THE THEME OF *BILDUNG* IN *THE PRELUDE*, *HYPERION*, AND *WILHELM MEISTERS LEHRJAHRE*

A Thesis

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Stefan Fleischer was born June 4, 1937 in Vienna, Austria and emigrated to the United States in 1941. He grew up in Brooklyn, New York, attending public and secondary schools there. In 1954 he entered the University of Rochester and majored in English and philosophy as a candidate in the Honors Program. He was graduated as a B.A. with High Honors in 1958. He began graduate work in English at Cornell University in 1958, receiving his M.A. in 1960 and then entered the doctoral program in Comparative Literature at Cornell. He spent the academic year 1962-1963 at the University of Heidelberg (West Germany) on an exchange Fellowship. Since 1964 he has been teaching at the University of California, Riverside, first as Lecturer and then as Assistant Professor in English and Comparative Literature.

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INTRODUCTION:

"ON THE GROWTH OF AN INDIVIDUAL MIND"[1]

I have chosen Wordsworth's Prelude, Hölderlin's Hyperion, and Goethe's Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre for study because, first of all, they seem to me to be about the same thing. All three works were composed substantially within one decade of one another and there is no evidence of a direct historical influence of one author upon another at the time of composition. These works are therefore especially useful objects for the kind of comparative literary analysis which concentrates more on exploring implicit analogies, rather than tracing explicit sources, verbal echoes, and other borrowings of literary ideas. My aims in this study are to demonstrate what these analogous attitudes, or themes, look like as they appear in each of these texts, to explicate the meaning of the theme for each work as well as to draw distinctions between the theme as it appears in The Prelude, in Hyperion, or in the Lehrjahre. My final purpose in considering these three works

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[1]The phrase is from the title of Coleridge's poem, "To William Wordsworth: composed on the Night after His Recitation of a Poem on the Growth of an Individual Mind." The poem Coleridge refers to is an early version of The Prelude.

in conjunction is to arrive at a new approach to the notion of "Bildung" and to the attendant literary-historical assumptions behind the generic ascription "Bildungsroman."

My primary assumption is that these works can be treated together in a thematic way because Wordsworth, Hölderlin, and Goethe were all poets of the same historical situation. To put the assumption in another way: history determines philosophical belief in a way in which literary cross-fertilization does not. For example, it is more likely that Shakespeare's scepticism would sound more like Montaigne's than Shelley's, regardless of whether Shakespeare read Montaigne and despite the fact that Shelley's The Cenci displays some obvious borrowings from Measure for Measure. This kind of historical assumption implies that literary meanings cannot be hermetically sealed from philosophical meanings and that a particular word or concept which appears in a literary text cannot be determined exclusively by looking for empirical instances of the same word or concept in prior texts. But I am not here arguing for the existence of a Zeitgeist, neither do I intend this study as a traditional Motivgeschichte.

A conceptual problem arises with the word "Bildung" itself. The Goethe Handbuch tells us Goethe used the word frequently and with a variety of nuance, but that the ideological base of his conception was a biological metaphor, the Goethean impulse to see "the complex of existence" in

terms of organic change and growth.[2] In this respect Goethe's notion of "Bildung" is similar to many other "organic" conceptions of the mind and its productions, described by Professor Abrams as a characteristic metaphor of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century psychology, philosophy, and literary theory.[3] The next entry in the Goethe Handbuch, "Bildungsroman," tells us that the term was coined by Dilthey and refers to a rather specific genre of fiction which has as its theme "Bildung des Ich durch die Welt" and that Goethe's Lehrjahre is the outstanding example of the genre.[4] German literary scholarship has in general considered the notion "Bildung" and "Bildungsroman" in much the way they are defined in the Goethe Handbuch.[5] The problem with the terms "Bildung" and "Bildungsroman" becomes apparent if we consider how these terms may be translated into English. "Bildung" is usually translated as "development" or, more rarely, as "education" and "Bildungsroman" is translated (if at all) as "novel of development." The point, however, is that

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[2] Goethe Handbuch, ed. Alfred Zastrau et al. (2d ed.; Stuttgart, 1961), p. 1209.

[3] M. H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp (New York, 1953).

[4] Goethe Handbuch, p. 1210.

[5] A critical and sceptical summary of traditional scholarly opinions on the notion of "Bildung," "Bildungsroman" may be found in Kurt May's "'Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre' ein Bildungsroman?" in DVjs, XXXI (1957), 1-3.

the terms are usually not translated because the linguistic equivalencies are recognized as both graceless and inexact. When the term "Bildungsroman" is used to describe certain types of English prose fiction, some kind of critical qualification is added to point out that one cannot really draw accurate analogies between the nineteenth century English novel and the nineteenth century novel in Germany which has so many obvious borrowings from, and imitations of, the Lehrjahre. Such explanations are not entirely convincing, however, because the Lehrjahre was an obvious cultural "fact" in England, certainly after Carlyle's famous translation in 1824. I do not think the lack of distinct imitations of the Lehrjahre can be explained by the badness of Carlyle's translation. One recent critic offers the interesting speculation:

> Had The Prelude appeared soon after its composition, one wonders if it might have initiated a tradition of Bildungsgeschichte [sic] in England akin to the vogue of novels established in Germany . . . by Goethe's Wilhelm Meister.[6]

What Professor Lindenberger has noticed is a similarity between The Prelude and the Lehrjahre, but he does not explore the similarity because he does not stay long enough with the concept "Bildung" as it appears in these texts. What the standard usage of the generic concept "Bildungsroman" obscures is that the concept "Bildung" was very

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[6]Herbert Lindenberger, On Wordsworth's Prelude (Princeton, 1963), p. 278.

much in the process of being defined just at the time when Goethe was supposedly writing the definitive example of the "Bildungsroman." So, for example, "Bildung" was a specific philosophical issue at the turn of the nineteenth century; "Bildung" is a complex and crucial notion in Hegelian philosophy and Hegel's notion of "Bildung" is very different from that of Schiller or Kant. It would seem then that any examination of "Bildung" would have to proceed on the historical assumption that the word was important, but not by any means rigorously and precisely defined at the time Goethe and Hölderlin were writing their "Bildungsromane."

At this point it would be useful to recall that the word "Bildung" has an etymological meaning: "Bildung" could be translated, quite literally, as "image-making." It is in such a context that Wordsworth's Prelude may be seen as a Bildungsroman. In the famous Simplon Pass passage in Book VI, Wordsworth interrupts his narrative abruptly to name the power which he finally comes to recognize as the true theme of his work:

> Imagination! lifting up itself
> Before the eye and progress of my Song
> Like an unfather'd vapour; here that Power,
> In all the might of its endowments, came
> Athwart me. . . .
> And now recovering, to my Soul I say
> I recognize thy glory; in such strength
> Of usurpation, in such visitings
> Of awful promise, when the light of sense
> Goes out in flashes that have shewn to us
> The invisible world, doth Greatness make abode.
> (1805, VI, 525-536)

The power of imagination "such visitings/ Of awful promise" is, I think, the central issue, not only in The Prelude, but in Hyperion and Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre, as well.

I may have to grant that the term "Bildungsroman" is an unwieldy one for the purposes of this study. But I am not interested as much in the term as in the pattern of experience which these three Bildungsromane describe. The pattern is not, as the description in the Goethe Handbuch suggests, a dialectic of "ich" and "die Welt," that is, a process of growth which may be called "socialization." Rather the process which The Prelude, Hyperion, and Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre describe is a product of the dialectic of time and feeling: in all three works the central tension is between "Gegenwart" and "Erinnerung" (to use Goethe's terms) and the process of Bildung which these authors describe concerns the ability of the individual consciousness to apprehend history, both personal and cultural, as a mental act, as an experience in consciousness. Just in this sense Hölderlin in the Thalia fragment speaks of Bildung as "die Organisation die wir uns selbst zu geben imstande sind."

THE PRELUDE:

RETROSPECTION AND INTROSPECTION

I

In its opening lines of joyous song ("O there is a blessing in this gentle breeze. . . . The earth is all before me"), The Prelude paradoxically echoes the closing strains of Milton's epic of a paradise lost. Perhaps this is one reason it has been generally assumed that behind The Prelude, a poem after all which seeks to dramatize the inextricable relevance of Wordsworth's past to his present poetic moment, there lurks the nostalgia for Wordsworth's own lost paradise--his lost childhood--and that The Prelude as a whole rehearses the pattern of the great Christian drama of fall and redemption. Despite multiple verbal echoes and thematic similarities, The Prelude does not express an essentially Christian nostalgia for an Edenic past because, quite simply, Wordsworth does not equate childhood with Edenic felicity. Rather, the poem's thematic structure draws upon traditional Christian elegiac attitudes to develop a conception of what is past, passing and to come, which is original (at least in English literary history) and considerably more coherently structured than is commonly supposed. In The Prelude, the narrative of the past,

rooted in the past by virtue of the grammar of narrative (action is described by verbs in the past tenses), tenaciously reaches toward a statement which suggests that the present is in the act of being redeemed. The quality and nature of this redemption, however, is something which depends finally on the acknowledgment and celebration of the fact of loss itself. Wordsworth does not therefore attempt to redeem the loss of the past in his description of it.

Significantly, Wordsworth establishes his retrospective narrative commentary only after a lyric preamble, a spontaneous singing in the present tense. It is as if the force of the song itself demands explanation:

> Thus far, O Friend! did I, not used to make
> A present joy the matter of my Song,
> Pour out, that day, my soul in measur'd strains
> Even in the very words which I have here
> Recorded: to the open fields I told
> A prophecy: poetic numbers came
> Spontaneously.
>
> 1805 (I, 55-61)[1]

The poem opens with a "now" and then moves to a more immediate "now" in order that the poet, through retrospective narrative commentary, may re-define a past experience as a present act of telling. Such a sequential arrangement of statements at the very beginning of the poem reveals the priority of present to past, the immediate <u>now</u> to the

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[1]All quotations from <u>The Prelude</u> are from the de Selincourt edition, revised H. Darbishire (Oxford, 1959).

reflective then. The rehearsal of past time and past events functions, in one respect at least, to unfold and interrogate the elusive mystery of a moment of "present joy," a moment which has been lost as fact, but which may be recalled by present speech. Therefore, Wordsworth's narrative history assumes the form of a letter to Coleridge. A letter is an active gesture, both a plea and a questioning, which attempts to reveal one's present condition, one's origins and teleology, in the shape of an encounter between one human voice and its auditor.

Just as Dante's memory of his past journey begins with a dramatic encounter with Virgil (Dante cries out "miserere di me" in the present tense), so Wordsworth's recollective narration grows out of a dramatic confrontation. The poet confronts his present, immediate feelings. The thematic scope of The Prelude is not historical in the sense that Wordsworth is recording the conditions which lead, or have led, him to a moment of "present joy." Rather, "present joy" is given as dramatic fact and what follows may be seen as an intensive interrogation of what the fact of poetic power might signify. It turns out that the moment of intense and spontaneous lyricism, though the occasion and reflection of "joy," engenders as well a paralytic doubt and uncertainty. Essentially Wordsworth asks, "Is this the sign of prophetic power?" In fact, Wordsworth is not at all certain of either his power to

sing, or what the proper subject matter for his song shall be. Wordsworth summarizes his ambivalent feelings in a language of intense, almost heroic, uncertainty:

> This is my lot; for either still I find
> Some imperfection in the chosen theme,
> Or see of absolute accomplishment
> Much wanting, so much wanting, in myself,
> That I recoil and droop, and seek repose
> In listlessness from vain perplexity,
> Unprofitably travelling toward the grave,
> Like a false steward who hath much received
> And renders nothing back.
> (I, 261-268)

The image of the "false steward" recalls Christ's parable of "that faithful and wise steward" of whom much is required. "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more." (Luke 12:41-48.) Quite traditionally, Wordsworth associates poetic power with revelation of divine power and with the concomitant moral notion of stewardship or responsibility to the fulfillment of that power (although here as elsewhere, the Wordsworthian notion of the "divine" is not merely a more naturalistic repetition of the Christian notion of divinity).

The rhetorical question which interrupts this summary of Wordsworth's present spiritual dejection, "Was it for this/ That one, the fairest of all rivers . . . sent a voice/ That flowed along my dreams?" functions dramatically to suggest that in some way personal recollection may fulfill the demands of poetic responsibility; the river in question is the Derwent, the actual river beside

which Wordsworth grew up. But the language used to describe the river sets up a complex series of resonances; its cadences echo Milton's epic questions, its position as invocation to introduce the epic narrative carries with it a freight of association (including the river Alpheus and "Siloa's brook that flowed/ Fast by the oracle of God . . ."). Most importantly, the use of the image combines a convention of epic rhetoric with a particular and personal, historical reference. The invocation to the Derwent launches Wordsworth's biographical account, but in a specifically epic tonality, as if only the epic voice and no other will express with justice the nature of the present crisis.

At this point in The Prelude Wordsworth has not yet begun to explain fully the reasons which might account for his making personal recollection the subject matter of his poem. Instead he moves directly to the business of recollecting, interrupting the process only long enough to assert by incantory and vocative statements, that his subject matter, in and of itself, demands the tone of epic praise. For example, the first recollection of Book I begins:

> Ere I had told
> Ten birth-days, when among the mountain slopes
> Frost, and the breath of frosty wind, had snapped
> The last autumnal crocus, 'twas my joy
> With store of springes o'er my shoulder hung
> To range the open heights where woodcocks run
> Along the smooth green turf.
> (I, 306-312)

The recollection moves directly, with no bridge from the

narrative of past event to present voice, into a section of invocation which we recognize as displaying Wordsworth's strongest voice; the lines echo the language of the Bible, the phrasing and the cadence of Miltonic "grand style":

> Dust as we are, the immortal spirit grows
> Like harmony in music; there is a dark
> Inscrutable workmanship that reconciles
> Discordant elements, makes them cling together
> In one society.
>
> (I, 340-344)

Wordsworth repeats the antiphonal exchange of specific recollection and epic invocation, in exactly the same way, three times during the remainder of Book I. Towards the end of the Book, Wordsworth again addresses Coleridge directly, indicating that throughout the whole process he was distinctly aware that his meditations were not particularly private, but always aimed towards evoking a sense of the epic proportions of his theme in an audience; he was particularly concerned that Coleridge, as epic audience, understand his intentions, and he carefully tries to explain these, although in a tone which is remarkable:

> . . . my hope has been, that I might fetch
> Invigorating thoughts from former years;
> Might fix the wavering balance of my mind,
> And haply meet reproaches too, whose power
> May spur me on, in manhood now mature,
> To honourable toil. Yet should these hopes
> Prove vain, and thus should neither I be taught
> To understand myself, nor thou to know
> With better knowledge how the heart was framed
> Of him thou lovest.
>
> (I, 620-629)

Wordsworth sees the act of recollection as a means of resolving the poetic crisis which he senses himself to be

in; note, however, Wordsworth's intuition that the resolution of crisis will involve both the act of remembering and the expression of the act, the letting Coleridge know what these recollections are all about. In other words, the address to Coleridge asserts the necessity of recollection as a process of language, a special act of naming; the task is to capture "those lovely forms . . . that . . . make remotest infancy/ A visible scene, on which the sun is shining" in a language and for an audience. Coleridge's presence in the poem is therefore crucial; it testifies to Wordsworth's intention of re-presenting past experience as language, specifically, as language of the highest sort--epic utterance. What is curious is Wordsworth's uncertainty about whether he can accomplish his task. He casts his statement of intention in a negative way, "Yet should these hopes [of writing a poem of epic proportions]/ Prove vain . . ." From the context it seems unlikely that Wordsworth is here merely following the epic convention of affected modesty; rather he asserts a real doubt about the sufficiency of language itself to accomplish the task.

