stifter: *Der Nachsommer*," in *Der deutsche Roman: Vom Barock bis zur Gegenwart. Struktur und Geschichte*, ed. Benno von Wiese, 2 vols. (Düsseldorf: August Bagel, 1963), 2:3475, especially 49.

64 Friedrich Beissner points this out in *Der Erzähler Franz Kafka* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1952), 32. Beissner also notes the affinity of Kafka's style in this respect to that of Stifter in *Der Nachsommer* (34).

65 See "Brief an den Vater" in Franz Kafka, *Hochzeitsvorbereitungen auf dem Lande und andere Prosa aus dem Nachlaß*, vol. 6 of *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Max Brod,

(footnote continued on next page)

although *Amerika* offers a fascinating glimpse into what might replace the aspiration to succeed a lost father.⁶⁶ And the displacement of the father is exactly coincident with the demise of narrative art as a means of control or transcendence. It is in the presence of a father who is refusing to fill his allotted role, refusing to transfer his own identity to his son, that we can read this breathtaking revocation of the style of Stifter's writing, and with it, an epitaph for the whole genre:

George shrank into a corner, as far away from his father as possible. A long time ago he had firmly made up his mind to watch closely every least movement so that he should not be surprised by any indirect attack, a pounce from behind or above. At this moment he recalled this long-forgotten resolve and forgot it again like a man drawing a short thread through the eye of a needle.⁶⁷

(footnote continued from previous page)

173 (Frankfurt am Main and New York: Schocken, 1953).

66 On Kafka and the Bildungsroman genre, see Fritz Martini, "Wandlungen und Formen des gegenwärtigen Romans," *Der Deutschunterricht* 3, no. 3 (1951): 13; Marion Sonnenfeld, "Die Fragmente *Amerika* und *Der Prozeß* als Bildungsromane," *German Quarterly* 35 (1962): 3446; Hitomi Yoshida, "Der Verfall des Bildungsromans in Kafkas *Amerika*," *Doitsu Bungaku* 57 (1976): 6070 (Japanese with German summary).

67 "Georg stand in einem Winkel, möglichst weit vom Vater. Vor einer langen Weile hatte er sich fest entschlossen, alles vollkommen genau zu betrachten, damit er nicht irgendwie auf Umwegen, von hinten her, von oben herab überrascht werden könne. Jetzt erinnerte er sich wieder an den längst vergessenen Entschluß und vergaß ihn, wie man einen kurzen Faden durch ein Nadelöhr zieht." Franz Kafka, "Das Urteil" in *Erzählungen*, vol. 4 of *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Max Brod, 51 (Frankfurt am Main and New York: Schocken, 1946). The translation is from Franz Kafka, *In the Penal Settlement: Tales and Short Prose Works*, trans. Ernst Kaiser and Eithne Wilkins (London: Secker & Warburg, 1949), 56.

Eichendorff's *Ahnung und Gegenwart* as a Novel of Religious Development

Gerhart Hoffmeister

Eichendorff's novel *Ahnung und Gegenwart* (literally, *Premonition and Present Time*) appeared in 1815, marking the end of the high point of Romanticism in Germany. Yet in it can still be traced the early Romantic call of Friedrich and August Schlegel for the fusion of heterogeneous elements. In this work one finds confession and self-realization, Bildungsroman, social criticism, and the work of providence (*Heilsgeschichte*) all blended into a uniquely Romantic creation. Experiences from early life and encounters with literature as well as circumstances of poetic and historical nature form the background of the novel.

Joseph von Eichendorff was born 10 March 1788 at the Upper Silesian manor of Lubowitz. He studied at Breslau and then attended the universities of Halle and Heidelberg from 1805 to 1808. In Heidelberg Eichendorff made the acquaintance of Count Heinrich von Loeben (1786-1825), whose lyricism he strove to emulate in his earliest poems. In May 1808 he traveled down the Danube with his brother Wilhelm to Vienna, and in the next year in Berlin he became acquainted with Achim von Arnim and Clemens Brentano, and attended lectures of the famous Romantic philosopher Fichte (1762-1814). It was in this eventful period that the plan of his first novel took shape; Eichendorff finished the manuscript in Vienna in October 1812, after Dorothea Schlegel (1763-1839) had suggested revisions as well as the title. In the winter of 1812-13, Eichendorff looked

about unsuccessfully to find a publisher interested in the book and turned finally to Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué (1777-1843) with the request that he edit the work or find a publisher for it. Fouqué hesitated at first but relented and succeeded in placing the manuscript with the house of Johann Leonhard Schrag in Nuremberg. The volume appeared with a preface by Fouqué.

The phase that had produced *Ahnung und Gegenwart* came to an end with Eichendorff's employment as a trainee in the Prussian government in Breslau in 1816. He had finally found peace and tranquility in the certainty of homeland, marriage, profession, and faith; in addition he had, in contrast to Loeben and under the influence of Arnim's and Brentano's famous poetry collection *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (The Boy's Magic Horn [1806-08]), made a decision to write popular verse.

So much of Eichendorff's early life went into *Ahnung und Gegenwart* that the book can be seen, first of all, as a *roman à clef*. There is the chief protagonist, Count Friedrich, Eichendorff's idealized self portrait, with the account of his youth (chapter 5) and trip down the Danube; Herr von A. seems to reflect Eichendorff's father; Viktor (chapter 7) is a poetic transformation of his boyhood friend, Kaplan Ciupke. Sumin castle, an old lodge, supplied the setting for the hunt in chapter 8, and a model of the hunt itself can be found in Eichendorff's diary (Sept./Oct. 1806). In book 2 the narrator concerns himself primarily with the "aesthetic tea societies," the refined salons of the age as he had come to know them in Berlin, Heidelberg, and Vienna. Book 3 points to the Napoleonic Wars.¹

In addition to the inclusion of details of his own life in the novel, Eichendorff also introduces various thinly disguised figures from among his acquaintances and friends to represent the different possibilities of poetic existence. Behind the figure of Leontin, dynamic counterpoint of and complement to Friedrich, stands Clemens Brentano (1778-1842), who had transformed life into poetry, into an aesthetic form of existence: "the favored one was ruled by it [poetry]."² Achim

¹ The *Befreiungskriege* as they are termed in German, or "Wars of Liberation."

² "Der Glückliche wurde von ihr [der Dichtung] beherrscht," *Ahnung und Gegenwart*, ed. Gerhart Hoffmeister (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1984), 83 (quoted as *AG*).

von Arnim (1781-1831) is sometimes called the model for the professional poet Faber, although Eichendorff's marginal gloss to Loeben's letter of 20 October 1814, in which Faber is referred to as an "affected fellow and not the ideal of a perfect man something nobody is who is only a poet,"³ would seem to contradict this view. And in the youthful poet "of more languishing aspect" ("von mehr schmachtendem Ansehen") Eichendorff is caricaturing his friend Loeben (140). But one shouldn't overlook possible literary modelssuch as Brentano's Haber in the epistolary novel *Godwi* (1801) and Waller in Arnim's novel *Gräfin Dolores* (1810) for Faber nor the possibility that Eichendorff had spread "the various facets of his poet's life,"⁴ over a number of different characters. In this sense *Ahnung und Gegenwart* could be taken as a document of Eichendorff's youth and years as a student. In *Ahnung und Gegenwart* it can be said that Eichendorff has found his way back to a firm trust in his own creative instincts, to his roots, and to the faith of his boyhood.

And so although his first novel represents the conclusion and culmination of this early phase of his life, it also holds the key to the rest of his works. Here we encounter the recurrent themes of Eichendorff's lyricism—longing and temptation, spring and love, homeland, the unknown and youthful confusion—along with the basic motifs and figures of his poetry. Eichendorff's poetic motifs are limited; characters, situations, turns of speech recur, slightly modified, again and again in subsequent works, becoming leitmotifs or ciphers that always evoke similar moods. For instance, he varies the theme of loss of self in poetry, novella, and novela theme illustrated by the Tannhäuser motif: the beautiful woman appears as Venus or a heathen Roman and represents the temptation of the evil world from which man can only save himself by calling on God.⁵ Usually a wandering artist like Friedrich in *Ahnung und Gegenwart*, like Florio in "Das

3 "ein manierter Kerl . . . und kein Ideal eines vollkommenen Mannes, was keiner ist, der bloß Dichter ist" (360).

4 Cf. Eichendorff's letter to Theodor von Schoen of 12 April 1833.

5 Cf. Friedrich at the end of chapter 13 as well as *Das Marmorbild* and *Aus dem Leben eines Taugenichts*.

Marmorbild" (1826, translated as "The Marble Statue") or like his most memorable character, the good-for-nothing in *Aus dem Leben eines Taugenichts* (1826, *Memoirs of a Good-for-Nothing*, 1866) goes out into the world as a carefree, aimless simpleton, achieving his own sense of identity only by braving the temptations of the world. The danger of loss of self is expressed metaphorically by means of mysterious signs and images of nature that are always ambiguous, originating not only from demonic forces but possibly also from God.⁶ After having withstood the danger presented by the profusion of images in his own imagination, Eichendorff's protagonist finally undergoes a transformation from an aesthetic life to the ethical and religious. It is significant that twenty years after *Ahnung und Gegenwart* Eichendorff returned to the same theme "the various facets of a poet's life" in his second novel, *Dichter und ihre Gesellen* (1834, *Poets and Their Companions*), using the same figures under different names, in only slightly different circumstances and with similar motifs.

Early on, research began finding serious fault with *Ahnung und Gegenwart*. The objections had primarily to do with the structure of the novel. Around the turn of the century the novelist Ricarda Huch spoke of an "unfinished mush not easily consumed,"⁷ and Walther Killy sixty years later pointed to the "accumulation of episodes,"⁸ the mere succession of events and circumstances that lead nowhere. Indeed, it can be asked whether *Ahnung und Gegenwart* has any form or structure at all. The question is in part answered by a brief comparison with *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* but also in a comparison with Romantic models. *Ahnung und Gegenwart* is routinely mentioned in literary histories as an *Entwicklungsroman* (novel of development) in

⁶ Compare for example a poem like "Mondnacht" with "Zwielicht" ("twilight"); for a discussion of the symbolism of the times of day, see the work of Peter Paul Schwarz, *Aurora* (Bad Homburg: Gehlen, 1970).

⁷ *Ausbreitung und Verfall der Romantik* (Leipzig: Haessel, 1902), 257.

⁸ "Der Roman als romantisches Buch," in *Wirklichkeit und Künstlerwerk* (Munich: Beck, 1963), 46.

the wake of Wilhelm Meister,⁹ or it is at least considered a Romantic attempt in this genre which, according to Wilpert's definition, "traces with psychological precision the inner and outer development of a person from the outset to a certain stage of personal maturation in a very conscious and meaningful composition."¹⁰

Like Goethe's Wilhelm Meister, Friedrich goes out into the world; both of them, after having fallen prey to robbers, awake in a wonderful setting Wilhelm in Philine's lap and Friedrich in the care of Erwin(e). There are also numerous signs of Eichendorff's reading of *Wilhelm Meister* after chapter 3; Marie, for instance, could be modeled on Philine. As in the case of Wilhelm, a confrontation with the theater also plays a certain role in Friedrich's life, as, for example, the "Triumph der Religion" in chapter 12. Chapter 6 contains an allusion to "Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele" in Goethe's work, and Erwine, too like Mignondies of unrequited love. There are also striking structural similarities in the two novels, such as in the preeminence of the spatial element (e.g., travel), of worldly events, and the delineation of numerous characters. The protagonists make their way through the various stages of life and are influenced by all of these multifarious forces.

But the structural *differences* are also obvious. Concerning Friedrich, Günther Weydt stresses the lack of mentors and edifying influences: "Friedrich only learns that which he really already knew or felt. . . . There is one insight that is gained namely, the preeminence of the eternal over the temporal."¹¹ To this extent Weydt can rightfully point to Grimmelshausen's *Simplicius Simplicissimus* (1669), with its analogous open, picaresque structure. Seen in this light, Friedrich's

9 Detlev W. Schumann goes so far to consider *Ahnung und Gegenwart* one of the "most profound of German Entwicklungsromane in terms of content," in "Rätsel um Eichendorffs *Ahnung und Gegenwart*," *Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch* 18 (1977): 174.

10 Gero von Wilpert, *Sachwörterbuch der Literatur* (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1964), 166.

11 "Der deutsche Roman von der Renaissance und Reformation bis zu Goethes Tod," in vol. 2 of *Deutsche Philologie im Aufriß*, ed. Wolfgang Stammer (Berlin: E. Schmidt, 1959), column 1335.

way of looking at the world was predetermined from the outset. He would thus have no need of formation (*Bildung*) but rather would have to distance himself from life by passing through different stages of experience and self-confirmation: the aimless life of a wanderer in book 1, the critical view of the capital with its pathological symptoms in book 2, and finally the disillusioning struggle for liberation in book 3.¹² Friedrich's speech is characterized by melancholy and resignation, because he has been unable to change anything either in the corrupt city or in the mountains. In addition, he remains aloof from the literature of his day as well as from other people even Leontin, whom he admires, and Rosa, whom he simply allows to go into the capital without regard for the danger to her, since the town is viewed as a seat of worldly corruption offering a life-style at odds with the ancient values of free knights and feudal counts. Whereas Friedrich's progress through the world, starting with the robbery at the mill in the forest, resembles an odyssey and proceeds in spontaneous jumps from the "study of nations" ("Studium der Staaten") and of soldiery to the decision to enter a monastery, Goethe has his Wilhelm grow and learn without leaps,¹³ from being a "poor dog" and servant under the conscious planning of the Tower Society via lost causes all the way up to the "master" who disciplines and integrates himself in a society, finally making the decision to serve the community as a surgeon. According to Hermann August Korff,¹⁴ Wilhelm finds his

12 In his interpretations of *Ahnung und Gegenwart* Egon Schwarz distinguishes three phases that he refers to again and again: the relation of the individual to the world (personal-social or satirical-philosophical), the types of narration (exposition, complication, resolution), and finally the theological aspect (origin, alienation, return). See "Joseph von Eichendorff: *Ahnung und Gegenwart*," in *Romane und Erzählungen der Romantik*, ed. Paul Michael Lützeler (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1981), 308f.

13 Recent research, however, has raised some reservations to this interpretation; cf. Rolf-Peter Janz, "Bildungsroman," in *Zwischen Revolution und Restauration*, vol. 5 of *Deutsche Literatur: Eine Sozialgeschichte*, ed. Horst Glaser (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1980), 14449.

14 Hermann A. Korff, *Hochromantik*, part 4 of *Geist der Goethezeit* (Leipzig: Koehler & Amelang, 1953), 445.

satisfaction in the world, whereas Friedrich, disillusioned by all decisions, appears to retreat to the monastery although with the intention, in the wake of the unsuccessful Wars of Liberation, of preparing for the religious renewal of a pagan Europe.

To Friedrich, character formation does not mean personal maturation but becoming conscious of a meaning of life intuited early on. In his case personal growth is not developed concretely as an epic process; instead, Friedrich arrives at his goal all at once without psychological preparation. He suddenly stands there as a *miles christianus* "in shiny armor as a soldier of God as if on the border of two worlds,"¹⁵ even though the text states, "This isolation at last developed in Friedrich the natural, religious power of his soul, which already in his worldly life, blinded by good-natured amazement, often buried in the storm of events . . ., had shone forth in all his strivings, deeds, poems, and mistakes."¹⁶ His inner life had developed organically but, as it were, without him, or at least without his conscious participation, toward the religious. And yet both Friedrich and Wilhelm Meister realize that art is not enough to sustain life.¹⁷ Both novels end without a depiction of "perfect life," yet they point the way to it.

If, then, Friedrich's concept of personal growth and his actual life do not fit, we will either have to think in terms of an unsuccessful *Entwicklungsroman* with no structure or, alternatively, raise the question of the structural unity of *Ahnung und Gegenwart* on another level, as Günther Weydt has suggested: "The 'development' takes place more in the sense of the *Simplicissimus* mold than in the Goethean tradition" (col. 1335). In this view, the book does possibly have a kind of structural unity after all. The novel begins according to a plan of salvation

15 "In blanker Rüstung als Kämpfer Gottes gleichsam an der Grenze zweier Welten."

16 "In Friedrich entwickelte diese Abgeschlossenheit endlich die ursprüngliche, religiöse Kraft seiner Seele, die schon im Weltleben, durch gutmütiges Staunen geblendet, durch den Drang der Zeiten oft verschlagen, aus allen seinen Bestrebungen, Taten, Poesien und Irrtümern hervorleuchtete" (308).

17 See Korff, 447; cf. *AG*, 233.

in the sign of the Cross and then receives decisive new impulses from the allegorical theater performance about the "triumph of religion" (chapter 12) and Friedrich's visit to the allegorical family tomb (chapter 21) to finally arrive at the recourse to religion (chapter 24). Viewed from this religious angle, it is no wonder that Friedrich is able to pass untainted through the "licentious" world; from the beginning, his attention has been fixed on spiritual rather than psychological or material experiences. In other words, Friedrich's journey does correspond more closely to the dialectic movement of Parzival and Simplex than to that of Wilhelm Meister: Parzival and Simplex as well as Friedrich start out with a feeling of being in harmony with God (*amor dei*), continue on to experience the world (*amor mundi*), and conclude with their rejection of the world and their simultaneous return to God (*amor dei*). In the end, all of them turn into *miles christiani*: as grail king, hermit, and monk they withdraw from the world convinced that only religion will save their souls as well as the world. These are novels of religious development based on theological categories, not on the psychological categories to which Wilhelm Meister and his brothers comply by way of individual growth and acceptance of social forces at work.

There is, however, a second way of approaching the form of the novel. In contrast to *Wilhelm Meister*, as it now is generally viewed by Germanists, *Ahnung und Gegenwart* is a thoroughly "Romantic book," one that, in the tradition of earlier Romantic novels, is not concerned with the representation of the real world and "psychological precision," but rather as Killy has demonstrated with "fictionalized spaces of unimaginable eras."¹⁸ Whether this is the only interpretation possible is a question we shall take up below.

Eichendorff was familiar with the major German Romantic novels, and he crafted entire scenes after them. Using the model of the Romantic novel, as exemplified in Ludwig Tieck's *Franz Sternbalds Wanderungen* (1798), Brentano's *Godwi* (1801), Novalis's *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (1802), and Dorothea Schlegel's *Florentin* (1801), his plot develops from the odyssey of the hero, and the various episodes are stages of this progression. Students, artists and actors, craftsmen

¹⁸ Killy, 47.

and gypsies make up a traveling world which, bohemian as it is, comes into social and moral conflict with the middle-class way of life. The Romantic cast of characters also includes pilgrims and monks, counts and countesses in forests, castles, or hermitages and the like, giving the external structure of the novel, characterized by constant changes and surprises, its correspondingly unbourgeois setting. The forest, moon, and music are used to evoke certain moods and achieve a specific atmosphere. The wanderers seem to be roaming the world haphazardly, without sensing that they belong together. Alternatively, the plot involves lost souls searching for each other, trusting in their good luck. Chance in the byways of the world corresponds to the premonitions, dreams, and yearnings of the unconscious man, whose world represents actual reality. At every turn the more acute sense organs of the artistic individual discover correlations and connections in the world that remain hidden to the philistine. For the initiate a network of esoteric ties supports the loose structure of the novel of journeying (*Wanderroman*) aided by prefigurations and the hero's task of searching for his sweetheart, his parents, or himself. In the end, everything that was lost is reunited.

Among Romantic novels Eichendorff's *Ahnung und Gegenwart* represents a special case in that it did not remain a fragment. In fact, it could have had a rather tidy ending that tied together all the loose strands, for with Friedrich's entrance into the monastery, all of the puzzles embodied in the constellation of characters could have been resolved but this did not happen. At the end of the novel, for instance, we don't know whether Leontin is really the brother of Friedrich (217) and Rudolf. If he were, then his sister Rosa would also have to be related to Friedrich. And how does Erwine fit in with Friedrich's childhood, since she is, after all, the daughter of Rudolf and Angelina, the "white woman" ("weiße Frau"), and would thus be Friedrich's niece?¹⁹

These and similar questions remain open, contributing to the mystery of existence that corresponds to the world view of Romantic poets. However, one shouldn't underestimate the influence of English horror novels in the use of originally trivial motifs (for example, the

¹⁹ Schumann supplies important details to reveal some of the mysterious aspects.

kidnapping of children by gypsies, chapter 23), or, finally, reject out of hand Detlev Schumann's hypothesis that Eichendorff might have reworked a youthful version of the novel (from his years in Heidelberg), traces of which seem to shimmer through the scenery and constellation of characters (chapter 15). More important, however, is Egon Schwarz's view that in this novel the enigma of human existence "without a clear religious consciousness" must necessarily remain "mysterious and insolvable." "It is precisely this tortuous quest for the resolution of the mystery, which leads the protagonists to their self fulfillment, and the momentous revelations at the end that connect the individual fragments of the novel, are perfect 'objective correlates' for the philosophical elucidations and resolutions that take place simultaneously."²⁰

Despite some unanswered questions, however, *Ahnung und Gegenwart* does satisfy the typology of the Romantic novel to the extent that fate at first leads Friedrich back to the mill, the starting point of the whole odyssey: "He now stood on the same spot where he had begun, as if he had completed a laborious circle."²¹ This is where the puzzles of life, which now start revealing themselves to Friedrich inspired by the love of God, had begun. For now he is drawn to the gardens of his childhood and to his new-found brother at the ruins of his parents' castle (271), where he discovers pages from his "life story" ("Lebensbuch"): "Among the strange faces, Friedrich thought to his great astonishment he recognized some old acquaintances from his childhood."²² "But where are we headed? Home ever homeward." This aphorism of Novalis's is confirmed in *Ahnung und Gegenwart*. It points to the circular structure of the novel to the circular path that Friedrich, in his search for a homeland both in a real and a metaphorical sense, treads.

²⁰ Schwarz, "Joseph von Eichendorff: *Ahnung und Gegenwart*," 310.

²¹ "Jetzt stand er an demselben Orte, wo er begonnen, wie nach einem mühsam beschriebenen Zirkel" (244).

²² "Unter den komischen Gesichtern glaubte Friedrich zu seiner höchsten Verwunderung manche alte Bekannte aus seiner Kindheit wiederzufinden" (280).

The question as to what extent Eichendorff, in creating his characters, was following his predecessors is illuminated in the figure of Friedrich; in society he usually stands apart, and he is also reserved in his relationship to literary reality and to the women in the novel (Romana, Rosa, Erwine). Alienated, he stands beside or above what is happening, absorbed wholly in song, God, and nature. By comparison, Rudolf represents a Faustian nature, one who has tasted the pleasures of this world to the full and who now in a fool's castle the place of those who have failed in life expresses his cynical contempt of the world,²³ but he does finally go forth once again to seek among the wise men of Egypt for the essence of things.

Finally, we must stress the significance of Countess Romana, the ideal of a pagan woman of seductive beauty and demonic passion for love that was indebted to the literary tradition of the socially and sensuously emancipated female protagonist since the *Sturm und Drang* movementsuch as Fiordimona in Wilhelm Heinse's *Ardinghello* (1787), Violetta in Brentano's *Godwi* (1801), and Linda de Romeiro in Jean Paul's *Titan* (1800/1803). With Linda's brother Roquairol, Romana shares the "torn soul" ("zerrissene Seele," 175), "a genius gone mad" ("tollgewordene Genialität," 62), and the aestheticism of strictly worldly poetry that is devoid of any trace of inner truth (202).²⁴ In her "fairylike hunter's outfit" ("feenhafte Jägerkleidung") she suddenly stands "petrified like a statue" ("versteinert wie eine Bildsäule," 239) before Friedrich, reminiscent of the allegory of earthly beauty, the "religion of fantasy, turned to stone" ("zu Stein gewordene Religion der Phantasie," 137), and at the same time prefiguring Eichendorff's subsequent Venuses.²⁵

23 A likely model for him was Schoppe or Roquairol from Jean Paul Richter's *Titan* (1800/1803).

24 See Wulf Koepke's article in this volume for a fuller discussion of the novels of Jean Paul.

25 For a discussion of the figures in *Ahnung und Gegenwart* cf. in particular the excellent observations of Egon Schwarz in his "Joseph von Eichendorff: *Ahnung und Gegenwart*," especially 310.

Although the similarity of *Ahnung und Gegenwart* with other Romantic novels with regard to structure, constellation of characters, and motifs is apparent, this first novel of Eichendorff is in its stylistic detail already a typical creation of the author's own genius. In the arrangement of the whole, the book introduces something fundamentally new: on the one hand, with Friedrich's retreat from the world into a monastery, the religious solution (chapter 20), and on the other, the inclusion of the contemporary world. The heroes of Romantic *Wanderromane* are known to seek the medieval past, since it unlike the present seems to promise a golden future. In *Ahnung und Gegenwart* primary concerns are, after the example of Arnim's *Gräfin Dolores* (1810), the depiction of the zeitgeist, the consciousness of crises, and social criticism yet without loss of the medieval aspect. Indeed, Friedrich does appear as *miles christianus* not only in external appearance but also in his concept of poetry (28) and in his early Biedermeier, that is, quietistic and unpolitical, attitude toward the "eternally uniform course" ("ihr ewig gleichförmiger Gang," 72) of life that the landed nobility led on mountains and manors as heirs and protectors of old rights and liberties.

Although serious objections to an interpretation of the novel as criticism of contemporary society have been raised particularly by Walther Killy the contemporary character of the novel cannot be overlooked,²⁶ in that it mentions historically fixable, if not precisely specified, contemporary events, contains criticism of the moods prevailing in the time prior to the Wars of Liberation, and finally is concerned with a symbolic representation of the zeitgeist. Eichendorff points out the relationship to current issues in his preface. In it he mentions a "necessarily continuous contact of the book with public matters"²⁷ that prevented it from being printed as early as 1812, and he refers to it as a true picture of "that sultry-stormy period of

26 Cf. Rudolf Majut, who sees *Ahnung und Gegenwart* as a "contemporary novel at the threshold of Biedermeier," in "Der deutsche Roman vom Biedermeier bis zur Gegenwart," in vol. 2 of *Deutsche Philologie im Aufriß*, column 137173.

27 "eine nothwendig fortlaufende Berührung des Buches mit den öffentlichen Begebenheiten."

expectation, of longing and confusion."²⁸ After the defeat of Prussia and Austria in 1806 and before Napoleon's Russian campaign and the outbreak of the Wars of Liberation in 1813, the artist was obviously concerned about making a poetic contribution to the renewal and reform of Prussia and with attempting to mobilize the nobility of his fatherland. In this regard the intention of the novel's author is also thoroughly contemporary. One more reason why *Ahnung und Gegenwart*, as an *Entwicklungsroman*, presents a problem. Again and again we find the novel closely tied to political and military events of the day, a circumstance made particularly clear in book 3, where the plot goes back to the Tirolian insurrection under Andreas Hofer in 1809 against Napoleonic rule. In chapter 18 Friedrich encounters a band of militia at the last "circular wall in Germany . . ., where you can look down to Italy"²⁹; he conducts himself with distinction in the insurrection, although with the "fortunes of war having turned" ("das Kriegsglück wandte sich," 237), he is expropriated and banned.³⁰

This critical situation stimulated Eichendorff to write. He made his protagonists champions of concepts and representatives of the *Zeitgeist*. Looked at in this way, *Ahnung und Gegenwart* criticizes the moral and intellectual decay of the nobility. Of Leontin, for instance, it is written that "he lamented over the times more than perhaps anyone else" ("Ihn jammerte seine Zeit vielleicht wie keinen," 178). What outrages him is the "un-German," philistine indifference in citizenry, nobility, and artists to all values, metaphorically expressed by the puppetlike dance without intrinsic meaning in the tavern (64) or by the "character masks without character" ("Charaktermasken ohne Charakter," 118) at the masked ball in the courtly residence (chapter 11). "May God help the nobility," ("Gott steh' dem Adel bei," 184) thinks Friedrich once there is nothing left to distinguish it from the rabble. Nor does the prince set a good example, even though the

28 "jener Gewitterschwülen [*sic*] Zeit der Erwartung, der Sehnsucht und Verwirrung."

29 "Ringmauer von Deutschland, wo man nach Welschland heruntersieht."

30 According to Detlev Schumann (200), Eichendorff's experiences in Heidelberg with the German League of the Rhine are mirrored here.

scenes in question are based, in some details, on Goethe's *Egmont* (1787). According to Eichendorff the prince was supposed to be "nothing more than a mere imitator of literature."³¹ From this we can see how much the figure of the prince is indebted to the literary tradition since Christian Fürchtegott Gellert's *Die schwedische Gräfin von G**** (1747/48) and Lessing's *Emilia Galotti* (1772). The noble at court appears as a dreamer and seducer to whom nothing is sacred and whose emotions are insincere (chapter 14).

The intellectual elite is primarily concerned with the contradiction between thought and action, with the breach between life and deeds, and with aestheticism. Poetry as simple aesthetic pastime and mere aristocratic formalizing fill Friedrich with indignation: "He was disgusted with the faint-hearted false poets who, oblivious to the demands of the times that cried to heaven, squandered their national vigor in vain dallyings."³² In another situation he turns against the "thorough abstraction, stale living, the vacuous, voluntary indulgence in images,"³³ and points, in its stead, to the poetic praise of God (150). Friedrich, then and thus also his author clearly subscribes to the religious-patriotic efforts for renewal in literature that were current in Heidelberg Romanticism after 1806, particularly under the lead of Arnim and Brentano.

This by no means exhausts Eichendorff's criticism of the aestheticism of the times; poets and nobility, the elite of the citizenry, met regularly in the literary salons, the so-called aesthetic tea societies ("ästhetische Teegesellschaften," 162), especially in Berlin. The narrator takes aim at the shallow aestheticism of these circles with such expressions as *complacent* (*selbstgefällig*, 139), *vain* (*eitel*, 154), and *hollow* (*leer*, 156) (chapter 12). Leontin and Friedrich have their bad

31 "ein bloßer wirklicher Nachahmer des Erdichteten, Gelesenen," (358). Eichendorff's marginal gloss to Loeben's letter to him, 20 October 1814.

32 "Ihn ekelten die falschen Dichter an mit ihren Taubenherzen, die, uneingedenk der himmelschreienden Mahnung der Zeit, ihre Nationalkraft in müßigem Spiel verliederten" (176).

33 "gänzliche Abstraktion, das abgestandene Leben, die leere, willkürliche, sich selbst zerstörende Schwelgerei in Bildern."

experiences in these "artificial" ("künstlichen," 154) "holy synods" ("heiligen Synoden," 163) that take themselves far too seriously and that, to Eichendorff's mind, clearly did little to regenerate the people.

By turning to Eichendorff's landscape symbolism, we acknowledge a key concept of Eichendorff research since R. Alewyn, H. Rehder, and O. Seidlin discovered its functional role for the poet's prose works in 1957 (see note 35). A closer look at Eichendorff's landscaping technique will not only reveal his moral encoding of his poetic scenery but also will shed light on his constellation of characters, his criticism of contemporary issues, and the structure of the novel as a whole. The realization that nature is a close mirror of emotional life is a discovery that goes back to the Renaissance; the correspondence between nature and soul, however, was not made until Rousseau (1712/78). Yet Eichendorff goes beyond the traditional "pathetic fallacy" (Ruskin) as a poetic tendency to ascribe human emotions and sympathies to nature which seems to correspond to man's emotional states. With him neither morbidity nor falseness are involved, nor a mere decorative use of nature; on the contrary, like Wordsworth, Eichendorff convincingly expresses his sense of communion with the natural world (see his song "Schläft ein Lied in allen Dingen") and takes his basic conviction a step further by symbolizing the world of the human spirit through natural phenomena, using natural formulas recurrently to express moral states; the landscape becomes a moral arena. Thus, the narrator characterizes the paradisiacal innocence of childhood, for instance, as a well-kept garden (46); the temptation of wild passions draws men from the heights of the castle gardens down into the abyss after the fire of arbitrariness has laid waste to Romana's soul, ancestral portraits, and garden.³⁴ Oskar Seidlin interprets the "indescribable chaos" of garden and castle as an expression of her rootlessness and revolt in contrast to Friedrich's ideal of a well-ordered, "pious" landscape (cf. 241).³⁵ The dizzying heights at which Romana lives is an ex-

34 See the allegory of Romana's life (130) and see also the chaotic castle garden at the end of the fairy tale of Ida and the water sprite (44); regarding the allegory of the garden, cf. Thomas A. Riley, "An Allegorical Interpretation of Eichendorff's *Ahnung und Gegenwart*," *Modern Language Review* 54 (1959): 20413.

35 Oskar Seidlin, "Eichendorff's symbolische Landschaft," in *Eichendorff heute*, ed.

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pression of her isolation and peril, but also of her absolute freedom from conventional morals. Up there, there are only two possibilities: salvation through faith or a fall into the abyss (112). Straying from the heights into the depth of the valley mirrors moral decay (222). Similar landscapes, together with atmospheric phenomena, appear in dreams that either characterize the female protagonist³⁶ or symbolize the times. Friedrich's dreams, in particular, serve as epic integrations of the plot and point to his mission of freeing the world in the name of the Cross.

For Eichendorff "every region" ("jede Gegend") has its own life and "its own idea" ("ihre eigene Idee," 100). Not only the moral life of the soul is reflected in each of them, but beyond this, the landscape may even mirror the entire epoch. In dreams, both become one: "a dark storm passed over the whole prospect, as if the world were burned."³⁷ This vision of the end of the world corresponds to the reference to the Cross of Christ, whereby the dream landscape becomes part of the history of salvation. Yet at the same time it also mirrors the spiritual straits of the country prior to the Wars of Liberation as when Friedrich says, "To me our times seem to be like this expansive, uncertain twilight! Light and shadow are yet struggling mightily, commingled, in wondrous masses with one another brooding clouds pass forebodingly in between, uncertain whether they bring death or salvation the world lies below in deep, vague, stifled anticipation."³⁸ In another passage the transparency of Eichendorff's

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Paul Stöcklein (Munich, 1960; 2d edition, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1966), 228; Richard Alewyn, "Eine Landschaft Eichendorffs," *Euphorion* 51 (1957): 4260; Helmut Rehder, "Ursprünge dichterischer Emblematis in Eichendorffs Prosawerken," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 56 (1957): 52854.

36 Cf. Rudolf as a knight in a sea of clouds (48) with Friedrich (212).

37 "Ein dunkler Sturm ging über die ganze Aussicht, als wäre die Welt verbrannt" (177).

38 "Mir scheint unsre Zeit dieser weiten, ungewissen Dämmerung zu gleichen! Licht und Schatten ringen noch ungeschieden in wunderbaren Massen gewaltig miteinander, dunkle Wolken ziehen verhängnisschwer dazwischen, ungewiß ob sie Tod oder Segen führen, die Welt liegt unten in weiter, dumpf stiller Erwartung"

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landscape, in which time and eternity cross, becomes apparent: "As they came out of the forest and stepped onto a jutting cliff, they at once spotted, at a marvelous distance, emerging from old castles and timeless forests, the river of bygone ages and eternal inspiration, the regal Rhine."³⁹ The Rhine is a symbol of time-honored order and values and, as the river of inspiration, is also a signal for future salvation. Yet, as Seidlin points out, this immersion of Friedrich's into the river stands "metaphorically, too, for the protagonist's dedication to the historical moment, his leap into history"^{40a} consecration of his strength before entering the monastery.

Viewed, then, in the light of the symbolism of landscape used by Eichendorff, the loose sequence of episodes takes on a more recognizable form. *Ahnung und Gegenwart* opens with a sunrise which sheds its first light on its poetic creation, though not yet with the metaphysical significance that the sunrise at the end of the novel assumes. This dawn has more to do with the light symbolism of the "Triumph der Religion" on stage (13536) during whose enactment a sunset turns into a spiritual annunciation of a new beginning ("Aurora," 136). Even the account of the whirlpool in the Danube (chapter 1) takes on allegorical significance.⁴¹ It represents the whirlpool of lifewith all its temptations and dangerswhich Friedrich will have to face after the completion of his university studiesboth in its erotic form (Rosa, aboard an oncoming ship, heralds to him a previously unknown, alluring "new world" ["neue Welt," 4]) as well as in its religious significance. The whirlpool embraces both life and

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(327).

39 "Als sie aus dem Walde auf einen hervorragenden Felsen heraustraten, sahen sie auf einmal aus wunderreicher Ferne, von alten Burgen und ewigen Wäldern kommend, den Strom vergangener Zeiten und unvergänglicher Begeisterung, den königlichen Rhein" (192).

40 Oskar Seidlin, "Eichendorffs symbolische Landschaft," 236.

41 Cf. the detailed interpretation of this passage in Egon Schwarz, "Joseph von Eichendorff: *Ahnung und Gegenwart*," 31315.

death; above, it projects the Cross of salvation.⁴² With this opening allegory *Ahnung und Gegenwart* clearly reveals a conceptual affinity with *Simplicissimus* and furthermore with Calderón, whom Eichendorff esteemed and translated: "Eichendorff's stage is a completely genuine *gran teatro del mundo*."⁴³ This whirlpool in the river returns later as the turmoil of enticement and death for the individual (198) and in the form of a storm as symbol of a crisis of the times (187). Sultriness is the prelude to the approaching tempest, already visible on the horizon, that threatens to devastate "the whole world" ("die ganze Welt," 106). Particularly forceful at the start of chapter 15 is an account of an approaching storm that signals the crisis of the contemporary consciousness, the threat to the fatherland, because faith is dead and only some individuals, such as Friedrich, prepare themselves with chivalry and piety (187). Two storms clash above the German Empire and cause the thunder of war (248) before the sun of regeneration and salvation in the sign of Jesus can rise again. Christ seeks a disciple like Friedrich: "If you love Me rightly, go under with Me; you will then rise again as the sun, and the world is free!"⁴⁴ Not as a poet-priest like Novalis's Heinrich von Ofterdingen will he transform the world into a fairy tale, but instead as a monk he will heal it from his inner reserves of religious conviction. How this is to be done is not described, for the world is out of joint. The symptoms of its sickness can be gathered accurately from topographical features:

Why does everything down below in the plains become one and indistinguishable like a sea, with only the castles standing out clearly and unblurred among the pealing of bells drifting in the air and errant bolts of lightning? You could make me mad down below,

42 "In der Mitte des Stromes steht ein seltsam geformter Fels, von dem ein hohes Kreuz tröst- und friedereich in den Sturz und Streit der empörten Wogen hinabschaut" (4).