The final paragraph of Book I leaves the problem quite open and although Wordsworth's tone of sweet reason here is disarming it is also probably duplicitous. Wordsworth seems to console himself with the notion that, at least, he has found a theme about which he feels sure he can talk, and, more importantly, which, by the very fact of

its appearance, seems "spontaneously" inspired:

> One end at least hath been attained; my mind
> Hath been revived, and if this genial mood
> Desert me not, forthwith shall be brought down
> Through later years the story of my life.
> The road lies plain before me;--'tis a theme
> Single and of determined bounds; and hence
> I choose it rather at this time, than work
> Of ampler or more varied argument,
> Where I might be discomfited and lost:
> And certain hopes are with me, that to thee
> This labour will be welcome, honoured Friend!
> (I, 636-646)

We know from biographical (and bibliographical) evidence that in the process of writing The Prelude Wordsworth's theme of "single and of determined bounds" rather exceeded his expectations in its demands of amplitude.[2]

As I have noted before, prevalent critical opinion infers that Wordsworth's retrospective mode of narration (that is, making recollection the matter of his poem) implies a fairly uncomplicated nostalgia for the Edenic felicities of childhood. But the point is a troublesome one, precisely because Wordsworth's attitude towards childhood was highly complex and, in places, consciously ambivalent. As a structural focus in his poetry, childhood, although often considered in dimensions of psychological reality, is nevertheless also used symbolically to express a dualistic attitude towards nature. At one point for example in

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[2]See de Selincourt's introduction (particularly sections 2-5) for a discussion. The Prelude (Oxford, 1959).

The Prelude Wordsworth states explicitly that nature played a double role in his development: "Fair seed time had my soul, and I grew up/ Fostered alike by beauty and by fear." But the point is that the nature (and more importantly the remembered relationship with nature) which gives rise to the epic tone of The Prelude is not the nature associated with conventional, pastoral Edenic settings.

Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality" would be a relevant example to consider in detail because here Wordsworth contrasts two natures which are radically different in kind. The natural setting of the "Ode" is rural enough, but oddly reminiscent of eighteenth century nature; that is, allegory sprayed with a coat of green enamel. The setting of the "Ode" is conventional, general, and unparticularized:

> While earth herself is adorning,
> This sweet May-morning,
> And the children are culling
> On every side
> In a thousand valleys far and wide
> Fresh flowers.

This looks far more like the distant prospect of Eton College:

> Ah happy hills, ah pleasing shade,
> Ah fields beloved in vain,
> Where once my careless childhood strayed,
> A stranger yet to pain!
> I feel the gales, that from ye blow,
> A momentary bliss bestow,
> As waving fresh their gladsome wing,
> My weary soul they seem to soothe,
> And, redolent of joy and youth,
> To breathe a second spring.
>
> Thomas Gray, "Ode: on the Distant Prospect of Eton College"

It looks hardly at all like the nature described in the climatic passages of The Prelude, the setting we have come to consider Wordsworth's characteristic landscape.

The contrast between the way nature is represented in the "Ode" and Wordsworth's characteristic landscapes has been generally ignored by critics because the tendency has been to read the "Ode" as a meditation about the poet's "loss of vision," without considering the natural setting as a dramatic rendition of that loss. At the risk of belaboring the point, it seems to me that nature has been left unparticularized in the "Ode" for an important dramatic reason: what the speaker sees in the poem dramatically enforces his statement that he can't see very well.

In the "Ode," Wordsworth also shifts from his characteristic manner of describing the external scene as a kind of blurred co-ordinate of his own mental landscape. Wordsworth's fundamental strategy in "Tintern Abbey," for example, is systematically to blur the distinction between the object of perception and the mind that perceives:

> --Once again
> Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,
> That on a wild secluded scene impress
> Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect
> The landscape with the quiet of the sky.

The cliffs, strictly perceived as natural objects, connect earth and sky. But Wordsworth packs a long and tricky subordinate clause between the described grammatical subject (cliffs) and the grammatical object (landscape and

sky). Strictly speaking, the landscape as object of perception is the wild secluded scene. But the curiously literal impact of the verb "impress" suggests that the wild secluded scene is absorbed into the mind of the viewer in a very real and plastic way. Because the description of the cliffs is interrupted long enough to introduce the suggestion that the perceiving mind has absorbed the natural objects of perception, by the time the final clause is reached the verb "connect" could almost take the "I" of the perceiver as its legitimate subject; this introduces the subtle possibility that not only the cliffs, but also the "thoughts of more deep seclusion," act as the agents which connect the earth with the quiet of the sky.

The central thematic situation of the "Ode," the poet's lost sense of unity with the objects of nature, is established and developed by a manner of description which keeps the speaker and the surrounding objects of sight in sharp antithetic separation. Three sets of extended antitheses develop through the "Ode"; antipodal metaphors of light and darkness, time divided between the "then" and the "now," and, finally, sharp oppositions of celestial and terrestrial phenomena. In his essay on the "Ode," Cleanth Brooks concentrates on these "paradoxical" juxtapositions of imagery and notes "Wordsworth is about the poet's business here, and not trying to inculcate anything.

Instead, he is trying to dramatize the changing interrelations which determine the major imagery."[3]

Professor Brooks, however, misses Wordsworth's strategic aims, the larger context in which these juxtapositions function in the poem. When Brooks states, "I can make no such claim for the precision of Wordsworth's treatment of the 'resolution,' the recovery. . . . I feel the solution is asserted rather than dramatized,"[4] the trouble here is less with the poet than with the professor, who thinks he is still reading John Donne. The theme of a metaphysical poem emerges directly out of the ironic pressures exerted by the metaphorical action of the poem. The strains between image and theme, vehicle and tenor, in short, the conscious pressure of conceit, of such a poem are often powerfully dramatic; but the success of metaphysical conceit is often only a step away from explosive chaos, as when the tears of Crashaw's "Weeper" fly upwards and "Heav'n's bosom drinks the gentle stream."

The "Ode," understandably enough, operates in a way quite different from the metaphysical poem. The "Ode" does not resolve directly out of the interrelations of its images, from stylistic dexterity and manipulation, but as a result of a primary shift in the poet's attitude toward the

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[3]"Wordsworth and the Paradox of the Imagination," in The Well-Wrought Urn (New York, 1947), p. 127.

[4]Ibid., p. 158.

objects of his creation; a change in attitude which ironically undercuts the opening situation of the poem. The expressed, explicit nostalgia for the celestial light of childhood is a kind of dramatic facade behind which stands the deeper and more pervasive nostalgia of the poem. This latter nostalgia becomes apparent only through the ironic attitude directed against the former.

Consider the tone in which the speaker treats his present condition. He views the world "in the light of common day," and in a nostalgic, elegiac mood. This mood is, however, directed towards a phenomenon that has a habit of appearing and disappearing in a remarkably arbitrary way. The celestial light once "apparelled" the common objects of nature; the use of the word "apparelled" suggests that the light is something donated to the object, the way a garment may be donated to a person, and, like a garment, the light has a habit of disappearing. Despite the speaker's lament of the loss, the way in which the light goes enforces its quality of unreality; this light seems something of a fabrication (perhaps even a cut off the bolt which clothed a very naked emperor). At any rate, the statement of loss is so flat and bald in stanza I that one must wonder whether the speaker quite knows what he has lost. What the earth <u>was</u> is dramatically important only as a pointer to what <u>is</u>: the speaker's present separation from the objects of nature. "The rainbow comes and goes" and the poet could not care

less. It would seem that if Wordsworth were really consistantly developing dramatic interrelations of his images, nostalgia for the object functions ironically in the "Ode," only as a way to widen the gap between the speaker's present condition and his memory of his past condition, not as an attempt to redeem the loss by an immediate evocation.

It has been pointed out that the poet does not actually see the pastoral festivities which surround him, but that he hears the sounds of joy. Professor Brooks reads this as a "very cunning touch. . . . The poet has lamented the passing of a glory from the earth. But he can . . . at least hear the mirth of the blessed creatures."[5] But to consider the modulation from images of sight to images of sound as a way of ironically enforcing the original nostalgic lament for the lost glory seems to me to miss the point. The poet is indeed being ironic, but with the purpose of undercutting the original description of his situation and the original dramatic conflict.

The movement from sight to sound begins in the prevalent tone and manner of the "Ode's" pastoral descriptions:

> Now, while the birds thus sing a joyous song,
> And, while the young lambs bound
> As to the tabor's sound,
> To me alone there came a thought of grief:

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[5] Ibid., p. 134.

but then the movement suddenly shifts into an entirely new poetic gear:

> A timely utterance gave that thought relief,
> And I again am strong:
> The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep;
> No more shall grief of mine the season wrong;
> I hear the Echoes through the mountains throng,
> The winds come to me from fields of sleep.

Professor Brooks ignores these lines in his explication of the poem, mainly because the imagery refuses to function the way the new criticism would like it to. The sounding cataract and the winds blowing from the fields of sleep suddenly appear in the conventional, elegiac green of the May-scene as echoes from a totally different world. Notice, however, that the visual images are, strictly speaking, "utterances," either of the poet himself, or more importantly sounds from a landscape which Wordsworth characteristically apprehends not as luminous, but as resonant. This sort of intrusion on the description of the landscape of the "Ode" prepares for the poem's resolution by introducing the possibility that the nostalgic lament for celestial light is only the initial, apparent conflict in the poem. The cataract image calls the initial conflict between celestial and earthly light into question by adding a dimension of a radically different sort into the poem.

Before we consider the "resolution" stanza in detail, let us briefly examine Wordsworth's use of the notorious Platonic myth of anamnesis in the "Ode." Despite his own admonition (in a note dictated to Isabella Fenwick)

that the notion of anamnesis is "too shadowy . . . to be recommended to faith" and that he only used the notion for his purposes as a poet," Wordsworth's supposed Platonism in the "Ode" has engendered reams of critical speculation about whether or not Wordsworth <u>really</u> believed in the transmigration of souls.[6] One might safely guess that Wordsworth took the notion about as seriously as Plato did (which is to say, not very). But that does not answer why the notion figures so obviously in the "Ode," or in the <u>Meno</u> for that matter. It might be well to look at the notion as it appears in Plato, before we speculate on Wordsworth's use of the idea.

The <u>Meno</u>, a masterpiece of dramatic indirection, concerns itself with the question of whether virtue can be learned. (The fact that Anytos, one of the auditors in the dialogue, later appears as one of the accusers at Socrates' trial and denounces him suggests in itself that the dramatic situation of the <u>Meno</u> offers ironic comment on the philosophical question [can virtue be learned?] at stake.) In the course of the dialogue, Socrates introduces the notion advanced by divines and poets that

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[6]For a summary of some of the speculative investigations concerning Wordsworth's "Platonism" in the "Ode," see Thomas M. Raysor, "The Themes of Immortality and Natural Piety in Wordsworth's Immortality Ode," <u>PMLA</u>, LXIX (Sept., 1954), 861-875. See also George W. Meyer, "A Note on the Sources and Symbolism of the Intimations Ode," <u>Tulane Studies in English</u>, III (1952), 33-45.

> the soul of man is immortal, and at one time has an end which is called dying, and at another time is born again, but is never destroyed. And the moral is that a man ought to live always in perfect holiness.
>
> (Jowett translation, 81b.)

Surely Socrates is ironic rather than logical when he asks Meno to consider the fable and "see whether their (the divines') words are true." The moral Socrates draws from the fable is as blatant a piece of chop-logic as can be found--especially since a few lines later Socrates infers from this the central thesis of the dialogue that "all inquiry and all learning is but recollection."

If we view the argument of the Meno as dramatic rather than logical, and there seems some reason to do so, then the notion that "all learning is but recollection" functions as a kind of peripeteia. Socrates, in the dilemma of trying to describe the nature of virtue to two rather treacherous and pompous Thessalians, proceeds by the only route available to the wise dialectician; he doesn't try to convince them of anything, he only tries to shock and surprise them. The curious mathematical demonstration Socrates performs, proving that the untutored boy "remembers" certain geometrical principles he didn't previously know, really demonstrates the phenomenon we call "insight." The notion of recollection is used to define metaphorically the notion of insight; that mysterious process of mind that goes beyond the realm of perception of particulars and somehow dredges up a sense of transcendent generalities. More needs

to be said about the dramatic form by which this process is represented in the Meno; for our purposes, however, the point is that the term "recollection" is used as a metaphor by Socrates to convey the sense of transcendence and timelessness which psychologically accompanies the process of insight.

This may have seemed a far-fetched detour, but I would argue that the anamnesis myth is used in Wordsworth's "Ode" for a similar kind of metaphorical purpose as in the Meno. Wordsworth is trying in a poetic-dramatic language to represent the phenomenon of insight and a range of attendant psychological processes. Whatever the "Ode" intimates of immortality it does so by dramatically enacting the process of the mind averted from the direct apprehension of external experience, and turned towards the forms and dimensions of its own internal experiences. The central psychological insight of the "Ode" is that the sense of immortality arises from the process which accompanies the nostalgia for the childlike sensuous apprehension of the external world. The "remembered" objects of the lost world exist in the "Ode" only to set the process dramatically in motion.

Let us now consider the well-known "resolution" stanza of the "Ode" to see how Wordsworth intimates the nature of the immortality he is interested in.