43 Oskar Seidlin, 238; cf. Helmut Rehder, "Ursprünge dichterischer Emblematis in Eichendorffs Prosawerken," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 56 (1957): 52841.

44 "Liebst du mich recht, so gehe mit mir unter, als Sonne wirst du dann wieder aufgehen, und die Welt ist frei!" (177).

terrifying image of my age, where the ruins of the past stand on solitary heights, where the individual, sharply outlined in the sunlight, is seen to push himself forward, while the whole lies amorphous in colorless masses. . . .45

The flatlands with the masses of human beings in the cities are contrasted to the mountain heights with their enclaves of nobility. "Ancient freedom" ("Die alte Freiheit," 322) is known only in the great forests or in the old "green bastions of liberty" ("grüne Freiheitsburgen," 266). Thus, the land with its expansiveness (forest, castles, mountains, etc.) takes on a positive note; that is where the "simple life" reigns, founded on unadulterated custom and religion. It is, then, hardly surprising that the landed gentry, together with the artists, form the opposition to the courtly nobility and the philistines in the town with its limited space. City and court are breeding grounds of corruption. Masked balls and tea societies exemplify the dull spectacle of life that presents itself to the Romantic characters in the city. There all individual differences disappear in the masses, "the most vulgar and the most refined, forcefully thrown together, become like hand and glove, the weakling is made bold by the crowd, the truly noble fends for himself."⁴⁶ Like a giant, the city threatens any and all individuality, "beauty and nobility and divine right" ("die Schönheit und Hoheit und das heilige Recht," 176). For honor it becomes a tomb. Friedrich is unable to pray in the city (132), Erwine becomes ill and wants to return with her sweetheart to the woods (186), Leontin flees from the "mob down there" ("das Pack da unten," 216) to the freedom of his mountains. And Romana takes on demonic proportions

45 "Warum wird unten auf den Flächen alles eins und unkenntlich wie ein Meer, und nur die Burgen stehen einzeln und unterschieden zwischen den wehenden Glockenklängen und schweifenden Blitzen? Du konntest mich wahnwitzig machen unten, erschreckliches Bild meiner Zeit, wo das zertrümmerte Alte in einsamer Höhe steht, wo das Einzelne gilt und sich schroff und scharf im Sonnenlichte abzeichnet, hervorhebt, während das Ganze in farblosen Massen gestaltlos liegt. . . ." (195).

46 "Das Gemeinste und das Größte, heftig aneinander geworfen, wird hier zu Wort und Schlag, die Schwäche wird dreist durch den Haufen, das Hohe ficht allein" (175).

precisely because she is unable to make a decision between the town and nature.

Ahnung und Gegenwart is, then, no mere novel of youth, of reminiscence and Romantic longing. It is also an attempt at coming to terms with the times; it is a novel that, even prior to the Wars of Liberation, cried out for inner change as a necessary condition for the regeneration of society. Friedrich's entry into the monastery, then, is shown to be timely a concession to the times even though upon publication of the novel in 1815 there was a new historical situation that had been created by the Wars of Liberation. Eichendorff's negative assessment of the times is an essential aspect of his novel. Aestheticism as a contradiction between essence and appearance, thought and act, poetry and life and the pathological symptoms of city life disturbed Eichendorff deeply. This is why, from his perspective as a member of the Catholic landed gentry, he used his landscape style to criticize individuals as well as society as a whole criticism that touched all of Europe, the "cultivated centers of paganism" ("ausgebildeten Heidensitze," 322) with its materialism, "with the sixfold butter of domestic bliss" ("mit sechsfacher Butter des häuslichen Glücks," 318) and its "factory-style life" ("Fabrikenleben," 175). As scarcely any other of the Romantics, Eichendorff in *Ahnung und Gegenwart* treats the German "calamity" ("Misere," 313) that drives Leontin to America and Friedrich into a monastery.

Ahnung und Gegenwart is both criticism of the times and a story of development toward final Salvation. The one presupposes the other. The certainty of faith provides the point of departure for the critical view of contemporary reality, which can only be redeemed by a common return to past values. In this sense, over the dilapidated present (*Gegenwart*) looms the presentiment (*Ahnung*) of a more ideal world, and beyond a treatment of its own era, the novel in its allegorical bent becomes a "redemptional novel":⁴⁷ "The conclusion, too, is eminently satisfying, since all the protagonists seem to have realized peace in God, i.e., there is a cease-fire of their souls."⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Egon Schwarz, "Joseph von Eichendorff: *Ahnung und Gegenwart*," 311.

⁴⁸ "Der Schluß ist auch in höherem Sinne befriedigend, denn alle Helden des Romanes erscheinen zuletzt in einem Gottesfriedem beruhigt, das ist ein Waffen-

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In sum, contrasted with other Romantic novels, Eichendorff seems to start out with an artist's journey, but the farther his key protagonist travels the closer his journey resembles a circle which leads him back to his very beginnings, his premonitions of his own and the world's salvation in God like that sought by *Simplicissimus*. His religious outlook on life determines his rejection of the corrupt world, which entails his skipping any psychological development. Thus this novel only appears to start out as a Romantic novel of the artist's education, but it concludes as a counterthrust to Wilhelm Meister-type predecessors since it is modeled according to a plan of salvation more in the tradition of Grimmelshausen's *Simplicissimus* than anything else.

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stillstand der Gemüter." Eichendorff, marginal gloss to Loeben's letter of 20 October 1814.

E. T. A. Hoffmann and the Bildungsroman

James McGlathery

The German novelistic genre known as the Bildungsroman is most often associated with the so-called Classicism of eighteenth-century Weimar. The genre was defined, after all, by Wieland's *Agathon* (1766/67) and Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795/96). Its essence, however, is better revealed in the ensuing literary movement, Romanticism. The German Romantics pushed the genre to its mystical limits. Precisely for that reason, the intellectual underpinnings of the Bildungsroman emerge most clearly in the examples from Romanticism.

Even more obviously and intensely than Weimar Classicism, early Romanticism was a child of the emerging German philosophical Idealism, especially as represented by Kant's erstwhile followers Fichte and Schelling. This Idealism, in turn, was another of many waves of Platonism to sweep Europe since the Middle Ages. The Bildungsroman as a novel of education, cultivation, and formation needs to be viewed in this Platonic context, and in particular as reflecting survivals of Renaissance neo-Platonism, such as persisted in Freemasonry to Goethe's time and beyond. As has long been recognized, the Society of the Tower in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* is just such a secret organization devoted to the moral and spiritual betterment of the individual and thereby to philanthropic aims; and the connection between the Classical and Romantic Bildungsroman and the masonic

novel or *Bundesroman* has not gone unnoticed.¹ The Bildungsromane of Wieland and Goethe strongly reflect goals of moral and philanthropic idealism like those of Freemasonry. However, the underlying neo-Platonic ideal of ascending to the sublime is not starkly evident. Precisely this moral and philanthropic Idealism, as understood and practiced in the eighteenth century, was a chief target in the German Romantics' rejection of the literature and culture of the Enlightenment. When Novalis, with his *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (posthumous, 1802), set out to produce a poetic counterpart, or antidote, to Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, it was especially the ideal of economic philanthropism depicted there that he wished to eliminate. Novalis replaced it with an ideal much closer to that of Renaissance neo-Platonism: the quest of the sublime, understood as an ideal realm of the spirit.

Novalis did not live to finish his Bildungsroman, completing only the first of its two parts. It has been doubted that the second half of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* could have been written in any case, so ambitious were Novalis's plans for the poetic sublimity of that last part. Indeed the same difficulty faced all authors of German Romantic Bildungsromane: ideals of sublimity, transcendence, or mystical union with the divine do not easily lend themselves to depiction. As with Novalis's *Ofterdingen*, these novels tend to break off in the middle, never to be completed. Thus, such was the case likewise with Ludwig Tieck's *Franz Sternbalds Wanderungen* (1798, *Travels of Franz Sternbald*) and Friedrich Schlegel's *Lucinde* (1799, translated as *Lucinda*, 1913).

The first half of a novel of neo-Platonic Idealism is relatively easy to write, since it leads up only to the anticipation of the ending, to the

¹ See Marianne Thalmann, *Der Trivialroman des 18. Jahrhunderts und der romantische Roman*, Germanistische Studien, No. 24 (Berlin: Ebering, 1923), and my discussion of her findings in relation to Hoffmann in James M. McGlathery, *Mysticism and Sexuality: E. T. A. Hoffmann. Part One: Hoffmann and His Sources* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1981), 13840. See also Ferdinand Josef Schneider, *Die Freimaurerei und ihr Einfluß auf die geistige Kultur in Deutschland am Ende des XVIII. Jahrhunderts: Prolegomena zu einer Geschichte der deutschen Romantik* (Prague: Taussig & Taussig, 1909).

climax of the dramatic plot, at which point we are given an important inkling of how the whole will end. Thus, the first of the two parts of Novalis's *Ofterdingen* is entitled "The Expectation" ("Die Erwartung"), and the second "The Fulfillment" ("Die Erfüllung"). In the Romantic Bildungsroman, it is this fulfillment of the ideal, the achievement of transcendence, that causes the problem. Moreover, because the genre as a whole has its origins in neo-Platonism, even those novels before and after Romanticism that were finished tend to have unsatisfactory endings.²

This introductory reflection on the Bildungsroman as it arose in Weimar Classicism and early Romanticism has been necessary to provide a context for discussion of E. T. A. Hoffmann's relation to the aims and practices of the genre. It needs to be said at the outset that Hoffmann did not write any work that can properly be called a Bildungsroman after the model of Wieland, Goethe, Tieck, Novalis, and Friedrich Schlegel. The closest he came was his *Lebensansichten des Katers Murr nebst fragmentarischer Biographie des Kapellmeisters Johannes Kreisler in zufälligen Makulaturblättern* (1820/22, literally, Life Views of the Tomcat Murr with a Fragmentary Biography of the Conductor Johannes Kreisler in Random Leaves of Waste Paper, translated as *The Educated Cat*, 1892), which tells of a poetic young composer whose soul is genuinely filled with spiritual longings and intimations of transcendence. The title role, however, belongs to a literary tomcat.

If anything, Hoffmann's *Tomcat Murr* is a parody of the Bildungsroman³ (though he would not have known to refer to it by that

² Jürgen Jacobs points to demands by both Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis that Bildungsromane have a mystical ending; see Jürgen Jacobs, *Wilhelm Meister und seine Brüder: Untersuchungen zum deutschen Bildungsroman* (Munich: Fink, 1972), 127.

³ For discussion of Hoffmann's *Kater Murr* as a parody of the Bildungsroman, see Jacobs, 147, and especially Rolf Selbmann, *Der deutsche Bildungsroman*, Sammlung Metzler: Realien zur Literatur, No. 214 (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1984), 96101.

name, which came into currency only later in the century).⁴ To be sure, like the typical Romantic Bildungsroman, Hoffmann's novel remained unfinished; but what is missing is uncharacteristically evidently not the ending, for it appears that in the manner of his indirectly acknowledged model, Laurence Sterne, Hoffmann has given us the ending at the very beginning as the first installment of the biography of Kreisler, the poetic hero. More precisely, if we do not have the story's ending, it is because the novel's third and final part was to contain some depiction of the composer's life after he had taken in the literary tomcat while its master was away not exactly the stuff of transcendent neo-Platonic fulfillment.

Being a novel of education, the Bildungsroman needs not only an impressionable or receptive young person as pupil and central figure but also a teacher or mentor, who in the neo-Platonic tradition functions to initiate the neophyte into secret and sublime mysteries. The third major figure in Hoffmann's *Murr*, next to the tomcat and the composer, is indeed such a character, a master organ builder named Meister Abraham, whose role as educator is double in that he is also the literary tomcat's owner, master, rescuer, and adoptive parent. If this comic secondary function were not enough to disqualify Abraham as the proper person for this role in a Bildungsroman *comme il faut*, his strange past with, and continuing reveries about, a mysterious orphan girl should give us pause, considering that the girl moved in with him after he had rescued her from a charlatan occultist so that Abraham might similarly use or abuse her. And if that is not enough, we must wonder about the purity of Abraham's motivation in encouraging the composer's love for young Julia, since Abraham identifies her with his lost beloved, the orphan girl Chiara, and himself with Kreisler as in love with Julia. Abraham's aim, to be sure, may be to initiate Kreisler into the sublimation of erotic desire through renunciation and art, and is to this extent decidedly in the neo-Platonic mode. What is uncharacteristic for the Bildungsroman is the demonization of desire, which in both Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* and Novalis's *Ofterdingen* is

⁴ The history of the term Bildungsroman and its definitions are surveyed by Selbmann, 933; see also Jacobs, 1016 and the article by Martini in this volume.

seen as a healthy, positive force associated with a stage in the ascendance to a higher love, in keeping with neo-Platonic tradition.

This uncharacteristic demonization of desire is even more evident in Hoffmann's other, earlier novel *Die Elixiere des Teufels* (1815/16, translated as *The Devil's Elixir*, 1824). The title, like that of the later novel, suggests that we are not dealing with a Bildungsroman, for in that genre the ideal is a secular, neo-Platonic one, divorced from Christian theology and demonology. Moreover, because this novel was completed, almost by definition it cannot be counted among German Romantic Bildungsromane, in which the ending requires depiction of the ineffable and which therefore remained unfinished. As with the putative ending of *Murr*, this novel closes with the sublimation of desire through renunciation; but here the demonization of desire is even more direct, complete, and obvious, since the beloved is murdered by a magical double, in whom the sexual guilt of the central figure, a monk, is projected. Medardus's mentor, moreover, is a worldly-wise monastic superior who counsels him to write his memoirs as a confession to cleanse his soul and therefore does not appear a figure who might hold the key to sublime mysteries into which Medardus might become initiated.

Better candidates for the role of neo-Platonic mentor can be found in Hoffmann's fairy tales (*Märchen*), as opposed to his supposed novels of education. Here too, however, we seem to be dealing with parodies of initiation into sublime mysteries and occult wisdom.⁵ A large element of the charlatan characterizes Hoffmann's magical mentors. They appear descended from the like figure in one of Hoffmann's attested sources, *Le Comte de Gabalis ou Entretiens sur les sciences secrètes* (1670, *The Count of Gabalis or Conversations about the Occult Sciences*), by the Abbé de Montfaucon de Villars.⁶ This suspicion

⁵ The role of mentor in Hoffmann's fairy tales was isolated for study by Christa-Maria Beardsley, *E. T. A. Hoffmann: Die Gestalt des Meisters in seinen Märchen*, *Abhandlungen zur Kunst-, Musik- und Literaturwissenschaft*, No. 182 (Bonn: Bouvier, 1975).

⁶ For discussion of Villars's *Gabalis* as a source for Hoffmann, see the section on cabalism in McGlathery, *Mysticism and Sexuality. Part One*, chapter 9, "Spiritualism," 15067; especially 15255.

is all the firmer because Hoffmann's first such figure, the Archivist Lindhorst in his fairy tale *Der goldne Topf* (1814, translated as *The Golden Pot*, 1946), initiates his poetically inclined protégé, the erstwhile student Anselmus, into mysteries involving the realm of elemental spirits, just as the Count of Gabalis does with Villars's narrator. It may of course be objected that Hoffmann's archivist proves his credibility by showing himself to the narrator in the form of a salamander, or fire sprite. Yet at that point the narrator has just had a drink of the archivist's potent punch; and we are otherwise given reason to believe that the many magical events in the tale are to be viewed as fantasy on the part of the characters, including the narrator, who in turn is an ironic self-portrait of Hoffmann.

The mentors in Hoffmann's other fairy tales, while less recognizably the type of the neo-Platonic initiator, cut still more ridiculous figures. Far from introducing the young romantic dreamer Balthasar to occult mysteries of a transcendent nature, the magician Prosper Alpanus in *Klein Zaches genannt Zinnober* (1819, translated as *Little Jack*, 1857) employs his powers on the youth's behalf to enable him to administer a beating to his rival without his having to be present in the parlor where the rival is courting the beloved at that moment on a sofa. This mentor's role is thus clearly that of the matchmaker or go-between familiar from traditional comedy, especially as descended from the commedia dell'arte. The role is rendered yet more farcical by the circumstance that his protégé's rival is a magical, grotesque dwarf, who may be suspected of being purely a creature of young Balthasar's fantasy in panicked reaction to entering upon the role of suitor.⁷

Similarly, the mentor figure in *Prinzessin Brambilla: Ein Capriccio nach Jacob Callot* (1821, translated as *Princess Brambilla*, 1971), the self-styled Roman charlatan Celionati, functions chiefly to bring about the marriage between his protégé, the young actor Giglio Fava, and the pretty seamstress Giacinta Soardi. To be sure, Celionati does initi-

⁷ The critical approach taken here and elsewhere in this essay is that used in James M. McGlathery, *Mysticism and Sexuality: E. T. A. Hoffmann: Interpretations of the Tales* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1985). For an up-to-date critical bibliography of interpretive approaches to Hoffmann, see Gerhard R. Kaiser, *E. T. A. Hoffmann*, Sammlung Metzler: Realien zur Literatur, No. 243 (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1988).

ate Giglio into neo-Platonic mysteries through his tale about a mystical, primeval spring, which he calls the *Urdarquelle*; but the point of this initiation is to transform the young actor into a player in the commedia dell'arte, and that aim in turn is intimately bound up with the goal of getting Giglio and Giacinta to the altar, since they are to perform on the comic stage together, with courtship and marriage surely a chief theme of their extemporaneous jests. ("Celionati," as Prince Bastianello di Pistoja calls himself in his role as quack peddler, suggests derivation from Italian *celia* "joke" or *celione* "jester" and Latin *natus* "born".)

Sillier still is the role of the magical mentor in Hoffmann's last fairy tale *Meister Floh: ein Märchen in sieben Abenteuern* (1822, translated as *Master Flea*, 1826), of which there are indeed three: a magical flea gifted with speech and two Dutch biologists resurrected from the grave, all three of whom are enamored of a magical beloved with neo-Platonic pedigree. Far from initiating the no longer so young though still romantically inclined bachelor Peregrinus Tyß into occult secrets, the three mentors if they can be called that at all are suspect as projections of his panic at the thought of intimate involvement with a woman; and in the end Peregrinus goes his own way, daring to escape from deliciously morbid bachelor involvement with the magical beloved into marriage with a woman of flesh and blood, albeit an ideal of virginal sweetness and innocence appropriately named Röschen Lämmerhirt ("Rosie Lambsherd"). That sexual desire and the procreative urge are the secret mystery here is indicated by, among other things, the flea's ultimately irresistible attraction to the bodies of beautiful women and by the reputations of the historical Jan Swammerdam (1637-1700) and Anton van Leeuwenhoek (1632-1723) for their research on reproduction.

Also owing to the traditions of neo-Platonism and Freemasonry, the central figure of the Bildungsroman is invariably a youth. The corresponding role for young women was that of inspiration to sublimity and transcendence or of poetic muse, as is most purely represented by Mathilda in Novalis's *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. Since Hoffmann's fairy tales are only ostensibly about mystical transcendence, however, a young woman is the central figure in two of them: "Nußknacker und Mausekönig," (1816, translated as "Nutcracker and

Mouse-King," 1853), the ultimate source for Tchaikovsky's famous ballet, and "Die Königsbraut," (1821, The King's Bride). The magical realms into which the two mentors in these stories initiate their protégés are such as to suggest projection of the older men's guilty dream of love with their virginal pupils, to whom they are related, respectively, as godfather and father. Thus also in the fairy tales with heroines, magic and the occult ultimately point, not to the beyond, but once again to sexual desire.

An exception is the remaining story of the seven that Hoffmann counted among his fairy tales, "Das fremde Kind," (1817, translated as *The Strange Child*, 1852), in which the protégés are a young boy and girl barely of school age, and their magical mentor is a figure strongly reminiscent of nursery images of the Christ Child. No room, really, for sexual desire here (though the brother and sister, Felix and Christlieb, both imagine that the magical friend is of their respective sex). This exception this "strange child" among Hoffmann's stories proves the rule, however, because he wrote this tale with the aim of creating the impression that it was by another author, in order thereby to counter the criticism made of his nutcracker story that he was not capable of writing tales suited for children (the first edition of *Grimms' Fairy Tales*, the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* of Hoffmann's Romantic contemporaries Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, had just recently appeared, the first volume in 1812 and the second in 1815).

Several other stories with magical mentors reinforce the impression that Hoffmann's use of this role involved sublime parody of the genre that has since become known as the Bildungsroman. In these tales the pupil is again male, and the veiled object of portrayal is bachelor panic at the prospect of marriage and the concomitant physical consummation of desire. In "Die Bergwerke zu Falun," (1819, translated as "The Mines of Falun," 1943), the mentor is the ghost of a bachelor miner who initiates the young former sailor Elis Fröbom into the occult mysteries of the earth's depths while admonishing him to devote himself to the mystical Queen of the Mines instead of marrying the pretty miner's daughter Ulla Dahlsjö. In "Die Brautwahl" (1819, The Choice of a Bride), it is another ghost, this time of a goldsmith, who serves a young bachelor as magical mentor, in this case promising to help him win his beloved's hand on the condition that before marrying he

go first to Italy for a year to pursue his studies as a painter. In "Der Elementargeist," (1821, The Elemental Spirit), the mentor is an ugly middle-aged bachelor major in the Prussian military who initiates his protégé into a fantastic relationship with a salamandrine beloved, a relationship that serves the youth as an escape from his susceptibility to the charms of a seductive countess. Finally, in "Die Irrungen," (1820, The Mistakes,) and "Die Geheimnisse," (1821, The Secrets), a tale in two installments, the mentor is again the type of the ugly old bachelors with Godfather Drosselmeier, too, in "Nußknacker und Mausekönig" who identifies vicariously with the protégé, a younger bachelor, as the object of ardent female passion, and who in this case aims to wed the protégé to his own magical beloved, so that he himself will not be deprived of her charming presence and maternal ministrations.

As the examples just cited suggest, the role of the magical mentor in Hoffmann's tales can be interpreted as reflecting unconscious sexual panic and flight from desire on the protégé's part. The same is true of Hoffmann's handling of the beloved's characteristic role as muse as it functions in the Bildungsroman and in neo-Platonic tradition generally. Unlike the series of beloveds in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* culminating with Natalia, and unlike even Mathilda in Novalis's mystical *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, the lovers in Hoffmann's tales who are associated with ideality and transcendence tend to be creatures of fantasy. To be sure, this is clearer in the fairy tales than in the novels. Aurelia in *The Devil's Elixir* and Julia Benzon in *Tomcat Murr* are both depicted as women of flesh and blood, like Goethe's Natalia and Novalis's Mathilda. Yet although the third-person, omniscient (with some limitations) narration in Goethe's and Novalis's novels assures the actual existence of the heroines within the fiction, Aurelia's reality is guaranteed merely by Medardus's account in his confession of his adventures with supernatural powers and Julia's only by Kreisler's biographer, whose story of the composer's great love may be no more than novelistic fantasy (though it is ultimately Hoffmann's poetical depiction of his own passion for his young music pupil Julia Marc). That is to say, Hoffmann goes to considerable trouble to indicate that his novelistic heroines are the stuff of dreams. In *Meister* and *Ofterdingen*, by contrast, every indication is that the love is consummated

and that this physical consummation in fact contributes to achievement of a higher level of sublimity and transcendence.

The role of the magical lovers in Hoffmann's fairy tales, meanwhile, is only ambiguously that of muse. Invariably they represent a potential peril for the protégé as well as a promise of transcendence. Anselmus's beloved in *The Golden Pot* has a double identity as woman and as snake; hence her name Serpentina. Anselmus's fantastic encounters with her cause him to fear for his sanity. Giglio's passion for the imaginary Princess Brambilla likewise makes him feel that he is in danger of losing his mind. And Peregrinus's magical involvement with Dörtje Elverdink (alias Princess Gamaheh, alias Aline, Queen of Golconda) becomes associated in his mind with death and suicide. The reason for this ambiguity between visions of transcendence and of insanity or death is that these dream beloveds are substitutes for the true objects of the protégé's passion and fear, namely, the dream beloveds' real-life counterparts Veronika Paulmann, Giacinta Soardi, and Röschen Lämmerhirt, respectively, who in each case represent the prospect of marriage and the wedding bed. The embracing of the magical dreams of transcendence is produced by unconscious flight from desire.

This psychic mechanism is shown in more openly comic fashion in two of the other tales involving magic and the occult, "The Elemental Spirit" and "The Mistakes" (with its continuation, "The Secrets"). In the first instance a middle-aged bachelor is helped in avoiding an adulterous involvement by identifying the object of his passion with a salamandrine dream beloved from his youth; and in the second case, a dandyish young bachelor escapes from amorous pursuit by a Jewish banker's daughter into fantasies about another "oriental" girl, an alluring, magical Greek princess who in the end rejects him for what he is, a (sexual) coward pretending to be a romantic hero and lover.

Fairy tales and magical tales generally are of course not what we mean when we speak of the Bildungsroman. How about Hoffmann's young men in his two novels, *The Devil's Elixir* and *Tomcat Murr*? Do they fit or fail to fit our expectations for heroes in this genre? The monk Medardus in the *Elixir* and the composer Kreisler in *Murr* are both extremely sensitive, poetically inclined young men with deep

yearnings for transcendence and the sublime. They are indeed, to that extent, potentially the type of the neo-Platonic protégé.

Medardus's upbringing, however, has been such that his dreams of transcendence remain entirely within the framework of Christian theology. His muse is a Christian saint who he imagines has stepped forth from a painting to be reincarnated in the person of a real-life counterpart, Aurelia. His path to enlightenment and revelation is one of doubt and guilt over the ambiguity of his passion as fleshly lust and transcendent yearning; and his vision of ideality and fulfillment at the end is a dream of reunion with Aurelia as St. Rosalia in the beyond. One can scarcely speak of a process of sublimation as education and cultivation here, though Medardus's mentor, the Prior Leonardus, is certainly the required type of the cosmopolitan wise man who could potentially have made his protégé over into at least the ecclesiastical equivalent of a Wilhelm Meister at maturity, had he had a different pupil. *The Devil's Elixir*, in short, was not meant to be a Bildungsroman; it belongs instead to the fashion of the so-called Gothic novel, or tale of mystery and horror. This is of course not to say that its literary quality is the less for that; on the contrary, the psychological depiction is of great depth and mastery.⁸

What then of Kreisler in *Tomcat Murr*? He possesses the requisite poetic, sensitive soul in the mode of Wilhelm Meister and Heinrich von Ofterdingen. Yet for all that, he is basically the disillusioned romantic bitterly torn asunder (*zerrissen*) by visions of ideality on the one hand and awareness of realities on the other. As the hero of a Bildungsroman should be, he is powerfully attracted to the world of art, as means to and medium of transcendence, and he is indeed a practitioner of music, as conductor and composer. Yet his devotion to art is not associated with a healthy or harmonious development of his spiritual powers, as with Meister and Ofterdingen, but is the result of a lonely and unhappy childhood from which he sought refuge in devotion to an aunt and, after her death while he was still an infant, in

⁸ As Blackall put it, "It is the psychological dimension that gives the novel its strength, and marks it off from ordinary shockers"; see Eric A. Blackall, "The Divided Self: Hoffmann," in his *The Novels of the German Romantics* (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1983), 221-41, especially 231.

dedication to her memory. Kreisler's transcendent yearning is thus owing to an emotional deficit.

Kreisler's pathway to enlightenment is not that of the hero of a Bildungsroman either; it is not a *Bildungsweg* (a path toward *Bildung*). To be sure, his biography is essentially the story of his passionate devotion to an incarnation of his ideal of transcendence, to an ideal beloved as muse, like Ofterdingen's for Mathilda (and unlike Goethe's Meister, insofar as the latter finds his ideal in Natalia only after a series of romantic involvements). But Kreisler's love for Julia is a story of struggle, like Medardus's love for Aurelia, between guilt over desire to possess her physically and yearning to believe that his love for her is purely spiritual. What Kreisler learns, or at least in the end must accept, is that his dreams of transcendent love for Julia are sublimations of an urge to physical possession. This is at any rate the lesson that is suggested to him near the end, when it is revealed that his rival's brother had murdered the object of his dreams of transcendent beauty and innocence out of jealous love after discovering that she had "deceived" him with the brother. This revelation, in turn, occurs during Kreisler's sojourn in a monastery, where as in *The Devil's Elixir*, the choice is radicalized between surrendering to fleshly lust and celibacy. Contrary to the convention of the Bildungsroman, desire is demonized here again by being placed within the Christian context of sin and the devil, and renunciation functions as the means of escape. Upon leaving the monastery, Kreisler therefore fails to accept Master Abraham's invitation to attend Princess Maria's nameday celebration, where he would have been reunited with his beloved Julia, and instead disappears for an extended period, during which she is presumably married off to the imbecilic Prince Ignaz. Kreisler's failure to accept the invitation suggests that he either feared that to see Julia again would rekindle a desire to possess her physically or that seeing her about to be sacrificed to a marriage of convenience would awaken in him a murderous, jealous lust like that which seized Antonio over his beloved Angela's betrayal of his love with his brother Hektor.

Far from becoming Julia's lover and husband at the end of the fragmentary novel, Kreisler takes on as his housemate the literary tomcat, Murr. Bachelor life with a tomcat for companionship is hardly the way a Bildungsroman should end. Where is the vision of ideality

or transcendence here? Perhaps the unwritten part 3 of the novel would have brought some resolution of Kreisler's love for Julia beyond this tacit renunciation. Yet it is just as likely that the first installment of Kreisler's biographyhis name literally means one who spins around or goes in circlesis chronologically the last. After all, *The Devil's Elixir*, too, ends with Medardus's renunciation of fulfillment of his love in this lifein his case of necessity, after his magical double, Count Viktorin, has murdered Aurelia just as she was being invested as a nun.

Our very last hope for discovering a Bildungsroman heroa *Bildungsheldin* Hoffmann's fiction is the title role of his last, unfinished novel, namely Tomcat Murr himself. A Bildungsroman with an animal as hero, however artistically gifted, poetic, and sublime, hardly accords with the expectations for this genre, of course, and would clearly seem to be intended as parody. Murr, indeed, refers to the sublime but has little capacity for it, as shown in the novel's opening scene, where he laments the lack of "true sympathy of souls" ("wahre Sympathie der Seelen") in his day because a dove he yearned to devour has sought refuge in the dovecote instead of in his embrace. As befits a tomcat, Murr is not unhappily the prisoner of his biological instincts, urges, and appetites.⁹ His educational path, moreover, far from being a progressive poeticization of life in its manifold aspects, as in Goethe's *Meister* and Novalis's *Ofterdingen*, is a series of negative encounters with the outside world. Like Kreisler, indeed, with whom he was to reside in his last years in the novel's unwritten third part, the tomcat ends in renunciation. By contrast with Kreisler, though, if Murr's renunciation extends to love's consummation, it is not out of fear of the impurity of his passion as born of lust, but again as befits a tomcatfear of rejection based on his short-lived cohabitation with the female cat Miesmies and his being subjected to ridicule by the female dog Minona. After his disappointment in love with Miesmies, Murr sought refuge in bachelor friendship, as then implicitly happens again at the end, when Master Abraham, in departing on a long journey, boards Murr with Kreisler. That sexual guilt is not the

⁹ Blackall (236) makes the point that "Kreisler is as driven by his instincts as Murr. . . ."

issue with Murr is shown, moreover, by the fact that his unwitting incestuous desire in making advances to his fetching feline daughter Mina plays no role at all in his turning away from love.

Hoffmann's tomcat novel also fails the test as a Bildungsroman and even as a parody of that genre for an important formal reason as well. Like Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, *Tomcat Murr* is a fictional autobiography, whereas a Bildungsroman demands third-person narration. *Murr* is thus rather a parody of Goethe's poeticized autobiography *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (1811/33, *Poetry and Truth*) than his *Wilhelm Meister*. It is a spoof on the fashion of literary autobiographies of the sort for which Rousseau's *Confessions* was a chief model. At the same time, the Murr and Kreisler stories, taken together, are indeed Hoffmann's autobiography and confession, an ironic depiction of himself as composer and as author, as his music pupil Julia Marc's passionate lover from afar and as subject to tomcat instincts as well.

If Hoffmann did not write anything that can fairly be called a Bildungsroman, why include him in this volume at all? As we have seen, the neo-Platonic dream of sublimity and initiation into transcendent mysteries, which may be deemed basic to that genre, permeates virtually the whole of Hoffmann's work. Moreover, as has long been recognized, the mentor-pupil relationship is another familiar feature, not only in the two novels, but in the fairy tales and other stories as well. Finally, the protégé's beloved, or her magical reflex, typically functions as the mentor's agent, serving as the pupil's object of poetic inspiration. If despite these affinities Hoffmann's tales and novels cannot, with the widest latitude, be termed Bildungsromane, it is because the basic thrust of his fiction is precisely to undercut the neo-Platonic dream, depicting it as occasioned by desire. Desire, if one will, is the hidden lever that sets the imagination in motion. As one of Hoffmann's mouthpieces, Lothar, says in explaining the hermit's madness in *Die Serapions-Brüder* (1819/21, *The Serapion Brethren*), since the mind is confined in the body, the poetic dreamer forgets that the world outside the mind including the body compels the mind to perceive things as it dictates.¹⁰ In Hoffmann's works, desire is

10 Cf. E. T. A. Hoffmann, *Die Serapionsbrüder*, vol. 4 of *Sämtliche Werke in Einzelbänden*, ed. Walter Müller-Seidel (Munich: Winkler, 1963), 5455.

just such an outside force that acts as the hidden lever setting in motion the inner world of the spirit.

The Blackening of the Breast:
The Narrative of Existential Education and R.M. Rilke's
The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge

Walter H. Sokel

A key image in Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* is the blackening of the mother's breast. The mother blackens her breast to wean the child.¹ She employs a repellent device to bring about a desired result. By alienating the child from her, she furthers its growth toward an independent existence. The blackening of the breast helps to form the human individual. Kierkegaard uses the image in a strange transposition of gender. Apart from its well-known autobiographical relevance to the author's relationship to his ex-fiancée Regina Olsen,² it refers to Abraham's self-denigration in his effort to protect his son from the horrifying truth of God's demand for the boy's death. Abraham presents himself as a bloodthirsty ogre to mask the fact that the real villain is God Himself. On a further and deeper level, the meta-

1 Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling and The Sickness Unto Death*, translated with an introduction and notes by Walter Lowrie (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1941; reprinted 1954), 28f.

2 Cf. Walter Lowrie, *Kierkegaard*, Harper Torchbooks/The Cloister Library (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1938, reprinted 1962), 219.

phor of the blackened breast relates to God's monstrous face which his demand for Isaac's sacrifice has suddenly revealed to Abraham. It points to the cruel rupture of the oneness of the ethical and the divine. God's command weans Abraham from the illusion that the ground of Being coincides with human morality. Abraham's agonized awakening from illusion catapults him into freedom, for now it is up to him to decide what law is to guide his action. He alone has to choose whether to follow the universal law of morality and nature or to put his special relationship to God ahead of everything else. This choice is Abraham's entirely. No external force constrains him in one direction or the other. However, this freedom appears as his greatest bane. It is the angst, called fear and trembling, which in his subsequent *Concept of Dread* Kierkegaard makes the precondition of the freedom to make choices of momentous consequence. Angst is the price exacted by autonomy. It is the blackened breast, which by horrifying him forces the individual to exchange blissful dependency for a freedom in which he or she is alone.

The situation of Kierkegaard's Abraham bears on the Bildungsroman because it relates to a concept intimately connected with the emergence of this genre. The idea of *Bildung* as spiritual maturity underlies the concept of Enlightenment, as in Kant's words, "the exit of man from self-inflicted immaturity."³ As already for Lessing in *The Education of the Human Race*,⁴ human maturity is for Kant moral autonomy. However, Kant's idea of moral autonomy is still limited by reason. The morally mature human being chooses the law that univer-

³*Immanuel Kant's Sämtliche Werke: In chronologischer Reihenfolge*, ed. G. Hartenstein (Leipzig: Leopold Voss, 1867), 4:161. [My translation]. It is Martin Swales's great merit to have pointed out connections between the Bildungsroman and *Bildung* as "the expression of a particular kind of bourgeois humanism," which he links to the thought of Kant in *The German Bildungsroman from Wieland to Hesse* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1978), 1421. However, we should in this context bear in mind that Kant's historical thinking, like the primary examples of the Bildungsroman, was deeply imbued with Leibnizian monadism, an intellectual tradition which dominated German culture in the eighteenth century. Cf. Ernst Cassirer, *Freiheit und Form: Studien zur deutschen Geistesgeschichte*, 3d ed. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1961).