Hence in a season of calm weather
Though inland far we be,
Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither
Can in a moment travel hither
And see the children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

The image of immortality is introduced in purely visual terms ("our souls have sight of that immortal sea"); this is a curious kind of sight, however, actually a metaphor for the act of remembering childhood. But the final, brilliant knotting together of the image depends upon the sonorous force of "and hear the mighty waters rolling evermore." Through a collapsing of vehicle and tenor in the image (is it "we" or "souls" which do the hearing?), the waters of immortality manifest themselves visually to our souls, but finally only as sound to ourselves.[7] A number of critics have suggested that this image exemplifies what Freud has described as the "oceanic sense," but whatever the psychoanalytic dimensions of Wordsworth's "roaring water" images are, their metaphysical implications are clear enough. Sounding waters and, in a particular case of cataracts, their visual configurations are Wordsworth's characteristic natural images used to suggest symbolically the divine beyond the natural; it is this image which casts a haze over the natural object as a prelude to a sense of

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[7]See W. K. Wimsatt's important discussion of this image in "Romantic Nature Imagery," The Verbal Icon (New York, 1954), p. 114 ff.

imminent revelation.

In the "resolution" image Wordsworth describes only the process by which immortality is intimated. The children are never directly seen, only viewed by a kind of insight. The structure of the image most powerfully conveys the sense that the children are seen, by subsuming the images of sight to images of space and sound. Direct apprehension of "immortal" objects remains the hidden secondary term in the poem's resolution image and praise in the "Ode" is reserved for the sense that searches for revelation through the objects of nature. This suggests that in the "Ode" Wordsworth's primary nostalgia for the natural object gives way to a deeper, more pervasive nostalgia, grounded in a basic mistrust of his own ability to apprehend the "celestial light," the divine origin of the natural object, by direct sensual perception. Wordsworth attempts to resolve the dilemma in the "Ode" by making the very ambivalence he feels for the natural object the dramatic material for his poem. He raises "songs of thanks and praise . . . for those obstinate questionings/ Of sense and outward things,/ Fallings from us, vanishings.", because this ambivalence toward the natural object fosters the dramatic development of the "Ode" through the shift from images of sight to images of insight as a means to apprehending the immortal within the mortal. On the psychological level, the object remembered does exist in a sort

of timeless present. But, given Wordsworth's metaphysical commitment, the tyranny of the object cannot be entirely circumvented by the language of poetry. The logos in the objects of perception is apprehended by Wordsworth through the complicated process of recollection and not directly revealed as inhering to the object itself. But the experience becomes realized through poetry; a language which represents the world as word, but which depends on the natural object as the source and final referent for this representation.[8]

To refer these observations back to The Prelude: in the "Ode," retrospection is the key mode of vision, not because the poet is trying to recall a lost state of Edenic felicity, but because retrospection is a self-affirming act of consciousness. The Prelude is an epic in praise of memory, because memory is the act of trying to apprehend the totality of all existence as consciousness; in recollection the subject perceiving and the object perceived exist concomitantly as objects of consciousness.

We can now consider the particular kinds of recollected experiences in The Prelude which Wordsworth claims were of prime importance in his spiritual development. The particular metaphor Wordsworth uses to describe these

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[8]Compare Paul de Man's "Structure intentionelle de l'image romantique," in Revue International de Philosophie, No. 51, 1960.

experiences--"spots of time"--with its emphasis on the physicality rather than the temporality of the experience suggests clearly that Wordsworth is concentrating on the experience as it exists in the inward dimension of recollection. Wordsworth gives two specific examples of "spots of time" in Book XII of The Prelude; because of the distinctive quality of these examples, their language of description, and the particular constellations of their imagery, we realize that "spots of time" experiences exist throughout the poem, although not identified as such.[9] In fact, a discussion of the narrative structure of The Prelude must take into account that the poem narrates two kinds of history, a chronicle of temporal experiences and a history of "spots of time" experiences.

With regard to the "spots of time," Wordsworth is most explicit in emphasizing their significance:

> There are in our existence spots of time,
> That with distinct pre-eminence retain
> A renovating virtue, whence, depressed
> By false opinion and contentious thought,
> Or aught of heavier or more deadly weight,
> In trivial occupations, and the round
> Of ordinary intercourse, our minds
> Are nourished and invisibly repaired.
> (XII, 208-215)

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[9]I am much indebted to an article by Jonathon Bishop, "Wordsworth and the 'Spots of Time,'" in ELH, XXVI (March, 1959), for confirming my belief that the primary organization of The Prelude is a-historical. Mr. Bishop, although concentrating on the psychological content and configuration of Wordsworth's memories, also points out that they represent a pattern of structural organization in the poem which has little, if anything, to do with "development" in its ordinary use as a temporal concept.

"Spots of time" are in some way directly opposed to "ordinary" historical experience. It is quite clear that the "renovating virtue" does not inhere within the experience itself, or in the fact that it is a diversion from "ordinary" experience; Wordsworth refers only to some quality of the experience which, because it has the power to make itself felt later on, makes it important. Something about the experience raises it to a level which clearly distinguishes it <u>in kind</u> from mundane perceptions. (Here I quote from the 1805 version of the poem, because as is often the case in Wordsworth's meditative passages, the language is slightly more excursive and slightly less obscure:)

> This efficacious spirit chiefly lurks
> Among those passages of life in which
> We have the deepest feeling that the mind
> Is lord and master, and that outward sense
> Is but obedient servant to her will.
> (1805, XI, 269-272)

Wordsworth indicates that the relevance of the experience is totally inward; it testifies to the primacy of inward consciousness (I avoid the term "imagination" on purpose) over outward perception. As with all inward experience, however, it must have its origin in some relational, or perceptual, act of outward experience. Let us consider now what kind of experience it is which, as distinguished from "ordinary" experience, can be made over into a "spot of time."

As we have noted before, Wordsworth mentions two specific "spots of time" in Book XII: the boy's coming on

a mouldering gibbet in the bottom land and the subsequent seeing of a country girl making her way up a hillside carrying a pitcher of water; and the wait on the crag with the horses. These "spots" are described as actual memories, but hardly as having the quality of nostalgic rumination over the "good old days." As usual with Wordsworth, when he is remembering an experience in an intense way, the memory of its content (although not in the tone of its description) is in an emphatic sense negative, violent to the point of horror, and engendering terror. In purely visual dimensions Wordsworth conveys intensity by reducing the physical space and the physical objects of the scene to starkest particularity, with heavy emphasis on the spatial isolation of objects in the landscape:

> I sate half-sheltered by a naked wall;
> Upon my right hand couched a single sheep,
> Upon my left hand a blasted hawthorn stood;
> With those companions at my side, I watched . . .
> (XII, 299-302)

In the Preface to the 1815 edition of his Poems of the Imagination, Wordsworth discusses his curious ability to relate sheer physical observation to the most intense kind of imaginative experience. He is talking about the poem, "There was a boy . . ."; but that poem, published separately as a lyric, is also a "spot of time" experience in The Prelude (V, 364-389) and the poet's remarks on the poem are relevant to our discussion. Wordsworth notes:

> . . . guided by one of my own primary consciousnesses, I have represented a commutation and transfer of internal feelings, co-operating with external accidents, to plant, for immortality, images of sound and sight, in the celestial soil of the Imagination. The Boy, there introduced, is listening, with something of a feverish and restless anxiety, for the recurrence of the riotous sounds which he had previously excited; and, at the moment when the intenseness of his mind is beginning to remit, he is surprised into a perception of the solemn and tranquilizing images which the Poem describes.[10]

This describes the characteristic psychological pattern of perception in the "spot of time" experience; a moment of the most intense kind of observation, accompanied by emotions of restlessness and anxiety, followed by a momentary relaxation, and, finally, a subsequent heightening and re-apprehension of the experience in an extra-ordinary, inward intensity. In the "spot of time," the wait on the crag with the horses, Wordsworth describes himself as "feverish, and tired, and restless." We have already remarked the intensity of his physical observation of the scene. But the synaptic interruption (the movement from outward perceptions to the remission of intense observation), in this scene is most curious: Wordsworth simply interrupts the narrative description of the scene, to report that at the same time his father died; he then associates the impression of the scene on the crag with the memory of his

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[10]Quoted by de Selincourt in his edition of The Prelude, p. 547.

father's death and goes on to praise the total impression as evidence "down to this very time" (that is, the time of writing The Prelude), of the "workings of my spirit," which are the "renovating virtue."

The question is: how can this kind of profoundly negative, terrific experience engender what Wordsworth describes, in his unfortunately pompous critical diction, as "solemn and tranquilizing images"? As Jonathon Bishop suggests in his study, seen in psycho-analytic way, the "spots of time" experiences are colored by profound feelings of guilt, the external landscape, in this case, the landscape of the bleak crag, the single sheep and the blasted hawthorn objectively correlate with the feelings a ten-year-old boy has when his father dies.[11] But we might still consider in a more general way the relationship between the negative tone, the coloration of Wordsworth's intense descriptions and the positive assertions, the most characteristically prophetic pronouncements, which invariably follow such descriptions.

An interruption, a disruptive intrusion on the act of sheer perception is characteristic of all the "spots of time" in The Prelude; in a number of ways, the "spot of time" where the disruptive movement is the report of the death of his father parallels Wordsworth's experience, as

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[11] See Bishop, pp. 56-58.

an adult, of the death of Robespierre in Book X. But I shall consider that connection later. For now I wish mainly to stress the effect of disruption which is particularly evident in the description in Book XII. If we relate the intrusion back to the description of the landscape which preceded it, we realize that the bleakness of tone which marks the description is not merely a Wordsworthian essay into the picturesque; it is much more than an example of the late eighteenth century's predilection for rugged and awesome scenery. It is as if Wordsworth is saying that, by keeping an eye steadily on the object, what follows will be revelation of terrible splendor, but the object itself is only an "external accident." At one point in the great episode of the Simplon Pass in Book VI of The Prelude, Wordsworth interrupts his narrative description with a sudden apostrophe to the "Imagination," which he says is "like an unfathered vapour that enwraps/ At once, some lonely traveller," an interruption which appears on the scene rather like the account of his father's death which interrupts the narrative description of the lonely Wordsworth, as a ten-year-old boy, on his way home fro Christmas holidays from boarding school.

In a perfectly serious way, we should consider both interpretations, the apostrophe to the "Imagination" and the report of his father's death, as the same kind of "unfathering," in one direction coloring nature with the

somber grey of mortality, but, at the same time signalling a sense of separation from nature which indicates the eternal that is out of nature, beyond generation; the eternal is the realm of the insubstantial and the unfathered. All of Wordsworth's distinctions between subject and object, between mind and nature, rest finally on a dichotomy between the mutable and the eternal which is fundamentally Platonic, a distinction between object as object and object as idea. Recall Plato's cosmology in the Timaeus:

> When the father who had begotten [the world] saw it set in motion and alive, a shrine brought into being for the everlasting gods, he rejoiced and being well pleased he took thought to make it yet more like its pattern. So as that pattern is the Living Being that is forever existent, he sought to make the universe also like it, so far as it might be, in that respect. Now the nature of that Living Being was eternal, and this character it was impossible to confer in full completeness on the generated thing.
>
> (Cornford translation)

The real quest of The Prelude might be considered as a search for the threshhold of the mutable and the divine; certainly Plato's image of nature as "a shrine brought into being for the everlasting gods" seems similar enough to Wordsworth's view of nature. This is not, however, to succor the common misapprehension of Wordsworth as a pantheist; wherever His home, God does not dwell in nature. Rather, Wordsworth's search was based on his intuition that a certain mode of perceiving nature will provide hints of the divine, because these modes of perception reveal a consciousness which is beyond the nature of generation.

The gibbet scene, the first "spot of time" in Book XII, pursues the characteristic pattern of observation-interruption-impending revelation, but also imposes on that pattern a type of narration which seems at first to be purely descriptive; we notice, however, abrupt changes in the tonality of the narration. Here, again, the emotion which attends the description of the physical scene is fear and awe; further, the movement towards the scene is an actual descent:

> Some mischance
> Disjoined me from my comrade; and, through fear
> Dismounting, down the rough and stony moor
> I led my horse, and, stumbling on, at length
> Came to a bottom.
> (XII, 231-235)

What follows is the image of the gibbet and "on the turf . . . some unknown hand had carved the murderer's name." The sudden image of the writing carries, in itself, something of the effect of apocalyptic horror like an echo of "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin" (Daniel, 5:25), written on the wall of Belshazzar's feast-house. Wordsworth stresses the unnaturalness of the writing by explaining a local superstition, which has the effect of keeping ordinary nature physically away:

> By superstition of the neighborhood,
> The grass is cleared away, and to this hour
> The characters are fresh and visible.
> (XII, 243-245)

In a movement as sudden as the shift of images in nightmares, or an Eisenstein <u>montage</u>, this image is replaced by a

description of physical re-ascent and the vision of

> A naked pool that lay beneath the hills,
> The beacon on the summit, and, more near,
> A girl, who bore a pitcher on her head,
> And seemed with difficult steps to force her way
> Against the blowing wind.
> (XII, 249-253)

Wordsworth's disclaimer, "It was in truth/ An ordinary sight" is of course just. In the same way, "Or the pitcher . . . broken at the fountain,/ Or the wheel broken at the cistern? (Ecclesiastes 12:6), are in truth ordinary sights, but Wordsworth's comment only enhances the weirdness of it all. True to pattern, Wordsworth comments on the effect of the scene in a characteristic rhetoric of splendid generality; "Oh! mystery of man, from what depth/ Proceed thy honors" (XII, 272-273).

The tone of the generalization supports the pattern of physical description, the movement from depth to height. The movement, however, cannot be seen as a gradual development from perfectly natural observations to observations of a heightened mystical sensibility; Wordsworth insists on a disruptive suddenness. There is nothing in Wordsworth's tone of description to suggest, say, a more intense Popean deism of the sort; "The surest virtues thus from passions shoot,/ Wild nature's vigor working at the root." (An Essay on Man, pp. 183-184). We should rather recall that first "the grass is cleared away." Then, and only then, does Wordsworth move toward a tonality of revelatory perception.

Wordsworth's suspicion of the tyranny of the bodily eye has been noted often enough; but it might be well to ask whether Wordsworth was striving for a poetic language which ultimately could be independent, not grounded in the physical perception of ordinary objects. The Prelude, at least, seems to search for possible alternatives; as I have tried to characterize it, the pattern of Wordsworth's more profound recollections begins with an utterly straightforward description of the natural scene, often securely anchored in particularity by the announcement of time of day and season.[12] As the description progresses it becomes increasingly less objective and more intense, until it is at some point suddenly disrupted, and Wordsworth launches a peroration of intense abstraction. There is no doubt that the abstraction is, in some sense, grounded in the visual description; but the shift from the language of particular perception to the language of abstraction might seem somehow disconcerting in its willful arbitrariness. It seems to me that the key to the way these disruptive shifts function lies in Wordsworth's own observation about the action of the mind. He recalls, in the critical comment to

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[12]It is worth noting that Wordsworth's introductions to his great descriptive passages are usually more straightforwardly commonplace and off-handed in the 1805, rather than in the posthumous, version of the poem. Compare the two introductions to the Mt. Snowden episode, for example: "In one of these excursions, travelling then/ Through Wales on foot . . ." (1805, XIII, 1-2); "In one of those excursions (may they ne'er/ Fade from remembrance!) through the Northern tracts of Cambria . . ." (1850, XIV, 1-3).

the Boy of Winander poem cited previously, that after a period of intense observation, "His mind [begins] to remit" with the sudden resulting perception of "solemn and tranquilizing" images. Such images, however, arise exactly at the moment when the mind is no longer directly aware of the object of observation. Accompanying the sense of separation from the external object, and partly redeeming the sense of loss, is an equal sense of imminent transcendence. The point, however, is that the two modes of apprehension are mutually exclusive; the sense of one involves a sense of negation of the other.

From Book II of The Prelude, where Wordsworth attempts to deal most discursively with the question of the history of the mind, we know of the depth of his commitment to a naturalistic view of things. There is no doubt that, for Wordsworth, existence, "our Being's earthly progress" comes directly from nature. It has therefore been tempting to endow Wordsworth with an essentially emblematic poetic language; when Wordsworth describes certain natural phenomena, he is really describing the divine-within-life, so the argument runs. But the temptation to associate the Wordsworthian trope of "the correspondent breeze," for example, directly with the whole theological tradition of existence as the incorporation of divine afflatus is simply misleading, because it suggests that Wordsworth's thought and, more importantly, Wordsworth's theory of poetic

language, is analogous to the theory of language implicit in the long history of Christian theology. It suggests that Wordsworth thought and wrote about breezes and gardens in essentially the same way as the Patristic fathers, or the singer of the Canticle attributed to Solomon, or Dante, with only the difference that Wordsworth was somehow diffident about using the word "God."[13] Precisely his insistence on the natural origins of human existence and experience accounts for Wordsworth's scrupulous avoidance of <u>any kind</u> of traditional mythological armatures to support his poetic statements; it also accounts for the logic of his thought, his devotion to an essentially <u>mimetic</u> theory of language, and, ultimately, the crisis of his poetic career.

What Wordsworth calls "the first/ Poetic spirit of our life" (II, 260-261) comes from nature, but in a

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[13] See M. H. Abrams' essay, "The Correspondent Breeze: A Romantic Metaphor," in <u>English Romantic Poets: Modern Essays in Criticism</u>, ed. Abrams, New York, 1960, pp. 37-54. Unfortunately, Professor Abrams' sensitive criticism of the reductionism inherent within the method of archetypal criticism ("Only leave out enough of the qualities that make a poem, or any complex experience, and it can be reduced to an abstract pattern--almost any abstract pattern, including, if that is our inclination, the pattern of the vegetational cycle of death and rebirth") can be applied with equal acuity to his own method of dealing with literature. The trouble with "history of ideas" interpretations of literary texts is that such interpretations too often demand treating an individual expression of a literary theme as if it were <u>only</u> a rhetorical <u>topos</u>, a literary convention which only expresses the "spirit of the age." The "ideas" of one age can be shown historically dependent on the "ideas" of an earlier age, which suggests the continuity of Western history--a comforting notion, but, unfortunately, only an abstraction.

circuitous and rather complex way:

> For feeling has to him [the infant] imparted power
> That through the growing faculties of sense
> Doth like an agent of the one great Mind
> Create, creator and receiver both,
> Working but in alliance with the works
> Which it beholds.
> (II, 255-260)

The syntax is tricky here, but not excessively so: "that" takes "power" as its antecedent, but "power" is nothing more or less than "feeling," a primal sense of unity with nature. Existence, per se, originates as a state where subject and object are indistinguishable:

> No outcast he, bewildered and depressed:
> Along his infant veins are interfused
> The gravitation and the filial bond
> Of nature that connect him with the world.
> (II, 241-244)

The mechanical and organic metaphors ("interfused," "gravitation," "bond") suggest total participation with the natural world, but a participation which is essentially mindless. The fundamental ambiguity of this long passage, in which Wordsworth presents a schematic history of the mind, resides in how "feeling" becomes the creative mind; the mediating term is "the growing faculties of sense." As William Empson has pointed out, "sense" is an extremely rich word in The Prelude and often plays the mediating role in the movement from external observation to internal awareness.[14] One way to grasp the problem would be to

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[14] "Sense in The Prelude," in The Structure of Complex Words, London, 1952, pp. 289-305. Empson is brilliant but perverse; he indicates what is probably the key issue

work backwards; to ask the question: what does the creative mind create out of sense? It tries to re-affirm its sense of the totality of all existence. But because this re-affirmation is now an act of mind, it is only an imitation of simple, unconscious identification with nature.

Thus Wordsworth's larger statements about consciousness and nature always proceed in two directions: first, such statements assert a recollection of intimate identification, and, secondly, announce an awareness of maturity for which Wordsworth makes much more profound claims. The development of consciousness, however, is seen by Wordsworth as a negation of original, primal sense of being; consciousness separates subject from object, because of its ability to distinguish existence external to itself from self-awareness, the sense of existence internal to itself. In this respect, therefore, consciousness testifies to human isolation. Wordsworth comments in a statement of touching directness: "I was left alone/ Seeking the visible world, nor knowing why" (II, 277-278).

Wordsworth's sense of the isolation of consciousness quite overrides any sense of temporal coherence or continuity which the poet might feel. Throughout the

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to an understanding of The Prelude and then with a curious self-consciousness claims that he believes it all nonsense: "Perhaps I am taking a narrow and stupid view, but the idea (of the relationship between sense of perception and inward sense) seems to me to remain pretty unintelligible, however plainly and lengthily it is expressed" (p. 304).

narrative whenever Wordsworth announces an event as occurring at a specific time--and he most characteristically introduces his important recollections with such temporal pronouncements--the sense of specific time becomes quite quickly obliterated by the process of the poet's concentration on defining his state of mind. The past for Wordsworth does not cohere therefore as an orderly succession of events viewed in a coherent temporal perspective; rather moments out of the past organize themselves as material for a rather intricate process of exemplification. The temporal organization of The Prelude is perplexing because the poet's emerging sense of development does not depend on the chronological sequence of the events which the poet uses to exemplify his development. The complications which such an attitude produces may best be seen if we consider those sections of the poem where Wordsworth places himself directly in a context of public historical events.

THE PRELUDE:

HISTORY AS ROMANCE

> Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine? . . .
>
> I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all: Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.
>
> St. Paul to the Corinthians (I Corinthians:14)

II

Books IX and X of the 1805 Prelude are the most overtly historical of the poem. These books describe Wordsworth's stay in France for eight months in 1791-92. The narrative alludes throughout, in the form of an excursive, descriptive commentary, to the political cataclysm of the French Revolution--a subject of no small interest either literary or cultural. Yet in a number of ways Wordsworth's account of revolutionary times in France has seemed less than satisfactory both as poetry and as historical chronicle. Matthew Arnold, a very astute reader and perhaps the first who had available to him the entire Wordsworth canon in something like the order Wordsworth intended, announced his dis-ease about Wordsworth's manner of organizing his poetic statements when he observed:

"Wordsworth classified his poems not according to any commonly received plan of arrangement, but according to a scheme of mental physiology."[15] Arnold's observation on the general arrangement of Wordsworth's poetry may also apply to the manner of arrangement and the narrative strategy of The Prelude itself. Like Arnold, most readers have expressed some misgivings about the formal and structural arrangement of The Prelude and have tried to account for their sense of uncertainty by questioning the logic of Wordsworth's intentions. Wordsworth's changing conceptions of what the proper theme of The Prelude might be, his extended revisions and interruptions in composition, as well as the vagaries of memory, have all been offered up as "reasons" to account for the difficulty in discerning just exactly what the thematic assertions of The Prelude are. All such reasons assume, however, that Wordsworth really wanted to write a chronicle history of the mind. Thus when readers find it hard to navigate Wordsworth's stream of temporality it is because the poet is confused or perverse, or both, about telling time and about recounting the influence of events on his life. Yet it could just as easily be assumed that lack of chronological coherence and a laconic distance in the accounting of certain events in The Prelude might just as well suggest that "clock-time" is

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[15] Preface to Poems of Wordsworth, ed. Arnold (London, 1879), p. xiii.

simply irrelevant to the theme of the "growth of the poet's mind" which Wordsworth claims as the central subject matter of his poem.

Nowhere does the relation between inward development and the narrative of historical events seem more ambiguous and problematic than in those sections of The Prelude devoted to the events of the French Revolution. Clearly Wordsworth was deeply affected by the turmoil of revolutionary hopes and counter-revolutionary disasters in which he participated and which he observed. Clearly also this drama of political hope and retreat from political hope which played itself out in Wordsworth's mind during the 1790's constitutes what might be called the "plot" of Books IX and X of the 1805 Prelude. One standard inference is that this temporal sequence of political and historical events directly caused Wordsworth's famous "moral shock," disillusionment, despair and his ultimate recovery as a natural recluse; further that the temporal sequence of crisis and recovery constitutes the central theme of The Prelude.[16] But if Wordsworth's notion of development were rooted in such a pattern of crisis experience and recovery, why then is the temporal sequence of these events so obscure in the narrative structure of the poem? Quite

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[16]For a summary of opinions concerning the possible dates of Wordsworth's post-revolutionary depression and flirtation with Godwinism see de Selincourt, p. 603.

possibly, when Wordsworth attempts to treat what one recent critic has called the "social dimension" of his theme of development, he proceeds not by laying out what happened in a clear chronological narrative and then commenting retrospectively on the event (although this may appear to be his strategy in certain places, notably in the earlier books of the poem).[17] Rather, when Wordsworth explicates "public" events, he seems quite deliberately to distort those events' "timely" qualities to suggest, precisely, that the temporal aspect of these events had little significance.

Wordsworth begins his narration of his stay in France, describing events as a hasty confusion of locale, by means of a Juvenalian satiric catalogue:

> Through Paris lay my readiest course, and there
> Sojourning a few days, I visited,
> In haste, each spot of old or recent fame,
> The latter chiefly; from the field of Mars
> Down to the suburbs of St. Antony,
> And from Mont Martyr southward to the Dome
> Of Genevieve. In both her clamorous Halls,
> The National Synod and the Jacobins,
> I saw the Revolutionary Power
> Toss like a ship at anchor, rocked by storms;
> The Arcades I traversed, in the Palace huge
> Of Orleans; coasted round and round the line
> Of Tavern, Brothel, Gaming-house, and Shop,
> Great rendezvous of worst and best.
> (IX, 42-55)

In the next verse paragraph Wordsworth, assuming a more characteristically meditative pose, which recalls the mood

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[17] Herbert Lindenberger, On Wordsworth's Prelude (Princeton, 1963).

of meditative passivity just after the opening lines of the poem (I, 60-70), focuses on one particular experience to summarize the impact of his confrontation with moments of "recent fame":

> Where silent zephyrs sported with the dust
> Of the Bastille, I sate in the open sun,
> And from the rubbish gathered up a stone,
> And pocketed the relic, in the guise
> Of an enthusiast; yet, in honest truth
> I looked for something that I could not find,
> Affecting more emotion than I felt.
> (IX, 67-73)

In short, Wordsworth apprehends recent history as a handful of dust, as a stony desolation open to the sunlight. His affectation of emotion, or lack of it, notwithstanding, the recollected image is one of tranquillity, a response which is similar to the kind of consoling admonition Wordsworth feels in the presence of the Leech-gatherer ("Resolution and Independence," 106-112). Throughout the opening section of the narrative in France, Wordsworth remains an unequivocally passive observer, a stance which is intensified by a strikingly elaborate image of hermetic enclosure:

> Amused and satisfied, I scarcely felt
> The shock of these concussions, unconcerned,
> Tranquil, almost, and careless as a flower
> Glassed in a Green-house, or a Parlour shrub
> When every bush and tree, the country through,
> Is shaking to the roots.
> (1805, IX, 86-91)

To be sure, the image of organic tranquillity is meant in part at least to contrast with Wordsworth's subsequent "involvement" with the revolutionary cause.

Yet, paradoxically, the narrative of Wordsworth's

involvement with revolutionary causes observes a consistently, dream-like tone of disengagement. The landscape of France, described in Books IX and X, is the most conventionally pastoral of the entire Prelude and Beaupuy, who is, if anyone, the "hero" of this particular portion of the narrative, assumes heroic stature, not so much because of his perfervid republican sentiments, but rather because he is described in terms from the chivalric romance of Tasso of Spenser. Wordsworth quite explicitly translates Beaupuy from an historical being into a chivalric hero:

> Among the band of Officers was one,
> Already hinted at, of another mould---
> A patriot, thence rejected by the rest,
> And with an oriental loathing spurned,
> As of a different caste. A meeker man
> Than this lived never, nor a more benign,
> Meek though enthusiastic. Injuries
> Made him more gracious, and his nature then
> Did breathe its sweetness out most sensibly,
> As aromatic flowers on Alpine turf,
> When foot hath crushed them. He through the events
> Of that great change wandered in perfect faith,
> As through a book, an old romance, or tale
> Of Fairy, or some dream of actions wrought
> Behind the summer clouds.
>
> (IX, 288-302)

In just the way he metamorphoses the historical Beaupuy to a figura, a moral type, Wordsworth tries to lend coherence to the historical flow of events, not by narrating the amplitude, or the richness, or the texture of what actually happened, but rather by attempting to see in the present events a recapitulation of prototypical situations from ancient history, thus raising actual political events to the status of exemplary myths. Therefore, Wordsworth's

narrative of his political involvement becomes a catalogue of qualitative discernments, a series of commitments to abstractions. He sees in political events the hope for fulfillment of qualitative ideals, "liberty," "self-sacrifice," and the like. Wordsworth describes political events not as events but as incarnations of ideals and his history is, therefore, moral history in the vein of Plutarch's account of Roman history.