⁴*Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts*, 1777 and 1780.

sal rationality prescribes. As a rational being, he has no other choice, and in that sense his choice is predetermined. Abraham's situation radicalizes the principle of autonomy by separating it from reason. Only when, as in Abraham's case, the individual has to decide, unaided by reason, between two goods or evils in his case, between love of child and loyalty to God can his choice be considered absolutely self-determined.

Because of this removal of the grounds for action from any universal guidance such as reason or the moral law, Kierkegaard's Abraham has difficulty communicating the reasons for his decision. God's demand is addressed not to *any* father, but to Abraham alone. It creates a situation with relevance only to him. He cannot possibly share with anyone else his anguish of choosing, for no one can believe that God would contradict His own universal law which proscribes murder. The isolation in which Abraham finds himself transcends the possibilities of communication. Thus Abraham becomes not only an individual but also an absolute one.⁵ God's demand brings about an education of a radical sort. Weaning Abraham from the universal, it forces him to rely on himself in a most fundamental way. Like physical weaning, this education is dialectical. A most negative experience turns out to be the vehicle of an absolutely positive result.

A group of narratives exists in which education is dialectical in the same sense as Kierkegaard's image of the blackening of the breast. In these narratives, the protagonist's experiences of fear and trembling, dread and absolute isolation, emerge as the precondition for his exit from a profound and universal kind of immaturity. These narratives of weaning, as I propose to call them, overlap in many ways with the subgenres of the lyrical novel⁶ and the diary novel.⁷ The narratives of weaning form, however, a distinct subgenre for two reasons: the-

⁵ Abraham "as the individual was placed in an absolute relation to the *absolute*." *Fear and Trembling*, 103.

⁶ Cf. Ralph Freedman, *The Lyrical Novel: Studies in Hermann Hesse, André Gide and Virginia Woolf* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1963).

⁷ Cf. Lorna Martens, *The Diary Novel* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge UP, 1985).

matically they belong to the existential or proto-existential sensibility as it first developed around the middle of the nineteenth century in authors such as Kierkegaard, Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, and Nietzsche.⁸ Secondly, this group of narratives, beginning with Leo Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilych* (1886) and culminating in Jean-Paul Sartre's *La Nausée* (1938), describes processes of learning that link it to the Bildungsroman in ways which I shall now try to sketch.

Friedrich Kittler, in his study of *Wilhelm Meister*, has shown how the fulfillment of a promise planted in early childhood unites with socialization in producing the prototype of the Bildungsroman. Wilhelm Meister's desire, first awakened by his mother's desire, finds fulfillment in the end when, with the discreet help of obliging father figures, he obtains in Natalie an ideal mother figure.⁹ If this utopian synthesis of individuality and socialization is to typify the Bildungsroman,¹⁰ the subgenre I intend to examine constitutes its exact inversion. Not development but rupture, not continuity but disjunction is its guiding principle. These narratives do not describe life from childhood or early youth to maturity, but concentrate on a period of crisis. Biography is not their purpose. Whereas the Bildungsroman shows a mimetic preoccupation with the life that it presents and considers this presentation its chief end, the narratives of weaning are closer to the older genre, the novel of education. The novel of education has a didactic aim to which it subordinates descriptive concern. Insights are the *raison d'être* of its plot. It does not seek to paint a portrait; it seeks to mediate a point of view. Privileging a period of crisis rather than describing a life, the narrative of weaning intends this crisis to exemplify a general insight into the human condition. Its protagonists are paradigmatic figures. Their experiences are illustrative

8 Cf. Edith Kern, *Existential Thought and Fictional Technique: Kierkegaard, Sartre, Beckett* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1970).

9 "Über die Sozialisation Wilhelm Meisters," in Friedrich Kittler and Gerhard Kaiser, *Dichtung als Sozialisationsspiel: Studien zu Goethe und Gottfried Keller* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 13133.

10 Cf. Swales's distinction between the Kantian and the Hegelian strain in the genre. (Swales, 1721)

of something transcending their lives. While in the Bildungsroman the reader primarily remains the observer of the process by which a life is formed (*gebildet*), in the narratives of weaning the reader is to experience from within the problem which human existence presents to the character, who is usually the sole point of view of the narrative.

If concentration on the inner life, or character, is what sets off the Bildungsroman from the older romance and tale of adventure,¹¹ then the narratives of weaning represent its culmination. They concentrate entirely on inner event. The traditional Bildungsroman still retains quite a few elements of romance, adventure tale, and the picaresque. The hero's *Bildung* resides, to a considerable extent, in the impact the world makes upon him. *Bildung* proceeds by interchange with other characters, by exposure to varying locales and social milieus. In the narratives of existential education, the nature of experience is largely interiorized. The external world, to the extent that it is shown at all, exists as a catalyst for the thoughts and feelings of the protagonist, but the rendition of thoughts and feelings is not an end in itself. No matter how enigmatically and ambiguously, experiences in it relate to a learning process dialectical, inconclusive, and obscure though this process might be.

In the Bildungsroman the hero "learns" by false starts. For long stretches he is lost in what will later turn out to be illusion, error, pursuit of false goals. Thorough exposure to these is the chief vehicle by which formation of character or *Bildung* is attained. The narrative of existential education privileges this false turn of existence which is its primary borrowing from the Bildungsroman, while it turns other elements of the genre, such as continuity and, above all, socialization, on their heads.

I shall concentrate, after a brief discussion of *The Death of Ivan Ilych*, on one of the most important of these narratives, R. M. Rilke's *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*, which forms a kind of bridge between Tolstoy's tale and Sartre's *La Nausée*.

Leo Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilych* identifies the absolute individual as everyman, as the name *Ivan Ilych*, the Russian equivalent of *John Johnson*, indicates. Ivan Ilych undergoes a universal human fate

¹¹ Cf. Swales, 13.

he lives toward his death. The paradox of this universal, however, is its also being the most absolutely individual condition. For although everyone is mortal, each one has to die alone. No one can die for anyone else, as no one else can take one's place in life. No one can truly share the experience which individuation makes each one undergo in a body and with a mind that are his or hers alone. The universal that is life is a totally individuating condition. Ivan Ilych's dying spells out to him what living is. Ivan Ilych's gradual learning of this insight is the narrative process described in *The Death of Ivan Ilych*. It is his *Bildung*. Representing education through experience makes *The Death of Ivan Ilych* a Bildungsroman. In keeping with this learning process, the narrative perspective changes from an impersonal narrator's report, looking at Ivan Ilych from outside, to a personal perspective in which the narrator becomes the transparent vessel of the character's intimate thoughts. The reader comes to share Ivan Ilych's point of view, which turns into the sole perspective of the narrative.

This shift in narrative perspective from external to internal expresses Ivan Ilych's education, which is a way of learning to see differently. Before the onset of his long fatal illness, which isolates him from his family and society, Ivan Ilych saw not with his own eyes, but with the eyes of his society. He shared its prejudices; he judged with its judgments. He lived impersonally. He chose the woman he was to marry because he thought this choice the proper one in the opinion of his superiors. Seeing himself with the eyes of others, he functioned as an object, rather than as a subject. Correspondingly, the narrative perspective presents him from outside, impersonally, as he saw himself. Ivan Ilych was not yet an individual. He lived according to what Heidegger, deeply influenced by Tolstoy's story, was later to call *das Man*.¹²

Ivan Ilych's dying is an education, for it shows him that his socialized existence has been incompatible with the human condition that dooms human beings to be themselves. Confronted by the specter of his nothingness, he becomes aware of his being. In the face of his death, he begins to feel the precious uniqueness of his life. For the first

¹² Heidegger refers to Tolstoy's story in a footnote in *Being and Time* (Division II, Chapter 1, Section 51).

time, he learns to see with his own eyes, feel his own emotions, and think his own thoughts. Dying he begins to live *his* life. He attains autonomy in the form of authenticity.

Like Abraham's fear and trembling, Ivan Ilych's dying is a weaning from the universal, which here appears not, as in Kierkegaard, as the moral law, but as a conventional existence. Dying is the process of being reborn as a self. *The Death of Ivan Ilych* shows the difference between two forms of existing which, borrowing the terms from Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra* (but with a somewhat different meaning), I propose to call the ego and the self. The ego is the object of self-regard. It is the self viewed by itself as an object, a commodity, precious or contemptible as the case may be, but always with an implicit price tag attached to it. Lukács's term *reification*, the viewing of oneself as a thing (*res*), describes the ego. Sartre, in *The Transcendence of the Ego*, distinguishes the ego, the result of self-reflecting consciousness, from spontaneous consciousness and desire. In *The Death of Ivan Ilych*, spontaneous consciousness and desire are his true self. However, before the onset of his "sickness unto death" Kierkegaard's term for despair Ivan Ilych's self-regard made concern for the opinion of others the guiding principle of his behavior. His dying is a process by which the ego is overcome to make room for the self.

The weaning of the self from the ego is the education which Rilke's *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* (1910, translated as *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*, 1930) describe.¹³ In *The Notebooks*

¹³ Fritz Martini's formulation "the ego that seeks its self" in *Das Wagnis der Sprache: Interpretationen deutscher Prosa von Nietzsche bis Benn*, 2d ed. (Stuttgart: Klett, 1956 [1954]), 144, would have to be reversed. Malte is weaned from his ego toward the self. That *The Notebooks* describes a "development" has been frequently seen. Cf. among others Armand Nivelle, "Sens et structure des *Cahiers de Malte Laurids Brigge*," *La revue d'esthétique* 12 (1959): 532; Ernst Fedor Hoffmann, "Zum dichterischen Verfahren in Rilkes *Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge*," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift* 42, no. 2 (1968): 20230 and reprinted in *Materialien zu Rainer Maria Rilke Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge*, ed. Hartmut Engelhardt (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974), 21444, to which my page references will refer; Walter Seifert, *Das epische Werk Rainer Maria Rilkes* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1969); Theodore Ziolkowski, *Dimensions of the Modern Novel: German Texts and European Contexts* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1969). Hoffmann and Ziolkowski see this development mainly in aesthetic terms

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the impact of Tolstoy combines with that of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra* (1882/83).¹⁴ Rilke received the combined influence of Nietzsche and Tolstoy through Lou Andreas-Salomé, whose suitor Nietzsche had been and who, an admirer of Tolstoy, introduced her young lover to the Russian writer.¹⁵ Zara-

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as Malte's "effort" to achieve "the valid form" (Hoffmann, 224) and as a gradual change from the first-person confessional to the third-person narrative (Ziolkowski, 31). Seifert sees an existential self-overcoming giving way to an aesthetic one (240). While I share the view that *Malte* describes a process of education, I see it in keeping with Rilke's own interpretation of Malte's development as one leading to "a newly gained freedom" that should have resulted in a moral change, i.e., a change expressed in actions. (Letter to Clara Rilke of 19 October 1907, quoted from *Materialien*, 40. This work will subsequently be referred to as Engelhardt.)

14 The importance of Tolstoy for *The Notebooks* can be seen from the endings of the novel which preceded the one Rilke finally adopted. Both involve Tolstoy. Cf. Rainer Maria Rilke, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Ernst Zinn with Ruth Sieber-Rilke (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1966), 6:96778. In the first version of this planned conclusion, Malte accuses Tolstoy of having betrayed his own greatness as an artist. The critique thus implies admiration for Tolstoy's creative achievement. For the particular attraction that *The Death of Ivan Ilych* possessed for Rilke, cf. his letter to Lotte Hepner of 8 November 1915 (Engelhardt, 113f.). For the decisive impact of Kierkegaard on Rilke shortly before and during the writing of *The Notebooks*, see Otto Friedrich Bollnow, *Rilke*, 2d ed. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1951), 2325. For Kierkegaard's general importance for Rilke, see Werner Kohlschmidt, "Rilke und Kierkegaard," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 63 (1950/1951): 18992. For the great importance Nietzsche had for Rilke in his formative years, see Eliza Mary Butler, *Rainer Maria Rilke* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1941, reprinted 1946), 2330. Cf. also Erich Heller, "Rilke and Nietzsche," in *The Disinherited Mind: Discourse on Thought, Belief and Poetry* (Cleveland: World, 1959), 12377, (London: Bowes & Bowes, 1952).

15 Rilke had already come under the spell of Nietzsche prior to his meeting of Lou, but she reinforced and deepened it. On a personal level the visits with Tolstoy proved to be quite ineffectual and the second even ludicrously disastrous. Cf. Butler, 55, and Wolfgang Leppmann, *Rilke: A Life*, trans. Russell M. Stockman and Richard Exner (New York: Fromm, 1984), 10811. The German original is *Rilke: Sein Leben, seine Welt, sein Werk* (Bern and Munich: Scherz, 1981).

thustra's ethics of self-transcendence, which had played a pivotal role in Rilke's early work, is still a vital factor in his novel.

Nietzsche's Zarathustra preaches self-transcendence as the law of life. The *Übermensch* (overman) is only the most obvious example of Zarathustra's morality. The demand for self-transcendence permeates the entire work. Self-transcendence is the means by which life counterbalances the gravitational force of death. It is the command to deny, hate, and reject one's present self in aspiring to a self beyond it. The ethics of self-transcendence can be closely related to the distinction between ego and self made in the context of Tolstoy's tale. (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and *The Death of Ivan Ilych* were written at the same time, which may show something about their historical affinity.) What I called the ego corresponds in *Zarathustra* to the self that is to be overcome. It is persistence in an identity once attained and smugly held on to. The self-rejection that propels a life to reach for a higher form of being is a dying. The close analogy between the two works resides in the principle of dialectics that animates both. What is experienced as an *Untergang*, a fall and death, is perceived as an *Übergang* (as in Zarathustra's example of the tightrope walker),¹⁶ a bridge and threshold to a new and higher life.

To understand *The Notebooks* as a narrative of weaning in the existential sense, it is necessary to see *The Death of Ivan Ilych* side by side with *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and Kierkegaard's concept of angst. It is to see the yearning for authenticity and autonomy side by side with the law of self-transcendence, and it is to see both as presented dialectically rather than directly. That is, the demand for a life of self-overcoming and authenticity appears at first not explicitly, but in its negative form as the experience of being wrenched from comfort, solace, and security. The work describes the crushing of an ego in preparation for the liberation of a self which, in the work, appears only as a possibility and is never shown as attained. An *Untergang* is to be read as an *Übergang*. Rilke advised his reader to read *The Notebooks*

¹⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Werke in drei Bänden*, ed. Karl Schlechta (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1955), 2:281.

from an inverted perspective, "against the current."¹⁷ What to Malte appears at first utterly negative, unsettling, dreadful, is to be viewed in a positive light.¹⁸ To a considerable extent, this shift of perspective occurs within the text itself, so that one can speak of an education not only of the reader, but also of the experiencing and narrating consciousness that bears the name of Malte Laurids Brigge.¹⁹

17 Letter to Artur Hospelt of 11 February 1912; Engelhardt, 99. Malte's *Untergang* does not have to be seen literally, as though Rilke had always retained his original idea of Malte's death. The final version has an open ending and does not preclude a future for Malte. One is left with "a projecting, an intending, an opening of the horizon" (Martini, 175). Cf. also Helmut Naumann's view of Rilke's change of mind on his protagonist's fate in Helmut Naumann, *Malte-Studien: Untersuchungen zu Aufbau und Aussagegehalt der Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge von Rainer Maria Rilke*, Reihe Deutsche und Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft, No. 7 (Rheinfelden: Schäuble, 1983), 23.

18 See Rilke's letter to Lotte Hepner of 8 November 1915: ". . . I myself feel sometimes that [this book] is like a mold [eine hohle Form], like a negative, in which the depressions and grooves are pain, desolation, and most woeful insight. The cast, however, if it were possible to make one . . . would perhaps be happiness, assenta most exact and certain bliss." (Engelhardt, 110). All translations are my own, unless indicated otherwise. The dialectical character of *The Notebooks*, in which the negative emerges as positive and vice versa, has been pointed out. Cf. Martini, 149; Ulrich Fülleborn, "Form and Sinn der *Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge*: Rilkes Prosabuch und der moderne Roman," in *Unterscheidung und Bewahrung: Festschrift für Hermann Kunisch zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Klaus Lazarowicz and Wolfgang Kron (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1961), 14769, reprinted in Engelhardt, 17598, to which my pagination refers. However, Fülleborn's "law of complementarity" (184f.), according to which every "move" has its "countermove," differs essentially from the dialectical principle which I see at work in *Malte*, since such a law does not envisage a development with turning points, but a perpetual fluctuation. Walter Seifert comes closer to the idea of dialectics envisaged here but finds a synthesis, an "equilibrium" (208, 270) which contradicts the principle of self-transcendence, as will become clear subsequently.

19 Anthony R. Stephens sees Malte as a "changing aspect or mode of a complex ego-structure." *Rilkes Malte Laurids Brigge: Strukturanalyse des erzählerischen Bewußtseins* (Bern and Frankfurt am Main: Herbert Lang, 1974), 116. Although this formulation might be too extreme, it has the merit of highlighting the fact that the novel offers no other point of reference except the writing emanating

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Like *The Death of Ivan Ilych*, *The Notebooks* can be understood as describing a process which results in a certain insight or point of view. This point of view appears as a bestowal of meaning on the anguish recorded in the earlier parts of *The Notebooks*. The connection between Malte's distress and its meaning does not appear as a linear plot illustrating an idea. Rather, it appears as the way in which the reader is first made to share the horrors of clinging to a certain view of self and world and subsequently treated to the propagation of a new view in which horror gives way to celebration. This change is merely alluded to. Its full realization is left as a challenge to the reader, even as transforming his insight into an actual change of his life is left as a challenge to Malte to which he may or may not rise. Malte's education does not coincide with the limits of the text. It has already been in progress before the notes begin, and it is by no means complete when they end. Malte's move to Paris, which precedes the first entry of his notes, is already part of the change of which one of the first entries of the *Notebooks* speaks. This change has alienated him from all human relationships, and he considers making this break with his past final. That this change is, in the broadest sense, an education, or at least viewed by Malte as such, emerges from his statement, very early in *The Notebooks*, that he is learning to see. As will become evident, learning to see has not only an aesthetic but also a moral-existential dimension, since at its deepest meaning it involves a change of perspective that would fundamentally affect his whole existence. However, the nature of what Malte "learns" is such that one can never finish learning it. The last words of the novel are *not yet*, which shows its open-endedness. In a letter written very shortly after the novel was finished, Rilke affirmed its open ending. "Further notes," he wrote, "could still have been added. . . . In aesthetic terms this is a poor unity, but in human terms it is possible, and, in any event, what emerges beyond this [open end] is the project of an existence [ein Daseinsentwurf] and a shadowy web of powers stirring [within Malte]."20 Two years later Rilke recom-

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from a fictional consciousness. What we receive is not the mimetic representation of a world, but Malte's ever-solitary consciousness.

20 Letter to Countess Manon zu Solms-Laubach of 11 April 1910; Engelhardt, 82.

mended that *Malte* be read "in the ascending sense, which is its real and decisive meaning."²¹ The text itself does not allow a definitive answer but strongly suggests Malte's transcendence of his original anxiety and his working on a *Weltanschauung* that would permit him to take a missionary stance toward the world.

This tendency in *The Notebooks* and it is no more than that will become clearer after a consideration of their structure. *The Notebooks* has been seen as consisting of three parts. In the first, Malte's Parisian present dominates; in the second, memories of childhood and family tend to crowd out the Parisian scenes; and in the final part, narratives about historical and legendary figures, culminating in the "legend" (Malte's term) of the Prodigal Son, take the place of the intimate personal impressions and memories of the earlier parts.²² One can, however, also see a division of the novel into two halves conforming to the two volumes in which the first edition appeared. The first half consists of the interplay between Malte's alienated Parisian present and, juxtaposed to it, his memories of his childhood in rural and feudal Denmark. The second half begins with Malte's viewing of the tapestries of *La dame à la licorne* and, arising from this, Malte's projection of an ideal of love. This ideal increasingly dominates the *Notebooks*, until it finds its most consistent narrative expression in the "legend" of the Prodigal Son with which the work closes. Although accidentally arrived at, this structure corresponds exactly to the "current" of the work.²³

21 Letter to Artur Hospelt of 11 February 1912; Engelhardt, 99. The critical literature generally supports the view of the open-endedness of the final version of the novel against Rilke's own early statements about Malte's *Untergang*. Cf. Fülleborn, 177; Hoffmann 236; Ziolkowski 36. While Stephens stresses the ambiguity of the ending (19f., 234), Naumann, as has been mentioned, sees a change of mind on Rilke's part from an originally tragic to a hopeful ending (cf. note 17).

22 Cf. Hoffmann, 223-27, 243.

23 Cf. Seifert, 268. Seifert sees an internal justification in the accidentally arrived-at structural division of the novel into two halves. He detects a parallel between the beginnings of both parts. Both begin with a self-imposed exodus and profound change: Malte's exile to Paris and the young women's exodus from their

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Considered in terms of temporal structure, Malte's doctrine of love introduces a present tense markedly different from the present of Malte's Paris experiences. This new present is not a time of lived experience, but of timeless moral value. By the same token the promulgation of this morality opens the present toward the future, since the ideal of love advocated by Malte implies, and at one point explicitly proposes, a change of behavior for mankind. The concluding half of *The Notebooks* thus looks toward the time dimension privileged by existential thought. Futurity is the sphere in which, according to Heidegger, *Dasein*, or human reality, has its proper being as care and project.²⁴ This movement of *The Notebooks* from the interplay between present and past toward the future is also a movement from the space of angst closing in on Malte's consciousness toward open vistas in which his consciousness loses itself in the other. Programmatic and parabolic enunciation of a moral ideal crowds out the description of personal experience. For the understanding of *The Notebooks* as a narrative of dialectical education, an examination of the message of this ideal will prove essential. From it light is shed upon the current of the work.²⁵

Malte's ideal of love declares loving to be essentially different and infinitely superior to being loved. The love that Malte extols does not seek fulfillment and satiation; it does not ask for a return. It is an ardor that no object can contain and that always surpasses itself. It does not stay at the degree of passion once attained. It soars beyond itself. What else, Malte asks, is the story of Marianna Alcoforado, the

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ancient family estates to the modern metropolis. One takes place on the personal level, the other is seen clearly in its historical significance. I shall return below to this important insight.

²⁴ The seminal and central position of Rilke in existential thought is illuminated by Heidegger's avowal, related by J.-F. Angelloz, that his thought "was nothing but the philosophical unfolding of what had been uttered poetically in Rilke." J.-F. Angelloz, *Rainer Maria Rilke: L'évolution spirituelle du poète* (Paris: Hartmann, 1936), 3.

²⁵ Naumann, ²⁴, also advances the view that the work receives essential clarity from the end. In the concluding parts of the work he sees "Malte's ascent commencing by virtue, above all, of his newly understood idea of love."

Portuguese nun whom her French lover deserted and who transformed her grief into the poetry of her letters, what else is it but a latter-day version of the myth of Byblis, the nymph who pursued her faithless lover and could not cease to pursue him even beyond her death? Still rushing after him, she metamorphosed, "rushing into a rushing spring" (925).²⁶ Powerful emotion steadfastly pursued transforms the self. Love that no longer seeks reciprocity is driven by its own momentum to transcend itself as well as its object. Marianna Alcoforado's, Gaspara Stampa's, and above all Sappho's transmutation of betrayed and unrequited love into literature exemplifies Malte's ideal of self-transcendence. Metamorphosis achieves a kind of immortality, precisely by giving up the original and "natural" desire of being fulfilled.

Nonpossessing or intransitive love is only the most conspicuous example of Malte's ideal of self-transcendence.²⁷ It transforms itself into, and indeed finds its parallel in, art. The passage in which Malte first proclaims his doctrine of love as a program for mankind is followed immediately by the memory of a childhood conversation with his mother about the marvelously deft women who have made the lace they both admire.

"They surely went to heaven [for having accomplished such a thing of beauty]," I said admiringly. I remember it occurred to me that, for a long time now, I had not inquired about heaven. Maman drew a long breath. . . . After a while, she said slowly, "To heaven? I believe they are entirely in this lace. Considered in that way, it might well be seen as eternal blessedness." (836)

²⁶ All quotations from and references to *The Notebooks* are taken from the edition listed in note 14. The number in parentheses, following the quotation or references, indicates the page number in volume 6 of *Sämtliche Werke*. Where the translations are not my own, a second number refers to M.D. Herter Norton's translation (New York: W. W. Norton, 1949).

²⁷ Cf. Bollnow, 206f. Bollnow uses the term "immanent transcending which takes place within itself [on the spot, as it were], a transcending as such." He sees Rilke as anticipating Heidegger but ignores the closeness of this ideal of self-transcending to the ethos of Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, a source common to both Rilke and Heidegger.

Self-transcendence is a work, a creation, in which the worker, by abandoning herself to it, is preserved.²⁸ The passage also makes very clear that the ideal of self-transcendence is a secularized form of Christian belief in immortality. Nietzsche's Zarathustra, after proclaiming the death of God, transfers transcendence from the beyond to the future, the overman, whom man is to bring forth. Malte changes self-transcendence of the species into self-transcendence as individual work or project, whether it be art, or love, or God, whom, he says, "we have undertaken as our task" (926), or childhood, which Malte feels is something to be "mastered." The lace workers' heaven is neither a spatial nor a temporal beyond; it is neither heaven nor a future species or society. It is the work they have created by pouring their lives into it. Essential here is not only the art but also the immortality. Art is salvational. By having given their lives to their activity, these women have been able to transform their humble and ephemeral existence into things in which they are still, across the centuries, admirably remembered. It is by losing themselves in the nonself, the work, that they were able to perpetuate themselves beyond death, even as the great lovers, by renouncing all hope for selfish reward, have made of their feelings things that stir and inspire. The superiority of the self as subject as projecting activity of the soul over the self as object of self-regard underlies Malte's distinction between lover and beloved.

Near the end of his *Notebooks*, Malte sums up the difference between loving and being loved: "To be loved is to be consumed. To love is to glow with inexhaustible oil. To be loved is to pass away; to love is to endure" (937). While loving is an activity of the soul which, through the energy that drives it on, partakes of the cosmic power that sustains being, being loved is a passive condition. In that sense, love can be said to be part of eternity, while being loved makes the beloved an object that shares the fate of all objects, which is to dwindle and to disappear. In contrast to dynamic activity, the reified being of the beloved creates no effects and leaves no traces except those that

²⁸ Ziolkowski, (6), points out that art is a refuge for Malte from his temporal existence. Important for Malte, however, does not seem to be the result so much as the *process*, the work and effort of self-transcending. Ziolkowski's emphasis on the timelessness of the work misses the dynamic aspect of Malte-Rilke's ideal.

the lover allows him to have. (I use the masculine pronoun for the objects of love because for Malte, as for Rilke, the great lovers have almost all been women. Men generally have been incapable of wanting more from love than to be its adored objects.) It is through the lover that the beloved receives whatever worth he has. It is through her that he will be remembered, if he is to be remembered at all. Thus paradoxically, though courted and desired and therefore imagining himself to be the dominant partner, the beloved in a curious parallel to the master in Hegel's *Phenomenology*, who becomes the slave of his slave is dependent on and subordinate to the lover. Those for whom love is not an activity but a tribute make themselves victims of their self-love. "Badly live those who are loved, and they are in danger. Would that they could overcome themselves and turn into lovers" (924). It is the need for reification that is the target of Malte's attack. This need stems from the egocentric perspective. He who wants to get love rather than give it looks upon himself as the object of his self-concern. Self-concern engenders the dread of mortality. As for Ivan Ilych, it is inconceivable to the ego that it could ever die. Has it not always been the target of all solicitude and the center of all interest? And yet even the self-enamored knows and he especially that he must die. In this grim situation he flees to being loved as to a haven, a shelter of reassurance, a means of forgetting that he is mortal. The need to be loved is born from fear, but it does not provide the security it seeks.²⁹ As a shield against fear, love proves futile. "Behold," Malte writes, "kings recline and stare, and the storyteller cannot divert them. At the blissful breasts of their favorite, a horror crawls over them and makes them jittery and joyless" (778). A possession can always be lost, and those who see love, like life itself, as their possession always "live in danger." Those, however, who love without seeking to possess are free of insecurity. Having abandoned the egocentric perspective, they are independent and sovereign. Like Camus's absurd hero, they have freed themselves from fear as from hope. They alone determine the

²⁹ Stephens, 253, points out that Malte himself is a parallel to the objects of love who seek security. He refers to Rilke's letter to his Polish translator, Hulewicz, in which Rilke speaks of "Malte's nature, which looks for security."

course of their love and their sole advantage is to be themselves. The ideal of self-transcendence is also the ideal of absolute authenticity.

In the penultimate section preceding the legend of the Prodigal Son, the German song sung for Malte by a Danish woman whom he encounters in Venice contains these lines: "Behold the lovers,/as soon as their avowals begin/they start to lie" (936). The show of mutual love, these lines suggest, inevitably brings on bad faith. The need to please the other in order to be found pleasing in turn cannot coexist with truthfulness. The anxiety of self-regard imports dishonesty into love. However, where there is no demand for a return of love, lovers can be at one with themselves, for they do not look for love outside themselves.

Love for Malte is a passion that asserts the self while giving up the ego. It asserts itself, the feeling it is, as authentic, sovereign, and absolute. It corresponds closely to Kierkegaard's concept of passion as the foundation of the truth of the self. For Malte passion is what makes the great lovers absolute individuals, not because they wish to be different, but because what they feel fills them so completely that no duplicity can arise, no gap can emerge between what they feel and what they are. They do not possess love as something from which the self could be separate as an owner is separate from what he owns. They are their love. When her lovers left her, Sappho, the supreme heroine of Malte's ideal of love, was not sad but jubilant. "At such exalted partings, her heart became one with nature" (931). Free of the last remnant of self-concern, she partook of the selfless prodigality, the pure squandering energy which Zarathustra calls the "giving virtue."³⁰ She "disdained" the division which makes "one of two the lover and one the beloved" (931, 203) and kindled such passion in her passive, weak, and self-centered partners that they came to forget themselves and turned into strong and giving lovers like herself. Such giving virtue, the purest form of altruism, is the ideal envisaged in Malte's doctrine of love. It is a transcendence of the ego that includes

³⁰ Nietzsche, 2:33640.

an ethical mission guiding the other toward the same freedom it has achieved for itself.³¹

The education that *The Notebooks* describes is an education from fear to love.³² The structure of the novel reflects this process. What in the first half appears from Malte's perspective as fear gradually reveals itself to him as the negative side of that power which transforms the ego and of which love is the most glorious manifestation.

Fear and *dread* are key words in the early parts of *The Notebooks*, and Else Buddeberg's statement that for Malte "angst is the name that unlocks everything"³³ is not wide of the mark in characterizing the first third of the work. In Malte's Parisian experiences life dwells in the shadow of an all-pervasive angst. As in Kierkegaard, angst in *Malte* is the sign by which a demand for liberation, or in Kierkegaard's term "the dizziness of freedom,"³⁴ makes itself first known to consciousness. In the later half of *The Notebooks*, Malte realizes that his fear, and fear in general "real fear," as he calls it is the manifestation of an inner power.

Fear increases when the power increases that produces it. We have no idea of this power except in our fear. For it is so utterly incomprehensible, so wholly opposed to us that our brain decomposes at the point where we make the effort to conceive of it. And yet, for a while now, I have believed that It is *our* power, all our power, which is as yet still too strong for us. To be sure, we do not know it, but

31 Cf. Rilke's letter to Merline of 16 December 1920. Rilke speaks here of the moral effect Malte has had upon him: "Les experiences de Malte m'obligent parfois à répondre à ces cris d'inconnus . . ." (Engelhardt, 119).

32 What complicates an understanding of *The Notebooks* is the twofold nature of Malte's education. It is not merely an education toward self-transcendence but also an education toward an autonomous and authentic way of seeing and being. This links Malte's moral-existential to his aesthetic education, his learning to see.

33 Rainer Maria Rilke: *Eine innere Biographie* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1954, reprinted 1955), 148.

34 Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Dread*, translated, with an introduction and notes, by Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1944 [reprinted 1957]), 55.

is it not precisely our ownmost being of which we know the least? (862)

Fear is the negative element by which our strength makes itself known. It is only through our fear that we have access to it, and our fear is intimately bound up with our perspective. Our strength appears to be opposed to us because we look at it with the eyes of our consciousness, and our consciousness in turn is the organ as well as the limit of our ego. From the point of view of our brain, that is, our consciousness, the strength that dwells in us is unimaginable. It transcends us, but only if by us we understand our ego. Fear is the information our consciousness has of the vast unconscious that lurks in us as our unknown power. Malte's view of the nature of this power seems to contain a contradiction. On the one hand, he calls it "our ownmost," and, on the other hand, he says it is totally against us. This implies a split between two very different ideas of self. The deepest and most essential part of our self, "our ownmost," is against another part of our self called "us." Since this part has "our ownmost" against it, it must be a more superficial, less essential part of the self. Such a split corresponds not only to the distinction between self and ego as seen in *The Death of Ivan Ilych* but also to Zarathustra's distinction between puny ego and infinitely greater self. Malte's equating of the unconscious, the unknown, with power or strength Malte's term *Kraft* signifies both points less to Freud than to Nietzsche; and indeed, the split between these two aspects of self is built into the Nietzschean idea of self-transcendence.

An analogous split appears in the death of grandfather Brigge. The self that Brigge was, his empirical person or ego, ceded its place to Brigge's death. Yet this death is the fruit and consummation of his life, his "ownmost being."

It was the wicked, princely death which the Chamberlain had carried within him and nourished all his whole life long. All excess of pride, will and lordly vigor that he himself had not been able to consume in his quiet days, had passed into his death which now sat, dissipating, at Ulsgaard. (720, 23)

The unknown power in us of which fear gives us our sole knowledge is the power that opposes the ego, as death opposes one's life and yet forms the innermost part of the self. Malte's fear, then, has a positive role. It is the messenger of an immense power that lies hidden in the deepest reaches of the self.

This power is the power of self-transformation. Near the beginning of *The Notebooks*, in the first of Malte's childhood memories, this power appears in an awesome and terrifying guise. It is his grandfather's "hard death"; it is the power that kills. But near the end of the novel it is linked to the self-renewal of nature, which carries with it the demand that human beings do likewise. Malte levels his compassionate reproach at those who cling to their identity and fail to rise to the challenge which each new spring poses to human beings. They drag winter with them into spring. For them the new year is not a new beginning, but at best a continuation (926). In their soul, they would like to partake of the renewal of nature, but the weight of their limbs holds them back, and the fear of illness muddies the joy they feel they *should* experience. Clinging to their old self prevents participation in the rebirth of life. They are excluded. "And there you stood, with beating heart, in the wide turnaround, determined to be at one with all this. But a bird sang and was alone and denied you. Oh, why did you let yourselves die?" (926). Persistence in identity does not perpetuate but forfeits life. Malte ironizes the ideal of identity and self-persistence in the figure of Charles the Bold, duke of Burgundy, who "was one and the same his entire life, hard, and impossible to change, like granite" (884). Such radical self-persistence weighs as an intolerable burden "upon all who endured him."³⁵ Only in reaching beyond itself can life maintain itself. In a similar vein, the German song Malte hears in Venice concludes with a lover saying, "Only . . . because I never detained you, I hold you fast" (936).

Self-transcendence is suspension between dying and being reborn. Thus one's perspective might proceed either from the old self that is to be overcome, or it could look ahead to the new self that is yet to be born. Depending on which of these perspectives prevails, either agony or exuberance may result from the ideal of self-transcendence.

³⁵ Naumann, 37, also sees Charles the Bold as a negative figure.

In the early sections of *The Notebooks*, Malte's perspective is largely that of the self that is to be overcome. It is, therefore, one of anguish and fear. Increasingly, in the course of *The Notebooks*, and preponderantly in the last part, the perspective shifts to one which looks forward toward a new life, although it is extremely doubtful that Malte himself will ever live it. However, he outlines the way of this new life in his theory of love, which culminates in the figure of the Prodigal Son who refuses to be loved and with whom the work ends.

The demand for self-transcendence appears to Malte first as a threat of annihilation. It was a childhood horror that had no name except *das Große*, the great or big thing, which his mother was able to block from his view. Then the threat still seemed to come from outside. Now, however, in his Parisian alienation and with his mother long departed, the threat haunts him from within. It resembles the structure of his grandfather's death. Death issued forth from Brigg's "womb" like a monstrous foetus that kills its parent by its birth. Similarly, "the great thing" now grows out of Malte, an intimate part of him, but like a cancer as frighteningly alien as "a big dead beast" (765). Perceived as a "growth, a swelling, a second head," it is literally his *Bildung*, a formation, or rather deformation, his self has produced and which it now has to nurture. Feeding it proves an almost unbearable effort for his heart; there is hardly enough blood to pump into the great thing. His self is being used up for this "over-self" that, having issued forth from him, is growing beyond him, about to choke and bury him.

Here self-transcendence appears in the horrifying guise of a self-alienation of his body.³⁶ In a later passage, it becomes clearer that this physical self-alienation is a demand for self-transcendence issued from the unconscious self to the conscious ego. For here Malte's pursuer is his own heart. He seeks to hide and escape, but his heart follows him relentlessly and does not allow him to find rest. Resembling the call of conscience in Heidegger's *Being and Time*,³⁷ the heart seeks to drive the ego out of its boundaries. In the following passage, the

³⁶ Stephens, 114, speaks of Malte's split self.