It is not surprising that Wordsworth sees in the atmosphere of France the enchanted groves and forests of Renaissance romance-epics. Just as the Fairie Queen is the allegory of justice coming to England under Elizabeth and Tasso's Gerusalemma Liberata is an allegory of Christian rectitude, so in Book IX of The Prelude the seeming imminentness of liberty coming into being in France reminds Wordsworth of this older tradition of perceiving allegorical order in historical events. Later in his life Wordsworth was to make the cryptic remark that "[history] enslaves the fancy,"[18] but Book IX provides a perfect example of how Wordsworth's dream of liberty finds narrative form either as a catalogue of abstractions or as a romantic atmosphere, as a "wander[ing] in perfect faith,/ As through a Book, an old romance, or tale/ Of Fairy, or some dream of actions wrought/ Behind the summer clouds." At one point in the narrative Wordsworth reveals exactly the movement from

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[18] Critical Opinions of William Wordsworth, ed. M. L. Peacock, Jr. (Baltimore, 1950), p. 51.

meditation on abstract ideals (the occasion is a conversation with Beaupuy) to the realization of these ideals not in events but in atmosphere.

> Along that very Loire, with festal mirth
> Resounding at all hours, and innocent yet
> Of civil slaughter, was our frequent walk;
> Or in wide forests of continuous shade,
> Lofty and over-arched, with open space
> Beneath the trees, clear footing many a mile--
> A solemn region. Oft amid those haunts,
> From earnest dialogues I slipped in thought,
> And let remembrance steal to other times,
> When, o'er those interwoven roots, moss-clad,
> And smooth as marble or a waveless sea,
> Some Hermit, from his cell forth-strayed, might pace
> In sylvan meditation undisturbed;
> As on the pavement of a Gothic church
> Walks a lone Monk, when service hath expired,
> In peace and silence. But if e'er was heard,--
> Heard, though unseen,--a devious traveller,
> Retiring or approaching from afar
> With speed and echoes loud of trampling hoofs
> From the hard floor reverberated, then
> It was Angelica thundering through the woods
> Upon her palfrey, or that gentle maid
> Erminia, fugitive as fair as she.
> Sometimes methought I saw a pair of knights
> Joust underneath the trees, that as in storm
> Rocked high above their heads; anon, the din
> Of boisterous merriment, and music's roar,
> In sudden proclamation, burst from haunt
> Of Satyrs in some viewless glade, with dance
> Rejoicing o'er a female in the midst.
> A mortal beauty, their unhappy thrall.
> The width of those huge forests, unto me
> A novel scene, did often in this way
> Master my fancy while I wandered on
> With that revered companion.
>
> (IX, 431-465)

I have quoted at length because the passage is strangely misleading and deceptive. It might seem at first that the passage, which is essentially a digression commenting on the <u>feeling</u> Wordsworth's conversations with Beaupuy evoked in him, is really a response to woodsy locale. After all,

to a literary sensibility any dim forest might well evoke the topic of selve oscure. But the associations, which Wordsworth with retrospective emphasis considers fanciful, are particularly to the dark forests of Renaissance romance. In the association Wordsworth makes clear that his own feelings about the time were a series of mythic expectations of historical fulfillment, much like those expectations of historical fulfillment which are the mythic armatures of Renaissance romance. The passage, then, defines the nature of Wordsworth's involvement with the French revolutionary cause: his was the involvement of the poet-dreamer. Like Spenser, Wordsworth's quest was for historical fulfillment, the coming into being of some ideal pattern of order. Such expectations account for the "romance" atmosphere which pervades so much of Book IX of The Prelude.

The remainder of Wordsworth's narrative of France concerns itself with the destruction of Wordsworth's "dream of actions wrought/ Behind the summer clouds." The story of Vaudrecour and Julia represents Wordsworth's failure in the mode of romance narrative. The Vaudrecour and Julia episode functions as an exemplary tale, much like innumerable encapsulated narrative episodes in Spenser and Ariosto. Through the use of this tale Wordsworth tries to exemplify the meaning of the times. In other words, one typical story (whether a private allegory or not) shall reveal the significant shape of myriad, confusing, actual events:

> From this height I shall not stoop
> To humbler matter that detained us oft
> In thought or conversation, public acts,
> And public persons, . . .
> But I might here, instead, repeat a tale,
> Told by my Patriot friend, of sad events,
> That prove to what low depth had struck the roots,
> How widely spread the boughs, of that old tree
> Which, as a deadly mischief, and a foul
> And black dishonour, France was weary of.
> (IX, 541-552)

This elaborate introduction reveals more of Wordsworth's thematic and moral intentions than the episode itself. The cavalier abruptness with which Wordsworth disposes of Vaudrecour's love-child at the end of the episode ("his young child/ Which after a short time by some mistake/ Or indiscretion of the Father, died." [1805, IX, 905-908]) reveals only an extremity of badness which de Selincourt observes is "difficult to parallel in our literature."[19]

Whatever its intrinsic inferiority, the Vaudrecour and Julia episode, exemplifies one strategy Wordsworth used, however unsuccessfully, in an attempt to articulate his sense of history. With Book X of The Prelude Wordsworth has already abandoned the strategy of treating the French Revolution in the romance-epic mode. Instead, he returns to his more characteristic mode of narration, that of describing outward events as if they were a syncretic series of inward apprehensions. Thus the actual event of the September Massacres provides the occasion for the "spot of time"

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[19] The Prelude (Oxford, 1926), p. 593.

episode in Book X. By making an "objective" historical event the occasion for a "spot of time," Wordsworth at once makes his experience in France more significant, less objective, and in effect annihilates a sense of time and historical development. Submerged in the particular spot of time in Book X is a particular view of history, but one which stands radically opposed to the supposed historical optimism which, Carl Woodring among others, finds in those books of The Prelude dealing with Woodsworth's residence in France.[20]

The "spot of time" in Book X, like nearly all of Wordsworth's intensely inward visions, grows out of a seemingly direct and "objective" narrative situation, here not only rooted in Wordsworth's ordinary reality of living in France, but also directly related to a time of great "public history." Yet the "spot of time" functions to "interrupt" the more or less public reportage of Wordsworth's stay in France, and serves to define his situation there in an entirely new modality. Wordsworth begins by describing the particular occasion of his return to Paris, sometime in October, 1792: "Cheered with . . . hope, to Paris I returned" (X, 48). At this point, Wordsworth

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[20] Wordsworth (Boston, 1965), p. 102. Further on, Woodring implies Wordsworth's "despair" originates from the events recounted in Book XI of the final version--"First Britain's declaration of war and then the imperialistic emergence of Bonaparte ended the blissful hope of creating an ideal society in 'the very world' of 'all of us'" (p. 102).

confronts history, not as "Some dream of action wrought behind the summer clouds," but in the form of an intensely perceived spatial locale. On his way to his lodgings he crosses "the square (an empty area then!)/ Of the Carrousel, where so late had lain/ The dead, upon the dying heaped." (Book X, 55-58.) This, then, is the physical "spot" which is the occasion for the "spot of time" experience. Wordsworth perceives most intensely the physical isolation of the place (an empty area then!): the actual events which transpired, the slaughter and the chaos are evoked all the more absolutely by their absence than by their presence. Further, because Wordsworth did not actually <u>see</u> the events of the September Massacres, he is able (brilliantly) to describe the historical reality as

> a volume whose contents he knows
> Are memorable, but from him locked up,
> Being written in a tongue he cannot read,
> So that he questions the mute leaves with pain,
> And half upbraids their silence.
> (X, 59-63)

This passage finally explains the curious tone of disengagement which has characterized so much of Wordsworth's narrative of revolutionary France. For Wordsworth, historical experience is a kind of unintelligible language which must first be translated to be understood. The night vision which follows does precisely that:

> High was my room and lonely, near the roof
> Of a large mansion or hotel, a lodge
> That would have pleased me in more quiet times;
> Nor was it wholly without pleasure then.
> With unextinguished taper I kept watch,

> Reading at intervals; the fear gone by
> Pressed on me almost like a fear to come.
> I thought of those September massacres,
> Divided from me by one little month,
> Saw them and touched: the rest was conjured up
> From tragic fictions or true history,
> Remembrances and dim admonishments.
> The horse is taught his manage, and no star
> Of wildest course but treads back his own steps;
> For the spent hurricane the air provides
> As fierce a successor; the tide retreats
> But to return out of its hiding-place
> In the great deep; all things have second birth;
> The earthquake is not satisfied at once;
> And in this way I wrought upon myself,
> Until I seemed to hear a voice that cried,
> To the whole city, "Sleep no more." The trance
> Fled with the voice to which it had given birth;
> But vainly comments of a calmer mind
> Promised soft peace and sweet forgetfulness.
> The place, all hushed and silent as it was,
> Appeared unfit for the repose of night,
> Defenceless as a wood where tigers roam.
> (X, 66-93)

Wordsworth's language of translation is characteristically his own and is as far removed from sentiments of progressive optimism as anything might be. It is not fair to say that the actual events of the Revolution and the subsequent reign of terror caused Wordsworth's disillusionment. Rather, it was the translation of outward events into his own language of vision which revealed to him a meaning for the events which hardly could occasion optimism. But the dark apocalypse which Wordsworth envisions in Paris is no different from the dark perceptions of his childhood experience. The process of interpreting experience has not changed fundamentally. Only the occasions have. If Wordsworth experienced a moral crisis from 1794 to 1796 it had its roots not in the historical events of 1791 and the years

following but, rather, as Wordsworth puts it, in those "remembrances and dim admonishments" which constitute the fabric of the "spots of time" experiences.

This particular spot of time, especially in its climactic shriek of guilt: "sleep no more" (and the evocation of Macbeth, a figure who assassinates Providence is most relevant) finally annihilates the dreamy hopes which characterized Wordsworth's view of reality prior to that particular spot of time. This spot of time, like all others, serves to correct those "expectations" which Wordsworth has at the beginning of a moment of inwardness, and then loses when he returns to reality. Thus the consoling comments of Wordsworth's calmer mind after his vision are "vain"; because of the intervening vision, all Paris seems a city "defenceless as wood where tigers roam." The forces at work here are seen as those of a primal and violent nature. Wordsworth is talking about the French Revolution, to be sure. But he is also seeing these historical events as part of the fundamental natural pattern evoked in the stealing of the boat episode in Book I of The Prelude, the descent from the Alps down the defile of Gondo in Book VI. Thus Wordsworth's moral crisis, and, more importantly, his restitution from his feelings of despair will come not surprisingly through a re-apprehension of that nature which so preoccupied him in his childhood and so terrified him throughout his life. Wordsworth's return to nature which is

the subject-matter of the last three books of The Prelude is not then a moral retreat from the sphere of social action, but, rather, like the return to Nature in the last book of Rousseau's Confessions, an attempt at defining, or re-defining, the occasions and conditions upon which Wordsworth sees his development dependent. Wordsworth's return to nature is really a return to those conditions necessary for the act of imagination.

HYPERION:

CONSCIOUSNESS AND HISTORY

I

In The Prelude Wordsworth's thematic intention had been to describe the development of mind and to dramatize, perhaps more intensely than in any other work of literature, the complex condition of the creative imagination. In the act of recording his recollections Wordsworth sought to reconstitute a sense of the harmony or unity of existence which he had felt to be irretrievably lost. But, such an act of "pure" imagination could be achieved only at the cost of forgetting about history: the development of imagination is for Wordsworth an a-historical, a-temporal phenomenon. The chronological, historically orientated narrative which represents one structural dimension of The Prelude is therefore deceptive, because at the end Wordsworth considers his existence as an historical creature and his activity in his historical epoch as an interruption--indeed an essentially destructive interruption--to the development of his poetic imagination. Towards the end of The Prelude Wordsworth reviews the history which has been the subject matter of his poem by invoking the venerable epic analogy, comparing the course of a human

life to that of a river:

> We have traced the stream
> From darkness, and the very place of birth
> In its blind cavern, whence, is faintly heard
> The sound of waters; followed it to light
> And open day, accompanied its course
> Among the ways of Nature, afterwards
> Lost sight of it bewilder'd and engulph'd
> Then given it greeting, as it rose once more
> With strength, reflecting in its solemn breast
> The works of man and face of human life.
> (1805, XIII, 173-181)

Although the final suggestion of these lines is that the poem itself "reflects" human accomplishment in an historical sense, the metaphor as a whole distinguishes the final victory of mind (which is rather similar to the mind's original condition), from the "engulph'd," "bewilder'd" condition between origin and fulfillment; the period in between is the "time" of historical involvement. It is by no means clear that the placid reflections of maturity compensate for the time of swampy bewilderment in historical action, and Wordsworth's notion of development, as such, is defined finally as an attempt to reconstitute in a totally inward way--by imagination--the harmony of original existence.

Hölderlin's Hyperion, by contrast, recognizes with an agony which is largely absent in Wordsworth the necessarily historical order of human experience and the inextricability of historical experience and the development of human consciousness. Indeed, one central distinction between Hyperion and The Prelude is that, for Wordsworth, the

development of consciousness remains the final avenue of escape from the multiple dilemmas of an historical existence in time, while, for Hölderlin, consciousness continually emerges as an awareness that existence is bound in time.

Hyperion is a history of development, a Bildungsgeschichte, which describes the growth of consciousness from a point of view which maintains the inextricability of consciousness and historical being: Hölderlin recognizes only the child and the gods as beyond the fate of being bound in history. All else, both nature and human consciousness, therefore, suffers the destiny of mortality. Wordsworth finally asserts in The Prelude that the human mind may transcend the earth on which it dwells; and in his highest flights Wordsworth wraps nature in a mist as a cover for the earth, which permits consciousness to identify more closely with its feelings of the approaching imminent divinity. For Hölderlin such an attitude is tempting enough, but the sunlight which blazes on the Hyperion landscape permits no such solution. Neither is Hölderlin willing to accept a view of consciousness which functions only to lament in elegiac fashion the lost unity of a natural, but unconscious, existence. Rather, Hölderlin addresses himself with startling tenacity to only one question, that of effecting a dialectical reconciliation through consciousness of what he recognizes to be the fundamentally "dissonant" nature of human existence.

In a study of Hölderlin, Ernst Müller suggests the relevance of Hyperion to the development of Hölderlin's poetic career. Müller observes: "Es ist nicht zufällig, dass Hölderlin zur Vollendung des Hyperion die besten Jahre seines voll erwachten Dichtertums benötigt hatte."[1] Quite like The Prelude and Goethe's Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre, Hyperion was a long time in coming and, especially if we consider the briefness of Hölderlin's poetic maturity, occupied a major place in his poetic life. Emil Beissner notes that the first evidence of Hölderlin's decision to write a Hyperion novel occurs in a letter written to Magenau in July 1792.[2] The completed novel was published in two sections, the first in 1797 and the second two years later. But it is the number and diversity of the Hyperion fragments which have been discovered that testify to the considerable effort standing between the initial conception and the final accomplishment of the novel. Müller notes that the "Vorstufen tragen allesamt kein künstlerisches Gepräge, sondern sind mehr oder weniger gedankliche Konzeptionen, Aphorismen, Entwürfe, Auseinandersetzungen, wachsende Kreise, die auf eine künstlerische Gesamtform hindrängen."[3] These observations about the tentative and

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[1] Hölderlin (Stuttgart, 1944), p. 174.