³⁷*Being and Time*, Second Division, First chapter, Sections 5960.

second person addressed by Malte's consciousness must be seen as his ego:

Your heart comes after you and already you seem to stand almost outside yourself and can no longer get back. Like a bug that has been stepped upon, you gush out of yourself, and your little bit of [surface] hardness and adaptability is [now] without meaning. (777)

The innermost self, the heart, is that "ownmost" power that makes itself known only through fear. It is a compulsion to transcend the self. Self-transcendence appears here literally, physically, as the body gushing out from under the hard crust of the ego. In terms strikingly analogous to Freud's theory, the ego is here identical with the surface of the self, the hardness of self-preservation and at the same time adaptability to the external world. The inner power that makes for self-transcendence degrades the ego and lets it appear to itself as a bug. What is metaphor in Malte will, two years after the publication of *The Notebooks*, be narrated event in Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis*.

Quite early in *The Notebooks*, Malte senses quite explicitly that a radical change is demanded of him that would entail giving up the self to which he has been accustomed and learning not only to see but also to live in an entirely new way that is as yet inconceivable to him.³⁸ Although from his present perspective such a radical self-transcendence seems like annihilation, he begins to entertain the possibility that the new way might be compatible with physical survival. What keeps him from it is his fear, which in turn is the result of his affectionate clinging to his old self and its ways.

If my fear were not so great, I would console myself [with the thought] that it is not impossible to see everything differently and yet to live. But I am afraid, I am unmentionably afraid of this change. I have, after all, scarcely become used to this world which appears good to me. What should I do in another one? I would so much like to stay among meanings grown dear to me. (755f.)

38 Cf. Fülleborn, 193.

This new life, which he calls "the time of the other interpretation" (756) a most fitting term for a change of perspective would be life without the ego. He would be his writing, analogous to the lovers who do not possess, but who are their love.

But there will be a day when my hand will be far away from me, and when I shall bid it to write, it will write words which I do not mean. The time of the other interpretation will commence. . . . For all my fear I am, after all, like one who stands before great things, and I recall that it often used to be this way in the past whenever I was about to write. But this time I shall be written. I am the imprint that shall transform itself. Oh, only a step [is needed], and my deep wretchedness would be bliss. (756)

What Malte envisions here is indeed self-transcendence. It would no longer be his ego, his conscious self, that would write his writing, but something that corresponds to that unknown power which Malte says is known to us only through our fear. The space of self gained by the loss of the ego appears as an enormous distance that separates his writing hand from his conscious will. This dethronement of consciousness is an enlargement of the self. Malte's poetics of "the death of the author" as conscious intention and control echoes Nietzsche's theory of lyric poetry in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) and Rimbaud's "Lettre d'un voyant," this manifesto of surrealism *avant la lettre*, as it also points ahead to the "authorless" poetics of Roland Barthes. In all of these, writing stands emancipated from the writer's ego.

At this early point in his notebooks, Malte feels he cannot live up to this vision of self-transcendence. He feels his fear is insurmountable. He "cannot take that step" that is needed. He cannot change his perspective. "I am fallen and can no longer lift myself up because I am broken" (756). Yet in later parts of *The Notebooks* Malte appears on the road to assuming the "other" perspective. To appreciate this change, we shall have to look more closely at the narrative line that centers around the derelicts of Paris, or the castaways, as Malte calls them. Malte's relationship to the castaways is the clearest example in

The Notebooks of a theme illustrating a development on Malte's part.³⁹

In the beginning portions of *The Notebooks*, the derelicts are figures of utter dread. They signify Malte's horror of falling through the holes in the net of respectable society and sinking down into the depths of the inconceivable. The castaways seem to haunt and pursue him, winking at him as though signaling that secretly he already belongs to them. The socially unimaginable has for Malte, as also for Musil's Törless and Hesse's Sinclair, moral and existential significance.⁴⁰ The social outcasts represent the transcendent, which here appears in one of its most unsettling forms. These derelicts are a challenge to Malte's social self-regard, to his desperate insistence on staying respectable, even though his outward circumstances underline his having been already set adrift, unmoored from family, class, and status, utterly

39 The French translator of *The Notebooks*, Maurice Betz, relates Rilke's explanation of the castaways as follows: "(Malte) is drawn to them as to visions of his own inner lures. Because he is aware that he is somehow like them, these encounters instill such horror in him." "Über die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge," in Engelhardt, 160. Original publication in *Rilke in Paris*, ed. and trans. Willi Reich (Zurich: Verlag der Arche, 1958), 6791. In a previous essay I discussed the theme of the castaways in relationship to the theme of Malte's two families—the Brigges and the Brahes. Cf. "Zwischen Existenz und Weltinnenraum: Zum Prozeß der Ent-Ichung im Malte Laurids Brigge" in *Probleme des Erzählens in der Weltliteratur: Festschrift für Käte Hamburger zum 75. Geburtstag*, ed. Fritz Martini (Stuttgart: Klett, 1971), 21233. Also published in *Rilke heute: Beziehungen und Wirkungen*, ed. Ingeborg H. Solbrig and Joachim W. Storck, Suhrkamp Taschenbuch No. 290 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1975), 10529. English translation as "The Devolution of the Self in *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*," in *Rilke: The Alchemy of Alienation*, ed. Frank Baron, Ernst S. Dick and Warren R. Maurer (Lawrence: The Regents Press of Kansas, 1980), 17190. In this and the following paragraphs, some overlapping with my earlier essay will be necessary to help substantiate my present argument, which a mere reference in a footnote would not be able to accomplish.

40 *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törless* (translated by Ernst Kaiser and Eithne Wilkins as *Young Törless*, 1955) by Robert Musil, appeared in 1906; Hermann Hesse's *Demian* (1919), a kind of Bildungsroman, describes the youth of Emil Sinclair and portrays the decline of European civilization in somewhat Spenglerian terms.

isolated and facing total impoverishment. Allegorical figures of purely subjective relevance, "vocabulary words of his distress,"⁴¹ the castaways beckon Malte to follow them into a realm where respectability would lose all meaning. They constitute the lure of the universal in social terms.

At first Malte sees this as disastrous and seeks to flee and resist their uncanny attraction, but to no avail. Any attempt to evade the castaways is self-deception what Sartre will later call bad faith. For, in his soul, Malte knows that they are his destiny. They are his conscience, in Heidegger's sense,⁴² and he cannot escape them. They are the call that admonishes him to forfeit the respectability which is the protective mask of his ego.

Learning to see in his new Parisian present means first of all learning to see the horrors of existence hospitals where people die *en masse* and anonymously, a man who staggers and collapses, a pregnant woman shuffling along a wall, a little old lady who appears from nowhere and is suddenly next to him, holding out a pencil toward him, a poor woman whose face remains in her hands, a derelict dying in a cheap café, and many other sights of misery which no one else seems to notice. That Malte says he *learns* to see such things shows a way of seeing that is still new to him. Learning to see is to be pried away from a sheltered existence that turns out to have been blindness. It is a confrontation with the hitherto unimagined and unimaginable. As if to convince himself that the unimaginable truly exists, Malte reiterates that he has indeed *seen* what seems to transcend the endurable. "I have seen an old man who was blind and shouted. That I have seen. Seen" (748). He expects not to be believed. His former sheltered, bourgeois-aristocratic perspective makes it enormously difficult for him to believe his own newly opened eyes. It transcends all plausibility. "Will one believe that there are such houses? No, they will say I am misrepresenting things. This time it is the truth, with nothing

41 See Rilke's letter to his Polish translator, Witold von Hulewicz, of 10 November 1925, in which Rilke uses the expression "Vokabeln der Not" (Engelhardt, 131). Although Rilke refers here to the historical figures appearing in *The Notebooks*, his term applies equally to the castaways.

42 Cf. note 37.

omitted, and of course nothing added" (749). In this insistence on the truth of his sights, he is bent on establishing the primacy of his personal seeing over what "one" (*man*) considers likely. The function of Malte's new seeing is to transcend what is habitually noted. It radically oversteps the boundaries of good taste and decorum. Malte's seeing dwells on the shocking, the revolting, the hard to bear. It widely extends the frontiers of awareness. What Malte learns is to see that which is hidden from view. He uncovers what walls conceal. He describes the interior of a house that has recently been torn down, and he does the same with the head of a woman who has left her face in her hands. What the polite view of the world shuts out, he lays bare. Malte literally confronts us with the monstrosity of inwardness. He tears away whatever a face normally conveys civility, sociability, the readiness to communicate like a mask prepared for social use and bares the raw, featureless self under the ego. (About the role of the mask in Malte's education I shall speak below.)

Learning to see is thus a weaning from the protective limits which the bourgeois code of "decency" sets to our perceptions. Malte insists that what transcends our habitual noticing exists. As Sartre will bring out in *La Nausée*, Malte alerts us, but first of all himself, to the frightful way by which existence surpasses our grasp of it. As in Baudelaire's poem "Une Charogne," to which Malte refers, to evoke, in order to endure, the disgusting is an extension of our hold on being.⁴³ It is a form of self-transcendence, a push ahead into what had hitherto been beyond his imagination. Malte's learning to see and his moral-existential education are two sides of the same process. Both are concerned with ways of seeing; both turn around questions of perspective. However, while Malte's aesthetic weaning from the conventionally restricted point of view appears from the beginning in a largely affirmative light, its moral-existential counterpart proceeds for long stretches in an entirely negative guise as fear.

Malte's first turning point comes as he watches, with horrid fascination, the derelict dying in a café. Malte puts himself in his place, imagines the total alienation from all being into which he must now

43 Cf. Rilke's letters to Clara of 19 October 1907, and 4 September 1908, Engelhardt, 39f.

be going, and enters it with him. It is Malte himself who is dying in the other person. It is then that he first experiences the demand for self-transcendence. He sees through the hollowness of hanging on to his respectable persona. Yet, as mentioned above, he still seems to lack the strength to live according to "the other interpretation."

In later parts of *The Notebooks*, however, Malte appears much further along on the road to assuming the "other" perspective, for the castaways, who before had been figures of dread, have become examples of an infinitely desirable way of life. It is a life free of all self-regard, free of the strenuous attempt to maintain a self-flattering image held up to the world for its approval, a life without vanity, and therefore without fear and shame. This ideal of sublime indifference to self-regard, and thus to the regard of others, is embodied for Malte in the blind newspaper vendor at the Jardin du Luxembourg, the beggar woman with the withered arm, who begs without shame in front of the café terraces, and above all by the mad King Charles VI who, while still alive, was viewed as a carcass. These exemplary figures have emptied themselves of all ego. They are beyond pride and shame. The blind newspaper vendor is like the great women lovers.⁴⁴ As they have transcended all hope of return of their love, the blind man is so completely at one with himself that no "precaution," no "pretense" or designing strategy can qualify his utter "abandonment to his misery" (902). And even as the women lovers surpass the objects of their love and leave them far behind, the newspaper vendor surpasses Malte's "means" of comprehending him. When Malte sees him decked out in his Sunday best, he asks, "Who among all those people (I looked about me) could imagine that all this finery was for him?" (903, 179). Malte's reflections on the fatally dangerous temptation that fame constitutes for great artists Ibsen and Eleanor Duse are the examples used parallel his admiration of the castaways who have transcended all shame. Shame and surrender to fame are two sides of the same phenomenon. Both are instances of self-reification.

Malte's admiration of two of the castaways clearly shows his altered perspective. Although he knows he is, at least as yet, unable to emulate them, he wishes he were. Regardless of whether or not he will

44 Cf. Hoffmann, 228.

reach the goal, *The Notebooks* shows him definitely on the way to it. They describe a progress without termination. They show the direction, but not the goal. God too for Malte is only "a direction and not an object of love" (937). In self-transcendence there is only a way, but never an end. Open-endedness, as in the legend of the Prodigal Son with which the Notebooks "end," is of the essence of this education.

Thus we find in the latter half of *The Notebooks* the change of perspective accomplished which the café episode first suggested as an imperative if Malte was to transcend his despair. Even though he is still far from accomplishing a change of his life, he has at least learned to look at it in an entirely new way. What is it, then, that brings about this change of perspective between the initial and the final half of *The Notebooks*? We have already seen that a first step was Malte's self-identification with those in extreme situations, first of all with the dying man in the café and subsequently with the St. Vitus Dancer on the Boulevard St. Michel and his Russian neighborsneighbor being a metaphor for a parallel to oneself. Malte's ability to identify with them, and in two instances even to try to help them, shows his readiness to transcend himself by entering the other.⁴⁵ A second step toward Malte's change of perspective works subliminally. It is his self-confrontation in writing his childhood memories. Leaving their general function aside for the moment, I should like to concentrate on a particularly harrowing experience of self-alienation which is of supreme relevance to the problem of perspectiveMalte's experience with the mask that he playfully put on and then could not get rid of.

In Malte's mask experience, self, and ego appear ranged against each other. The ego appears as the mask, the mirror image, while the true self is imprisoned under it and wants out. As in Lacan's mirror stage, the ego is another. It is not the self. Yet, to all others as well as to Malte's literal self-regard in the mirror, it appears as himself. The self that others see, indeed the self that he sees in the mirror, is only a fantastic other whom the real self has fabricated by donning the mask, but who now imprisons, tyrannizes, and stifles it. Terrified,

45 Cf. Judith Ryan, "'Hypothetisches Erzählen': Zur Funktion von Phantasie und Einbildung in Rilkes *Malte Laurids Brigge*," in Engelhardt, 24479, esp. 255. First publication in *Jahrbuch der deutschen Schillergesellschaft* 15 (1971): 34174.

Malte realizes that the person who is seen as himself is not himself. Recalling that the Latin word for mask is *persona*, the reader realizes with Malte that the person who, as his image, meets his own eyes is not he. His real self remains unseen and cannot make itself known except through fear. Malte's terror at his inability to free himself from his "persona" that terror is now the only evidence of his self. This real self remains ungraspable, unutterable. Like Kierkegaard's Abraham, it is caught in speechless inwardness. Its greatest terror is that no one can understand, let alone share, its terror. The others simply laugh at the grotesque disguise which is now Malte's public persona. His real self is something that lies buried beyond communication. He has become what Kierkegaard calls an absolute individual, one whose situation is such that he cannot make himself understood to anyone else.

But there comes a moment when the mask and mirror image dictate that the image become the self's reality. This is the moment when the ego emerges. It is the usurpation of the self by the reflected self, strikingly anticipating, in a most literal way, Sartre's narrative of the ego as arising from the self-reflection of consciousness.⁴⁶ For Malte this is the moment when his terror transcends endurance.

While I strove in boundlessly increasing anguish to squeeze somehow out of my disguise, it forced me, by what means I do not know, to lift my eyes and impose on me an image, no, a reality, a strange, unbelievable, and monstrous reality, with which, against my will, I became permeated: for now the mirror was the stronger, and I was the mirror. . . . I lost all sense, I simply ceased to exist. For one second I had an indescribable, painful and futile longing for myself, then there was only he: there was nothing but he. (808, 94f.)

But even as he describes this moment of succumbing to the false self, Malte views the scene from the perspective of his real self. While in his

⁴⁶ Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Transcendence of the Ego: An Existentialist Theory of Consciousness*, translated and annotated with an introduction by Forrest Williams and Robert Kirkpatrick (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1957), 53. (Original French edition: "La Transcendance de l'Ego: Esquisse d'une description phénoménologique," *Recherches Philosophiques* 6, [1936/37].)

Parisian adulthood it is his ego that looks at his hidden self, his heart, and sees in it its pursuer and enemy, in his childhood memory the perspective is reversed. He looks with the eyes of the buried self upon his person and sees it as a mask.

This real self behind the mask is not an identity, an unchanging substance. Rather it is that which assumes identities. It was the real Malte who had chosen and put on the mask which now makes him suffocate under it.⁴⁷ The real self is that which gives rise to identities and then seeks to liberate itself from them. In Malte's mask experience self-alienation appears as the essence of the ego. But this insight is not formulated in conceptual terms. It is enacted as a dramatic event. On a scenic-metaphoric level, it presents, with terrifying vividness, what Malte as an adult begins to realize dimly. His encounter in the café shows him that when the ego is lifted, like the mask in his childhood, it allows the self to breathe. Thus both episodes present a shift of perspective from the persona to the hidden power that shapes the ego as a mask prepared for social uses and destroys it when it has become too confining and threatens to suffocate the self.

The relationship of the two episodes in the sequential order of Malte's notes sheds light on the structure of the *Notebooks* as a narrative of education. The insight of the adult, though conceptual, is vague and sketchy. The insight in the child's experience, though utterly nonconceptual, is a scenic happening of extreme, emotionally gripping vividness. In imaginative terms it represents an advance over the insight of the adult. Even though in Malte's biography the experience of the mask long precedes the encounter in the creamery-café; Malte's re-creation of it, through the act of remembering and writing, follows it. Childhood composed, that is, actively recollected through writing, serves to vivify imaginatively what adult Malte conceptually is able merely to grope for in the most veiled and obscure way. Remembering as writing thus acts as a means of helping along a process of learning that takes place subliminally and implicitly. The location of Malte's memory of the mask in the process of his weaning from the egocentric perspective shows its clarifying function. It occurs approximately halfway between Malte's first dim realization, in the creamery, of his

47 Cf. Bollnow, 255.

need to change his perspective, and the explicitly proclaimed ethical ideal of egolessness represented by his admiration of the figures of pure self-abandonment. Malte's re-creations of his childhood transform, through scenic representations, what he first dimly sensed in fear into the clear ethical ideal of the conclusion of his notes. Their function is to change the loss of the ego from a thing of dread into one of intense longing.⁴⁸

The third and final change of perspective brings out most clearly both the historical dimension and the dialectical nature of the educative process in *The Notebooks*. It occurs at the point when Malte, inspired by the tapestries of *La dame à la licorne*, first advances his theory of love as a project for the future of man. Malte observes young women of old aristocratic families, now in dissolution, who have come to Paris to study art. He sees them exemplifying that process of alienation which the modern city represents for Malte from the first sentence of *The Notebooks* on. Uprooted and about to lose themselves in that lonely sea of anonymity which urban modernity represents for Malte, they constitute a parallel to himself. As with those who die faceless and impersonal deaths in the hospitals of Paris, alienation climaxes in degrading reification. Even these young women, Malte reflects, are "on the point of thinking of themselves as men might talk of them when they are not present" (832). They are beginning to look upon themselves as sex objects. Their surrender to men's sexual view of them may appear to them as a sign of their newly won freedom, but Malte sees it as their sliding down into self-reification.

From the beginning of his notebooks, Malte's view of modernity has been entirely negative. He sees modernity as decline, disintegration, and an apocalyptic reduction of the human to the mechanical. Women's emancipation, a prime symptom of modernity, leads to their viewing of themselves as objects. However, at this point Malte suddenly changes his historical perspective. He accepts disintegration as a challenge. In a preeminently dialectical move, he urges modernity to go beyond the point it has reached. To use a term now in vogue, one

⁴⁸ In his "best Parisian time" when he worked on Malte as well as on the *Neue Gedichte*, Rilke writes, "the whole world streamed toward me more and more only as a task. . . ." Letter to Lou of 28 December 1911; Engelhardt, 89.

might say Malte moves from modernity to "postmodernity." He seizes upon the emancipation of women as the opportunity to initiate the liberation of men. He exhorts men to assume the role they have hitherto left to women and to become the self-transcending lovers women have been in the past. What Malte proposes is a radical change in the relation of the sexes. Opposite forms of reification have traditionally marred this relationship. Men have reified women as their possessions, but they have also reified themselves as "natural" objects of female worship and devotion. In their pride of masculine privilege, they have inflicted self-reification upon themselves like artists who succumb to the temptation of fame. Women, in turn, while freeing themselves from the external reification imposed upon them by men, are, by adopting the male view of themselves, slipping into a new kind of self-reification. Malte, by calling on men to dare to change from objects into subjects of love, makes what women have been in the past into the role model for men. In so doing, he also counteracts women's new tendency to self-reification and brings them back, now on a conscious and deliberate level, to what they formerly had been unconsciously and unreflectively. Thus he completes, in a sense, the process of emancipation which he initially seemed to deplore. Modernity changes in his eyes from a source of breakdown into the opportunity of liberation from the traditional personas of gender. His ideal of love tends to abolish the spiritual and psychological distinction between the sexes by appealing to both men and women to transcend themselves in a love that, like Sappho's, knows no distinction between lover and beloved. It seeks to make the self and its other alike by raising both from the level of object to that of autonomous subject.

The principle of the blackened breast is the principle of dialectics. In a dialectical view, not the difference between opposites, but their mutual relatedness is essential. Distinction ceases to be absolute. Both dialectics and the relativity of distinctions are of crucial importance in *The Notebooks*. Malte's project of love calling for the transcending of the traditional distinctions between the roles of the sexes is thus closely linked to the Brahe theme of the novel, in which distinctions between past and present, death and life, absence and presence blur, and opposites flow into each other. (Significantly, the Brahes are Malte's maternal family.)

However, Malte's doctrine of love, anticipating Heidegger and Sartre, also sees human existence as futurity, as a task to be pursued. It is the task of creating the autonomous and self-transcending human subject. Thereby it continues the original idea of *Bildung* as a project of the Enlightenment which aims to achieve the spiritual maturity of both men and women. This project entails a break with the false security of man's spiritual childhood. It is this break which Rilke's *Notebooks*, like other narratives of existential education, seek to illustrate.

Educational Experiment in Thomas Mann

Gerald Gillespie

Tracing the decline of a bourgeois family over several generations in *Buddenbrooks* (1901), his first major success as a novelist, Thomas Mann so skillfully adapted the realist tradition of the nineteenth century that readers could effortlessly assent to crucial features of the book's modernist structure: its use of Nietzschean paradigms and imitation of Wagnerian leitmotifs. Within a couple of years Mann's novella *Tonio Kröger* (1903) registered important steps toward eventual transformation of the older generic features of the Bildungsroman, too. Through glimpses of its title figure's development from childhood to middle age, *Tonio Kröger* gives a new twist to the Romantic theme of the artist as an outsider whose relationship to life as well as to bourgeois normalcy has been profoundly disturbed. This rupture acquires an epochal significance associated with the shift in aesthetics around 1900 in large measure because Mann's story conveys its sociological and metaphysical insights through a more immediately self-evident modernist structure. Right from the opening we cannot avoid thinking of the story as a kind of abstract music developed out of the alienation and identity problem of its overture and bound together by leitmotifs; it amounts essentially to eight thematic variations capped by a coda. The novella's fluctuating temporal perspective, point of view, and narrative voice, its juxtaposed but interpenetrating objective and subjective slices, and its multiple mirrorings also bear analogy to the cubist montage technique in painting. The hero's psychology—the contest of imperatives and values within him—is relativized as a set of data he himself comes to treat as cultural signs. There is no external social or historical resolution;

rather, Tonio arrives at recognition of his artist's destiny as a pattern within the containing system, this moment of truth being recorded in his letter to Lisaweta as conclusion. The ground-pattern of a character's growth, which Mann takes over from the older story of apprenticeship or education, becomes a symbolic outline punctuated by a series of epiphanic moments of heightened consciousness.¹

Mann converts the late nineteenth-century fiction about the social and spiritual development of a young person, the actual starting point of *Tonio Kröger*, into a "hermetic" construct.² This is the new kind of aesthetic space in which the case of the excessively Apollonian standard-bearer of Western civilization in Mann's novella *Der Tod in Venedig* (1911, translated as *Death in Venice*) plays itself out in its final phase, except that, being an unwitting herald of a possible Western collapse, the intellectual protagonist Gustav Aschenbach arrives at a negative epiphany of inward surrender to Dionysus after decades of repressive self-control. Mann could have excerpted and expanded chapter 2 of *Der Tod in Venedig* the foreshortened background story of Aschenbach's development up to his fifties, narrated in historical retrospect by a severely ironic, omniscient voice as a novel of education. But that would have meant operating in terms of the nineteenth-century genre against his own modernist inclinations.

Thus, these two novellas help us to grasp the new rules that govern Mann's creative reordering of the familiar Bildungsroman in his encyclopedic symposium on the fate of the West, *Der Zauberberg* (1924, translated as *The Magic Mountain*, 1927), a work that is avowedly "hermetic." Its protagonist, the bourgeois engineer Hans Castorp, is

1 On the importance of epiphanic peak moments in the novel of the early twentieth century, including Mann (illustrated by the Snow subchapter), consult my article "Epiphany: Notes on the Applicability of a Modernist Term," in *Sensus Communis: Contemporary Trends in Comparative Literature. Festschrift für Henry Remak*, ed. by Peter Boerner, János Riesz, and Bernhard Scholz (Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 1986), 25566.

2 On this concept and its various expressions, see my article "The Ways of Hermes in the Works of Thomas Mann," in *Sinn und Symbol: Festschrift für Joseph P. Strelka zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. by Karl Konrad Polheim (Bern, Frankfurt am Main, New York, Paris: Peter Lang, 1987), 37185.

in his late twenties approximating the traditional age zone for closure in the educational novel by the time he exits from the lofty spaces of sickness and enchantment into the turmoil of the Great War.³ Although in key places we are allowed to identify more closely with the bourgeois quester figure, Mann's authorial irony draws on the complex example of Miguel de Cervantes's stance in *Don Quixote*. We are privileged as readers to observe, both with critical distance and in the amplitude and detail possible in a humoristic-encyclopedic novel,⁴ how Castorp too, in his own way, discovers the fundamental powers that, in the flow of Mann's fiction, have already made their appearance in the artist Kröger's existential anguish and in the intellectual Aschenbach's tragic overweening. The authorial voice even issues Castorp a diploma of maturation near the end of his stay at the sanatorium, certifying that our simple hero, after so many years of hermetic-pedagogic discipline, of ascent from one stage of being to another, has now reached a point where he is conscious of the "meaningfulness" of his love and the object of it (MM 651).⁵

If Hans matures "into an intuitional critic" (MM 651) within the novel, the authorial voice gives us advance warning in the brief foreword that the story is also told "for its own sake" as a revelation about a "certain crisis" yet at work which "shattered its way through life and consciousness" and about the "strange and questionable double nature

3 A helpful descriptive outline of the succession of Hans's experiences, chapter by chapter, is given in Randolph P. Shaffner, *The Apprenticeship Novel: A Study of the "Bildungsroman" as a Regulative Type in Western Literature with a Focus on Three Classic Representatives by Goethe, Maugham, and Mann* (New York, Bern, Frankfurt am Main, Nancy: Peter Lang, 1984), 72105.

4 Mann's place in the humoristic-encyclopedic tradition is the subject of the final chapter in Herman Meyer, *The Poetics of Quotation in the European Novel*, trans. Theodore and Yetta Ziolkowski (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1968).

5 References to the English translation by H. T. Lowe-Porter, henceforth indicated after the abbreviation MM with page number, follow the Modern Library paperback, Thomas Mann, *The Magic Mountain* (New York: Random House, n.d.; orig. published by Alfred A. Knopf, 1955). Occasional references to the original German version, indicated after the abbreviation Zb with page number, will follow the two-vol. paperback ed., Thomas Mann, *Der Zauberberg: Roman* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1967).

of that riddling element," time (MM ix). This crisis involves the collapse of the realist epistemology and the concomitant structures of the realist novel as governing principles; they become internalized as subordinate elements alongside other subject matter in a new construct. Mann's problematizing of the time order of fiction and of his own act of imaginative recollection thus touches core issues we find in such great modernist copings with time as Marcel Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* (1913/27) and James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922). The modernist author, gazing back in *Der Zauberberg* over a "deep chasm" (MM ix) for European civilization and mankind, a boundary confirmed by the Great War, recapitulates his sense of the mysterious drama of cultural and spiritual forces that have shaped the German nineteenth century and yielded the dilemma of the twentieth, a past first probed in detail in *Buddenbrooks*. There, as mentioned, Mann seemed to practice a relentless pathology in the wake of Gustave Flaubert, but in fact he was using an anthropological dialectics derived from Nietzsche and compositional principles derived from Wagner. Now the already recaptured particular past of the northern Protestant and capitalist ethos and, tacitly, the stages in Mann's growth as a cultural analyst beyond *Buddenbrooks* and *Der Tod in Venedig* his essays in *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* (1918, translated as *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man*, 1983) marking the watershed are reembedded in chapter 2 of *Der Zauberberg*. This chapter ostensibly reveals the origins of the youthful protagonist but actually allows us, through mention of Hans's childhood experiences, to deepen our exploration of the network of leitmotifs already operative during his arrival at the sanatorium in chapter 1 and to discover or confirm why these connections are relevant to the larger story of European development, as Hans himself will learn in due course.

Furthermore, in the guise of a romanesque *in medias res* start to a more traditional omniscient third-person narration, chapter 1 of *Der Zauberberg* establishes the interchangeability of space and time, and their subsumption not only in dream structures but also in the abstract relational framework which obtrusive chromatic and numerological clues hint at. The fair Hans is paired with his darker cousin Joachim in chapter 1. Their symbiotic roles are then linked in chapter 2 to the pairings of traits in the familial and cultural heritage that, via the

leitmotivic network, reaches out over the European geocultural terrain, into the wide world, and back to the roots of European civilization. When in chapter 6 Naphta, exposing the ancient roots of Freemasonry so as to diminish Settembrini's claims, informs Hans "that the primary symbol of alchemical transmutation was *par excellence* the sepulchre," Hans instantly thinks of jars of preserves hermetically sealed and sitting on a shelf (MM 511). This image, already present in the coffin holding the grandfather's body in chapter 2 and strikingly similar to such sacramental vessels and sarcophagi in *Ulysses* as "Mrs. Plumtree's Potted Meat" recurs in important variations. In chapter 7 Hans independently finds solace in the modern "magic" of the gramophone, a "truncated little coffin of violin wood," a "temple" (MM 643) that pours forth orchestral pieces, lieder, and operas, "the triumphant idealism of music, of art, of the human spirit" (MM 645). Clearly, through the half-paraphrasing authorial voice, Mann relates Hans's soaring thoughts, thoughts "alchemistically enhanced" by reception of the sacramental content from "the sarcophagus of music," to the highest aspirations of his own book as a hermetic container of spiritual nourishment, capable of releasing "the new word of love and the future":

One need have no more genius, only much more talent, than the author of the "Lindenbaum," to be such an artist of soul-enchantment as should give to the song a giant volume by which it should subjugate the world. (MM 653)

In chapter 1 Hans's passage through his room, number 34, begins to be connected with movement through the novel's symbolic structure of seven years of enchantment, seven stages of alchemical heightening narrated in seven chapters, and myriad numerological analogues. Chapter 2 confirms for us that Hans has a personal destiny to bring something forth out of the tomb of his cultural past by going through a second educational career, one deeper than he could have known below on the flatlands of normalcy in bondage to time. Hence the readily analyzable "death-sled" dream (MM 17) of chapter 1 functions as a seed-crystal precipitating the anguish of an ultimate parting from Joachim, the necessary death of aspects of Hans, while the concretized

social-historical restatement of this latent theme comes at the opening of chapter 2 through the ecphrasis of the Castorp family's christening basin. Dated 1650 and standing on an austere nineteenth-century base, the basin (like its implicit model, the Buddenbrooks Bible) records the seven generations of the Castorp family down to the death-imprinted orphan Hans with his telltale "rather soft and defective" teeth (MM 31), whom we have just met in chapter 1 crossing the threshold into the hermetic space of the Swiss sanatorium.

Any competent reader familiar with Mann's earlier works could be presumed to notice the parallel with the structure of *Der Tod in Venedig*. Aschenbach is attracted to the spell of Venice, the special European city at a transactional boundary of time and space; by following him there, European especially German readers plumb the dangerous ambivalences in their own heritage. Like Thomas Buddenbrook, who, "remembering" too late the teachings of Arthur Schopenhauer, is undone by what they reveal (*Buddenbrooks*, part 10, chapter 5), Aschenbach is inwardly devastated by the seductive horror exposed in Euripides' *Bacchae* and other classics he studied but never faced squarely in his formative years. Now the novelist Mann transposes his own Nietzschean critique of the age's spiritual "palsy" and "mediocrity" openly onto the "middle class" world that has shaped Hans (MM 31ff.). Volume 1, consisting of chapters 1 to 5, shows Hans's liberation from the bourgeois work ethic and morality. This entails breaking out of the constrictive order of time inherited from a mechanistic worldview, and entering into the sense of time as an enigma. Volume 2, consisting of the expansive chapters 6 and 7, shows in parallel Hans's probing of the enigma and his growing fascination with life, a scientific curiosity that shatters the narrowness of his earlier vocation as a specialist. In the *Snow* episode of chapter 6 we participate in his encounter with eternity and in his discovery of his own will to affirm and love. Having transcended both Settembrini, the advocate of rational humanism, and Naphta, the voice of irrational mysticism, Hans witnesses the union of all the contradictions of life in Peeperkorn, who embodies personality as a positive value but also the tragic limits of vitalism as an answer.

However, the rules of a modernist "time-romance" (MM 543) differ in an important respect from the ordinary novel of education in

conducting the protagonist through all these steps. As the meditative overture to chapter 7 asserts, in following Hans through the various figural, often parodic dimensions of the "magic mountain" for example, as a Dantesque harrowing of hell, as Tannhäuser's captivity in the *Venusberg*, and so on we are involved in a poetic entry into a kind of "eternity" under the "lawful license of a holiday" (MM 547). Not only the inclusive, integrative principle of the humoristic novel but also a modernist "relativity" (MM 546) hold joint sway in the multiple mirrorings and confluences of literary and mythological references.⁶ This same approach governs the nature of the discussants and actors (Behrens, Settembrini, Naphta, Chauchat, Peeperkorn, et al.) who influence or affect Hans as much as it governs the composition of elements in his nature.⁷ On one level of the fiction they are "real" characters with quite particular attachments to actualities of history and culture at the beginning of the twentieth century; on another level complexes of forces and memories are transparently bundled together in them in a manner enabling the essayistic analysis of human development over the centuries in Europe. The reader engages in a sweeping act of cultural remembering by means of Hans's restarted "education" because, even when witnessing the higher mystery of personality (MM 583), Hans is no longer the old-fashioned sentimental student like Gottfried Keller's "real" hero in the Swiss Bildungsroman *par excellence*, *Der grüne Heinrich* (1851/55), but a hermetic medium in a modernist "experiment." The constituting of Hans resembles the alchemical compounding and transmuting of elements. Mann's treatment of Hans exhibits yet another affinity to some of Joyce's experi-

6 Perhaps the finest account connecting Mann's post-Nietzschean idealism, his political shift endorsing the new Weimar Republic, and his interest in the Einsteinian world is that in Michael Beddow, *The Fiction of Humanity: Studies in the Bildungsroman from Wieland to Thomas Mann* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982), 232-43.

7 In *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture* (London: Verso, 1987), Franco Moretti defines the Bildungsroman as a "constant elusion of historical turning points and breaks: an elusion of tragedy and hence . . . of the very idea that societies and individuals acquire their full meaning in a 'moment of truth' [and] of whatever may endanger the Ego's equilibrium" (12), but he is silent about *Der Zauberberg*.

ments in *Ulysses*: a massive engagement with scientific vocabulary and discourse. *Der Zauberberg* introduces a remarkable wealth of concepts from many different realms of the natural and human sciences. It also manoeuvres the protagonist Hans into a kind of stimulative isolation, where his mind can become passionately involved in probing basic questions about the constitution of things, to engage in "Research," as a subchapter of chapter 5 is titled. Although Hans has been trained as an engineer, it is at the sanatorium that he first experiences the fuller importance of science.

The theme of educational experiment emerges in chapter 4 when Ludovico Settembrini, Hans's first important self-appointed mentor, sanctions it in his case, intervening to steer him away from fascination for sickness, the lure of dark powers.

"It befits your time of life, thus to avoid the settled convictions of the mature man, and to make experiments with a variety of points of view. *Placet experiri*," he quoted, giving the Italian pronunciation to the c. "That is a good saying. But what troubles me is that your experiment should lead you in just this direction." (MM 98)

The context in which we hear Settembrini's warning rules out our taking him straight simply as an authorial mouthpiece. A provocative underground linkage is knit for the reader when the would-be teacher brings the ambiguous German term *Versuch* (*versuchen* try, essay, attempt, tempt; *Versuchung*, temptation) and the imported locution *Experiment* together (Zb 104). Settembrini's tic of repeating phrases three times lends a hieratical, suprapersonal suggestion to his conscious literariness in associating his own role vis-à-vis Hans from the start with that of Virgil guiding Dante through hell (MM 57ff.). Settembrini (in whose name *seven* appears via the Latin root *septem*) proudly identifies himself as a champion of the classics, humanism, the liberal revolution, and progress, a continuer of the Renaissance and Enlightenment. In this respect his teachings directly exhibit how a worldview under threat overlaps with the ascendant challenge to its stability. In "non-dialectic," "plastic" speech (MM 63), he explains the active critical principle of the West clearly ancestral to Mann's own narrative irony, even though unbeknownst to Settembrini the newer irony dissolves the older. Consistent with his programmatic "malice"

toward debasing, reactionary, and obscurantist phenomena, Settembrini soon warns Hans to flee the luxuriance of disease upon noting his attraction to Clavdia Chauchat (in whose lupine build, cat name, Russian origin, and Asiatic facial traits reside hints of the Dionysian). Settembrini himself as a character may despise paradoxes as a danger to clear thinking, but in the novel's plot one result of his tracing of his libertarian ancestry (MM 152ff.) and praise for the nobility of the beautiful word as the foundation of human dignity (MM 159) is that his teaching also stimulates the emergence of the antithetical elements in the young engineer. Hans now consciously grapples with his own piety toward his authoritarian ancestry, his addiction to music, his retrieved memory of the half-European aspect of his own existence in his schoolmate Pribislav Hippe, the irresistible attraction to Clavdia Chauchat, who triggers that memory.