[2] Hölderlin, Sämtliche Werke, ed. Friedrich Beissner (Stuttgart, 1957), III, 296.

[3] Müller, p. 174.

theoretical qualities of the Vorstufen suggest also that they may provide a valuable conceptual focus for the occasionally bewildering textural surface of the novel. Similarly, the very quality of monotonous, diffuse statement and restatement of the thematic material in the final Hyperion (which is nevertheless presented in a considerably more dramatic way than one might expect), offers exegetical clues to the complexities of the incredibly concentrated and intricate poetry of Hölderlin's creative maturity following Hyperion. This is not to resort to a defense of Hyperion on the lame ground of historical "interest," but rather to point out that the "open" texture of the work can be accounted for at least partly if we consider Hyperion as a critical but nevertheless tentative formulation of the central questions which Hölderlin asked with single-minded insistence throughout his career.

Professor Paul de Man has noted that Hölderlin's dedication to self-exegesis appears already quite clearly in the early Thaliafragment (1793) of Hyperion and the theoretical statement which prefaces the Thaliafragment "is . . . indeed an accurate and complete summary of the novel that follows--not just the Thaliafragment but the final Hyperion, written in 1796--and contains several of the themes which remain central through Empedokles and the later work of Hölderlin."[4] Hölderlin's preface to the

[4]"Keats and Hölderlin," Comparative Literature, VIII, No. 1 (1956), p. 30.

Thaliafragment formulates "existence" (Dasein) as a dialectical movement between two ideals:

> Es giebt zwei Ideale unseres Daseyns: einen Zustand der höchsten Einfalt, wo unsere Bedürfnisse mit sich selbst, und mit unsern Kräften, und mit allem, womit wir in Verbindung stehen, durch die blosse Organisation der Natur, ohne unser Zuthun, gegenseitig zusammenstimmen, und einen Zustand der höchsten Bildung, wo dasselbe statt finden würde bey unendlich vervielfältigten und verstärkten Bedürfnissen und Kräften durch die Organisation, die wir uns selbst zu geben Im Stande sind. Die exzentrische Bahn, die der Mensch, im Allgemeinen und Einzelnen, von einem Punkte (die mehr oder weniger reinen Einfalt) zum andern (der mehr oder weniger vollendeten Bildung) durchlauft, scheint sich, nach ihren wesentlichen Richtungen, immer gleich zu seyn.[5]

Hölderlin here describes Bildung as an "eccentric" process (that is, not simply cyclical), which runs from a state of simplicity donated to us by nature (the ideal of Einfalt) to a state of organization which we donate to ourselves as consciousness (the ideal of Bildung); but these two extremes are dialectically dependant upon one another, because in consciousness the harmonious ideal of simplicity can be viewed from a double perspective, at once a movement away from unconscious simplicity, but also as a reapprehension (perhaps only paradoxically) of that harmony which seems essentially lost. The eccentric road of development moves one way in actuality but in essence turns back upon

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[5] Hölderlin, Sämtliche Werke, ed. Norbert V. Hellingrath and continued by Friedrich Seebass (Berlin, 1923), II, 53. All quotations from Hyperion, the fragments, and Hölderlin's poetry which I use in the essay follow the pagination of the Hellingrath text.

itself and therefore seems in its essential directions always to be the same. Professor de Man comments:

> The idea is taking shape that this movement is not erratic or the result of individual caprice, but that its development is itself a law which the mind can seize. The Bildungsroman thus takes on a new significance; not only is the initiation determined by its two extreme points (from simplicity through separation to recovered unity), but the intermediate cycles are determined in kind and order. The succession of events, instead of being mere accidents of destiny, is a first approximation of the law of gradual growth.[6]

However difficult and problematic Hölderlin's metaphysical formulations may be, their relevance to the structure of Hyperion can I think be understood: the recapitulative succession of events and attitudes in the novel describes dramatically Hölderlin's notion of Bildung. Thus the "plot" of Hölderlin's novel represents the law of development which the mind can grasp and the fundamental structure of the novel traces and reticulates the movement from Einfalt to Bildung; but because Hyperion is a novel such a structure must assume a particular dramatic form.

II

Hyperion opens with a landscape description (the particular locale is named as a hill-side above the gulf of Corinth) which offers an open prospect and suggests freedom and undirected vitality:

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[6] de Man, p. 30.

> Ich bin jezt alle Morgen auf den Höhen des Korinthischen Isthmus, und, wie die Biene unter Blumen, fliegt meine Seele oft hin und her zwischen den Meer, die zur Rechten und Linken meinen glühenden Bergen die Füsse kühlen.
>
> (II, 89)

In a way rather similar to Wordsworth's opening identification with the "gentle breeze" in The Prelude, which brings a "joy," half-conscious and half-unconscious in nature, the speaker (Hyperion, the Ich of the novel) here compares his feelings to the ecstatic, wandering absorption of a bee among flowers. In atmosphere at least, the opening landscapes of both Hyperion and The Prelude are remarkably similar. Both descriptions explore, in a tone of unself-conscious joy, the intense attractiveness of what the poet sees again after a long absence in a familiar landscape. But, while Wordsworth comments retrospectively on the scene to qualify its significance as it is initially presented in the poem, Hölderlin secures the atmosphere of the landscape immediately as it is presented. It is not entirely the landscape, as landscape, which establishes the opening atmosphere in Hyperion, but rather the fact that the landscape is defined as the Vaterland seen again. It is the fact of return to the place of origins which gives to the scene the atmosphere of uncomplicated joy. But the joy of the familiar seen again is accompanied and balanced (if not negated) by a series of antithetical attitudes. The opening sentence of Hyperion establishes that Greece is loved: "Der liebe Vaterlandsboden giebt mir wieder Freude

und Laid." Thus, although the scene evokes a mood of uncomplicated joy, the feeling of elegiac sorrow, coming from a different source, accompanies and immediately qualifies the original mood, Hölderlin's strategy in Hyperion, already apparent from the first few lines, is to evoke a scene in terms of a double perspective: at the opening Hölderlin moves toward a "naive" (in the Schillerian sense) joy while at the same time moving in the opposite direction towards a mood which suggests the impossibility of any single feeling remaining for long without complication or qualification. Thus the second and third paragraphs mount in intensity from the generalized statement ("Ich bin jetzt alle Morgen . . ."[Italics mine.] to a closer and more particularized identification with the scene in "naive" fashion ("wie die Biene unter Blumen"); the narrator then attempts to absorb more and more of the landscape in its intense particularity; mountains, city and rushing onward--the openness of the sea, until no more can be encompassed and the mood breaks apart with startling abruptness. Characteristically, in Hölderlin, the intensity of one momentary attitude is shattered by the disruptive adverb "aber" which introduces an antithetical feeling with equal intensity. In this case:

> Aber was soll mir das? Das Geschrei des Jakels, der unter den Steinhaufen des Altertums sein wildes Grablied singt, schrökt ja aus meinen Traumen mich auf.
>
> (II, 89)

At first sight such an abrupt shift from the intense blaze of the Corinthian landscape to a Winckelmannian lament over the rubble of antiquity seems excessive, too sudden a swing from low to high in the fashion of Werther and undramatic in its arbitrariness. In general, such abrupt shifts in tonality have presented considerable difficulties, not only to readers of Hyperion, but also for the reading of Hölderlin's work in general.[7]

It would be useful therefore to consider on just what kind of dramatic structure Hyperion is built. The seemingly arbitrary shifts in tone in themselves mediate the ostensible, thematic material of the novel. Because Hyperion is an epistolary novel, its narrative emerges from a speaker who is both commentator and protagonist. We may note by contrast that Richardson's Clarissa (to use a paradigmatic example of the genre), develops its dramatic situations to a considerable extent by reporting the same piece of news from antiphonal points of view. In this respect the general outlines of Hyperion are closer to, say, The Prelude (which is, after all, a long blank verse letter to Coleridge)

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[7] In a letter to Goethe (Jena, 30. Juni 1797), Schiller judges Hölderlin's work with considerable condescending suspicion: "Er (Hölderlin) hat eine heftige Subjectivität und verbindet damit einen gewissen philosophischen Geist und Tiefsinn. Sein Zustand ist gefährlich . . ." This is in response to some very ambiguous remarks which Goethe had previously made. For this exchange of remarks, see Goethe, Gedenkausgabe der Werke, Briefe und Gespräche, ed. Ernst Beutler (Zürich, 1950), XX, 367-368.

than to more familiar models of the eighteenth century epistolary novel. Hyperion is also closer to The Prelude than to Goethe's Leiden des jungen Werthers if only because in both Hyperion and The Prelude the dramatic event emerges as mediated recollection, whether tranquil or not, while the swings of Wertherian passion are given as the immediate dramatic responses to immediate events.

If such is the case, then the violent alternations in the narrative tone of Hyperion cannot be seen as having any immediate dramatic relevance to the events on which the speaker is commenting. In fact, at the time Hyperion writes his letters to Bellarmin (a friend we know nothing about except that he is supposed to be German), the major events which provide the subject matter of the novel have long since been over. Thus the physical act of return, which is a kind of starting point for the action of meditation in the novel, in itself offers a clue as to how we should consider the relation of past experience and present account in the novel; the present account mediates the past event, provides the conceptual focus which continually modifies the past event. In his letters, Hyperion proposes to reassess his past, using his physical return to the place where his history originates as the occasion for a beginning. The narrative is in fact a recollection, but more than that a reconstitution of the past, which is now made over as a language. This is more than cyclical rumination. Hyperion

is at pains throughout the novel to convey the immediate intensity of his past experience, but in that act he fastidiously maintains an objectivity by his continual awareness of the distinction between what was and what is. The phrase "so dacht ich," recurring regularly throughout the novel (and most importantly in its reappearance as the next to last phrase of the novel) fixes Hyperion, the narrator, in a stance of detachment from Hyperion, the agonist. But the detachment is only partially successful. Thus the phrase "so dacht ich," occurs with abruptness as if detachment could only be maintained as an heroic act of will, as an heroic effort of consciousness. Therefore, the changes of mood and the stance which Hyperion, the letter-writer, establishes towards his own history can be considered as the most important events in the novel. These are immediate events of consciousness, not of action. In this way the true dramatic process of the novel is the changing action (the shifting tone) of Hyperion's letters, not the events which the letters rehearse. The dramatic significance therefore of Hyperion's abrupt alternation of mood in his first letter resides in the suggestion that the act of remembering constantly changes the past experience itself as well as exerting a continuous (though fluctuating) force upon the narrator's present self. In short, the rapidity with which Hyperion shifts from elegiac remorse, to heroic determination, to a kind of pious, stoic

expectancy suggests that Hyperion, the narrator, and Hyperion, the actor of the narrated event, exert a continuing and complex force upon one another.

The paradox of antithetical attitudes which contain one another is not an abstract philosophical schema which masquerades as an organizing strategy for the novel; it is rather a fundamental habit of mind, a conceptual mode which entirely informs Hölderlin's apprehension of the world. The peculiar genius of Hyperion is that the novel manages to dramatize such a habit of mind and does so at moments with a tragic intensity. Similarly the Greek setting of Hyperion cannot be considered only as a paysage moralise in the manner of Wieland's setting for Agathon. It is well known just how much of the Hyperion landscape Hölderlin lifted whole from a translation (probably French) of Chandler's Voyages in Greece and Asia Minor and from Choisel's Voyage Pitturesque en Grece.[8] But in his choice of setting Hölderlin attempted more than an exercise in the Sentimental picturesque. First of all, Hölderlin's landscape exists to express the profundity of his nostalgia for the earth, an earth which is remembered as a real place. As Ernst Müller puts it, "das Griechische" is for Hölderlin "eine Gegenwart des Abwesenden."[9] The Hyperion landscape is in

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[8] See Friedrich Beissner's discussion in the Stuttgarter Ausgabe, III, 434.

[9] Müller, p. 259.

its way a kind of prime nature and Hyperion's "eccentric" road from Einfalt to Bildung recapitulates in a representative individual, what for Hölderlin was an assumed historical law, true equally for an individual, race, a culture, a civilization. When Hölderlin in the Vorrede comments on the setting of his novel: "Der Schauplaz, wo sich das Folgende zutrug, ist nicht neu," (II, 87) he implies that he is not only attempting a Bildungsgeschichte of an individual in a fashionably antique setting, but that the particular Geschichte recapitulates an historical process of Bildung which can be understood as a law which is valid both generically and in its particulars. Thus Hyperion attempts to dramatize the general historical process of Becoming in a place which is both familiar and real. The alternation of recollection and its expression as a present attitude, the general movement from childhood to manhood, the choice of the Greek landscape to represent both nature and the fate of nature in historical time, as well as the patent parallel between Hyperion's revolutionary struggle against the Turks and the events unfolding in France from 1789, all suggest the history of Hyperion's Bildung is a symbolic history.

We have already noted how Hölderlin, in his theoretical formulations, has conceived of Bildung as an "eccentric road." This conception of Bildung is based ultimately on a cosmological picture, one which Hölderlin could well have

adopted from his interest in the Keplerian conception of planetary movement.[10] At any rate, it would seem that Holderlin's picture of an eccentric road refers to a circling in a bi-polar orbit (the two poles are Einfalt and Bildung). It is not surprising therefore that the stylistic as well as the dramatic structure of Hyperion should follow a similarly eccentric path. The prose of the novel both in detail and within its larger dramatic presentation of thematic material constantly re-describes a pattern which can be summarized by the physical metaphor of a movement outward (Ausflug) and a movement of return (Rückkehr). The critical physical movement which constitutes Hyperion's path to Bildung has already been suggested in his first letter: in a tone of increasing excitement Hyperion moves toward more intense identification with nature (most often symbolized by a stormy physical movement downward from mountainous heights toward the ocean), which is disrupted and followed by a movement away from nature (usually dramatized as an elegiac reflection of loss). This pattern from simplicity, or nostalgia for simplicity, to Trennung is the first key structural step in Hyperion's Bildungsgeschichte. All of Hyperion's experiences recapitulate the central pattern. Let us consider now the path which Hyperion's first movement out of simplicity

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[10] Wolfgang Schadewalt, "Das Bild der exzentrischen Bahn bei Holderlin," Holderlin Jahrbuch, 1952, pp. 1-16.

describes.

Hyperion calls the first step "the time of awakening," and he describes it to Bellaramin:

> Aber schön ist auch die Zeit des Erwachens, wenn man nur zur Unzeit uns nicht wekt.
> O es sind heilige Tage, wo unser Herz zum erstenmale die Schwingen übt, wo wir, voll schnellen feurigen Wachstums dastehn in der herrlichen Welt, wie die junge Pflanze, wenn sie der Morgensonne sich aufschliesst, und die kleinen Arme dem unendlichen Himmel entgegenstrekt.
> (II, 94)

By the self-conscious analogy to the growing plant, Hölderin emphasizes the naturalness and simplicity of the impulse to grow toward increasing identification with the world. In the course of the novel this impulse toward growth takes form first as the process of education which, as it is described, is a "classical" education--a looking at the past models of human greatness. But the process is unsuccessful, because as Adamas (Hyperion's teacher, who perhaps bears some stylized resemblance to Schiller and his role in Hölderlin's life) tells Hyperion the nostalgia for human greatness at once makes apparent the process of human failure: it only increases the longing consciousness of isolation. But, also, as Adamas tells Hyperion, history is a slow ripening, a timely process; fulfillment cannot come all at once and therefore "du [Hyperion] wirst seyn, wie der Kranich, den seine Brüder zurükliessen in rauher Jahrszeit, indess sie den Frühling suchen im fernen Lande" (II, 101). The inevitable direction is toward

Trennung and Hyperion recognizes it as such. But in a very important observation Hyperion insists that the source of Trennung is not the product of capricious fate but is rather an integral, even radical, impulse within human nature. Trennung is the obverse aspect of the movement toward identification; further, Trennung is assumed as a primary fact in the process of Bildung:

> Aber sage nur niemand, dass uns das Schiksaal trenne! Wir sind's, wir! wir haben unsere Lust daran, uns in die Nacht des Unbekannten, in die kalte Fremde irgend einer andern Welt zu stürzen, und wär' es möglich, wir verliessen der Sonne Gebiet und stürmten über des Irresterns Gränzen hinaus.
> (II, 101-102)

Because the novel tries to imitate and reveal the process of consciousness and because for Hölderlin all events of experience recapitulate the initial pattern of human growth toward consciousness, experience is always described as a bi-polar movement, in one direction towards a greater apprehension of unity through an emergent separation, or Trennung. Hyperion describes this dialectical law of consciousness through four periods of human experience; education, friendship, love, and action. In each the same fundamental pattern is recapitulated and each of Hyperion's attempts at experience may be seen in one respect at least as failures. Yet the final statement of the novel is clearly hopeful in tone. Hyperion's final vision of unity

> Wie der Zwist der Liebenden, sind die Dissonanzen der Welt. Versöhnung ist mitten im Streit and alles Getrennte findet sicht wieder.
> (II, 291)

suggests that in the very failures of experience the principle of Versöhnung emerges, if not with clarity, at least with a certainty which the hero finds may finally be apprehended. In the process of each experience which Hyperion undergoes, the principle of Versöhnung, which is articulated with greater certainty through each failure of experience (and, more importantly, in the movement towards recovery after the failure of each experience), is revealed most clearly through the physical atmosphere which accompanies each period of experience. Because Hyperion is much more a novel of consciousness than of action, the tone and mood of the narrative is invariably more significant than the events of narration. Also the moments of transition between action in the novel are actually moments of reflexive revelation which unfold the significance of the preceding or impending action.

Thus the transition between the first two periods of experience in the novel, the time after the separation from Adamas and before the meeting with Alabanda, reveals both the necessary failure of the attempted movement toward unity through education (the Adamas episode) and the necessary hierarchical succession of the period of friendship (the Alabanda episode) which follows. Hyperion's separation from Adamas seems arbitrary because of the suddenness with which it takes place. Here the geographical direction of the action gives something of a clue. Hyperion and Adamas

have been moving generally eastward in their peripatetic wanderings through the grand ruins of Greek civilization. The activity of education is revealed implicitly as a symbolic picture--Hyperion and Adamas meditating, in a landscape of ruins, on the loss of a civilization:

> ach! die ausgestorbnen Thale von Elis und Nemea und Olympia, wenn wir da, an eine Tempelsäule des vergessnen Jupiters gelehnt, umfangen von Lorbeer, Rosen und Immergrün, in's wilde Flussbett sahn, und das Leben des Frühlings und die ewig jugendliche Sonne uns mahnte, dass auch der Mensch einst da war, und nun dahin ist, dass des Menschen herrliche Natur jezt kaum noch da ist, wie das Bruchstük eines Tempels oder im Gedächtnis wie ein Todtenbild.
>
> (II, 99)

Thus the landscape of education is a landscape of half-forgotten pieties, forgotten gods, ruined temples, broken statues in heroic poses and the eternal green of nature as the constant, elegiac reminder of human loss.[11] Adamas' commitment is to dwell entirely on that loss and search for the means to redeem it. His hope is to begin again and his wanderings express his search. Therefore he moves toward Asia:

> In der Tiefe von Asien soll ein Volk von seltner Trefflichkeit verborgen seyn; dahin trieb ihn seine Hoffnung weiter.
>
> (II, 102)

Why Adamas' hope for a redemptive humanity lies in Asia and the reasons he feels that from there may he redeem present

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[11] Compare Müller's exegesis of this same passage. Müller notes how Hölderlin here "idealizes" Chandler's description of the temple of Jupiter at Olympia. Hölderlin, p. 263.

loss is not immediately apparent. In his later poetry Hölderlin states clearly that the movement eastward represents the attempt to get out of consciousness too quickly:

> Er schied und wandern „wollt', und ungeduldig ihn
> Nach Asia trieb die königliche Seele.
> Doch unverständig ist
> Das Wünschen vor dem Schiksall.
> (IV, 173)

(Compare also "Stimme des Volks" (Zweite Fassung), IV, 192.)

Although it may seem arbitrary in the novel, the suggestion nevertheless remains that Hyperion can only accompany Adamas up to a certain point and that their separation is inevitable. Significantly, their point of departure is the island of Nio (known also as Ios), the legendary site of Homer's grave. Thus Hyperion's separation from Adamas is intricately connected with an historical awareness, or apprehension, of a lost heroic culture. Hyperion is separated from his teacher at a site where a culture has now become ash and ruin:

> Am Grabe Homers brachten wir noch einige
> Tage zu, und Nio wurde mir die heiligste unter
> den Inseln. Endlich rissen wir uns los.
> (II, 102)

Following this first dramatic separation in the novel the central metaphor of physical return begins to emerge. In the next letter to Bellarmin, Hyperion reports his actions following the separation from Adamas as a kind of return, but tentatively and ambiguously stated at this point:

> wie ein Geist, der keine Ruhe am Acheron findet, kehr' ich zurück in die verlassnen Gegenden meines Lebens. Alles altert und verjüngt sich wieder. Warum sind wir ausgenommen vom schönen Kreislauf der Natur? Oder gilt er auch für uns?
> (II, 103)

Although the metaphor of return and renaissance seems at first to be inapplicable to consciousness (Geist), the rhetorical question (Oder gilt er [der Kreislauf der Natur] auch für uns?) at least leaves the matter open. This is one of the richer subtleties of the novel, because, although Hyperion has gone through the experience, he has not finished his recollection of the experience and, therefore, the resolution of the experience still remains a dramatic question.

Hyperion uses the word Bildung for the first time in the novel in his letter to Bellarmin which reports the restless anxiety and Wanderlust after his separation from Adamas. The letter begins: "Meine Insel war mir zu enge geworden, seit Adamas fort war" (II, 105). Thus Hyperion's search for Bildung begins as an essentially negative movement, a yearning for openness growing out of a dissatisfaction with the prison-like place of origins. And the source of this dissatisfaction is the fact that education (the first period of experience) has already removed the possibility of primal simplicity. Yet Hyperion also recognizes the movement toward Bildung as a kind of rebirth. Indeed he describes his leaving from the island of Tinos as if it were a new birth, following the death-like state of

his isolation after separation from Adamas:

> Es ist entzükend, den ersten Schritt aus der Schranke der Jugend zu thun, es ist als dächt' ich meines Geburtstags, wenn ich meiner Abreise von Tina gedenke. Es war eine neue Sonne über mir, und Land und See und Luft genoss ich wie zum erstenmale.
> (II, 106)

At this point Hyperion identifies Bildung as a process of "vital action" (lebendige Thätigkeit"), but even more importantly than the fact of renewed action itself is the characteristic atmosphere which accompanies the new movement. We recall that the landscape of Hyperion's first cycle of experience was a landscape of ruins, described in an elegiac tone. The landscape surrounding Smyrna, Hyperion's new locale, is described in a very different tonality:

> Wie ein Meer, lag das Land, wovon ich heraufkam, vor mir da, jugendlich, voll lebendiger Freude. . . . Zur Linken stürzt und jauchzte, wie ein Riese, der Strom in die Wälder hinab, vom Marmorfelsen, der über mir hieng, wo der Adler spielte mit seinen Jungen, wo die Schneegipfel hinauf in den blauen Äther glänzten; rechts walzten Wetterwolken sich her über den Wäldern des Sipylus; ich fühlte nicht den Sturm, der sie trug, ich fühlte nur ein Lüftchen in den Loken, aber ihren Donner hört' ich, wie man die Stimme der Zukunft hört, und ihre Flammen sah ich, wie das ferne Licht der geahneten Gottheit.
> (II, 107-108)

The landscape suggests fulfillment: characteristically the grand "openness" of prospect is established by the rather formal simile which associates the open land with the sea (which recapitulates the "openness" of the Corinthian landscape). Equally, however, this "openness" is accompanied by a certain quality of danger. Quite like the landscape

in the first stanza of Hölderlin's later poem, "Wie wenn am Feiertage . . ." the richness of the atmosphere here also carries an intensely threatening, dangerous quality. But in Hyperion, because the narrator at the moment he evokes the landscape adopts an entirely subjective stance, he takes the threat, the "thunder," only as a prophetic, providential sign and the light which accompanies the threatening storm is taken as an intimation of divine presence.

The Alabanda episode, which follows Hyperion's arrival at Smyrna, represents the enactment, however unsuccessful, of the intimations implicit in the preceding landscape. As the Alabanda episode unfolds, it becomes increasingly clear that Hyperion has fallen into the temptation of acting too directly, of trying to turn intimation into actuality too quickly. In this sense, then, the Alabanda episode marks yet another failure in Hyperion's experience. But, as Hyperion notes in one of his moments of self-conscious reflection, the impulse to act (even if it is too quickly) is inextricably connected with the condition of existence itself. It is the hope for change and the attempt to translate hope into experience which in fact defines existence: "Es lebte nichts, wenn es nicht hoffte." (II, 110.) But because Hyperion comes to this realization reflexively and self-consciously he is necessarily also aware that hope is by nature temporary and the very temporality of intimations of fulfillment defines

those intimations as possibly delusive. Hyperion's situation is poignant precisely because of his continual and unremitting awareness that the delusion itself is beautiful. The great passages of hopefulness in Hyperion so often begin simply with the phrase "Es ist schön." In reflecting on his past hopes, Hyperion notes that the beautiful is, if nothing else, a consolation for the most pervasive sense of historical loss:

> Die Unheilbarkeit des Jahrhunderts war mir aus so manchem, was ich erzähle and nicht erzähle, sichtbar geworden, und der schöne Trost, in Einer Seele meine Welt zu finden, mein Geschlecht in einem freundlichen Bilde zu umarmen, auch der gebrach mir. (II, 110)

But despite such awareness of the delusive possibilities of images (and immediately following this particular statement of disconsolate need) Hyperion encounters Alabanda for the first time and sees him as "a young Titan": the period of friendship is precisely Hyperion's attempt to "embrace a friendly image." In a note on the Alabanda episode, Professor de Man observes a troublesome, ambivalent complexity in the Hyperion-Alabanda friendship:

> One of the complexities and probably the weaknesses of the Alabanda episode is that friendship is strangely interwoven with its antithesis. Aside from being a friend, Alabanda is a sort of antiself, the symbol of another "eccentric road" which Hyperion has rejected. We have a foreshadowing here of the relationship between Empedokles and his brother opponent ("der Gegner") which was to be part of "Empedokles auf dem Aetna."[12]

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[12] de Man, p. 33.