Even though the character Naphta has not yet come into view as Settembrini's dark counterpart, we are predisposed to expect a Naphta after chapters 3 and 4, because Mann prepares the ground by other kinds of suggestive pairing. This figural doubling is as ancient as the contest of a light and dark angel for possession of the soul in a morality play, but now it haunts our thoughts in the form of elusive, indeterminate motifs, refracted in multiple mirrorings. Notable is the duo formed by the sanatorium director Behrens, an "ailing physician" (MM 132), and the suspect psychoanalyst (of what retrospectively we deem a Freudian persuasion) from eastern Europe, Krokowski. In his own right, Behrens acquires ambivalent traits as the possibly failed, melancholic priest-king Sorastro of Mozart's *Magic Flute* or as the composer Richard Wagner (MM 61f.), as the incorruptible judge of the underworld, Rhadamanthus, or the suffering Radames of Verdi's *Aida* (MM 195). He is now a Gothic scientist of the phantasmagoric in the x-ray room in chapter 5, now a worldly painter, now an image-conjuring Mephisto (MM 253ff.), now a hoarding Fafnir (MM 290ff) to Hans's inept parodic roles as Siegfried, Faust-Tamino (MM 259ff), and Werther (MM 342). Krokowski is similarly linked *inter alia* to nineteenth-century decadent artists (MM 16), to cabalistic secrets rivaling the appeal of Christianity, and eventually to Martin Luther (MM 134), thus to regressive religious impulses such as are manifested in a corrupt twentieth-century practice, the spiritualistic séances of chapter

7. In the earlier novella, Tonio Kröger has a German father of nordic type and a darker southern mother of indeterminate foreign blood; in the novel, inversely, Settembrini claims an Italian grandfather and German grandmother. Thus while the liberal philosopher preaches against especially "German" weaknesses, his words are both confirmed and undercut by the ambivalences present prior to Naphta's appearance and in Settembrini's own history. A "dialectic" (which Mann models mainly on Nietzsche's critique of cultural decay and his concept of Apollonian and Dionysian bipolarity) is already in action; Hans's mind is already infected by an "Asiatic" antiprinciple that threatens his "European" identity.

Mann's double-edged irony permeates the terms of the European and human story about which Hans gradually learns. We no longer simply follow a main melodic line of organic development sketched for the protagonist, such as Settembrini wishes for Hans and we might find in the educational genre of Enlightenment persuasions (for example, in Fielding's *Tom Jones*, 1750). Nor can we rely wholly on the psychological model of Romanticism, which modified the older organic pattern of the age of Rousseau and Herder through new techniques for exploration into recesses of the psyche and encounter with possible alter egos. We must think instead of a simultaneity of educational tracks on superimposed levels with many points of intersection. Mann's novel achieves a synchronic and diachronic fullness as an "encyclopedia" because it gathers complexes of factors but also exposes these factors as woven through the whole cultural fabric. In *Der Zauberberg* the educational quester from the Renaissance survives in outline, on the formal plane, as a shadow behind the superseded shadow of the eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century sentimental hero. The authorial voice confirms very early, in case any reader has not yet caught on, that "mediocre" Hans has a "suprapersonal significance" ("mittelmässig . . . überpersönliche Bedeutung," Zb 36); for "a man lives not only his personal life, as an individual, but also, consciously or unconsciously, the life of his epoch and his contemporaries" (MM 32). Hans thus serves as our "medium" (German *Mittel*), as a vessel to contain or transmit contents, including perceptions of form and the experience of time in all its varieties; and on the level of

hermetic- alchemical symbolism, his progress in achieving new insights exhibits the synthesizing properties of Mann's fiction.

If Settembrini's nature, too, is composite, why then is he, as the first teacher, so closely identified with the building of momentum or motivation in the educational process? His literary "Satanism," quoting Carducci's luciferic hymn, associates his rebellion against crippling and stultifying forces with two major currents flowing from the Renaissance via Romanticism: the humanist assertion of man's dignity and self-determination, and Faustian discontent and hubris. Since the concept of *Bildung* has its taproot in the humanistic tradition, the novel establishes a parallel between this important juncture in the larger cultural history of the West and the narrative moment, the juncture in Hans's life, by having a humanist spokesman incite the formal effort of self-shaping.⁸ Still tenaciously clinging like a Rousseau to a vision of human goodness, Settembrini claims that man has fallen in history but denies that man is condemned to a fallen state by his very nature as a creature. The intrusion of Settembrini's mission in the novel thus reenacts earlier breaking points in cultural history: the deliberate defection of heroic Humanism, the Enlightenment, and nineteenth-century positivism. In the instance of Faust, of course, the rebellion is associated with the Luciferic Fall. The "humane" revolutionary-reformist tradition ostensibly has the aim of replacing the authoritarian, obscurantist implications in the religious view of man as fallen. Through Settembrini's essentially Apollonian stance, the novelist lends deeper sense and clearer shape to the release of psychological and social factors latent in the characterization of Chauchat and more recessed in the attributes of Joachim, Hans's virtual other self. An important limit is quickly reached by first hearing Settembrini, because his progressive ideology cannot cope with the attack on liberal civilization that Naphta will mount. This theme hauntingly recurs in Mann's novel *Doktor Faustus* (1947) as the tragic exhaustion, failure,

⁸ Cf. W. H. Bruford, *The German Tradition of Self-Cultivation: "Bildung" from Humboldt to Thomas Mann* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1975), 209ff. on the structural and thematic function of Settembrini as exponent of an earlier master-concept of *Bildung*, and his contest with Clavdia as a major step leading to Naphta.

and helplessness of Western Humanism associated with the figure of the narrator Serenus Zeitbloom, who must witness the horror of nazism and the Second World War.⁹ Naphta appears on the scene just as, in the later nineteenth century, the Idealist outlook resurged in new forms to challenge realist ontology and metaphysics.

It is helpful to contrast the tension of possibilities for the educational experience here with "special" cases of the Bildungsroman in the nineteenth century. The title hero in Novalis's *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (1800), a poet-elect of the high Middle Ages, is vouchsafed visionary confirmations of yearned-for reintegration and the ultimate union of contraries. Novalis's Romantic utopian aim is to dissolve the boundary between time and eternity through the power of poetry. This intense heroic Idealism wanes in the early nineteenth century. By the 1830s, for example, in the novels of Scott, Stendhal, and Balzac, a major theme is the inefficacy, thwarting, and breakdown of Romantic aspirations. In Adalbert Stifter's novel *Der Nachsommer* (1857, translated as *Indian Summer*, 1985), the high-minded young bourgeois Heinrich Drendorf is shielded from the passions, social suffering, and blows of fate and remains protected once he has been attracted into the retreat of his chief educator Risach. Stifter contains the hurt of real history and the dangers of the romantic forces in the human heart for example, by having Risach (and Heinrich as first-person narrator imitatively) delay his personal revelation of grievous error until Heinrich has been sufficiently imbued with knowledge and values and his maturation is guaranteed but a hidden threat of sterility seems to lurk within the guarded success of personal cultivation in the afterglow of the greatness of the Goethean age. Flaubert's approach in *L'éducation sentimentale* (1869) is radically inverse, allowing us to follow the symbiotic pair of high and middle bourgeois school friends, Frederic Moreau and Charles Deslauriers, as they commit all the errors representative of the spiritual failure of their age, witness the collapse

9 Cf. the treatment of Zeitbloom in Stephen D. Dowden, *Sympathy for the Abyss: A Study in the Novel of German Modernism; Kafka, Broch, Musil, and Thomas Mann* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1986), 148ff.

of Romantic aspirations, and suffer the loss of squandered vitality. As the passing contents of their world are displayed to the reader through them, these "mediums" are emptied of any meaning except their own terminal anguish and disillusionment. In *A rebours* (1884, *Against Nature* 1959) Karl Joris Huysmans thematizes the latenineteenthcentury crisis of decadence in the attempt of his radically alienated protagonist Des Esseintes to reconstrue the cultural canon of the entire Western tradition in its time of decline and to create a completely artificial paradise as his personal refuge instead of finding a place in human society.

In reflecting on the Romantic, realist, decadent, and other facets of the nineteenth-century heritage, Mann's novel could well be expected to conduct Hans either into a protected utopia or into a dystopia of alienation and disinheritance. The space of education as a hermetic experiment may for a while seem immune from the external pressures of time; indeed, Mann connects such an exemption with the strange hermetic character of modernist works of art that come into being in a different or altered temporal order, this side of the "chasm" separating us from the virtual antiquity of the nineteenth century. However, the protagonist's captivity in the spell of the sanatorium as a pampered, affluent patient certainly affords no protection from the powerful forces of darkness in the modern world that manifest themselves there. By the same token, Hans's ultimate exit from this surrogate "hell" into the actual hell of history upon the eruption of the First World War symbolizes, in its Dostoevskian agonies, a profound redemptive change. By the end of the book Hans acquires and recovers but also abandons and loses much. The important point is that he outgrows these layers and attachments without succumbing in his heart to the disintegrative effects of the lessons of alienation and relativity.

The process of separating from the past is itself clearly experimental on several levels. On the level of the protagonist's story we observe more and more frequently the operations of Hans's own mind as he gradually probes his heritage, reconnecting it to a larger world, and explores the peculiarities of his own heart. Hans learns dialectic from his mentor Settembrini, avidly reads in many fields of the natural and human sciences, expands the terms of the European story by witness-

ing the ongoing great debate between Settembrini and Naphta, and transcends both of these cardinal figures by achieving his own syntheses out of the materials they cast up and by use of the tools they demonstrate. On another level Mann engages his readers openly in his ironic management of romanesque figuration and "trains" us to relate this narrative control to the contents brought to our attention in his intermittent moments of public discourse and authorial meditations.¹⁰ We follow Hans as if we were watching the novelist reproduce under laboratory conditions the factors of a mentality (a shadow cast by Mann's own mentality) that was implicated in the war trauma of modernism, yet was significantly altered by it. In this sense, we are looking *through* the structure of the novel as if through the walls of an alembic at an experiment whose reactants are ingredients of a world that supposedly died when these constituents were transmuted. The fiction, as the epic of those transformed elements, is a hermetic communication from the grave, and as such it also ritually seeks to bury the event, to entomb it, for fear of repetition of the mysterious rupture in human affairs: the horror of the First World War.

In tune with its themes of disease and death, the novel is replete with images and metaphors from medicine, and those of inoculation and self-poisoning are prominent for good reason. It is legitimate to say that Mann experimentally reactivates the dangerous combination of elements in the German and European world in order to identify the poison with which to immunize us. One illustration of how such use of metaphor links semantic and paradigmatic levels must suffice here. At the close of chapter 5, Hans actually drunk in the way traditional for carnival festivities, parodically inebriated by a lovephilter in analogy to the potions drunk in opera and romance, and spiritually intoxicated by self-poisoning is ready to return the "silver pencil" to Madame Chauchat. In chapter 6 the quicksilver bar of the

¹⁰ In *The German Bildungsroman from Wieland to Hesse* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1978), Martin Swales offers one of the most cogent descriptions of the narrative voice and procedure under new challenge in *Der Zauberberg*: facing "the unutterable complexity of life in all its contradictions" and "imprisoned within its own function as reporter of events," the narrative fights its way out of the "constriction" by ironic self-scrutiny (122ff.).

thermometer, another hermetic wand, implicitly confirms his participation in the witches' sabbath, his lovemaking with Chauchat that marks his crossing over into another realm; Hans is deemed to need a shot to dampen his raging fever after Walpurgis Night. We smile when Behrens, to punish Hans for his suspected fever-inducing excesses, plunges the "needle" into his arm. This sharp reminder of the pleasurable pain of Hans's fall replicates comically in miniature the paradoxical deep pleasure-and-pain that the novel as a whole conveys in the "survival" of Hans, with his acquired knowledge and his experience of the "death" of Joachim in his veins.

The paradox of "life" coming forth out of "death" belongs to the larger cluster of themes in *Der Zauberberg* that have to do with the mystery of time and our relationship to its puzzling varieties, including the strangeness of the internal operations of the mind and of fiction as special orders of time. The famous *Snow* episode in chapter 6 provides a central illustration of how Mann analogizes the reader's recovery or reconsideration of deeply implanted paradigms of myth and the entire "learning" process of the novel. The episode is an open model exhibiting a narrative approximation to vital accomplishments by the subconscious mind in its synthesizing of materials; this creative synthesis in turn recapitulates stages in the age-old development of human awareness as marked in stages of mythological insight known to us from cultural history. The arguments between Settembrini and the "reactionary revolutionist" Naphta (MM 461), advocate of a mystical "nihilism," "obedience," and "terror," have reached a high pitch. In addition, the terms which Hans has been absorbing as readers of Mann in the 1920s and afterwards instantly recognize develop further the conflict of forces as treated by the novelist in "Irony and Radicalism," the closing essay of *Die Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* (1918, rev. 1920). There Mann arrived at the psycho-historical view that, in the contemporary situation of Europe,

Radicalism is nihilism. . . . Intellect that loves life is not fanatic, it is ingenious, it is political, it woos, and its wooing is erotic irony. One

has a political term for this: it is 'conservatism.' What is conservatism? The erotic irony of the intellect.¹¹

Mann's instinctive conservatism has prompted his shift toward supporting the Weimar Republic as a product of political evolution by the time *Der Zauberberg* was published. Thus, on one level, Hans's carrying the oppositional terms for example, form, reason, nature vs. logos, passion, soul into the snow resembles an "essay"; but on another level, the metaphor of a journey into the uncanny human core converts the public discourse into mythological testing.

Hans's ski outing becomes a hero's symbolic journey into "hell" to confront danger and retrieve life-enhancing secrets. The pattern of initiation which is at the heart of the *Snow* episode of *Der Zauberberg* is submerged again, like dream-life, in the noise of everyday living, even though Hans obviously now carries deep within him a potent seed-crystal around which a new formation can accrete. More important, the reader henceforth bears the seed-crystal. Unmistakable is the parallel between Hans's will to survive and his new capacity to formulate his "dream-poem of humanity" which subsumes all the contradictions and enables him ultimately to resist the lure of "death" ("release, immensity, abandon, desire") and awaken to life, to "goodness and love" (MM 496).

It is love, not reason, that is stronger than death. Only love, not reason, gives sweet thoughts. And from love and sweetness alone can form come: form and civilization, friendly, enlightened, beautiful human intercourse always in silent recognition of the blood-sacrifice.

By means of the special pattern of an educational restart in the case of Hans, *Der Zauberberg* successfully interweaves three main narrative strands: recognition of the epochal breaking point which the trauma of the Great War confirmed, mythic passage through the figurative and literal hell which is inherent in human development, and participa-

¹¹ Thomas Mann, *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Mann*, trans. Walter D. Morris (New York: Ungar, 1987), 419f.

tion in the symposium which the ongoing text of the encyclopedichumoristic tradition promotes.

The choice of genre as organizing principle is crucial to the quite different tone and approach in Mann's entertaining *Bekenntnisse des Hochstaplers Felix Krull: Der Memoiren erster Teil* (1954, *Felix Krull*). In the sense that the aged writer exploits the conventions of the pseudo-biographical picaresque tale to create a special blend the education of confidence-man Felix, the reader's and the protagonist's gradual initiation into mythological foundations, and an indirect critique of the social and political condition of Europe in the *belle époque* his last novel represents a new level of experimentation with the concept of "development" or "formation" (*Bildung*). *Felix Krull* attempts to reconceive and imbed deep contents of the entire Mannian oeuvre in a traditional story form congenial to the redemptive irony that flows in *Der Zauberberg*, the Joseph tetralogy, and other works, and to answer the anguish over the modern artist and the Second World War in *Doktor Faustus*. The even older ancestral figure of the *pícaro* subsumes the more proximate ancestral impulses of the twentieth-century artist as a possessor of illicit inner knowledge about us and our world, as a trickster, and as an "enabler." Though born specifically out of the pressures of urban existence in Renaissance Spain and out of Humanist and Counter-Reformation questioning of the sinful impulse to survive, to rise out of the underclass or existential fallenness, and to redefine one's lowly origins, the "delinquent" can be understood in retrospect to represent frequently as its lowest common denominator the new spirit of individualism in the Humanist age. Sentimentalization of the rogue, which set in almost as quickly as the genre caught hold, allowed the conflation of the picaresque tale and a variety of first- or third-person pseudo-biographical accounts. This possibility was latent in the character of picaresque tales as parodic shadows of the lives of saints or of creative personalities (for example, the artists and *condottieri* of the Renaissance). Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* and Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* may serve to remind of the wide range of first person and third-person variations on the fundamental story of educative error two centuries after the birth of the picaresque.

Mann intuits in the annals of the tradition since *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554) the basic story of the ordinary person engaged in the pursuit

of happiness on the threshold of our century; he links that vitality to the principle of Hermes as bourgeois divinity par excellence, and he presents that drive in a special variety of the artist, the artist as a go-between and shaper of life. Of course, besides being a charming crook, Felix is indeed specifically a writer. An important ingredient of the first-person variety of the picaresque genre inherited from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is that the rogue presents his life in its immediacy from childhood on, as if it were happening, but actually tells his story in retrospect with the benefit of experience. The tale involves explicit or implicit arrival at a traumatic juncturereligious conversion, social desperation, existential anxiety, or the like. In the original Spanish examples, we observe a creature who at first acts and reacts naively, then either cynically or overweeningly, but eventually tastes the bitter cup of disillusionment. Openly or indirectly the narrator comments on the happenings while leading us toward the crisis. Often we get to witness the actual withdrawal from the world or conversion, as in the third-person *La Lozana Andaluza* (1528), or the first-person *Guzmán de Alfarache* (1599/1604); or we sense spiritual torment in the self-exposure that is broken off, as in *Lazarillo de Tormes*. There are reasons which cannot be pursued hereto assume that Mann never really intended to add a second part to his *Felix Krull*. In any case, Part 1 ends, in effect, without returning to the realm of history; rather (like *Lazarillo*, which influenced its opening) it breaks off at a high moment of mythic recognition that is only lightly veiled as a biographical incident.¹² The reader, through Felix, moves past the daughter (Senhorita Kuckuck) to the mother figure (Sehnora Kuckuck) in a rite of initiation that parodically conflates the bullfight cry and the Eleusinian cry. The novel leaves us as privileged voyeurs forever peering at this glorious encounter, the onset of a private scene of passionate fulfillment which lends deeper meaning to the delinquent who, among other things, represents the role of the artist.

In resuscitating the pseudo-autobiographical tale, *Felix Krull* renews to great advantage the mature mode of picaresque narration which reached its apogee in Germany in the first-person voice of

¹² See Oskar Seidlin, "Picaresque Elements in Thomas Mann's Work," *Modern Language Quarterly* 12 (1951), 183-200.

Grimmelshausen's *Simplicissimus* (1668).¹³ Mann so nimbly manages the split level of consciousness in the first-person narrator that it accommodates the burden of integrating the "lessons" of life all those materials which appear expansively in Mann's essays over a lifetime and surface in their 1920s variety in *Der Zauberberg*. The essence is distilled into the uncensored experiences of Felix, whom we follow as he recuperates from his family's fall into penury and disgrace, learns to cope with and outsmart the governing institutions, works his way up from a humble backstairs existence into comfortable bourgeois circumstances, and finally penetrates into the sweet life of aristocratic self-indulgence, even acquiring a surrogate noble ancestry and parents all these steps tested and savored as roles being tried out. Mann recognizes how the explicit running commentary or implicit roving gaze of the older Spanish genre can permit him effortlessly to bring on board a critique of the abuses and pretenses of the world. *Felix Krull* is indeed remarkable in the way it slices through Europe from North to South in cultural terms and bottom to top in social terms. We notice all the social forces and movements coming into the field of vision of Felix without his needing to analyze them copiously as a sociologist or historian would. The psychological forces and processes, too, are observed with freshness, as if by the eager learner. But of course these lessons from an unvarnished, at first naive, perspective slowly reveal, as they shape, the wisdom of the retrospective beholder.

Felix, who *does not know* he represents something archetypal (at least never is shown by his later narrator persona to act in the possession of such knowledge, as against deep intuition, in Part 1), *demonstrates* his mythological functions; and for us, as readers, one of the greatest pleasures is watching him as a principle in operation: as the modern Hermes. Beyond the rogue's voice, on a different plane of authorial irony in which the character Felix cannot participate, but which he instinctively mimics in writing his own memoirs, elements

13 On Mann's interest in the hero of *Simplicissimus* as a forerunner of Felix, see "Estebanillo and Simplex: Two Baroque Views of the Role-Playing Rogue in War, Crime, and Art (with an Excursus on Krull's Forebears)," in my *Garden and Labyrinth of Time: Studies in Renaissance and Baroque Literature* (New York, Bern, Frankfurt am Main, Paris: Peter Lang, 1988), 279-95.

of Mann's entire writing experience resurface for example, the fascination for the androgynic doubleness of humanity, felt a half century earlier vis-à-vis the twins in the story *Wälsungenblut*, or the fascination for the structures of intersection in the developed West such as the great Parisian hotel, earlier the Swiss sanatorium in *Der Zauberberg*. This novel stops in order to leave education in progress and Mann's art untrammelled by closure. The underground message seems to be the importance of not reaching a fixed or rigid self-awareness by realizing the eternal quality of development. In this respect, by its resemblance to the final affirmation of Joyce's *Ulysses*, the ending of Mann's *Felix Krull* reconnects with the fundamental modernist overcoming of time and desire for renewal.¹⁴

¹⁴ The analysis of structural principles by Mihaly Szegegy-Maszák, "Teleology in Postmodern Fiction," in *Exploring Postmodernism*, ed. Matei Calinescu and Douwe Fokkema (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1987), 4157, should make us cautious about concluding that the implied circularity and repetition in Felix's discovery, the reinstatement of a myth which appears to reveal a continuing palimpsest and to suspend teleology, the novel's "open" ending, and/or Part 1 as a hypothetical narrative rupture or discontinuity automatically qualify Mann's final book as "postmodern." More crucial may be how we judge the intent or effect of Felix's possible "misunderstanding" of evolution in his dream after hearing Professor Kuckuck's spontaneous lecture during the train ride from Paris. If "the reaction against evolutionism started by Nietzsche" is a "fundamental" postmodern attitude, as Szegegy-Maszák states, should we consider Felix's happy thought that evolution leads to himself to constitute affirmation on the part of Mann?

Hermann Hesse: *Steppenwolf* (1927)

Egon Schwarz

Hermann Hesse's *Steppenwolf* belongs to that German genre called the Bildungsroman or educational novel, but it turns that venerable tradition on its head. To understand its peculiar contribution to the genre, it is necessary to interpret the novel as a whole. I therefore request that the reader follow my explications with as much patience as he or she can muster until reaching the passages that deal with the problem that Hesse's novel is trying to address.

As an experienced observer of literary life and the reviewer of thousands of books, Hermann Hesse knew that "poetic writing can be understood . . . in many ways."¹ Further testimony to his objectivity is found in his admission that "the author is not the proper authority" (v)² to decide who is right in the eternal controversies among authors, critics, and readers. He even goes one step further in stating this axiom of literary reception. He maintains that "many an author has

1 Hermann Hesse, *Steppenwolf*, translated by Basil Creighton and revised by Walter Sorell (New York: Random House, 1963). Hereafter the page number will be indicated in parentheses in the text after the quoted passage. The German original will be found in the footnote or in parentheses after words or phrases. "Dichtungen können auf manche Arten verstanden . . . werden." The German edition cited is: Hermann Hesse, *Der Steppenwolf* (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1927).

2 "Der Verfasser einer Dichtung [ist] nicht die Instanz. . . ."

found readers to whom his work seemed more lucid than it was to himself" (v).³

Still, the author's note to *Steppenwolf*,⁴ from which the above statements are taken, and other references, above all Hesse's private correspondence, are full of irritation and disappointment over the "misunderstanding" ("Mißverständnis")⁵ created by this novel. Hesse does not tire of complaining about the majority of his friends, who are only capable of seeing the book at most as a "curiosity," ("Kuriosum") and about the newspapers, which had "nothing intelligent or at least honest" to say about *Steppenwolf*.⁶ His discontent gradually turns into invective when he refers to the "damn stupid newspaper articles"⁷ and to the German populace, which "does not love serious reading matter."⁸ He complains about the "awful aristocratic romances," ("üblen Prinzessinnenromane") that earn enormous sums for their authors, "whereas a book like my *Steppenwolf* could find no place in the entire country where a serialized publication could be made,"⁹ and no "famous man" ("berühmten Mann") willing to "count it among the

3 "Schon mancher Autor hat Leser gefunden, denen sein Werk durchsichtiger war als ihm selbst."

4 First printing of the licensed edition of the Büchergilde Gutenberg, 1942. Quoted here according to *Materialien zu Hermann Hesses Der Steppenwolf*, ed. Volker Michels, Suhrkamp Taschenbuch No. 53 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972), 159. Quotations from this collection will subsequently be designated by the letter M followed by the page number.

5 M 122, letter to Hilde Jung-Neugeboren, July 1927; M 144, letter to Martin Buber, January 1932; M 159, "Nachwort."

6 "Kluges oder wenigstens etwas Ehrliches" (M 119, letter to Heinrich Wiegand, June 15, 1927).

7 "saudummen Zeitungsartikel" (M 122, letter to Otto Hartmann, 5 August 1927).

8 "ernste Lektüre nicht liebt."

9 "während ein Buch wie mein *Steppenwolf* im ganzen Reich keine Stelle fand, wo ein Vorabdruck möglich gewesen wäre" (M 122, letter to Carl Seelig, 29 August 1927).

books of the year worth reading."¹⁰ He complains about the bourgeois press that rejects "this book as evil and indecent," while the socialist press "rejects it as hopelessly individualistic,"¹¹ and about "shrewd journalists and languishing aunts" who "collegially slap him on the back."¹² It bothers him that "not the slightest trace of understanding [is evident], not for the content and not for the form, neither of which is ordinary."¹³ In view of these complaints, one might regard it as a fit of equanimity when Hesse speaks of the "*amiable* lack of understanding"¹⁴ which the press brings to his work.

All these lamentations, these repeatedly expressed feelings, regardless of what else might be hidden behind them, imply that Hesse's novel was written with a view to expressing deeply-felt convictions. And if one investigates his written comments about the book, some of his intentions can indeed be reconstructed. Among these statements is an especially interesting letter to the father of a suicide victim, who apparently reproached the author, accusing his book of bearing some responsibility for his son's death:

Dear Sir:

You had the understandable need to shift your fatherly share of the guilt over the fate of your son to another person, and you did that to me in a letter which was neither polite nor prudent.

Goethe, with whom I otherwise cannot compare myself in the least, once received very similar letters regarding his *Werther* from similar-minded readers and fathers. At that time there existed a problem-

10 "unter die lesenswerten Bücher des Jahres gezählt" (M 126, "Über allerlei neue Bücher," 1928; letter to Felix Braun, January 1929).

11 "böse und unanständig . . . es als hoffnungslos individualistisch . . . ablehnt" (M 126).

12 "gerissene Journalisten und schmachende Tanten . . . die ihm kollegial auf die Schulter klopfen" (M 121, letter to Felix Braun, 8 July 1927).

13 "weder für den Inhalt noch für die Form, die beide nicht alltäglich sind, eine Spur von Verständnis" (M 122, letter to Hilde Jung-Neugeboren, July 1927).

14 "*freundlichen* Mißverständnis" (Ibid., my emphasis).

atic and somewhat decadent group of young people in which suicides were not infrequent, and the fathers looked for the decadence, not in themselves or their sons, but rather in that cursed *Werther*, which dared to say things that in their opinion should have been kept silent or explained away through lies. You must leave the responsibility to me for my books (which demanded sacrifices in their creation of which you cannot have the slightest notion). I do not need your instructions. If you had actually bothered to read *Steppenwolf* and made an effort to understand it, you would have realized that this book is not the story of ruin but rather one of a crisis and a healing, that "Steppenwolf" is not a decadent; he is quite capable of life.¹⁵

The expressions "crisis" ("Krise") and "healing" ("Heilung") must be noted, because they appear over and over again. One can see in them the core of Hesse's self-analysis. Both concepts also occur in the previously cited author's note, in fact in the cogent concluding paragraph in which the author summarizes his interpretation of the novel once again. This final paragraph even ends quite effectively with the word "healing" ("Heilung"):

¹⁵Hermann Hesse-R. J. Humm: *Briefwechsel*, ed. Ursula and Volker Michels (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), 23940. The German text is as follows:

Sehr geehrter Herr,

Sie haben das begreifliche Bedürfnis gehabt, Ihren väterlichen Schuldanteil am Schicksal Ihres Sohnes auf einen anderen abzuwälzen, und haben das in einem weder artigen noch klugen Brief an mich getan.

Von ebenso gesinnten Lesern und Vätern hat einst Goethe, mit dem ich mich sonst nicht von ferne vergleichen darf, ganz ähnliche Briefe über seinen "Werther" bekommen. Es war eine problematische, etwas dekadente Jugend vorhanden, in welcher Selbstmorde vorkamen, und die Väter suchten nicht bei sich oder ihren Söhnen die Dekadenz, sondern in dem verfluchten "Werther," welcher Dinge auszusprechen gewagt hatte, die man nach ihrer Meinung totschweigen oder weglügen sollte. Sie müssen die Verantwortung für meine Bücher (die unter Opfern entstanden sind, von denen Sie nichts zu ahnen vermögen) mir selbst überlassen, ich bin Ihrer Vorschriften nicht bedürftig. Hätten Sie die Sorgfalt aufgebracht, den "Steppenwolf" wirklich zu lesen und zu verstehen, so hätten Sie gesehen, daß er nicht die Geschichte eines Unterganges, sondern die einer Krise und Heilung, und daß der "Steppenwolf" kein Dekadenter, sondern ein Lebensfähiger ist.

Of course, I neither can nor intend to tell my readers how they ought to understand my tale. May everyone find in it what strikes a chord in him and is of some use to him! But I would be happy if many of them were to realize that the story of the *Steppenwolf* pictures a disease and crisis but not one leading to death and destruction, on the contrary: to healing. (vi)¹⁶

Such passages emphatically contradict all those critics who insist on Harry Haller's ultimate failure.¹⁷ The comparison with *Werther* opens a wide field for speculation regarding the author's basic intentions in *Steppenwolf*. Moreover, it suggests that by writing this novel, Hesse attempted to overcome a personal crisis which he felt had also a historical and thus a social significance. Many of Hesse's statements confirm such an assumption. For example, on 14 October 1926, in other words in the middle of the composition of *Steppenwolf* which he completed in January 1927,¹⁸ he asserted that he was not writing "a literary work but rather . . . a confession"¹⁹ and declared elsewhere "that the incurable personal, but only just barely overcome neurosis of an individual intellectual is at the same time a symptom of the soul of an age."²⁰ Hesse considered the worst trends of his time to be mon-

16 "Ich kann und mag natürlich den Lesern nicht vorschreiben, wie sie meine Erzählung zu verstehen haben. Möge jeder aus ihr machen, was ihm entspricht und dienlich ist! Aber es wäre mir doch lieb, wenn viele von ihnen merken würden, daß die Geschichte des Steppenwolfes zwar eine Krankheit und Krise darstellt, aber nicht eine, die zum Tode führt, nicht einen Untergang, sondern das Gegenteil: eine Heilung" (M 160).

17 Works which postulate such an outcome of the novel are for example Lynn Dhority's "Toward a Reevaluation of Structure and Style in Hesse's *Steppenwolf*," in *Theorie und Kritik: Zur vergleichenden und neueren deutschen Literatur*, ed. Stefan Grunwald (Berne and Munich: Francke, 1974) and Dorrit Cohn's "Narration of Consciousness in *Der Steppenwolf*," *Germanic Review* 44, no. 2 (1969): 12131.

18 M provides a chronicle of the years of composition (2937).

19 "keine Dichtung, sondern . . . Bekenntnis" (M 97, letter to Heinrich Wiegand of 14 October 1926).

20 "daß die persönliche unheilbare, doch notdürftig bemeisterte Neurose eines

(footnote continued on next page)

ey, machines, and chauvinism, while he regarded war as the culmination of this triad toward which he saw his contemporaries headed once more. Even in the summer of 1943 he noted, not without bitterness, that *Steppenwolf* was "smiled at condescendingly" ("belächelt") by most readers "as the private story of a certain Mr. Haller who takes himself too seriously. One seldom notes that the book is also about the war which, sixteen years before its outbreak, it saw approaching with every passing year."²¹

But even these great powers of expressiveness did not exhaust all of what the author believed he had captured in his work. Of the utmost importance to him, as he stresses again and again, was the portrayal of a timeless sphere that eclipses empirical reality, because "the content and goal of *Steppenwolf* is not critical commentary on the contemporary age and personal nervousness but rather Mozart and the Immortals."²² It is this essential addition that completes the enumeration of all the significant elements of Hesse's comments on his novel scattered over many years. With their assistance it would be possible to summarize the entire complex of his intentions. However, this task is unnecessary, because Hesse himself undertook it with all the clarity and completeness one could wish for. After the most vocal strife surrounding the controversial book had died down somewhat, Hesse wrote a letter to P. A. Riebe dating from 1931 or 1932. It is worth quoting the appropriate passage here:

Task of the *Steppenwolf* was: while preserving a few "eternal" (for me) tenets of belief to show the lack of spirituality in the tendencies of our age and their destructive effect even on superior minds and

(footnote continued from previous page)

geistigen Menschen zugleich Symptom ist für die Zeitseele" (Ibid., letter to Hugo Ball of 13 October 1926).

²¹ "als die private Geschichte eines Herrn Haller, der sich zu wichtig nimmt. Selten merkt man, daß das Buch außerdem von dem Krieg handelt, den es 16 Jahre vorher mit jedem Jahr näher kommen sah" (M 152, letter to Dr. Lewandowski, summer 1943).

²² "der Inhalt und das Ziel des 'Steppenwolf' sind nicht Zeitkritik und persönliche Nervositäten, sondern Mozart und die Unsterblichen" (M 147, letter to P. A. Riebe, 1931 or 1932).

characters. I was willing to forgo masquerades and expose my self in order to be able to portray in a really complete and bluntly realistic way the setting of the book, which is the soul of an uncommonly gifted and educated individual whose suffering is caused by the age in which he lives but who believes in eternal values.²³

To this account we need only to add at most the aesthetic component to which Hesse also occasionally referred. He insisted that the work was "structured with more consciousness and art" than his critics could imagine,²⁴ namely, as a strict canon, as a fugue²⁵ or, as he often stated, as a sonata.²⁶

This reconstruction of the goals Hesse pursued in his *Steppenwolf* undoubtedly contributes much to the understanding of the novel; for example, it could be a starting point for a comparison between what Hesse *wished* to achieve and what he *did* achieve. Obviously, such a reconstruction of Hesse's intentions does not render superfluous each individual reader's own grappling with the novel. Even in this respect one can confidently trust the author, who gave one reader the following good advice:

Here is my opinion on your question regarding *Steppenwolf*: I think you should concern yourself purely with the book itself and not be

23 "Aufgabe des *Steppenwolf* war: Unter Wahrung einiger für mich 'ewiger' Glaubenssätze die Ungeistigkeit unserer Zeittendenzen und ihre zerstörerische Wirkung auch auf den höherstehenden Geist und Charakter zu zeigen. Ich verzichtete auf Maskeraden und gab mich selbst preis, um den Schauplatz des Buches wirklich ganz und schonungslos echt geben zu können, die Seele eines weit über Durchschnitt Begabten und Gebildeten, der an der Zeit schwer leidet, der aber an überzeitliche Werte glaubt" (Ibid.).

24 "mit mehr Bewußtsein und Kunst gebaut" (M 126, from "Über allerlei neue Bücher," 1928).

25 M 148, letter to E. K. of October 1932.

26 M 121, letter to Felix Braun, 8 July 1927.

concerned over statements which the author may on occasion have later made about it.²⁷

Thomas Mann said "that *Steppenwolf* is a novel whose experimental daring does not fall short of that of *Ulysses* or the *Faux Monnayeurs*."²⁸ It is undoubtedly not coincidental that no more precise analysis follows this remark, because whoever is really familiar with the pioneering novels of James Joyce and André Gide could regard this only as amiable, collegial exaggeration, not as a serious literary comparison. In a justly admired essay executed with great brilliance, a literary scholar sought to prove that *Steppenwolf* was composed in a complicated sonata form, referring to Hesse's comment cited above,²⁹ and yet the attempt was not completely convincing. It was not long before Hesse's contention was refuted with no less painstaking philological meticulousness; in other words, it was shown that musical patterns in literary works could be regarded only as having a metaphorical function.³⁰ The designation *canon* is possibly more plausible; it too was suggested by the author for the structure of his novel.³¹ What is meant is that three carefully orchestrated attempts are made, although each time from a different perspective, to under-

27 "Meine Meinung zu Ihrer Steppenwolffrage ist die: Sie sollten, glaube ich, sich rein an das Buch halten, und nicht an Äußerungen, die der Autor darüber später gelegentlich getan hat" (M 153, 1947 to Horst Dieter Kreidler).

28 "daß der 'Steppenwolf' ein Romanwerk ist, das an experimenteller Gewagtheit dem 'Ulysses,' den 'Faux Monnayeurs' nicht nachsteht." Thomas Mann, "Hermann Hesse, Einleitung zu einer amerikanischen Demian-Ausgabe," *Neue Rundschau* 58 (1947): 248.

29 Theodore Ziolkowski, "Hermann Hesse's *Steppenwolf*: A Sonata in Prose," *Modern Language Quarterly* 19, no. 2 (1958): 11533. German translation by Ursula Michels-Wenz in M 35377.

30 Lynn Dhority (see note 17 above) declares that one becomes "inextricably entangled" as soon as he tries to establish the musical analogy with any degree of exactness."

31 See note 25.

stand the personality of the central figure, Harry Haller, and to penetrate the meaning of his experiences: in the foreword by the editor, the landlady's nephew who finds the papers the vanished person left behind; in Haller's journal written for the most part³² as a first person narrative, in which he portrays a critical phase of his own life; and finally in the "Treatise on the Steppenwolf," which describes the same phenomenon with abstract objectivity, from a sociopsychological view, so to speak. But even the idea of a canon can have no more than metaphorical significance as a sort of challenge to the reader to recognize the parallelism of these attempts and to use this knowledge to foster his insight into the novel. We may perhaps make more progress if we seek to define the spheres from which Hesse created the ideas and images of the work.

It is no empty phrase when Hesse stresses that he unsparingly revealed himself in this book.³³ Obviously every novel contains autobiography. It is more the rule than the exception that the general intellectual and psychic situation is similar in literary figures and their creators, that their attitudes to culture and society, government and the age as well as their tastes in matters of art agree. But the identification between Hermann Hesse and Harry Haller, even if one takes into account the ontological differentiation separating a living author from a fictional person, goes much further.³⁴ In fact, it could hardly be made more complete than in *Steppenwolf*, because it penetrates into

32 Dorrit Cohn notes that Harry Haller sometimes speaks of himself in the third person in her excellent article (see note 17 above): "In certain crucial scenes of the novel, the schizoid Haller becomes estranged from the self, to the point where he sees himself as one might see another person. And as he proceeds to analyze . . . the alienated self, he inevitably shifts his grammar to the third person" (12526).

33 See note 23.

34 Ralph Freedman, for example, warns against a simplistic equating of the two. See his article "*Person and Persona; The Mirrors of Steppenwolf*," in *Hesse: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Theodore Ziolkowski (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973), 15379. I see the main difference, other than in the artistic transformation which is a quite obvious one, in the stylization of Harry Haller in the direction of a philosophical and analytical thinker, which all evidence and some of Hesse's own statements indicate he was not.

unmistakable, verifiable details of his private life. It begins with the two names with the same alliterating initial letters and the same bisyllabic, trochaic accent, and it increases from page to page through the amassing of more and more details. Both the author and the protagonist were brought up by pious and strict parents, had the same role models, and were receptive to the intellectual heritage of the Far East. Both were writers and painted in watercolors. Both were deserted by their mentally deranged wives, were pacifists in the war, and were branded worthless dogs, shirkers, and traitors by the chauvinistic press;³⁵ neither was indifferent to the fact that "the whole world was embarking with blaring music for the next war."³⁶ Both had gout.³⁷ They even had a portrait of the well-coiffed privy councillor Goethe in common.³⁸ Both were thrown into a deeply disturbing crisis because they had concentrated too much on their intellectual development, a one-sidedness which they both hoped to overcome through the purchase of a gramophone³⁹ and learning to dance the "Fox" and the "Onestep," in other words, through the attempt "quite naively and childishly to join in the life and activity of the common man."⁴⁰ Both planned to commit suicide when they reached the age of fifty, and this decision gave each the ability to bear his suffering more easily. Further details could easily be added to the ones listed. They challenge the reader to connect every word and event in the book with Hesse's private life. This implicit demand obviously pursues

35 M 69, letter to Ludwig Finckh, mid-March 1926. In this and in the following notes I indicate only the passages where Hesse was speaking from his own experience. Every reader of *Steppenwolf* will easily be able to find passages where Harry Haller tells quite analogous things about himself.

36 "die ganze Welt mit vollen Segeln und schmetternder Musik auf den nächsten Krieg los segelt" (M 77, letter to Helene Welti, 13 July 1926).

37 M 62, letter to Alice Leuthold, February 1926.

38 M 74, letter to Richard Wilhelm, 4 June 1926.

39 M 77, letter to Frau Julia Laubi-Honnegger, 19 June 1926.

40 "ganz naiv und kindlich dem Leben und Tun der Allerweltsmenschen anzuschließen" (M 62, letter to Alice Leuthold, February 1926).

a strategic goal for the narrative. Through the fact that the book constructs these equations: Hesse=Haller, Haller's crisis=the crisis of the age, the reader is told with unusual urgency: *Tua res agitur*.

Hesse was an unusually well-read writer, a *poeta doctus*. The more than six thousand reviews he published during his lifetime represent just the most visible aspect of his knowledge of books. The extent of his reading of philosophy and literature is overwhelming, and it should not be surprising that it left many recognizable traces in *Steppenwolf*. It would be just as unproductive as it would be impossible to detect all these influences. Only in those instances where they are endowed with structuring power will it make sense to point them out. The Platonic-Christian-Romantic ideas, for example, have great significance in this book. It is Platonic to divide the world into a sphere of appearances perceived by the senses and a sphere of ideas which is the true and real one whose existence is shown to the consciousness of even the educated man only in dreams, in rare conditions of heightened perception, as the "divine and golden track," which "nearly always . . . was blurred in dirt and dust" of ordinary life, yet occasionally sparkles, only to be lost once again (3132).⁴¹ The central lesson which Mozart imparts to Harry Haller at the end is also Platonic, an experience which one, alluding to Plato's metaphor of the caves, could be called the "metaphor of the radio" ("Radiogleichnis").

At once . . . the devilish metal funnel spat out, without more ado, its mixture of bronchial slime and chewed rubber; that noise that possessors of gramophones and radio sets are prevailed upon to call music. (239)⁴²

41 "goldene göttliche Spur . . . fast immer tief im Kot und Staub verschüttet." *Der Steppenwolf* (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1927), 48. Future citations of page numbers for quotations from the German edition are in footnotes where the German original is given.

42 "In der Tat spuckte . . . der teuflische Blechtrichter nun alsbald jene Mischung von Bronchialschleim und zerkautem Gummi aus, welchen die Besitzer von Grammophonen und Abonnenten des Radios übereingekommen sind, Musik zu nennen."

But Mozart severely criticizes the protesting Harry.⁴³

Listen, then, you little man. Listen well! You have need of it. You're not just listening to a Handel who has been assaulted by radio. . . . At the same time you're hearing and seeing, dear sir, an excellent symbol of life itself. When you listen to the radio, you are hearing and seeing the primal battle between idea and phenomenal world at the same time, between eternity and time, between the divine and the human. (240)⁴⁴

⁴³ As a result of this radio scene, Hesse was attacked sharply not only in the magazine *Der deutsche Rundfunk* of 21 August 1927 (231719) but also quite recently from a more scholarly point of view: "Some of us may indeed feel a horror of technology that is loosely akin to Hesse's, so that we sense some gratification in the automobile hunt of the Magic Theatre. But it is the perfectibility of technology, its autonomy, and the investment of a dehumanized faith in it, that gives us worry, not its imperfection, its distortion of its intention. The radio scene shows a profound failure to comprehend technology and its élan. Within less than ten years the complaint of bronchial mucus and chewed rubber would be wholly irrelevant, and in the age of high fidelity it appears ludicrously quaint. Hesse has a completely undynamic view of the radio; he sees in it only a fixed object, an evil plaything, the trash of a pseudoculture; he does not sense in it that intimation of expandable horizons that, rightly or wrongly, fascinated large numbers of people, especially young people, in the infancy of technology." Jeffrey Sammons, "Hermann Hesse and the Over-Thirty Germanist," in *Critical Essays* (see note 34 above), 126. These reproofs are certainly worthy of consideration but are not quite just. Hesse has Haller speak of "a receiver and transmitter . . . still in their first stages and miserably defective" (115; "vorerst noch grauenhaft unvollkommenen Empfänger und Sender," *Der Steppenwolf*, 121); he realizes that these were just the mere "beginnings of radio," ("*Anfänge des Radios*") that the usual "bitterness and scorn for the times and for *science*" (116; "Ton von Erbitterung und Hohn gegen die Zeit und *die Technik*," *Ibid.*, my emphasis) is a symptom of his sickness which needs to be healed.

⁴⁴ "Hören Sie gut zu, Männlein, es tut Ihnen not! . . . Sie hören ja nicht bloß einen durch das Radio vergewaltigten Händel. . . . Sie hören und sehen, Wertester, zugleich ein vortreffliches Gleichnis alles Lebens. Wenn Sie dem Radio zuhören, so hören und sehen Sie den Urkampf zwischen Idee und Erscheinung, zwischen Ewigkeit und Zeit, zwischen Göttlichem und Menschlichem." (281) [Here English translation by ed.]

Other important ideas sound similar to those of Schopenhauer, the idea of "sense of guilt inherent in individuals" (53) ("Schuldgefühl der Individuation") which can only be expiated through disintegration, through the step "back to the mother, back to God, back to the All" (53).⁴⁵ Because "each birth signifies parting from the All, means confinement, separation from God" (71).⁴⁶ This notion of striving for integration and totality is united with the real concern of the novel by means of the postulate that the "return into the All,"⁴⁷ the "lifting of the personality through suffering,"⁴⁸ can only be achieved by the expansion of the "soul" ("Seele") so "that it is able once more to embrace the All" (71).⁴⁹

The philosopher who most influenced Hesse is of course Nietzsche. Without Nietzsche's cultural pessimism, the Nietzschean psychology of unmasking, and Nietzsche's social criticism, Hesse is unthinkable. For this reason Nietzsche's thought cannot be separated from the substance of the work. But four of Nietzsche's thought complexes are so basic for *Steppenwolf* that it is only appropriate that they be indicated here. Running through the entire work is, first of all, the difference between the gifted, exceptional person and the dime-a-dozen or herd men, the mediocre masses; second, the criticism of asceticism, of the purely spiritual aspect of Christianity that is hostile to the physical and sensual; and third, the idea that a person is not a static being but rather is constantly developing. "Man is not by any means of fixed and enduring form. . . . He is much more an experiment and a transition. He is nothing else than the narrow and perilous bridge between nature

45 "zurück zur Mutter, zurück zu Gott, zurück ins All" ("Tractat vom Steppenwolf," 10. The "Tractat" follows on p. 64 of the German edition).

46 "jede Geburt bedeutet Trennung vom All, bedeutet Umgrenzung, Absonderung von Gott" ("Treatise," 31).

47 "Rückkehr ins All" (Ibid.).

48 "Aufhebung der leidvollen Individuation" (Ibid.).

49 "daß sie das wieder zu umfassen vermag" (Ibid.).

and spirit" (6768).⁵⁰ Lastly, mention must be made of Nietzsche's philosophy of humor, which transcends the misery of earthly existence and enables a person to make light of his suffering and laugh at his own despair.⁵¹

The list of literary influences which could be considered to have some validity for *Steppenwolf* is long. One such influence with which it has been extensively compared is the Gilgamesh epic, which Hesse had known since 1915.⁵² Enkidu's initial description as a wild animal who became human through the help of a courtesan, his sexual awakening, the refinement of his table manners, personal hygiene, and dress could be mentioned; this whole civilizing process yields a whole series of motifs which speak for themselves in their relevance to *Steppenwolf*. Other parallels can be made to Rainer Maria Rilke and especially to Malte Laurids Brigge,⁵³ who, like Harry Haller, belongs to an outmoded cultural elite and must painfully come to terms with a part banal and part run-down mass society in a modern metropolis. Surprisingly, the similarities also extend to the *Duino Elegies*.⁵⁴ Haller is of the opinion that human life becomes a special "hell" ("Hölle") when "two ages, two cultures and religions overlap"

50 "Der Mensch ist keine feste und dauernde Gestaltung . . . , er ist vielmehr ein Versuch und Übergang, er ist nichts anderes als die schmale, gefährliche Brücke zwischen Natur und Geist" (27).

51 Other motifs from Nietzsche, which play a smaller role in the structure of the novel are: "the nobility of suffering" ("der Adel des Leidens," *Der Steppenwolf*, 28) and the "hegemony of music" ("Hegemonie der Musik," *Der Steppenwolf*, 168) in German culture.

52 See Kenneth Hughes's "Hesse's Use of *Gilgamesh*-Motifs in the Humanization of Siddhartha and Harry Haller," *Seminar* 5 (1969): 129-40.

53 In Rilke's short novel, *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* (1910). For a detailed discussion of this work as a Bildungsroman in modernist garb see Walter Sokel's essay in this volume.

54 Rainer Maria Rilke, *Duino Elegies and The Sonnets to Orpheus*, trans. A. Poulin, Jr. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977). All Rilke quotations are from this translation and will be cited by line numbers in the text. The German originals will be given in the notes.

(23).⁵⁵ Indeed, there are epochs "when a whole generation is caught in this way between two ages, between two modes of life and thus loses the feeling for itself, for the self-evident, for all morals, for being safe and innocent" (23).⁵⁶ A famous couplet in the "Seventh Elegy" expresses the same thought in a very abbreviated poetic form:

Each slow turn of the world carries such disinherited ones
to whom neither the past nor the future belongs.⁵⁷

(63-64)

But the analogy continues. Whereas Rilke with conservative pathos calls out for resistance: "This shouldn't confuse *us*; no, it should commit us to preserve the form we still can recognize" ("Seventh Elegy," lines 6567, Rilke's emphasis),⁵⁸ Harry Haller sounds more skeptical: "Were we, the old connoisseurs, the adorers of Europe as it used to be, of genuine music and poetry as once they were, nothing but a pig-headed minority of complicated neurotics who would be forgotten or derided tomorrow?" (41).⁵⁹ But the similarity of their worldviews cannot be mistaken. The old elitist culture, which is only championed by a small minority, appears to both to be extremely threatened by the modern capitalistic industrial society. The "Americanism" ("Amerikanismus") of the postwar period, which is diagnosed by Hesse in many places in the novel, finds similarities in Rilke, who is

55 "zwei Zeiten, zwei Kulturen und Religionen einander überschneiden" (37).

56 "wo eine ganze Generation so zwischen zwei Zeiten, zwischen zwei Lebensstile hineingerät, daß ihr jede Selbstverständlichkeit, jede Sitte, jede Geborgenheit und Unschuld verlorengelht" (38).

57 "Jede dumpfe Umkehr der Welt hat solche Enterbte,/denen das Frühere nicht und noch nicht das Nächste gehört."

58 "*Uns* soll/dies nicht verwirren; es stärke in uns die Bewahrung/ der noch erkannten Gestalt."

59 "Waren wir alten Kenner und Verehrer des einstigen Europas, der einstigen echten Musik, der ehemaligen echten Dichtung, waren wir bloß eine kleine dumme Minorität von komplizierten Neurotikern, die morgen vergessen und verlacht wurden?" (61).

even more strongly antipathetic. The very symbols of preservation are the same for both literary artists. Harry Haller asks himself this melancholy question in his apprehension over the impiety of an age that destroys everything: "Who still remembered that slender cypress on a hill over Gubbio . . . ?" (38),⁶⁰ while Rilke proclaims in the "First Elegy," again more briefly and positively than Hesse, but undoubtedly in the same imagery: "Maybe what's left for us is some tree on a hillside we can look at day after day" ("First Elegy," lines 1315).⁶¹ Also the formulation: "Have you . . . remembered well enough . . . ?" (lines 4546)⁶² appears in the "First Elegy." Hesse shares with Rilke not only the sadness over lost things but also the invective against that which has forced them from their place. In Hesse it is the "ravaged earth, sucked dry by the vampires of finance,"⁶³ the "so-called culture . . . with the lying, vulgar, brazen glamour of a Fair" (27),⁶⁴ and in Rilke it is a fair with "lifelike shooting galleries of garish luck: targets tumbling off the rack to the ring of tin when a good-shot hits one" and in which "booths that can tempt the queerest taste are drumming and barking," in one of which "there's something special to see . . . coins copulating, not just acting" ("Tenth Elegy," lines 2531).⁶⁵ Even the impulse to violent destruction of this empty and shallow culture, which many found offensive in Hesse, his "rage

60 "Wer gedachte noch jener kleinen, zähen Zypresse hoch am Berge über Gubbio . . .?" (57).

61 "Es bleibt uns vielleicht/irgend ein Baum an dem Abhang, daß wir ihn täglich/wiedersähen"

62 "Hast du . . . genügend gedacht?"

63 "zerstörte, von Aktiengesellschaften ausgesogene Erde"

64 "die sogenannte Kultur in ihrem verlogenen und gemeinen blechernen Jahrmarktsglanz" (42).

65 "Und des behübschten Glücks figürliche Schießstatt,/wo es zappelt von Ziel und sich blechern benimmt,/wenn ein Geschickterer trifft. Von Beifall zu Zufall/taumelt er weiter; denn Buden jeglicher Neugier/werben, trommeln und plärrn. Für Erwachsene aber/ist noch besonders zu sehn, wie das Geld sich vermehrt, anatomisch. . . ."

against this toneless, flat, normal, and sterile life," his "mad impulse to smash something, a warehouse perhaps, or a cathedral"⁶⁶ has its equivalent in the "Tenth Elegy": "Oh, how an angel could stamp out their market of comforts, with the church nearby, bought ready-made" ("Tenth Elegy," lines 2021),⁶⁷ harmonies that extend to synonyms, even identical words.⁶⁸

One could easily continue and bring out the considerable similarities of Harry Haller with Tonio Kröger and his ambivalent position between the bourgeoisie and art or with the belated revelation of a suppressed sensuality in the aging writer Gustav Aschenbach. However, it is now necessary to mention that most important personality, the one who acted as a godfather to Steppenwolf: Goethe.⁶⁹ It is obviously far from arbitrary to link *Steppenwolf* with Goethe. First of all, Harry Haller mentions Goethe as among his favorite authors and, what counts even more, his decisive quarrel with the bourgeois world that leads to final alienation is ignited by a commercially trivialized portrait of Goethe, who thus becomes a symbol of Haller's deviating value system. Additionally, it must be said that the bitter enmity between the beast and man, the struggle of Steppenwolf with his civilized counterpart, is based on Goethe's "Two souls, alas! reside within my breast."⁷⁰ This famous quote from Goethe is quite consciously used by Hesse as the basis of the entire conflict and, in spite of all the variations to which it is subjected, indeed, in spite of the

66 "Wut auf dies abgetönte, flache, normierte und sterilisierte Leben . . . rasende Lust irgend etwas kaputt zu schlagen, etwa ein Warenhaus oder eine Kathedrale" (44).

67 "O, wie spurlos zerträte ein Engel ihnen den Trostmarkt,/den die Kirche begrenzt, ihre fertig gekaufte. . . ."

68 The idea that animals are "more right" (12728; "richtiger," *Der Steppenwolf*, 137) than people is also extensively treated by Rilke in the "Eighth Elegy."

69 The following discussion is based on my essay "Zur Erklärung von Hesses *Steppenwolf*," *Monatshefte* 53 (1961): 191-98.

70 *Faust I and II*, ed. and trans. Stuart Atkins, vol. 2 of *Goethe's Collected Works* (Boston: Suhrkamp, 1984), 30. "Zwei Seelen wohnen, ach, in meiner Brust" (*Faust I*, line 1112).

irony with which it is treated, it still remains the key point of the book (66; *Der Steppenwolf*, "Tractat," 26). And Goethe ultimately appears as a character in the novel. His appearance in a dream of the protagonist lends it even greater significance in a novel where the dream world is more important than "reality." In the midst of Haller's crisis only one area maintains its validity: the sphere of timeless, intellectual accomplishment, inhabited by the creative heroes, called "the Immortals" ("die Unsterblichen"). Two of them are chosen by the author for personal contact with the antihero of the phantasmagoria to give him lessons that are supposed to enable him to make his life more meaningful. One of them, Mozart, appears at the end of the magic period in an ecstatic vision; the other, Goethe, at its beginning. All this makes it important to look for possible models for this novel in the works of Goethe.

Faust, of course, springs to mind, the poem from which the famous quotation about the two souls comes. There are so many and such extensive parallels that one could cautiously call *Steppenwolf* Hesse's *Faust*. At the beginning of the novel Haller is like Faust an aging man who has immersed himself in the entire intellectual knowledge of his time. Both are deeply disappointed by what they have achieved. Faust does not know "what, deep within it, binds the universe together";⁷¹ Haller has lost the connection "to the living heart of the world" (31)⁷² in spite of all his "books, manuscripts, thoughts" (30).⁷³ For both the result is a most bitter revulsion to life, which they are prepared to end in suicide. They are both spared from self-annihilation through the intervention of a supernatural being with whom they make an agreement bordering on the forbidden, reminding one of the traditional pact with the devil of the Western tradition. Hermine, as the Mephistophelian figure in Hesse's work is named, says she and Haller are both "children of the devil" (142).⁷⁴

⁷¹*Faust I and II*, ed. and trans. Stuart Atkins, 13. "was die Welt im Innersten zusammenhält" (*Faust I*, lines 38283).

⁷² "ans lebendige Herz der Welt" (48).

⁷³ "Bücher, Manuskripte, Gedanken" (46).

⁷⁴ "Kinder des Teufels" (155).

Both Faust and Haller are led by their new companions into those regions of human existence whose knowledge they have previously neglected to their profound detriment. These are the related spheres of daily existence, love, and sensuality. In order to be better able to understand this lesson, both must undergo a sexual rejuvenation. Hermine will teach Harry "to dance and play and smile, and still not be happy" (142),⁷⁵ and Faust promises "excitement, poignant happiness, love-hate, quickening frustration to these I'm consecrated!"⁷⁶ and wants to arrange things so that he nevertheless does not lose himself in complacency. For Faust a high point is the dissipation of the Walpurgis Night, for Harry Haller a masked ball stylized as the Walpurgis Night where he meets his Lady Mephistopheles in a bar which is outfitted as "hell."⁷⁷ To crown it all, Hesse has taken one of his key narrative strategies, the inner identity of the characters, from Goethe's work and thereby given an unmistakable clue to the source of his inspiration:

And in modern times there are poetic creations, in which, behind the veil of a concern with individuality and character . . . the motive is to present a manifold activity of soul. . . . If *Faust* is treated in this way, Faust, Mephistopheles, Wagner and the rest form a unity and a supreme individuality; and it is in this higher unity alone, not in the several characters, that something of the true nature of the soul is revealed. (66)⁷⁸

75 "zu tanzen und zu spielen und zu lächeln und doch nicht zufrieden zu sein" (15455).

76 *Faust*, ed. and trans. Stuart Atkins, 45. "Dem Taumel weih' ich mich, dem schmerzlichsten Genuß, verliebtem Haß, erquickendem Verdruß" (*Faust I*, lines 176667).

77 "Hölle" (212).

78 "In unsrer modernen Welt gibt es Dichtungen, in denen hinter dem Schleier des Personen- und Charakterspiels . . . eine Seelenvielfalt darzustellen versucht wird. . . . Wer etwa den Faust auf diese Art betrachtet, für den wird aus Faust, Mephisto, Wagner und allen andern eine Einheit, eine Überperson, und erst in dieser höhern Einheit, nicht in den Einzelfiguren ist etwas vom wahren Wesen der Seele angedeutet." (2526)

It would be tempting to pursue each of these similarities. Here it must suffice to indicate the coincidence of the most important lines, especially as the comparison with another of Goethe's works is advised, which may help to uncover new layers of meaning in *Steppenwolf: Wilhelm Meister*.⁷⁹ Obviously, *Steppenwolf* is not a Bildungsroman in the traditional sense. Even a cursory glance will convince the reader of this impossibility. That same glance will, however, reveal the presence of certain familiar characteristics whose combined effect in the overall plan leads one to assume intention rather than coincidence. With the appearance of the neon sign of the Magic Theater the novel *Steppenwolf* ceases to deal "with real things" ("mit rechten Dingen"). What is the *Magic Theater*? Is there anything in *Wilhelm Meister* that somehow corresponds to it, anything that casts a light into its mysterious essence? Can one indeed find in Goethe's novel the model for this theater whose messengers benevolently intervene in Harry's muddled life and help him to return to the right path, leaving him to his own devices, not completely healed, but still equipped with new insights, a shimmer of hope where previously there were only thoughts of suicide and despair? There may well be: the Society of the Tower, which is given in *Wilhelm Meister* a function similar to the one assumed by the Magic Theater in *Steppenwolf*. In both novels a secret society represents a sort of otherworldly order or at least a higher authority beyond the restricted existence of the individual. In *Steppenwolf*; as in *Wilhelm Meister*, a mysterious congregation of people is at work, which keeps a watchful eye on the hero, who is probing his way through the darkness. In an unfathomable way they are informed of his distress and needs, and when isolation and despair have reached their zenith, these people send their messengers out and guide his steps in a more favorable direction. "Can there be some pattern in chance events?"⁸⁰ an astonished Wilhelm Meister asks himself in the

⁷⁹ A comparison with the novella "Der Mann von funfzig Jahren" does not shed any light on *Steppenwolf* in spite of the promising title.

⁸⁰ *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, ed. and trans. Eric A. Blackall in cooperation with Victor Lange, vol. 9 of *Goethe's Collected Works* (New York: Suhrkamp, 1989), 302. "Sollten zufällige Ereignisse einen Zusammenhang haben?" *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, vol. 7 of *Goethes Werke* (Hamburg: Wegner, 1950), 494.

hour of initiation. The members of the secret society have inexplicable insights into the innermost corners of the heart. "The duty of a teacher is not to preserve man from error, but to guide him in error, in fact to let him drink it in, in full draughts. That is the wisdom of teachers,"⁸¹ says the abbé who had also once met Wilhelm in a slight disguise. There is no reason why Pablo of the Magic Theater could not have said these words to Harry in one of his more eloquent moments. Goethe's abbé corresponds to Pablo, the mourner to whom Harry speaks at the cemetery and by whom he is directed to the *Black Eagle*, where Hermine already is waiting for him; Goethe's stranger at the inn corresponds to the small red and yellow devil from the masked ball who instead of giving him a number at the coat checkroom hands him a message; and Goethe's officer corresponds to the billboard carrier, from whom he receives the peculiar and so deeply enlightening "Treatise on the Steppenwolf." This too has its obvious counterpart in Wilhelm's "Letter of Apprenticeship," where the sum total of a life is also calculated. Above all, Hermine should be mentioned here. It is clearly evident from the end that she is acting with the consent of the Magic Theater, but even before that she makes the suggestive promise to Harry, "I show you my little stage" (141),⁸² words to which he at first does not pay much attention but which later reveal their full meaning. And the fact that she knows very well about the nature and origin of the mysterious treatise is shown by her evasive answers and her strained attempt to seem particularly at ease when she is asked about it.

Both spheres that of the Society of the Tower and that of the Magic Theater represent a higher vantage point than the one on which the manifest action takes place. From that higher point a new perspective is revealed on the probing, erring, directionless searches of the central figures. Without it their lives would be meaningless, even truly absurd; but thanks to it even their errors are ordered into a

⁸¹ *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, ed. and trans. Eric A. Blackall, 302. ". . . Nicht vor Irrtum zu bewahren, ist die Pflicht des Menschenerziehers, sondern den Irrenden zu leiten, ja ihn seinen Irrtum aus vollen Bechern ausschlüpfen zu lassen, das ist die Weisheit der Lehrer." *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, 49495.

⁸² "Ich zeige dir mein kleines Theater" (153).

scheme of higher development (*Bildung*) However, this concept touches on a problem, because precisely the idea of development appears to be very different in each of the two works. After all, the most important feature of a Bildungsroman is the gradual awakening of a dormant youth who, at the beginning, is a toy of circumstances but becomes a mature, seasoned individual who, after being exposed to the influences of the age, follows the law of his own growth by appropriating only those elements of benefit to himself. But as soon as one formulates the idea of a novel of development or apprenticeship in this way, it becomes clear that *Steppenwolf*, although not completing this prescribed scheme in a straightforward fashion, nonetheless has a strong relationship to it. It is possible to state without reservation that *Steppenwolf* is obviously a Bildungsroman but one that has been stood on its head. One should keep in mind that the bourgeois world, with its narrow limitations, is of central significance for both novels which are being compared here, only that Goethe's novel represents the beginning and Hesse's the end of the bourgeois age. In Goethe's work the nobility is still a social sphere into which the bourgeois hero would like to rise and in which he is able to find that polish and freedom of the spirit needed for the complete cultivation of his personality. In contrast, nothing exists in *Steppenwolf* through which the muddled bourgeoisie could be overcome. The culture it has created is portrayed as very suspect. Inasmuch as no alternative worth striving for has appeared, the result is disappointment and almost pathological bitterness. Here an "early" and a "late" novelistic work stand facing one another. The hero can no longer be a hopeful youth who is inexperienced, to be sure, but who by reason of his talent may look to a fulfilled future. No, it is much more accurate to portray him as an aging man whose gout is the perfect outer manifestation of his unhealthy, inhibited, and crippled inner life. It can hardly be his task to put to the test and appropriate one after another the formative influences of his age. This is all far behind him. One can only use a fitting expression coined by Ortega y Gasset: he already finds himself "a la altura de los tiempos," at the height of the times. He has internalized what the culture has to offer; the arts and the sciences are already in his possession; he himself has contributed to their enrichment. The experiences that exert such a transforming influence on Wilhelm Meisterlove,

courtship, and marriage are already behind Harry Haller, have been emptied of all meaning, destroyed, failed. No one is able to give a clearer account of this than he himself. He asks, "Dear God, how was it possible? How had I, with the wings of youth and poetry, come to this? Art and travel and the glow of ideals and now this! How had this paralysis of hatred against myself and everyone else, this obstruction of all feeling, this mud-hell of an empty heart and despair crept over me so softly and so slowly?" (82).⁸³ And for this reason he must learn again to shed things one after another, and to forget, at least for the time being, the things that his life and the surrounding culture have taught him, to free himself from the poisons which he has accumulated in himself. By this means his basically healthy nature is supposed to recover, to become young and sensuous again, and to make up for what he has missed: the carefree, erotic life. He has to undergo an education backwards, a development in the opposite direction.

The place of healing is the Magic Theater, the stage no doubt is left about that Harry Haller's own soul.⁸⁴ The actors are personified splinters of his own psyche, the play a didactic one put on with help of the Jungian method of psychoanalysis, the purpose the reintegration of a disturbed personality. The subversive character of the dramatic technique is announced by the fact that the door to Harry's intimate theater, which was previously not there is suddenly illuminated on a wall that connects a church and a hospital: two ruined institutions of a culture which, with its fragmentation of the individual into two segments, spirit and body, each of which is to be treated separately,

83 "Lieber Gott, wie war es möglich? Wie hatte es mit mir dahin kommen können, mit mir, dem Dichter, dem Freund der Musen, dem Weltwanderer, dem glühenden Idealisten? Wie war das so langsam und schleichend über mich gekommen, diese Lähmung, dieser Haß gegen mich und alle, diese Verstopftheit aller Gefühle, diese tiefe böse Verdrossenheit, diese Dreckhöhle der Herzensleere und Verzweiflung?" (7778).

84 The secondary literature on *Steppenwolf* is too large and there are far too many works by single individuals for me to be able to mention all the authors to whom I am indebted. May they recognize their contributions in the following and be assured of my gratitude.

produced that insanity, sometimes called neurosis or schizophrenia, which is a precondition for admittance.⁸⁵ What has impeded the understanding of this play is its double nature. On the one hand, the author has ensured that all events are subject to a rational explanation. Hesse constructed in credible fashion a naturalistic backdrop with middle-class residences, wine cellars, hotel terraces, jazz music, and masked balls populated by hostesses, landlords, bar musicians, and easy women. Harry's many alcohol- and drug-induced conditions of euphoria, to which one can always attribute the crazier happenings, serve the same purpose of permitting a rational explanation. This realism is underlined by the fact that Hesse makes use of a practice stemming from old narrative traditions and introduces a conventional editor who allegedly is delivering to the public the papers left behind by his tenant.

On the other hand, this life is full of mysterious, apparently magical and uncanny, in any case, symbolic events. Unfortunately, many readers, even ones acquainted with literary history, have let themselves be led astray by Hesse's skillfully misleading disparagement of the bourgeois editor. Otherwise, someone would have found in his foreword, which is in no way as naive and narrow-minded as we are led to believe, the sentence that contains an important key to understanding the novel. From this sentence it can be deduced that Harry's notes are more invention than truth or, as it literally says, "They are rather the deeply lived spiritual events which he has attempted to express by giving them the form of tangible experiences" (21).⁸⁶ If one takes this statement seriously, as well one may, then the so frequently posed questions regarding the meaning of the Magic Theater, the nature of its presenters and their offerings, the authorship of the treatise, and so on, become unnecessary. They are phenomena capable of interpreta-

⁸⁵ The inscription is as follows: "MAGICTHEATRE. ENTRANCENOT FOREVERYBODY. FOR MADMEN ONLY." (3435; *Magisches Theater. Eintritt nicht für jedermann. Nur für Verrückte, Der Steppenwolf*, 5253). These three phrases appear repeatedly and are important connecting links for otherwise disparate events or thoughts.

⁸⁶ "im Sinne eines Ausdrucksversuches, der tief erlebte seelische Vorgänge im Kleide sichtbarer Ereignisse darstellt" (34).

tions using a doublefold or triplefold optics, in other words, partly of a realistic and autobiographical background, partly of a historical and social, partly of a neurotic and psychological origin.

It is well-known that since the First World War Hesse had been under psychoanalytic treatment and that he owed his breakthrough as a modernistic writer of worldwide importance to the understanding of the world revealed to him by psychoanalysis. He was still seeing an analyst, a student of C. G. Jung, every evening at the time of the composition of *Steppenwolf*. Making use of the Jungian repertoire of ideas to explicate the novel is by no means misguided and has led to worthwhile insights. Using this approach, one would identify Hermine with *anima*, Pablo with *animus*, as shadow, as a representation of the collective unconsciousness. Many plausible passages from Jung's teachings can be cited to support these possibilities. Even without knowing Jung's psychoanalytic method, the reader can clearly see that Hermine, Pablo, and Maria together reflect the primitive, sensual aspects of life, whether of the individual or of society, which Harry had suppressed in his distorted education, which developed only his intellect and his exclusive orientation toward high culture.

The most completely developed of these figures is Hermine. She is in fact called Haller's "soul" (Seele) and is recognizable in many ways as a part of his inner life. Even her name is significant. She is the female counterpart of Hermann, the supposed friend from Harry's youth, which is also why she ambiguously vacillates between a feminine and a masculine incarnation. She exudes a "herm-aphrodisiac" ("herm-aphrodisischer") magic; she comes from Harry's childhood, "those years of puberty, when the capacity for love, in its first youth, embraces not only both sexes, but all and everything, sensuous and spiritual" (188).⁸⁷ A tightly woven net brings her and Harry together. Intuitively she knows everything about him, understands, in spite of the great difference in education between them, every one of his thoughts; he, on the other hand, guesses her name, recognizes himself in her, and is completely her slave. She wants to teach him the

⁸⁷ "vor der Geschlechtsreife, in der das jugendliche Liebesvermögen nicht nur beide Geschlechter, sondern alles und jedes umfaßt, Sinnliches und Geistliches" (214).

light, superficial arts of life; he wants to teach her the heavy, deep ones. They make a pact which says they should learn to love one another and learn to die from one another. She wants to prepare him, the suicidal neurotic, through eroticism for his natural death; he is according to the pact to bring about her death. There is much talk about the sexual relationships which connect Hermine and Maria, Maria and Pablo, Pablo and Hermine, and Harry with all three. Once an orgy of three is even suggested. All this is supposed to symbolize the integration of the various parts of Harry's personality and the healing of his psyche, which has sickened through lack of love. "His whole life was an example that love of one's neighbour is not possible without love of oneself, and that self-hate is really the same thing as sheer egoism, and in the long run breeds the same cruel isolation and despair" (11).⁸⁸ The educational process through which Hermine leads Harry aims to make him "fall in love" with her, to develop his sensual self, to merge with the essence of his personality. He must discover that the division into human and Steppenwolf in which he has heretofore seen himself was much too simplistic, that the psyche consists of hundreds of entities, each of which makes its own justified demands. Toward the end the whole process is shown again in an image. Harry has just received from the chess player deep insight into the multiple composition of his personality. He finds out that the various qualities of his being are like chess pieces with which he is able to rebuild his spiritual life over and over again. Pulled by an irresistible force, he enters a chamber where he surprises Hermine with Pablo. Following a jealous urge, he stabs her in the heart with a dagger. Thereupon Pablo, apparently the director of the Magic Theater, transforms the lifeless Hermine into one of the many chess pieces with which the reader is already acquainted and puts it in his pocket. "Unfortunately, you did not know what to do with this figure" (245).⁸⁹ These are the ambiguous words with which he accompanies this ac-

88 "Sein ganzes Leben [war] ein Beispiel dafür, daß ohne Liebe zu sich selbst auch die Nächstenliebe unmöglich ist, daß der Selbsthaß genau dasselbe ist und am Ende genau dieselbe grausige Isoliertheit und Verzweiflung erzeugt wie der grelle Egoismus" (21).

89 "Mit dieser Figur hast du leider nicht umzugehen verstanden" (288).

tion. The ambivalence is caused by the fact that in this moment the two perspectives, the symbolic and the concrete, coincide, and from each of them this murder is necessarily seen differently.

One can say, in summary, that through spiritual hypertrophy the intellectual Harry Haller is more and more alienated from his bourgeois background without being able to free himself completely from it. In the end he experiences a mid-life crisis that drives him to the brink of suicide. In his schizophrenia he calls the untamed, undeveloped urges in himself the Steppenwolf, whose conflicts with his civilized self constitute his real sickness. He receives therapeutic help from two sources: from acquaintance with the easy-living demimonde of the metropolis in which he lives an isolated existence and from psychoanalysis, in which his deeper problems are revealed to him. The goal is to learn about humor, that is, the ability to view oneself and the world in comic rather than tragic terms. The experts in this art are the great creators of culture who are so admired by him, above all, Goethe and Mozart, whose icy laughter proclaims the strived-for synthesis: liberated sensuality resounds in laughter; the austere, incorruptible spirit manifests itself in the cold. To continue the image, one can say that in the end Harry is dismissed from this twofold healing process not fully recovered but improved.

To be fair to the book, one must delve into its social implications to which Hesse repeatedly referred. The crisis he describes is, as he emphatically asserts, not just that of an isolated individual, but rather one of an entire culture, not just "the pathological fancies . . . of a diseased temperament," but rather the "sickness of the times themselves" (22).⁹⁰ However, one must qualify this by adding that the point of view of the novel reflects that of a single class: the middle bourgeoisie. The aristocracy, the upper bourgeoisie, small businessmen, skilled and white-collar workers play just as small a role in the novel as factory workers. A short glance is, in fact, devoted to a marginal, nonbourgeois class; not the dark sphere of prostitutes, pimps, and the criminal

⁹⁰ "die pathologischen Phantasien . . . eines armen Geisteskranken [sondern] die Krankheit der Zeit selbst" (36).

element, but a class dependent on the middle class for its existence, the demimonde represented by cultivated "call girls" and jazz musicians.

The perspective is that of the outsider who subjects the bourgeoisie to sharp ideological criticism without, however, having completely removed himself emotionally from this class. On the one hand, he still harbors a strong attachment to the painstaking order, the spotless cleanliness, and unvarying routine of middle-class life. Haller's apartment building and its occupants are representative of these secondary virtues. The professor and his wife represent the other side. Here chauvinism, anti-Semitism, and narrow-minded anticommunism have the upper hand. A militaristic, jingoistic newspaper is not only read here; it is believed. "The classical heritage," ("das klassische Erbe") which Haller respects above all other things, is sentimentally praised here and thereby trivialized. An "empty and self-satisfied" ("eitle und selbstgefällige") etching of Goethe that portrays the poet as an "old man full of character, with a finely chiseled face and a genius' mane" in which "neither the renowned fire of his eyes nor the lonely and tragic expression beneath the courtly whitewash was lacking" (88)⁹¹ reveals the sham of this world.

The aloofness and analytical inclinations of the artist and intellectual suffering from rootlessness who cannot believe in the family or religion or the fatherland is the perfect vantage point for a relentless analysis of this class that dominates the state. He is made miserable by the scandalous behavior in politics and the economy; he has contempt for the rule of money; clergymen and funeral directors are vultures to him. But the most despised are the generals, the great industrialists, the politicians, and the journalists, because they are preparing the next war. As he is a nonmaterialist, despises technology, and makes fun of progress, one might characterize his attitude as "anticapitalism from the right" ("Antikapitalismus von rechts").⁹² But he has enough in-

91 "einen charaktervollen, genial frisierten Greis mit einem schön modelliertem Gesicht, in welchem weder das berühmte Feuerauge fehlte noch der Zug von leicht hofmännisch übertünchter Einsamkeit und Tragik" (85).

92 Hesse considered himself more a "leftist" ("Linken"): "I . . . have been driven, since 1914 and 1918, many miles to the Left, not just the small step to the Left taken by popular opinion." (Ich . . . bin seit 1914 und 1918 statt des winzigen

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sight to recognize that his rejection of these forces is not quite consistent. He does not live in palaces or proletarian houses, but always in respectable middle-class residences, dresses decently, has money in the bank and owns, although he is an opponent of exploitation, stocks in industrial concerns whose earnings he spends. In a moment of self-irony he recognizes that he has "rigged himself out finely as an idealist and contemner of the world, as a melancholy hermit and growling prophet"; he has remained "at bottom, however, . . . a bourgeois" (146).⁹³

What is in fact happening? It is evident from the above that, just as in others of Hesse's books, the world in *Steppenwolf* is a dualistic one. The cognitive schemata are as always the same: spirit and matter, the next world and this one, culture and nature, human and beast, middle class and artist, genius and mediocrity, high culture and subculture, maternal and paternal principles and so on ad infinitum. In contrast to the earlier works these polarities are mere starting points for the attempt at a synthesis and thus represent a new orientation, however cautious.

The First World War stands in the background as a decisive event, even though this is not stated outright, a catastrophe for which Haller assigns a share of the guilt to his own fatherland, for which he holds the entire technocratic-capitalistic system responsible, and through which he became a pacifist. The acquaintance with Pablo, Maria, and Hermine represents just one more challenge to his system of values, teaches him tolerance in other areas of life, generosity with respect to free love, even love for sale, bisexuality, and the use of drugs. His contact with this sphere and its moral pluralism has a "democratizing" effect on him. As a result, he develops an interest in a previously despised lifestyle, the popular culture of the time, which also has political implications, because, to put it bluntly, the Weimar Republic is the subject here. Like Thomas Mann and many other previously

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Schrittes nach links, den die Gesinnung der Völker getan hat, um viele Meilen nach links getrieben worden.), *Hermann Hesse-Thomas Mann: Briefwechsel* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp-S. Fischer, 1968), 18.

⁹³ "zwar wundervoll als Idealist und Weltverächter, als wehmütiger Einsiedler und als grollender Prophet verkleidet . . . im Grunde aber . . . ein Bourgeois" (160).

conservative artists, Hesse experienced a change of heart in the postwar period, which included a rejection of the old Germany and revealed itself in the following assessment by Harry Haller, who was so close to it:

None of us intellectuals is at home in reality. We are strange to it and hostile. That is why the part played by intellect even in our own German reality, in our history and politics and public opinion, has been so lamentable a one. (15253)⁹⁴

These thoughts awaken in him "an intense longing sometimes to turn to and do shape reality for once, to be seriously and responsibly active instead of occupying myself forever with nothing but aesthetics" (153).⁹⁵ It is not necessary to discuss expressly and in detail the fact that such ideas were diametrically opposed to the views of the prewar bourgeoisie. It is interesting to note to what an extent such a change in values, once it is underway, encompasses all thought, even that concerning art.⁹⁶

Maria . . . spoke of an American song . . . and she was so carried away with admiration and love as she spoke of it that I was far more moved and impressed than by the ecstasies of any highly cultured person over artistic pleasures of the rarest and most distinguished quality. I was ready to enthuse in sympathy, be the song what it might. Maria's glowing words and her eager effusive face made large rents in my aesthetics. There was to be sure a Beauty, one and indivisible, small and select, that seemed to me, with Mozart at the top,

94 "Wir Geistigen alle waren in der Wirklichkeit nicht zu Hause, waren ihr fremd und feind, darum war auch in unserer deutschen Wirklichkeit, in unsrer Geschichte, unserer Politik, unsrer öffentlichen Meinung die Rolle des Geistes eine so klägliche" (168).

95 "zuweilen eine heftige Sehnsucht . . ., einmal Wirklichkeit mit zu gestalten, einmal ernsthaft und verantwortlich tätig zu sein, statt immer bloß Ästhetik zu treiben" (16869).

96 See also: Egon Schwarz, "Hermann Hesses Buchbesprechungen: Reaktionen auf ihre Form, Ästhetik und Geschichtlichkeit," in *Hermann Hesse heute*, ed. Adrian Hsia (Bonn: Bouvier, 1980).

to be above all dispute and doubt, but where was the limit? Hadn't we all as connoisseurs and critics in our youth been consumed with love for works of art and for artists that today we regarded with doubt and dismay? . . . Wasn't the blossoming of Maria's childish emotion over the song from America just as pure and beautiful an artistic experience and exalted as far beyond doubt as the rapture of any academic bigwig over Tristan? (15657)⁹⁷

This statement opens the way for an understanding of art whose revolutionary explosiveness can still be felt today, fifty years later. Harry's rebellion against outmoded views leads to radical, almost prophetic insights which have helped guarantee Hesse's relevance up to the present day. They find expression in the demand, "Set factories afire at last! Make a little room on the crippled earth! Depopulate it so that the grass may grow again, and woods, meadows, heather, stream and moor return to this world of dust and concrete" (203),⁹⁸ in the complaint at having "to belong to a State, to serve as a soldier, to kill and to pay taxes for armaments" (210),⁹⁹ or in the statement that "now that everyone wants air to breathe, and a car

97 "Maria erzählte mir . . . von einem amerikanischen *song*, . . . und sie sprach davon mit einer Hingerissenheit, Bewunderung und Liebe, die mich rührte und ergriff weit mehr als die Ekstasen irgendeines Hochgebildeten über ausgesucht vornehme Kunstgenüsse. Ich war bereit mitzuschwärmen, sei der *song*, wie er wolle. Marias liebevolle Worte, ihr sehnsüchtig aufblühender Blick riß breite Breschen in meine Ästhetik, wohl gab es einiges Schöne, einiges wenige auserlesene Schöne, das mir über jeden Streit und Zweifel erhaben erschien, obenan Mozart, aber wo war die Grenze? Hatten wir Kenner und Kritiker nicht alle als Jünglinge Kunstwerke und Künstler glühend geliebt, die uns heute zweifelhaft und fatal erschienen? . . . War nicht Marias blühende Kinderrührung über den *song* aus Amerika ein ebenso reines, schönes, über jeden Zweifel erhabenes Kunsterlebnis wie die Ergriffenheit irgendeines Studienrats über den Tristan?" (17374).

98 "endlich die Fabriken anzuzünden, und die geschändete Erde ein wenig auszuräumen und zu entvölkern, damit wieder Gras wachsen, wieder aus der verstaubten Zementwelt etwas wie Wald, Wiese, Heide, Bach und Moor werden könne" (23334).

99 "einem Staat anzugehören, Soldat zu sein, zu töten, Steuern für Rüstungen zu bezahlen" (242).

to drive . . . in time, mankind will learn to keep its numbers in check by rational means" (212).¹⁰⁰

Thus, it is seen that the process of Harry's "becoming a person" ("Menschwerdung") is accompanied by a concrete interest in very earthly and material problems. Of course, he vacillates again and again and has his relapses, so that one cannot speak of a straight-line development. Still, he remains an unshakable Platonist and idealist in one respect: in his postulating a timeless spiritual world,¹⁰¹ from which resounds the icy laughter of the great artists of human history, "the Immortals," ("die Unsterblichen") over the earthly misery of the rest of mankind.

The now fifty-year history of this book consists of such ups and downs, of a true cacophony of voices and opinions, group interests and ideological reactions; it describes such a zigzag curve complicated by time and place that I have to limit myself here to a schematized typology.¹⁰²

100 "jetzt, wo jeder nicht bloß Luft atmen, sondern auch ein Auto haben will, . . . die Menschheit [werde] lernen müssen, ihre Vermehrung durch vernünftige Mittel im Zaum zu halten" (245).

101 In this connection I do not accept as correct the accusation of elitism made against Hesse, the claim that this post-Christian, aesthetic paradise of the "Immortals" ("der Unsterblichen") was reserved for the German educated public. It is obvious that Hermine with her belief in the saints would also gain admittance to an adjoining chamber of at least equal value. Compare her long speech where this conviction is expressed: "What I meant a moment ago when I called it eternity . . . is the kingdom on the other side of time and appearances. . . . There you will find your Goethe again and Novalis and Mozart, and I my saints, Christopher, Philip of Neri and all" (173). "Was ich vorher die 'Ewigkeit' genannt habe, . . . ist das Reich jenseits der Zeit und des Scheins. . . . Dort findest du deinen Goethe wieder und deinen Novalis und den Mozart, und ich meine Heiligen, den Christoffer, den Philipp von Neri und alle" (*Der Steppenwolf*, 1949).

102 The most complete presentation of the history of the reception of the novel is the following: Egon Schwarz, ed., *Hermann Hesses "Steppenwolf,"* Texte der deutschen Literatur in wirkungsgeschichtlichen Zeugnissen, No. 6 (Königstein/Ts.: Athenäum, 1980).

Many readers felt repelled by the pacifistic and antinationalistic tendencies of the novel. Others regretted its popular, that is vulgar, touch, abhorred the demimonde portrayed in the novel with its jazz, its open sexuality, and its drugs. Still others found themselves attracted by its Platonism (the parable of the radio, the Immortals), by Harry's taste in music and literature (Mozart, Goethe, Novalis), by the presence of a higher order, the realm of eternal values that hovers over the earth and in which the exceptional person shares. These readers glossed over the questionable parts of the book and consoled themselves by concentrating on the classical-Romantic language Hesse employs. Still others praised *Steppenwolf* for its criticism of the bourgeoisie, its clear-sighted prediction of the Second World War and especially praised those parts of the book where profiteers and arms manufacturers are attacked and academics of a nationalistic stamp are criticized. Such readers tended to view the whole work as the anticapitalistic portrayal of a historical crisis in which a high-minded intellectual is simply the one who has difficulty coping. Obviously, *Steppenwolf* has also found friends as well as opponents as a result of its psychoanalytic imagery.

A curious phase of its reception one which Hesse in his lifetime would never have predicted, because he did not believe Americans capable of such an interest in his work was brought about by the high esteem accorded the novel by the American youth movement of the sixties and seventies which led to the sale of hundreds of thousands of copies. Whatever the cause may have been, whether it was the critical rejection of the "normal" world or the Magic Theater¹⁰³ which was misunderstood as representing a psychedelic euphoria, this wave of popularity spread from America to many other countries and made *Steppenwolf* the favorite book of a worldwide movement and Hesse the most read author of German and possibly of world literature.

Translated from the German by Renate Wilson and James Hardin

¹⁰³ See Egon Schwarz, "Hermann Hesse, die amerikanische Jugendbewegung und das Problem der literarischen Wertung," *Basis: Jahrbuch für deutsche Gegenwartsliteratur* 1 (1970): 116-33.

Doubts about Despair: Christa Wolf's *Kindheitsmuster*

Michael Beddow

I

New Year's Eve. A mother looks in on her sixteen-year-old daughter, who's been lying around for days on end listening to music.¹

"Is that how you're going to see the year out?"

"Leave me be. This last year hasn't been good."

"You mean your laziness?"

"I mean, I'm starting to get used to things."

"What things?"

"The way everything's phony, me too, in the end. Phony people, phony life. Or haven't you noticed? Or maybe I'm abnormal? Or perhaps the ones who don't bother about it are right? Sometimes I feel another bit of me dying away. And whose fault is it? Just mine?" (10, 207)²

1 References to *Kindheitsmuster* cite the chapter number, followed by a page reference to the German paperback edition, (Darmstadt & Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1979). Typographical errors in that edition have been corrected (without comment apart from the instance in note 36 below) by reference to the hardback edition (1977) by the same publisher or to the Aufbau Verlag edition, (Berlin & Weimar, 1976), in cases where errors are common to both Western editions. All translations are my own.

2 So willst du das Jahr beschließen? fragst du. Laß mich, sagt sie. Das letzte Jahr war nicht gut. Du meinst deine Faulheit? Ich meine, daß ich mich zu gewöhnen an fange. Woran? Daran, daß alles pseudo ist, am Ende auch ich

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The exchange could take place anywhere, but the reflections it provokes in the mother belong to a distinctive kind of world: "A new sort of fear springs up inside you. . . . We need a different, a completely different sort of writing, you think to yourself."³ This reaction signals a culture where writing as a medium for scrutiny and transmission of public and private values is taken very seriously; we are in fact roughly halfway through *Kindheitsmuster* (1976), the longest novel so far written by the most distinguished novelist of the former German Democratic Republic, in a passage that epitomizes the tone and the intention of the work.⁴ The novel is about the need to find a language for the past which speaks to the present and opens up hope for the future. The present is the GDR of the 1970s, a country trying under a new leadership to adapt to the era of détente. The mother, still only in her forties, has experienced social and political climates quite beyond her daughter's ken. Brought up under national socialism, an enthusiastic devotee of the *Führer* in her teenage years, she has lived through defeat, displacement, and the years of reconstruction under Stalin's hand. After all she has been through, she does not begrudge her daughter her relatively agreeable existence. Yet she shares her daughter's unease. All around her she detects apathy (10, 212) and an uncritical pursuit of material comforts. She is dismayed to see young people nonchalantly munching sandwiches as they stroll around the site of Buchenwald concentration camp (11, 220) and

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selbst. Pseudo-Menschen. Pseudo-Leben. Oder merkst du das nicht? Oder bin ich vielleicht nicht normal? Oder haben vielleicht die recht, die sich darüber keine Gedanken machen? Manchmal fühle ich, wie wieder ein Stück von mir abstirbt. Und wer hat schuld daran? Bloß ich?

³ Eine neue Art von Angst springt in dir hoch. Ganz anders, denkst du, ganz anders müßte geschrieben werden.

⁴ On the distinctive place of literature in GDR culture, see Werner Brettschneider, *Zwischen literarischer Autonomie und Staatsdienst: Die Literatur in der DDR*, 2d ed. (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1974); Manfred Jäger, *Kultur und Politik in der DDR: Ein historischer Abriss*, (Cologne: Edition Deutschland Archiv, 1982); David Childs, *The GDR: Moscow's German Ally*, 2d ed. (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), 195228; and Chris Weedon, *Die Frau in der DDR* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), xviii-xxiii.

disgusted to hear how a group of East German teenagers on a bus trip through Poland, unabashed by the presence of Czech traveling companions, sing a song from the Second World War brutally contemptuous of Polish women (13, 265). She does not expect the young to feel guilt for events before their birth; that, she insists, is not the point (11, 220). What she misses is a moral imagination that would forbid cavalier attitudes toward past crimes and encourage critical engagement with the present. She holds her own generation responsible for the moral impoverishment of the young, because the realities of the past "of the thirties, of the fifties" (7, 139) have never been acknowledged, let alone described, by those who experienced them. For the future's sake, those who have lived through the past need to find a way of speaking to those who know only the present. This conviction sustains the author⁵ through the long-drawn-out creation of the text, a process whose labors, triumphs, and setbacks we are invited to share.

The chronology of the writing process is constantly brought to our attention. It spans a period from early 1971 to mid-1975, locating this attempt at a "completely different sort of writing" at a decisive juncture in German and European history. In December 1970 the Federal Republic concluded an agreement with Poland that built upon a treaty signed five months previously with the Soviet Union. These documents, ratified by the Federal Parliament in April 1972 after a major political crisis, affirmed the inviolability of the frontiers of all states in Europe, including the Oder-Neisse border between Poland and the GDR, which the Federal Republic had hitherto refused to acknowledge. The West's renunciation of the "lost territories" governed by Poland since 1945 removed one of the chief components of the East's picture of the Federal Republic as a revanchist state and forced East German politicians to revise their own selfunderstanding vis-à-vis both Bonn and Warsaw. This helps explain

⁵ Wherever I use the word *author* I am referring to the fictitious character who ostensibly writes the account we are reading. This character is neither identical to nor wholly distinguishable from Christa Wolf. See Joyce Crick, "Dichtung und Wahrheit: Aspects of Christa Wolf's *Kindheitsmuster*," in *London German Studies II*, ed. J. P. Stern (London: Institute of Germanic Studies, University of London, 1983), 16883.

why the early days of 1971, which saw the start of the writer's efforts to reconstruct her childhood east of the Oder, also saw an unusual number of meetings and gatherings which allowed her to evade her self-appointed task (1, 16). In June 1972, a month before the writer visited her birthplace, formerly German but now acknowledged even by the Western states as permanently located in Poland, the Four-Power Agreement on Berlin effectively brought to an end the quarter century in which Berlin had been a focal point of East-West tension and one of the likeliest spots for the outbreak of war between the superpowers. In May 1972 Walter Ulbricht, former protégé and hardened emulator of Stalin, had been replaced as first secretary of the Socialist Unity Party and effective ruler of the GDR by Erich Honecker, whose advent was widely expected to bring a liberalization of attitudes and practices. Signals went out that a degree of innovation in form and content would be permissible, even welcome, in the artistic sphere; but in political and economic matters Honecker rapidly proved himself more centralist and authoritarian than his predecessor had been in his last years in power. And in late 1976, between completion and publication of *Kindheitsmuster*, the expulsion of Wolf Biermann and its aftermath brought a new period of gloom into GDR cultural life.⁶ Honecker's government responded to the changed international position of his country by initiating a program of strict demarcation, *Abgrenzung*, between the Democratic Republic and West Germany, which included an attempt to disassociate the eastern state from Germany's Fascist past.⁷ December 1972 saw the signing of the Basic Treaty between the Federal Republic and GDR and the abandonment of the Federal Republic's claim to be the sole legitimate German national state. The way was clear for both German states to become members of the United Nations, giving formal

⁶ Biermann, a native of Hamburg, had freely chosen to live in the GDR and despite harassment on account of his politically critical songs and poems showed no signs of wanting to reverse that decision. That he was visiting the West at the invitation of a leading trade union when he was prevented by his own government from returning compounded the offense which his exclusion gave to critical loyalists like Christa Wolf.

⁷ See Childs, *GDR*, 9092.

recognition to the international rehabilitation of both Germanies. Christa Wolf has been accused of ignoring these events in the copious reflections about contemporary affairs that occupy the foreground of the novel,⁸ but they are implicit in the whole *raison d'être* of the work. It takes the invitation to greater freedom of artistic utterance extremely seriously; but by stressing the common heritage of the National Socialist past, it runs against the official policy of *Abgrenzung*, and it poses awkward questions about the economic aims of the regime. And the reference becomes explicit enough (provided we recognize what constitutes explicitness in GDR fiction) when the author describes the period in which she is writing as a time when "the postwar period is laboriously coming to an end" (7, 133)⁹ or surmises that "the new mood that's in the air"¹⁰ has

8 Alexander Stephan, *Christa Wolf*, 3d ed. (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1987), 12526, is "disappointed" that he can find no mention of the Eastern Treaties. His disappointment extends to the (less disputable) absence of references to the unrest in Poland, indicating an inadequate grasp of the political limitations under which Christa Wolf so shrewdly operates. She herself has spoken succinctly of these limitations in her speech in honor of the eightieth birthday of her former teacher, the scholar and literary critic Hans Mayer. In a review of *Kindheitsmuster* published in 1977, Mayer, who had left the GDR many years before, had accused Christa Wolf of practicing less candor than she preached: the novel was in his eyes culpably reticent about Stalinism. The hurt that accusation caused is visible in her rejoinder over a decade later: "My emphasis, when writing about the problems of a country which I had hopes of helping to change, was necessarily different from yours, since you had lost any chance of active engagement. . . . I have always treated any sign, no matter how modest, of creative changes in the practices of our society with great delicacy of touch (with delicacy, but not uncritically or dishonestly, that I can fairly claim)." "Die Problematik des Landes, an dessen Veränderung ich immer noch mitzuwirken hoffte, mußte ich anders akzentuieren als Sie, dem die Möglichkeit einzugreifen entzogen worden war. . . . [Ich] bin immer . . . sehr behutsam umgegangen mit allen, selbst bescheidenen Anzeichen von schöpferischen Veränderungen in der gesellschaftlichen Praxis. (Behutsam, nicht unkritisch oder unaufrichtig, das darf ich sagen.)" Christa Wolf, *Ansprachen* (Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1988), 48.

9 da die Nachkriegszeit unter Schwierigkeiten zu Ende geht.

10 diese allgemein neue Stimmungslage.

influenced her choice of material, indeed has made her book possible in the first place (5, 90).

This is the context in which the author's will to write is formed and arduously sustained. But before that will can be translated into action, she has to find a way of speaking of her own past and indeed of her present self. One of her central contentions is that everyone who has lived under tyranny finds honest thought, let alone speech, extremely difficult. When her daughter casually asks, "By the way, who was this Khrushchev, then?" (7, 138),¹¹ the mother is shocked. For her, the name of Khrushchev is inseparably bound up with the efforts, still far from over, to dismantle Stalinism. She relates a recurrent dream in which she joins a funeral procession that comes to a halt before a monstrous tombstone which to everyone's consternation already bears Stalin's name: "So who is it we're burying, then?" she and her companions ask themselves (11, 229).¹² Officially dead and gone, but in fact continually receiving reburial, the spirit of Stalin is another inhibiting influence upon the author; and that Khrushchev, for a child born shortly after he denounced Stalin at the Twentieth Congress of the Supreme Soviet, should be just another name from the remote past draws the author up sharply. Alarmed by this glimpse of the gulf between her own consciousness and her child's, the author feels a resurgence of the moral impulse behind her writing, an awareness that "certain duties cannot be put off any longer," above all "the duty to give some indication of what happened to us. We shall not succeed in explaining why things turned out this way rather than that, but we should not shirk the task of at least laying the groundwork for such explanations" (7, 138).¹³ A good proportion of that groundwork consists in strengthening her own grasp of what can and should be said. The barriers that inhibit

11 Nun sagt mir bloß mal, wer war denn eigentlich dieser Chrustschow!

12 Wen beerdigen wir eigentlich?

13 die Pflicht, anzudeuten, was mit uns geschehen ist. Es wird uns nicht gelingen, zu erklären, warum es so und nicht anders gekommen ist, doch sollten wir nicht davor zurückscheuen, wenigstens die Vorarbeiten für solche Erklärungen zu leisten.

language and understanding run not merely between different generations and different people but also between areas of the self. What at first seem mere preliminaries, linguistic and psychological obstacles to be cleared out of the way so the business of writing can begin in earnest, emerge during the work's progress as the author's true subject matter: in one of the novel's informal borrowings from psychoanalytic theory, the verbalization of the symptoms proves to be both diagnosis and treatment of the underlying malady, as the author tries to write her way through or around the defenses which the self has erected.

Ascription of a literary work to a genre can stem from an author's deliberate engagement with an established paradigm or it can be rooted in readers' perceptions of overlapping "family resemblances" possibly quite independent of authorial intentions among a number of works.¹⁴ Anglo-Saxon scholars and critics have rather devalued the generic label *Bildungsroman* by heedlessly attaching it to virtually any novel that tells of childhood and youth. Within German studies there is a consensus that the term can be more usefully applied to a type of novel not widely found outside the German tradition of prose narrative, whose most representative exemplars are Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* and Thomas Mann's *Der Zauberberg*. There is no reason to suppose that Christa Wolf, when writing *Kindheitsmuster*, was consciously trying to extend the *Bildungsroman* tradition, but it is plain enough that the novel displays a complex of themes and techniques that invite any reader familiar with the German narrative traditions to link it to the generic complex of the *Bildungsroman*: the exploration of a problematic self by retracing its development, a preoccupation with conflicts between socialization and personal integrity, a conviction that matters of the spirit play a vital part in human well-being, a disquiet about the direction history is taking, a belief in substantial connections between the writing of fiction and the human urge for self-understanding and self-develop-

¹⁴ On the notion of "family resemblances" and its usefulness in matters of generic classification, see J. P. Stern, "Vom Nutzen der Wittgensteinischen Philosophie für das Studium der Literatur," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literatur und Geistesgeschichte* 50 (1976): 557-74.

ment, an intense interest in the transmission of values between generations: all these features give Christa Wolf's novel strong links to the Bildungsroman tradition in its most distinctively German manifestations.¹⁵ *Kindheitsmuster* develops the genre by shifting the focus and teleology of the narrative away from the formative experiences proper toward the problems of understanding, evaluating, and truthfully portraying those experiences in retrospect. The retelling of a childhood and adolescence is subordinate to the author's present search for self-understanding and self-expression enacted in the writing of the story. And the development that finally counts is not that of the wartime child and adolescent or even the changes undergone by the author in the foreground of her narrative as she struggles to achieve an adequate grasp of just what she is doing and why; the dynamic of the novel lies in the reader's evolving understanding of what the author's inhibitions and victories say about the dangers and dilemmas of the present. The author never achieves her avowed aim of bringing her account to a point where her present consciousness can fuse effortlessly with her recovered childhood self; but this is not the failure of the work, which succeeds precisely by making us understand why the fusion cannot come about. Perhaps the most important difference-in-similarity between Christa Wolf's undertaking and the aims of earlier authors of Bildungsromane emerges here: like her predecessors in the genre (including the creators of the less than compelling Bildungsromane of the GDR's years of construction) Christa Wolf unapologetically aims to influence her readers for the better as she sees it. But there is nothing domineering about her didactic intentions. A life story carefully crafted and shaped to make a point, a narrative constructed to give linear expression to a set of certainties about the self and the world, these have no place where "assertions are shunned" and "perceptions put in place of solemn affirmations" (1, 9).¹⁶ The didacticism without dominance relies on

15 For the argument in favor of a distinctively German tradition of the Bildungsroman based on these criteria, see Michael Beddow, *The Fiction of Humanity: Studies in the Bildungsroman from Wieland to Thomas Mann* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982).

16 Behauptungen scheuen, Wahrnehmungen an die Stelle der Schwüre setzen.

the conviction that only the author's painstaking and painful reenactment of personal change can instigate change in others, where change involves, among other things, a re-perception and reevaluation of the past.

The novel employs two primary narrative devices, closely allied in their effects. The first device is that the author's childhood self is given an invented name Nelly and written about in the third person, treated as a more or less opaque figure by the narrator. The second device consists in presenting the remembering and writing self through a sustained inner dialogue with herself as "you" which the author conducts in the reader's hearing. These two devices give us something quite remarkable: a fictitious autobiography where for hundreds of pages the pronoun I never appears. They emphasize two things that would be insuperable obstacles to traditional autobiographical writing: the author's radical alienation from her own past and her related uncertainty about her present identity.¹⁷ At the same time, they make the exploration of these impediments yield the memories and the judgments that the author seeks. The narrator dates her first attempts to write what we are reading back to the beginning of 1971 (1, 16; 5, 91; 5, 105), but little of the first two years' efforts has found its way into the final text. A visit to her home town in the summer of 1971 helps the writing move forward, through the memories it evokes and also by offering a narrative skeleton which the author can flesh out with scenes from her recalled childhood and day-by-day events in her present life. But the text as we have it was ostensibly not begun until November 1972, well over a year after that visit, and we follow its progress through minor triumphs and major setbacks until May 1975, when the writer declares that the end "seems" to have been reached, not because a predefined goal has been achieved, but simply because there are no more papers left on her desk (18, 377). The real beginning was made possible by the sudden discovery of a tone of voice created by the

¹⁷ See Barbara Saunders, *Contemporary German Autobiography: Literary Approaches to the Problem of Identity* (London: Institute of Germanic Studies, University of London, 1985), for a discussion of these issues in the context of recent autobiographical theory and practice.

texture and rhythms of that inner dialogue with the self as "you" that made truthful writing possible and at the same time brought a realization that what lay ahead was "a long period of work and doubt" (1, 26).¹⁸ The dialogue with the self is central both to the writer's exploration of her past and to the development of the reader's grasp of what that exploration is meant to achieve. It is a sustained rebuttal of the thought that she has only "the alternative between silence and what Ruth [her elder daughter] and Lenka call being 'phony'" (17, 347).¹⁹ She is determined to forge a discourse that will allow her, if not complete truthfulness a "luxury" she feels she has no right to expect (13, 255),²⁰ at least frankness, candor, "not as a once-for-all tour de force, but as a process involving whatever approximations are possible, in tiny steps leading to a still unknown territory, where we could speak, in a way still scarcely imaginable today, more easily and more freely, speak openly and soberly about the present; and so also about the past" (17, 347).²¹ The sequence in that last sentence is very important. It identifies speaking about the present as the final aim of the work, to which the exploration of the past is ultimately subordinate.

Pressed by her family to say what she holds most important, the author settles for "communicating what one believes to be true" and at once defends herself against the suspicion that she's "silly enough to demand as children do that people should 'tell the truth.'" What she has in mind is "truth as a system of relations between people"

18 Eine lange Zeit von Arbeit und Zweifel.

19 die Alternative zwischen Schweigen und dem, was Ruth und Lenka "Pseudo" nennen.

20 Der Luxus vollkommener Aufrichtigkeit warum sollte er gerade dir ausgesucht sein?

21 nicht als einmaliger Kraftakt, sondern als Ziel, als Prozeß mit Möglichkeiten der Annäherung, in kleinen Schritten, die auf einen noch unbekanntem Boden führen, von dem aus auf neue, heute noch unvorstellbare Weise wieder leichter und freier zu reden wäre, offen und nüchtern über das, was ist; also auch über das, was war. (Astonishingly, this essential passage is left out of the published English translation.)

(17, 350).²² Much of the narrative works at setting up a system of forthright relationships: between the author as subject and object in the dialogue of memory and present attitudes; between the author and her family, her younger daughter in particular; and between the author and the wider public with whom she must establish communication if her efforts are to have any point. One of the author's many psychological obstacles is her awareness of just how hard that vital dialogue with her public will be to achieve. Somehow or other she has to get her readers to confront as determinedly as she does herself "the huge and many-layered problem of self-censorship, the commonest of all experiences for our contemporaries, which they scarcely notice any longer" (10, 211).²³ Outside the fictional space of her dialogue with herself, she is able to perform only one side of the transaction needed to convey the truth. She has to alert her readers to the perennial complexities of receiving truthfulness:

Since communication belongs to the essence of truth, [the writer] produces . . . a truth which is constrained on many sides: tied to the speaker and the invariably limited free space she has struggled with herself to achieve; tied to the person she is speaking about, and last but not least, to the people who receive the communication and whom one can only warn: the truth that gets through to them is not "pure" but tarnished several times over, and they themselves will pollute it again, through judgment and pre-judgment. (15, 296)²⁴

22 mitzuteilen, was man für wahr hält. . . . Du hältst mich doch nicht für so albern, daß ich fordere, man solle "die Wahrheit sagen", wie die Kinder. Was wir meinen ist: Wahrheit als Bezugssystem zwischen Leuten.

23 das große und vielschichtige Problem der Selbstzensur, die Selbstbewachung und Selbstbespitzelung . . . die allergewöhnlichste . . . Erfahrung der Zeitgenossen, die sie kaum noch wahrnehmen.

24 Da aber die Mitteilung zum Wesen der Wahrheit gehört, produziert er . . . eine vielfach gebundene Wahrheit: an sich selbst gebunden, den Mitteilenden, und den immer begrenzten Freiheitsraum, den er sich abgezwungen hat; gebunden an den, über den er aussagt, und nicht zuletzt an jene, denen die Mitteilung gilt und die man nur warnen kann: Nicht "rein" mehrfach getrübt ist die Wahrheit, die sie erreicht, und sie selbst werden sie, durch Urteil und Vorurteil, noch einmal verunreinigen.

For the GDR writer, continually aware of how her words will be maltreated by zealots at home and by patronizing critics in the West,²⁵ there are political considerations as well, exacerbating the epistemological problem:

In the age of suspicion there's no such thing as honest speech, for an honest speaker is dependent on someone prepared to listen honestly, and someone who keeps on hearing the distorted echo of his words strike back at him grows weary of being honest. There's nothing he can do about it. The echo he must anticipate is already there as a pre-echo in his most honest words. And so we cannot say precisely what we have experienced. (17, 333)²⁶

Yet the imperative to try remains, ultimately because despite external pressures the root of the temptation to give up and remain silent is within herself: the acquired anxiety about harboring deviant opinions that enlists bodily ailments, ranging from headaches to a cardiac episode (16, 322), to dissuade her from her task. She realizes her headaches are a way of posing herself a question which one part of her hopes may prove unanswerable: "What compels you . . . to clamber back into the past, to expose yourself yet again to sheer incomprehension from others and above all to your own evasive tactics and your own doubts? To split yourself off, virtually to 'go into opposition'" (7, 142).²⁷ But the most powerful weapon which her unconscious deploys against her will to clarity and frank utterance are

25 For the reception of *Kindheitsmuster*, see Sonja Hilzinger, *Christa Wolf* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1986), 9194; and Anna Kuhn, *Christa Wolf's Utopian Vision: From Marxism to Feminism* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988), 1078.

26 daß es im Zeitalter des Argwohns das aufrichtige Wort nicht gibt, weil der aufrichtige Sprecher auf den angewiesen ist, der aufrichtig zuhören wollte, und weil dem, dem lange das verzerrte Echo seiner Worte zurückschlägt, die Aufrichtigkeit vergeht. Dagegen kann er nichts machen. Das Echo, auf das er rechnen muß, schwingt dann als Vorhall in seinem aufrichtigsten Wort. So können wir nicht mehr genau sagen, was wir erfahren haben.

27 Was zwingt dich, . . . zurückzusteigen? . . . dich erneut auszusetzen . . . der puren Verständnislosigkeit, vor allem aber: der eigenen Verschleierungstaktik und dem eigenen Zweifel. Sich abzusondern, was soviel heißt wie "in Opposition gehen."

accesses of fear which afflict her whenever the writing approaches taboo regions, such as the realities of the Soviet occupation of Germany:

The attempt to touch upon things so far untouched, to say things never yet said, "releases" fear. . . . The elemental fear of learning too much and of being forced into a region of dissent, whose climate people like you have not learned to bear. . . . A fear, then, that comes from far away and from the earliest years, a fear of self-betrayal and guilt. A wretched legacy. (17, 346)²⁸

In other words, the extreme difficulty of writing about her past stems from the way those experiences have shaped her and her entire generation. The psychological heritage of the child's formative years underlies the adult's inhibitions: she is a hesitant writer partly because she understands all too well why her contemporaries are likely to make bad readers.

II

Nelly's childhood experiences as retraced and recovered by her adult self are governed partly by the dead hand of petit-bourgeois domesticity, partly by the totalitarian ideology that exploits the child's desire to shine in the eyes of figures in authority. Common to both influences is the tyranny of the "normal": in the domestic context it figures as fear of anything that deviates from the respectable, in the ideology of Fascism as the elevation of one nebulously defined "race" to the paradigm of humanity. From her earliest years Nelly is given the impression that she has to earn her parent's love by doing and being what they want, that "obedience and being loved are one and

²⁸ Bei dem Versuch, Unberührtes zu berühren Ungesagtes auszusprechen wird Angst "frei". . . . Die Grundangst davor, zuviel zu erfahren und in eine Zone von Nichtübereinstimmung gedrängt zu werden, deren Klima ihr nicht zu ertragen gelernt habt. . . . Eine Angst von weit her also und von klein auf, vor Selbstverrat und Schuld. Unselige Hinterlassenschaft. (This passage is left out of the published English translation.)

the same thing" (1, 20).²⁹ And the parents' idea of what a child should be is wholly conventional. Nelly's mother likes to say she can see through her like glass (3, 58), but the child senses that this does not mean that her mother is really interested in her personality or distinctive needs. All the mother wants to see in her child are things that reassure her that there is nothing different and therefore threatening about her offspring: "her mother didn't want to know what she was like in her inmost self. Nelly had the desolate feeling that even the Good Lord set store by the brave, truthful, sensible, obedient and above all happy child which she pretended to be all day" (1, 27).³⁰ Pretence is a pervasive feature of Nelly's childhood and adolescence, so much so that when asked at elementary school to supply a word denoting a feeling, it is *pretence* that she comes up with, to the puzzlement of her teacher and classmates (5, 100). The overarching sham is the charade of domestic bliss, the tenacity with which Charlotte, the mother, insists that "we had everything we could possibly wish for" to which, many years later, the daughter-as-author adds the bitter gloss: "mastery of language was not on her list of desirable things" (7, 144).³¹ Again and again the recollected scenes from childhood emphasize the "linguistic impotence" of her milieu, which "locks people up inside themselves, without letting them know this self any better" (8, 176).³² The climate of her childhood made her shrink from frank utterance among friends and close relations alike; and it is a cardinal claim of this novel that the suppression of speech produces blunted perceptions, stunted emotions, a withering away of individual judgment and response. "Nowhere does such abysmal

29 daß Gehorchen und Geliebtwerden ein und dasselbe ist.

30 Es lag [der Mutter] nicht daran, zu erfahren, wie sie in ihrem innersten Innern war. Nelly hatte das trostlose Gefühl, daß auch der liebe Gott selbst an dem tapferen, aufrichtigen, klugen, gehorsamen und vor allem glücklichen Kind hing, das sie tagsüber abgab.

31 Wir hatten alles, was wir uns wünschen könnten. Der Sprache mächtig zu sein stand nicht auf ihrem Wunschzettel.

32 Wortunmächtigkeit. Die einen Menschen in sich einsperrt, ohne daß er über dieses selbst etwas Näheres wissen kann.

silence reign as in German families" (9, 193)³³ is the author's comment, a generalization noticeably not confined just to the past. In the writer's own family, in the foreground of the novel, children are obviously encouraged to speak their minds, and their queries and opinions are treated seriously.³⁴ In a characteristic passage, we are offered two juxtaposed scenes from family life. We are shown Nelly's father and mother not talking to each other for days on end except for icy communications on business matters, until some trivial incident finally triggers a scene that sends the mother out of the house, slamming the door behind her. "A dozen times, Nelly swears never to inflict that on her children." Then comes a switch to the internal dialogue of the present author as she takes stock of what has become of that promise. "A dozen times you bite back the angry words that are on the tip of your tongue early in the morning about the children's colossal and incurable untidiness" so the lesson has been learned and applied. Or has it? The reflection continues: "[You bite back] the words, maybe, but not your irritation, which gets across to them all the same." Only now does the author allow herself the reassurance of dwelling on an all-important difference: "But then they can protest about [your irritation], as Nelly couldn't: Nelly had either to stay silent or be impudent" (6, 119).³⁵ This alternative between silence or impudence for the child who does not wholly fit the image of dutiful piety emphasizes the continuity (which is, of course, not claimed to be an identity) between the petit-bourgeois domestic ethos and the moral climate of totalitarian states. In such states, those who doubt the official line have no legitimate linguistic space in which to express dissent: they must either hold their peace or be accused of the

33 Nirgendwo wird so abgrundtief geschwiegen wie in deutschen Familien.

34 For a fuller discussion of the mother-child relationships, see Kuhn, *Utopian Vision*, 13234.

35 Ein dutzendmal schwört Nelly sich, ihren Kindern dies nicht anzutun. (Ein dutzendmal schluckst du das heftige Wort hinunter, das dir am frühen Morgen auf der Zunge liegt gegen die unermessliche und unheilbare Unordnung der Kinder das Wort, ja. Aber nicht die Gereiztheit, die sich ihnen mitteilt. Gegen die sie allerdings, anders als Nelly, aufbegehren können; Nelly mußte entweder schweigen oder frech werden.)

political, adult equivalent of impudence, with punitive consequences. And the novel insists that what is inflicted as a result, whether on children in the home or citizens in the state, is not just formal injustice but psychological damage, which can outlast the loosening of external constraints, making the suppressed spontaneity hard to recover, even when the domestic or political environment has become less oppressive.

Though drawn into the web of complicity like most of their compatriots, Nelly's immediate family members are anything but keen supporters of Hitler's regime; apart from anything else, they are too staid to be carried very far into mass enthusiasm or excess. But that only increases their daughter's susceptibility to the lure of the new movement; approaching adolescence, she finds a distinct thrill in getting home late from a meeting of the *Bund deutscher Mädel* (equivalent, for girls, of the Hitler Youth), knowing she will be able to dismiss her mother's reproaches by appealing to superior duties.

A higher existence lay before . . . her, beyond the little shop where on every side tins of fish, sacks of sugar, loaves of bread, sausages, and barrels of vinegar stood on the floor or hung from the ceiling . . . ; and beyond and apart from the white figure in her shopoverall who was standing on the doorstep and had certainly been looking out for her, Nelly, for some time now. (9, 177)³⁶

Rebellion against the narrowness of the home takes the growing child into deeper commitment to Fascist ideology. The author observes Nelly's adolescent energy and insecurity, which might otherwise have spurred her on to establish her individual identity, being channeled into a cause that demands and almost entirely receives the destruction of personal responses. Although the home and the movement become rivals for Nelly's allegiance, both spheres of influence assail her individuality by similar means and with similar consequenc-

³⁶ Ein gehobenes Dasein stand ihr . . . bevor, jenseits des kleinen, rundum mit Fischbüchsen, Zuckersäcken, Broten, Essigfässern, Würsten verstellten und verhängten Ladenraumes . . . ; jenseits und abseits auch von der weißen Gestalt im Ladenmantel, die vor die Tür getreten war und sicher schon lange nach ihr, Nelly, Ausschau hielt.

es, for what both require and reward is deception of one kind or another, especially self-deception. And the most damaging form of self-deception which the movement exacts is the misinterpretation of moral sensibility in ways that ultimately suppress moral perception altogether. Nelly's teacher and mentor in the early postwar days, Maria Kranhold, a Christian who has "long since gone to the West" (18, 360) is allowed to summarize the pattern of Nelly's formation by her Nazi educators. Nelly has attempted to defend the history teacher she idolized, Julia Strauch, against the charge of inhumanity, insisting that Julia, though she taught hatred of "inferior" races, would have been personally incapable of killing anyone. That is not the point, Maria replies, "She made you have a bad conscience whenever you told yourself that you couldn't kill anyone. She made . . . your conscience turn against you. So you couldn't be good, couldn't even think a good thought, without feeling guilty about it" (18, 362).³⁷ This is indeed the intention and effect of all the educational influences on Nelly outside her home. As a nine-year-old, she witnesses members of the local Jewish community salvaging their sacred objects from the ruins of their synagogue, and what she has learned about her duty to hate all Jews comes into conflict with her spontaneous reaction: "Nelly came perilously close to having an unsuitable feeling: sympathy. But healthy German common sense erected its barriers against it, in the form of fear" (7, 151).³⁸ The conflict is dealt with by suppressing it, converting sympathy to a fear directed both towards the victims after we've done this to them, Nelly

37 Sie hat Ihnen ein schlechtes Gewissen gemacht, wenn Sie sich sagen mußten, daß Sie keinen umbringen könnten. . . . Sie hat gemacht, . . . daß Ihr Gewissen sich umgekehrt hat, gegen Sie selbst. Daß Sie nicht gut sein können, nicht einmal gut denken können ohne ein Gefühl der Schuld. (Cited from the GDR edition [Berlin & Weimar: Aufbau Verlag, 1976], 508. The West German editions read "Sie hat Ihnen ein schlechtes Gewissen gemacht, wenn Sie sich sagen mußten, daß sie keinen umbringen könnten," which makes no sense. The published English translation "solves" the problem by reading *könnten* as a singular, thus compounding the error.)

38 Um ein Haar wäre Nelly eine unpassende Empfindung unterlaufen: Mitgefühl. Aber der gesunde deutsche Menschenverstand baute seine Barriere dagegen, als Angst.

thinks, the Jews will kill us all if we give them the chance (7, 151) and towards the self that could harbor such a delinquent emotion. Five years later the internalization of racialist ideology has gone so far that the impulse to compassion no longer makes itself felt, not even indirectly. Nelly and her classmates are potato-picking alongside Ukrainian slave-laborers, "What she felt towards the foreign women was not sympathy but unease, a powerful feeling of being different, stemming from . . . Julia Strauch's history lessons: different means better." Why, the author asks herself, did the fourteen-year-old Hitler Youth leader Nelly not cross the "yawning gap of thirty paces" to the spot where the slave-workers were eating their thin soup and give them some meat from the German children's lunch? She would like to be able to answer that Nelly was afraid but has to confront the "horrendous secret" that this was simply not the case. Nelly might indeed have been afraid to help the women, had the thought of doing so occurred to her; but it never entered her mind in the first place: "The temptation to do the perfectly obvious thing no longer got through to her. Nelly, innocent, as far as she knew, exemplary even, sat there and chewed her meat" (11, 232).³⁹

This is one of the few memories the author can recover of her adolescent life as a hand-picked leader in the Hitler Youth. Though closer to her in time than her childhood, it has left far fewer inward traces:

That you weren't prepared for. The school, the street, the playground provide figures and faces you could still paint a picture of today. But where Nelly was most deeply committed, devoted herself, abandoned herself, the details that matter have been wiped out. . . . The disappearance must have suited a deeply insecure consciousness, which, as is well known, can give compelling orders behind its own back to the memory, orders like: don't think about

39 Was sie den Fremden gegenüber empfand, war nicht Mitleid, sondern Scheu, ein starkes Gefühl von Anderssein, dem . . . Julia Strauchs Geschichtsunterricht [zugrunde lag]: Anders heißt wertvoller. . . . Das schauerliche Geheimnis: Nicht, daß sie es nicht gewagt, sondern daß es gar nicht gedacht wurde. . . . Die Versuchung aber, das Selbstverständliche zu tun, kam nicht mehr an sie heran. Nelly, unschuldig, soviel sie wußte, vorbildlich sogar, saß da und kaute ihr Fleisch.

it any more. . . . Don't talk about it. Suppress words, phrases, whole chains of thought which such words could trigger. (10, 215)⁴⁰

And, with a tentativeness that guards against self-pity, the author's inner dialogue reflects on the destruction of a childhood which has left its marks in the inhibitions of the adult:

Perhaps you ought after all to feel sorry about the losses that Nelly suffered losses beyond recovery, as you now realize. Perhaps you should feel sorry for the child who long ago took her leave and went away, never known or loved by anyone as the person she might have been. Who took her secret along with her: the secret of the walls which hemmed her in, which she groped along till she found a cranny that filled her with a little less fear than the rest but still with fear enough.

A fear which made itself felt in a pervasive, sustained sense of self alienation, whose trace is to be found precisely in the fact that the traces were wiped out: someone who doesn't want to be noticed soon notices nothing herself. The appalling will to self-abandonment doesn't allow the self to emerge. (10, 216)⁴¹

40 Darauf warst du nicht vorbereitet. Die Schule, die Straße, der Spielplatz liefern Gestalten und Gesichter, die du heute noch malen könntest. Wo Nelly am tiefsten beteiligt war, Hingabe einsetzte, Selbstaufgabe, sind die Einzelheiten, auf die es ankäme, gelöscht. . . . Der Schwund muß einem tief verunsicherten Bewußtsein gelegen gekommen sein, das, wie man weiß, hinter seinem eigenen Rücken dem Gedächtnis wirksame Weisungen erteilen kann, zum Beispiel die: Nicht mehr daran denken. . . . Nicht davon reden. Wörter, Wortreihen, ganze Gedankenketten, die sie auslösen konnten, nicht aufkommen lassen.

41 Vielleicht sollte es dir um Verluste, die Nelly erlitt unwiderruflich erlitt, wie du heute weißt, doch leid tun. Vielleicht sollte es dir leid tun um das Kind, das sich damals verabschiedete: von niemandem gekannt und als derjenige geliebt, der es hätte sein können. Das sein Geheimnis mitnahm: das Geheimnis von den Wänden, in die es eingeschlossen war, die es abtastete, um jene Lücke zu finden, die ihm etwas weniger Angst machte als die anderen aber doch auch Angst genug. Eine Angst, die sich damals in einem durchdringenden, andauernden Gefühl von Selbstfremdheit zu erkennen gab und deren Spur eben darin besteht, daß sie die

(footnote continued on next page)

Such passages make clear that the "self" that is at stake is identified chiefly with the ability to form and express one's own judgements, especially moral judgements, and that the author feels she has inherited this defective sense of selfthe "wretched legacy" already referred to.

III

Nelly's upbringing, both in and beyond the home, makes conformity the paramount imperative and associates all questioning of that imperative with insecurity, guilt, and fear of isolation. This allows the author to make a psychological link between her earlier self (and, indirectly, her present self as well, insofar as she is still prone to guilt and anxiety about "going into opposition") and the novel's most disturbing example of obsessive conformism, the desire to get on in the world by adopting and internalizing its standards without compunction Adolf Eichmann,

the man who couldn't bear not being a success; who right to the end, even concerning his own death, poured out clichés: master and victim of those deadly kinds of linguistic manipulation that to one man bring the longed-for complete identification with a cause and to others bring exterminationcarried out by people who with the aid of a language robbed of conscience can murder without feeling pangs of conscience. Because they are eventually capable of feeling only what is expected of them. Adolf Eichmann as the most dangerous of all, resembling as he does more closely than anyone else the "normal" behavior of his contemporaries. (11, 220)⁴²

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Spuren löschte: einem Menschen, der nicht auffallen will, fällt bald nichts mehr auf. Der entsetzliche Wille zur Selbstaufgabe läßt das Selbst nicht aufkommen.

⁴² Der Mann, der es nicht ertrug, erfolglos zu sein; der sich bis zu seinem Ende, auch über seinen eigenen Tod, in Redensarten erging: Meister und Opfer jener tödlichen Art von Sprachregelungen, die den einen die ersehnte absolute Gleichschaltung den anderen die Vernichtung bringendurch jene, die mit Hilfe der gewissenlos gemachten Sprache morden können, ohne Gewissensbisse zu empfinden. Weil sie nur noch empfinden, was erwünscht ist. Adolf Eichmann als der

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This is not facile linguistic determinism. The impoverishment of language is said neither to excuse nor to "explain" Eichmann. He is called a master as well as a victim of a deficient discourse; and the language has been *made* deficient. Both in the deliberate forging of the language and its masterly use, moral responsibility remains. But the implication is that to shape such a language or to adopt it is to cross a psychological threshold. From then on, the promptings of morality, robbed of an adequate discourse, become progressively weaker and the path of evil becomes easier, as long as it is the path "expected" by those with whose standards one has identified. What links the past to the present from the author's perspective is her perception that what Eichmann and his "normal" contemporaries did has both a form and a content. Their abhorrent actions and omissions were something historically specific for which the present-day young need feel no guilt. But the formal conditions from which those actions and omissions flowed are a perennial danger: the suppression of personal judgment in the face of received wisdom or enforced orthodoxy is, the novel suggests, in itself a crime against all that is best in humanity. What specific ills ensue when moral judgment bows to a communal norm is a matter of historical circumstance, and the novel insists on the danger of fulminating against such ills in the past while ignoring the persistence or reemergence of the moral deficiencies that produced them. The same dehumanizing power lurks behind other, less dramatically malevolent kinds of conformism, including, the author implies, the gospel of salvation through consumer goods.

The passages said to have been written in the United States, sometimes dismissed because of a rather silly remark about the black ghettos (12, 238), do not play off capitalist evil against socialist virtue. On the contrary, they bear witness to an uneasy sense that GDR policy is aiming to emulate precisely those aspects of capitalist culture that cause the author most discomfort. Among her observations on supermarkets, consumer goods, and advertising, the author quotes, disapprovingly, from an orthodox Marxist-Leninist reference work, which proclaims that ideas exist "only in the consciousness of

(footnote continued from previous page)

Gefährlichste, dem "normalen" Verhalten von Zeitgenossen am nächsten Stehende.

human beings as abstract reflections. . . ."43 She focuses on the dismissive word *only* and invites us to imagine an age "less insecure and hard-nosed and vulgar than ours," when the same notion would be expressed with a very different emphasis: "Astonishingly and magnificently, there exist in human consciousness general ideas. They are abstract reflections of reality, but they can also, either as correct partial results of an advancing process of understanding, or, in the worst case, as false projections from reality, . . . determine the actions of individuals and groups" (12, 247).44 Such a definition would vindicate the importance of judgements based on a critical distance from external reality and acknowledge their power for good and ill. As it is, the author fears that people in both East and West are increasingly under the sway of "the idea of getting by without an idea" (12, 249),45 of settling for values which give priority to material comfort and make car ownership a precondition of human fulfillment (16, 312). Her brother, an engineer, offers the technocrat's response: if that is the way people are content, maybe even eager to live, what right has she to sow disquiet among them?

He accused you [i.e., the author and her daughter] of intellectual snobbery . . . for trying to claim that rather exceptional needs were normal and undervaluing the normal needs of ordinary people. As if there was anything disgraceful about making a tolerable life in a convenient apartment with a refrigerator, a washing machine and a car your main priority. As if it weren't the case that all governments attempt to meet this majority need which shows they're

43 Die Idee . . . existiert nur im Bewußtsein des Menschen als abstrakte Widerspiegelung.

44 Erstaunlicher-, großartigerweise existieren im Bewußtsein des Menschen allgemeine Ideen. Sie spiegeln die Wirklichkeit abstrakt wieder, können aber auch, entweder als richtige Teilergebnisse eines fortschreitenden Erkenntnisprozesses oder, im ungünstigen Fall, als falsche Projektionen der Realität . . . das Handeln einzelner and großer Massen von Menschen bestimmen.

45 Die Idee, ohne eine Idee auszukommen.

better mass psychologists than the likes of you, brother Lutz. (15, 301)⁴⁶

The phrase *all governments* stresses the global reference of this question,⁴⁷ and in indicating that "mass psychology" dictates government policy, the speaker actually reinforces the reservations which his remarks are meant to counter, for the dehumanizing power of mass movements and the cult of "normality" is precisely the lesson of history which his sister's writing is trying to clarify and endow with critical purchase upon the present. Here, two senses of *materialism*, (philosophical in the cited dictionary definition, moralistic in the unease about consumerist values) are brought together, and both are presented as impoverishing, as ideologies that suppress creativity and moral dissent. The novel steers well clear of the rhetoric of "consumer terror," but precisely because the enormous differences between totalitarian oppression and the blandishments of consumer society are never denied, the suggestion that there can be disturbing similarities between their effects on the moral quality of the lives human beings live is more likely to earn serious attention. It is also likely to earn the kind of outraged misunderstanding which the author constantly anticipates. Again, it is her brother who puts the matter most trenchantly: he recognizes that his sister "imagines a world where people cultivate only those needs which foster their development, spiritual and physical," but insists that "developments are moving in a quite different direction, toward the increasingly complete satisfaction of

46 Euch warf er geistigen Hochmut vor . . . insofern ihr ziemlich ausgefallene Bedürfnisse für normal erklären möchtet und die normalen Bedürfnisse durchschnittlicher Menschen zu gering veranschlagt. Als ob es eine Schande wäre, ein auskömmliches Leben in einer komfortablen Wohnung mit Kühlschrank, Waschmaschine und Auto über alles zu stellen. Als ob nicht alle Regierungen diesem Bedürfnis der Mehrzahl Rechnung zu tragen suchten bessere Massenpsychologen als ihr, sagte Bruder Lutz.

47 Though it is worth pointing out that in the years covered by the foreground narrative, the numbers of consumer durables in GDR households were rising dramatically as a direct result of the policy pursued by the new leadership. See the statistical table in V. R. Berghahn, *Modern Germany: Society, Economics and Politics in the Twentieth Century*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982), 275.

needs which are not all 'humane.'" He accepts that his sister and niece dislike this trend, but he warns them that resistance is useless, maybe even dangerous. "Anyone who wantonly puts a hand into this mechanism will have it torn off." The author's reply and her brother's robust final rejoinder emphasize both the scope of the historical concern behind the author's hesitant reservations and the sheer weight and confidence of technocratic consensus against which she is proposing to raise her voice:

Maybe not the whole hand, then, you say. Just stick in a little finger. A few reflections. And not wantonly. Simply because that direction can end in self-destruction.

Suit yourself, said Lutz. At your own risk. But in any case, you can think what you like, people like you are on the outside. . . . Where these matters are decided, your views can't be considered. Only experts have a say. Spiritual ills cut no ice there. (16, 311)⁴⁸

In the face of such onslaughts from a close relative, it is not surprising that the author is plagued with recurrent doubts about the wisdom and the feasibility of her undertaking. What sustains her through all the setbacks is partly the conviction that not only the spiritual dignity but also the physical survival of mankind is at stake (a strand of thought which Christa Wolf subsequently elaborated in *Cassandra* and *Störfall*); and, perhaps even more importantly, her awareness that if anything can be learned from her past at all, it is that private conviction and judgment must be backed against majority pressure. But

48 . . . denkt an eine Welt, in der die Menschen nur jene Bedürfnisse entwickeln, die ihre Entfaltung fördern seelisch und körperlich. . . . Daß die Entwicklung anders läuft: auf die immer vollkommeneren Befriedigung von Bedürfnissen, die nicht alle "menschenmäßig" sind. . . . Und wer seine Hand aus reinem Übermut in diesen Mechanismus steckt, dem wird sie abgerissen, die Hand. . . . Vielleicht nicht gleich die ganze Hand, meinst du. Den kleinen Finger reinstecken. Und nicht aus Übermut. Bloß, weil die Richtung in Selbstzerstörung enden kann. Bitte sehr, sagt Lutz. Persönliches Risiko. Im übrigen: Ihr könnt denken, was ihr wollt, ihr seid sowieso "draußen". . . . Wo über diese Dinge entschieden wird, kann, was ihr denkt, nicht zur Kenntnis genommen werden. Da reden Fachleute. Seelische Leiden sind kein Argument.

the very past which teaches her that lesson has shaped her personality in a way that makes it hard to stand by her insights. Once again, the daughter figures as a focus of cautious hope that such inhibitions are not inescapable. Whatever other difficulties Lenka may have, diffidence in the face of majority opinion is not one of them. Her mother asks her whether she worries about the opinions of "all the folk who firmly believe that what most people think and do is normal."

Oh, those types, says Lenka, you needn't tell me about *them*. . . . And you're not afraid when you think quite differently than they do? . . . that they must be right, because they're in the majority that idea never occurs to you? No, says Lenka, I'm not dead yet. But you mean *you* think that? (11, 228)⁴⁹

Though prone to dejection about the world she lives in, Lenka feels no anxiety about backing her own judgment and perception against majority pressure and is bewildered to think her mother might be subject to such fears. That bewilderment is an encouraging sign that Lenka has escaped the "legacy" of inhibition, but she and those of her contemporaries who share her forthrightness still need a more useful legacy of knowledge and insight, which this "new kind of writing" struggles to provide.

IV

As well as liberating her from the inhibitions and stylizations of conventional first-person narrative, the author's narrative "game in and with the second and the third person, with a view to uniting them" (7, 149)⁵⁰ seems to offer the narrative a teleology independent of content or story line, apparently promising to solve a perenni-

49 die vielen Leute, die felsenfest glauben, was die meisten denken und tun, sei normal. Ach die, sagt Lenka. Kenn ich. . . . Und du hast keine Angst, wenn du ganz was anders denkst als sie? . . . daß sie recht haben müssen, weil sie doch die meisten sind die Idee kommt dir nicht? Nee, sagt Lenka. Ich bin ja nicht lebensmüde. Oder wie seh ich das: Kommt dir die Idee?

50 Spiel in und mit der zweiten und dritten Person, zum Zwecke ihrer Vereinigung.

al problem of Bildungsroman authors, that of reconciling truth to the openness of life with the formal demands of literary art.⁵¹ Her writing, so the author tells herself, will move gradually toward a point where she will be able to reidentify with her childhood self; and this reidentification will simultaneously restore a sense of self-possession in the present, the ability once more to say "I" without fear of self-distortion. When the "I" reemerges, the novel will have reached its conclusion whose truthfulness will be guaranteed by the achieved psychological integration, not by any contrived "rounding off" of external events.

This isn't a story that must of necessity lead up to a particular end. After all, what could this preconceived point be, towards which the story must be driven forward? In the hospital [recovering from the cardiac episode mentioned earlier] . . . you think you can see: the conclusion would be reached when the second and third person came to coincide, or better still, merged of their own accord, with the first. (16, 322)⁵²

Yet no sooner is this prospect clarified than it looks unattainable. "You thought it extremely doubtful whether you could reach that point, whether the path you have gone down leads in that direction at all" (16, 322).⁵³ The apparent goal of unifying the divided self proves less feasible the further it is pursued, because of the very nature of the childhood and adolescence that is being recovered. The priorities and values of the recalling self are different from those of

51 For the argument that this problem and attempts to solve it are a generic constituent of the Bildungsroman, see M. R. Swales, *The German Bildungsroman from Wieland to Hesse* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1978), and see his essay in this volume.

52 Es handelt sich ja nicht um eine Geschichte, die notwendig zu einem bestimmten Ende führen muß. Oder welcher wäre der gedachte Punkt, bis zu dem sie vorgetrieben werden müßte? Im Krankenhaus . . . glaubst du klar zu sehen: der Endpunkt wäre erreicht, wenn zweite und dritte Person in der ersten zusammenträfen, mehr noch: zusammenfielen.

53 Es kam dir sehr fraglich vor, ob du diesen Punkt erreichen könntest, ob der Weg, den du eingeschlagen hast, überhaupt dorthin führt.

the child and adolescent, so that the reconstructed past is entirely different in feel from the once-experienced life. To relive the past is not to recover it, but to become aware of the unbridgeable gulf between the present self and the former self, who perceived and responded very differently to the event now recalled. The author observes to herself that she senses

how your account makes nothing more understandable, in fact makes everything more confused. That the accents keep changing, coming to rest on points of emphasis which emerge only now, as you tell the story . . . that the child's life in all its vivid colors passed these points by without even noticing them. (8, 169)⁵⁴

In the same events, child and adult see fundamentally different significances; the more complete the recall of what happened, the greater the felt gap between the adult self and the child's. The lost past proves not to be a fairy-tale realm that can be entered joyfully once the spell of inner inhibition is broken: "It has proved deceptive, that secret hope that one day, after the due span of years was past, the thorny hedge would turn of its own accord into a sea of flowers that could be crossed unscathed in order to wake up childhood from its enchanted slumbers" (15, 291).⁵⁵ One sort of alienation from the childhood self, stemming from repression of early experience, is indeed dispelled as the author struggles against her self-censoring memory, "that system of deception" (7, 144) ⁵⁶ to free her true past; but it gives way to a different, incurable, form of alienation.

54 wie durch deine Erzählung nichts verständlicher, eher alles verworrener wird. Daß die Akzente sich unaufhaltsam verschieben, auf Schwerpunkten lasten, die erst jetzt, im Laufe des Erzählens, sich bilden. . . . Daß an diesen Schwerpunkten vorbei, sogar ohne sie zu beachten, in kräftigen Farben die Kindheit weiterlief.

55 Getrogen hat die uneingestandene Hoffnung, einmal, nach der angemessenen Anzahl von Jahren, werde jede Dornenhecke sich von selbst zu einem Blumenmeer verwandeln, das man unverletzt durchschreitet, um die lange . . . verwunschene Wahrheit zu erwecken. Es bleibt nichts übrig, als den möglichst getreuen Bericht weiterzuverfolgen.

56 die Erinnerung, dieses Betrugssystem.

The more the author recovers her past, the more the inner reality of what she finds horrifies her:

Who could have known [when the project was begun] that the main aim would be not to turn to a pillar of salt, not to be petrified through looking back. What remains: to find a way to get out of this business, if not unharmed, if not in one piece, just to get out of it somehow. (18, 358)⁵⁷

The emerging understanding of what the past was like clarifies and restructures the author's alienation from her childhood and adolescence but does not remove it; so the goal of bringing past and present selves to coalescence proves impossible to achieve. But what also emerges is that that goal was only a regulative means to the true end of her undertaking: the recovery of what was repressed and the reenactment for others of the process that made such recovery possible. Not (just) to strengthen others against present and future totalitarian tendencies, but to foster suspicion and opposition to conformity of all kinds, including conformity to the consumerism which the East is tempted to make its new ideal. This gives the novel a special resonance for readers in the early 1990s, who have watched the GDR disappear at a breathtaking pace largely dictated by an irresistible desire for the deutsche mark and all it can buy. The cult of abundant consumer goods and the model of human fulfillment it implies is, of course, a long way from the criminal rule of Hitler or Stalin and their henchmen; before we get the chance to ask, the author herself repeatedly wonders whether it is worth making such a fuss. She is carried through such doubts by the deep-seated conviction that a fuss has indeed to be made, because what is under threat in all the historical periods she has experienced is the same crucial thing: independence of perception, thought and judgement, genuine self-realization as opposed to the mindless adoption of general formulas of salvation. And resistance to conformity is seen not just as a marginal luxury for

⁵⁷ Wer hat wissen können, daß es darauf kommen würde, im Rückblick nicht zur Salzsäule, nicht zu Stein zu erstarren. Was bleibt: Wenn nicht ungeschoren, wenn nicht mit heiler Haut, so doch überhaupt, irgendwie aus dieser Sache herauszukommen.

incurable individualists; the novel is built on the notion that when spontaneity is suppressed, pathology takes over, in the insidiously destructive guise of enforced "normality." Conformity may seem to offer secure survival, but survival, the author insists in a crucial passage, is qualitatively less than a proper life:

Being dead, having survived, being alive how does one recognize them? Of the dead one cannot speak. Survivors have foresight and retrospect blocked off. Those who are alive have at their free disposal past and future, their experience and the conclusions it makes possible. (16, 328)58

To achieve this freedom to contemplate, understand, and talk about the past in the interests of the present and the future is the aim of the book. And it is an aim largely fulfilled, despite silences still unbroken which the author signals and accepts.

V

Like so many novels in the Bildungsroman tradition, *Kindheitsmuster* invites the question whether imaginative literature is the appropriate means for the issues it addresses. And like its predecessors, it has an answer to hand: fiction can do something beyond the power of discursive prose, namely give tangible embodiment to what Christa Wolf's writing, from her earliest to her most recent works, sets most store by: human happiness. She continually affirms her belief that a certain kind of happiness is the attainable goal of individual and collective human existence. It is something no one can ever have enough of, but its enjoyment need not be permanently postponed; amid adversity and anxiety it is granted to those of her characters who have the courage to demand and accept it. The last sentence of *Störfall* expresses a sentiment that runs through all Christa Wolf's fiction "How hard it would be, dear brother, to take leave of this

58 GestorbenseinÜberlebt habenLeben: woran erkennt man sie? Von den Toten kann man nicht sprechen. Den Überlebenden sind Rück-Sicht und Vor-Sicht versperrt. Die Lebenden verfügen frei über Vergangenheit und Zukunft. Über ihre Erfahrung und die Schlüsse, die sie ihnen erlaubt.

earth."⁵⁹ Even the novel which most painfully confronts the necessity of taking leave of life, *Nachdenken über Christa T.*, builds its anger about disease and death upon images of happiness which, once experienced and witnessed, cannot be undone:

To stand in this house with the night and the lake before her, just as she had dreamed of doing, was marvelous. . . . It was so simple, so obvious, so real. There were no regrets and no remorse. She stood there and realized she was remembering herself as no one else, later, would ever remember her. So this is what it's like, she thought in astonishment, it can be just like this.⁶⁰

What most accounts of *Kindheitsmuster* (including the present one) fail to bring home is that the novel, for all its self-consciousness, is anything but cerebral; the strongly evoked moments of happiness sprinkled throughout the text are not decoration or distraction, but part of the very stuff of what the work is trying to convey, glimpses of what can emerge if anxiety and inhibition are confronted. Almost always, the evocation of such moments is linked to a self-refuting claim that is impossible. The author, her husband, and brother abruptly realize that their journey into the past is not a nostalgic episode, but an encounter with possibilities of change in the present and future. "The three of you suddenly graspall at the same timethat it's nowhere laid down . . . that the greater or 'the best' part of your lives is already behind you. For no particular reason there's a sudden upsurge of *joie de vivre*, for the space of a few minutes every color is richer. It's nothing, absolutely nothing, that could be put

⁵⁹ Christa Wolf, *Störfall* (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1987), 118.

⁶⁰ In diesem Haus zu stehen, vor dem nächtlichen See, wie sie es geträumt hatte, war wunderbar. . . . Das war so einfach, so verständlich und wirklich. Da war nichts zu bedauern und nichts zu bereuen. Sie stand und wußte, daß sie sich an sich selbst erinnerte, wie niemand später sich an sie erinnern würde. So ist das, dachte sie erstaunt, so kann das sein. (Christa Wolf, *Nachdenken über Christa T.* [Darmstadt and Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1971], 17980.)

into words" (8, 176).⁶¹ But of course it has been "put into words" at the very moment it was claimed to be inexpressible. Or again, the author describes her pleasure at resting on a slope overlooking her birthplace and taking in the sights, the sounds, and the smells she had so long forgotten and concludes that "no possible list of things even if you could specify every single one of the silvery-grey willow fronds could bring forth the utter contentment of one of those rare moments of existence, where everything is just right and in its proper place" (10, 201).⁶² The statement about what a "list" cannot do is part of the successful expression of one of those "rare moments." Making a fuss about conveying the allegedly ineffable is, of course, a familiar literary device: it is a way by which writers draw attention to the evocative power of imaginative language. In this novel, such passages indicate the ultimate reason why fiction is the appropriate means for Christa Wolf's undertaking; it allows her to embed such glimpses of happiness in the account of all that stands in their way, to enrich the representation of fears and worries, discouragements and setbacks with powerful intimations of what sustains her "doubts about despair" (5, 104).⁶³

Two related things have frequently been said about Christa Wolf. First, that she has moved towards an increasingly explicit feminism; and second, that, during the 1970s she ceased to be a writer specifically of and for the GDR and became more international, or at least European, in her themes. These observations, though valid enough, are sometimes misleadingly taken to imply that she has developed away from the Marxism assumed to be her starting point. It would

61 Euch dreien wird auf einmal und gleichzeitig klar, daß nirgends geschrieben steht . . . , daß das meiste oder "das Beste" schon hinter euch liegt. Es ist ein kurzes, unbegründetes Aufleuchten von Lebensfreude, ein Vertiefen aller Farben, das minutenlang anhält. Es ist nichts, gar nichts, worüber sich etwas sagen ließe.

62 Nur daß keine Aufzählung der Welt und würdest du jedes einzelne der grausilbernen Weidenblätter nennen könnendie volle Genugtuung einer jener seltenen Lebensstunden hervorbringen kann, da alles stimmt und richtig an seinem Platz ist.

63 Zweifel an der Verzweiflung.

probably be truer to say that Christa Wolf's abiding commitment is to a strand of Enlightenment humanism that finds partial expression in Marxism and feminism but whose clearest formulation is in Kant's celebrated definition of Enlightenment as the coming of age of human beings, their abandonment of the leading strings of tradition and received authority and their acceptance of responsibility for their individual and collective destinies. That responsibility requires critical reflection on the values and practices of culture, and the frank public expression of such reflection is the engine of human progress, understood as the attempt to identify and foster what human beings require to achieve a happiness appropriate to their potential. The kind of public debates that blossomed fleetingly in the GDR in November 1989 must have seemed like the miraculous dawning of that era of frank, yet also thoughtful and considerate discussion that the novel tentatively anticipates for some remote future. There was even, briefly, speculation that Christa Wolf might become the first president of a reformed but still autonomous GDR. But it soon became plain that she, along with most like-minded intellectuals, would have to continue as creative dissenters rather than popular leaders, though the cultural position of her dissent will have to change fundamentally in the new united Germany, which has swept aside some of the more admirable values of the GDR along with its corruption and repression. The disappearance of the immediate political and social context of *Kindheitsmuster* will doubtless only emphasize the universal import of Christa Wolf's key conviction that the truth is always worth seeking because in the end, whatever risks or adversity beset its pursuit, it is not only bearable but sustaining. This cardinal principle of the Enlightenment is the bedrock of Christa Wolf's writings, unshaken by Nietzsche's assaults. In its service she has increasingly made a sober but essentially confident tentativeness the hallmark of her style: everything, whether it be a political program or a personal belief, a treasured private memory or an official version of history, has to be tested for its truth, irrespective of whether its acceptance would induce conformity or dissent. Her development, some time before the distinction between East and West began to lose its cold war content, into an author for East and West alike signaled, not an abandonment of Marxist principles (nor the unreserved acceptance of a feminist

program), but an insight that these principles express values with a longer and wider history. In *Kindheitsmuster* she has embodied a view of human beings that makes moral choice, informed by internal dialogue and honest communication with others, the essential precondition of personal fulfillment and social well-being. The scope of her project and the artistry with which she accomplishes it earn her a place alongside Goethe and Thomas Mann in the history of Germany's most distinctive generic contribution to European fiction.

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