Alabanda clearly becomes a kind of "brother-opponent" all too quickly. But again the radical shift from Hyperion's passionate encounter ("begegnen") of friendship to his equally passionate disappointment stems as much from Hyperion's overly intense expectations, that is, his original need to "embrace a friendly image," as from Alabanda's decision for revolution which Hyperion rejects. Hyperion comments on the impossibility of his expectations with an oblique kind of irony, even as he first describes the setting of his friendship in an atmosphere of lyric intensity:

> Wir sassen noch lange zusammen bei offnen Fenstern. Hohe geistige Stille umfieng uns. Erd' und Meer war seelig verstummt, wie die Sterne, die über uns hiengen. Kaum, dass ein Lüftchen von der See her uns in's Zimmer flog und zart mit unserem Lichte spielte, oder dass von ferner Musik die gewaltigen Töne zu uns drangen, indess die Donnerwolke sich wiegt im Bette des Äthers, und hin und wieder durch die Stille fernher tönte.
>
> (II, 114)

The sense of intense stillness--perhaps even <u>artificial</u> stillness--in this passage is all the more striking because only for the Alabanda episode is <u>night</u> the characteristic setting. The landscape and atmosphere of the Alabanda episode suggest intense expectations, really a kind of hopefulness, but always a hopefulness which is peculiarly dark. What Hyperion, the agonist, fails to recognize is the potential destructiveness implicit within the expectation. Hölderlin only later in his career (in the great opening to "Patmos," for example) links the great expectation with

the great danger inextricably together. In Hyperion the narrator recognizes only retrospectively with a kind of sardonic chagrin that the immense expectations of Hyperion the agonist simply could not be immediately enacted. The image the narrator uses is that of the child chasing after moonlight and the futility of the chase is a comment on the confidences, expectations, and all the talk of revolution which Alabanda and Hyperion have exchanged in their first encounters--also by the light of the moon. In retrospect the narrator realizes that the "titanic" feelings of expectation are only feelings--the world goes on:

> Aber es geht alles auf und unter in der Welt, und es hält der Mensch mit aller seiner Riesenkraft nichts fest. Ich sah' einmal ein Kind die Hand ausstreken, um das Mondlicht zu haschen; aber das Licht gieng ruhig weiter seine Bahn.
> (II, -19-120)

Hyperion's first separation from Alabanda, although it is only a temporary one (they later meet again and fight their revolutionary struggle against the Turks--but again are separated), if not so important for novelistic reasons, is significant because of the principle of experience which Hölderlin tries to dramatize here: Hyperion's friendship with Alabanda shatters because of the irreconcilable opposition of Alabanda's commitment to immediate action and Hyperion's more reflective consciousness. In a moment of self-criticism Hyperion calls his reflective consciousness merely "Schwärmerei." But Alabanda also admits that his own course, his commitment to seize each moment

for immediate action, is a temptation to move beyond bounds, beyond measure. Somewhat sarcastically Alabanda puts the blame on insufficient education:

> Es ist auch wahr, ich war zu früh entlassen aus der Schule, ich hatte alle Ketten geschleift und alle zerrissen.
>
> (II, 129)

The point, of course, is that both Hyperion and Alabanda are moving in the direction of fulfilling their expectations too quickly. But also Adamas, in his search for "ein Volk von seltener Trefflichkeit," and Alabanda, in his commitment to the destructive nightmare of revolutionary bloodletting, move as it were from the darkness of present history to yet a deeper darkness. This movement to the abyss is the constant temptation for Hyperion and one which the "eccentric road" of Bildung would overcome. Ironically, immediately after his separation from Alabanda, Hyperion's course seems temptingly downward (Hölderlin's characteristic geographical metaphor for the temptation of seeking fulfillment too quickly). The course is downward to the sea; Hyperion would reach out and embrace the "free flood" and in so doing he would act with just the sort of rashness which has already separated him from Alabanda in the first place. In this respect both the Alabanda and Adamas episodes are similar because in each Hyperion's separation is the result of his sense that the others seek fulfillment too quickly. It is significant therefore that in both instances Hyperion also experiences the temptation of

darkness subjectively and is held back. Hyperion comments: "ich überdachte mein Schiksaal, meinen Glauben an die Welt" (II, 130). Thus, the act of consciousness (what Hyperion calls "sein sanfterer Geist"), which sees only dissonance in experience, rejects the experience and at the same time makes its nostalgic demand for a return to simplicity. But the rejecting of the experience is at the same time an overcoming of the temptation implicit in the experience. The movement of return after the failure of experience is always, for Hölderlin, the critical moment in the process of Bildung. The impulse to return is born of nostalgia. But the nostalgia for simplicity is in itself the way of keeping within limits. In this way the "eccentric path" of Bildung always involves a recapitulative return along the same course and back to the same ground. Each time the return is made, however, its significance changes because of the increased burden of awareness implicit in the movement of return. Thus after the Alabanda episode, Hyperion reports his nostalgia for simplicity in the imagery with which the novel opened. But as the image is repeated here the impulse to return is seen as having the added force of a moral imperative:

> . . . es ist besser, sagt ich mir, zur Biene zu werden, und sein Haus zu bauen in Unschuld, als zu herrschen mit den Herren der Welt. . . . ich wollte nach Tina zurück, um meinen Garten und Feldern zu leben.
>
> (II, 130)

Again here, as after the Adamas episode, Hyperion alludes to spiritual development as possibly analogous to natural cycles of growth and decay. But the tone is here more certain than previously:

> Bestehet ja das Leben der Welt im Wechsel des Entfaltens und Verschliessens, in Ausflug und in Rükkehr zu sich selbst, warum nicht auch das Herz des Menschen?
>
> (II, 130)

Thus, the process of Bildung as it is dramatized in the novel is seen with increasing certainty as morally necessary; but Hyperion also realizes the difficulty of such a moral conception:

> Freilich gieng die neue Lehre mir hart ein, freilich schied ich ungern von dem stolzen Irrtum meiner Jugend--wer reisst auch gerne die Flügel sich aus?--aber es musste ja so seyn!
>
> (II, 130)

Book I of Hyperion ends with a most detailed account of just exactly what happens in the movement of return and may therefore be considered as the most significant action of the novel. Hyperion's return to Tina at the end of Book I describes "die Auflösung der Dissonanzen" as process, and as Hölderlin asserts in the "Vorrede" such resolution of dissonances is neither "für das blosse Nachdenken, noch für die leere Lust." The resolution is rather in the understanding of the actual process as it unfolds.

As with each new movement in the novel, the symbolic significance of the return to Tina is established by means

of a complex and evocative description of a new landscape. At first the action of return seems nothing more than a kind of simple, perhaps resigned, rest after battle. The atmosphere is one of resigned and peaceful expectancy:

> Ich [Hyperion] sezt' es durch. Ich war nun wirklich eingeschifft. Ein frischer Bergwind trieb mich aus dem Hafen von Smyrna. Mit einer wunderbaren Ruhe, recht wie ein Kind, das nichts vom nächsten Augenblikke weiss, lag ich so da auf meinem Schiffe.
> (II, 130)

The attitude is reminiscent of that in Rousseau's Reveries. Indeed, we know from Hölderlin's hymn, der Rhein," where he alludes directly to Rousseau's island ("Im Schatten des Walds/ Am Bielersee"), of the intense attraction which Hölderlin recognized in such an impulse to self-forgetfulness as a consoling escape from "the burden of joy":

> Dann scheint ihm oft das Beste
> Fast ganz vergessen da,
> Wo der Stral nicht brennt,
> Im Schatten des Walds
> Am Bielersee in frischer Grüne zu seyn,
> Und sorglosarm an Tönen,
> Anfängern gleich, bei Nachtigallen zu lernen.
> (IV, 177-178)

In Hyperion, even as the description of the landscape more intensely evokes the oblivious peace of self-forgetfulness, the tone modulates subtly, yet unmistakably, to reveal the movement toward self-forgetfulness as negative and self-destructive. The modulation is effected first of all through a widening, an opening out of physical perspective. More and more of the departing landscape is named--

the physical point of view is that of an observer in a ship leaving a harbor--and as more is seen, it also becomes more distant:

> die Bäume und Moskeen dieser Stadt . . . , meine grünen Gänge an dem Ufer, meinen Fussteig zur Akropolis hinauf, das sah ich an, und liess es weiter gehn und immer weiter.
>
> (II, 130-131)

This remarkable description of the physical landscape "opening out," and by the very fact of growing more distant, at the same time moves in the direction of annihilating the physical world even as it comes before the eye. As Hyperion floats further away, the physical landscape grows both more open and more indistinct; and as Hyperion associates the outward physical occurrence with his own inward condition, the disappearing landscape becomes the objective counterpart of nihilistic self-destruction. Just as the landscape "sinks away," Hyperion describes himself sinking into the sea "like a casket into the grave." In a moment of shocked awakening, after the fact, Hyperion realizes that as the harbor and heights of Smyrna drop away, what is in fact being lost is the sense of existence in a present world and present time--it all dissolves in a shimmering ephemeral mist:

> O Himmel! schrie ich, und alles Leben in mir erwacht' und rang, die fliehende Gegenwart zu halten, aber sie war dahin, dahin!
>
> Wie ein Nebel, lag das himlische Land vor mir . . .
>
> (II, 131)

Thus the growing atmosphere of peaceful self-oblivion (the

"wunderbare Ruhe" at the opening of the passage), because it involves a lessening of consciousness and a fleeing from historical action, involves also a loss of the world. Unlike Wordsworth, who at his moments of greatest intensity consistently tries to hold the surrounding, physical landscape fixed in a state of ephemeral mistiness, for Hölderlin, the "mistiness," the Nebel, covering the scene evokes with it the awesome realization that the peace of reverie and dream is uncomfortably similar to the peace of death. Hyperion's return to Tina, his escape from the unsuccessful present, is therefore narrated in a tone which finally expresses a totally disconsolate, almost mad, sense of loss. Return, then, is a simultaneous aspect of separation (Trennung) from present experience and is, therefore, for all of its attractiveness, terribly destructive.

In his next letter to Bellarmin, Hyperion calls the time of his return to Tina a period of "langen, kranken Trauer." What is being mourned, of course, is the failure of experience and the sickness is the omnivorous isolation of separation. But throughout this rather long narration of regret, there is an accompanying tone which emphasizes both the necessity and the justice of isolation, and, further, that the spiritual poverty of this time of loss is also a self-willed, conscious, and heroic act. Hölderlin's key word here is "Geduld," as if patience itself implies an expectancy which, even at the most nihilistic moments, is

never really lost.

At the moment when Hyperion's despair seems most intense, a key transformation takes place which suggests, even more clearly than the prophetic vision of reconciliation at the end of the novel, by just what means the lost unity of Einfalt is restored ("aufgehoben" to use the Hegelian word) in the growing development of consciousness. Hyperion notes that self-forgetfulness has a double aspect--and he articulates the double-sided quality of self-forgetfulness as if he were certain of its nature as a general law of existence:

> Es giebt ein Vergessen alles Daseyns, ein Verstummen unsers Wesens, wo uns ist, als hätten wir alles gefunden.
> Es giebt ein Verstummen, ein Vergessen alles Daseyns, wo uns ist, als hätten wir alles verloren, eine Nacht unsrer Seele, wo kein Schimmer eines Sterns, wo nicht einmal ein Faules Holz uns leuchtet. (II, 136)

Clearly Hyperion considers his present "forgetting of all present existence ("Daseyn") under the aspect of being lost, even associating this present sense of loss with the traditional Christian trope of the dark night of the soul. But this present condition of loss is very nearly like that condition of "forgetting of all present existence" where it seems "to us as if we had found everything." The paradoxical similarity of the two states resides in the characteristic of "Verstummen" (a growing silent), which is common to both conditions. The dramatic relevance of the paradox, however, only becomes apparent if we inquire in which ways

this "growing silent" is related to the sense of being ("Wesen") itself. The first "Verstummen" is the silence of simplicity, of edenic wholeness, which Hölderlin associates with the condition of childhood. In the lyric, "Da ich ein Knabe war . . ." Hölderlin explicitly asserts that the unconscious "friendship" of the child with his surrounding nature (and with the divine which in this respect exists with, and as, nature) is specifically a kind of <u>silent</u> apprehension of the world:

> Da ich ein Knabe war,
> Rettet' ein Gott mich oft
> Vom Geschrei und der Ruthe der Menschen,
> Da spielt' ich sicher und gut
> Mit den Blumen des Hains,
> Und die Luftchen des Himmels
> Spielten mit mir.
>
> (II, 47)

It is specifically the lack of human language which makes the child feel at one with nature and with the divine: this is Hölderlinian <u>Einfalt</u>, the condition in which the self is one with the surrounding elements precisely because the self feels nature (earth, air, water, fire) as <u>familiar</u>. Simplicity is further seen as a state of grace, a divine <u>saving</u> of the self, but unlike traditional Christian grace, the grace of <u>Einfalt</u>, for Hölderlin, is specifically a protection from human language ("von Geschrei . . . der Menschen). Positively, <u>Einfalt</u> is described as a silent understanding, a knowledge other than that of human consciousness, which finds its expression only in language: "Ich verstand die Stille des Äthers,/ Der Menschen Worte

verstand ich nie" (II, 48). By implication, therefore, the very act of naming, which is the first expression of consciousness, is in itself the first act of separation from unity of being. By the act of naming, the child destroys his familiarity with the world (both natural and divine):

> Zwar damals rieff ich noch nicht
> Euch mit Nahmen, auch ihr
> Nanntet mich nie, wie die Menschen sich nennen,
> Als kennten sie sich.
> (II, 47)

The very same claim for the silent, unconscious wholeness of simplicity is made early in Hyperion: "Da ich noch ein stilles Kind war und von dem allen was uns umgiebt, nichts wusste . . . (II, 93)." Thus it is appropriate that in the silence which expresses Hyperion's sense of present loss, he should also nostalgically recall the silence of innocence. The essential similarity of these two conditions marks what Hölderlin had described in a more theoretical and abstract way as the "essentially similar direction . . ." which the "eccentric road" of Bildung seems, at times, to assume. But the point is that the state of nostalgic annihilation (after Trennung) recalls by its very nature the state of Einfalt. It does more: in a state of nostalgic annihilation the process which has just taken place is named. The seeming annihilation after Trennung leads to the nostalgic attempt to capture as language that state of unity which seems irrevocably lost. At the end of Hyperion's letter which describes the paradoxical similarity

between the silence of alienation and the silence of simplicity, he names his present state of relationship to the world:

> Nun sprach ich nimmer zu der Blume, du bist meine Schwester und zu den Quellen, wir sind Eines Geschlechts! ich gab nun treulich, wie ein Echo, jedem Dinge seinen Namen.
> (II, 136)

The statement is in fact an echo of the condition of innocence, now apprehended negatively as an awareness of what has been lost. Language itself is the medium of this negative apprehension. In the act of "faithfully . . . giving each thing its name" the condition of familiarity is lost: flowers are no longer sisters, but flowers. In the act of naming, the self is separated from the world. At this period in his development Hyperion can only self-consciously parody a nostalgic remembrance of familiarity with nature. Hyperion's use of language is really that of the "sentimental" poet (in the Schillerian sense): his language articulates his isolation from the world. Hölderlin's metaphor of language as an echo is most suggestive because, while Hyperion is in fact naming his isolation from the world, the act itself echoes most richly that set of attitudes which constitutes "naive" poetry--that set of attitudes which would express the sense of unity with the world through language. Hölderlin's self-conscious echo of isolation, his lack of familiarity with the world is a precise parody of St. Francis' "Laudes Creaturarum," a poem

which quite unselfconsciously names the world as familiar: St. Francis' hymn of praise specifically names the elements as members of a family, his family and God's; precisely the sort of act which Hölderlin's hero can no longer accomplish. For example, compare the explicit similarity between the "Canticle of the Creatures" and Hyperion's "Nun sprach ich nimmer zu der Blume, du bist meine Schwester . . ." passage:

> Laudato si', mi Signore, per frate vento
> et per ere et nubilo et sereno . . .
>
> Laudato si', mi' Signore, per sor'aqua,
> la quale e' multo utile et humile et pretiosa et casta.[13]

Whatever the similarity between the silence of isolation and the growing silent of the state of childhood, the paradox which this crisis in Hyperion's development makes explicit is that recovery of the lost sense of unity with nature does not (perhaps cannot) come about through the medium of language. Rather, it is a vague "intimation," whose source is ultimately in nature, which permits recovery:

> O es war ein himmlisch Ahnen, womit ich jezt den kommenden Frühling wieder begrüsste! Wie fernher in schweigender Luft, wenn alles schläft, das Saitenspiel der Geliebten, so umtönten seine leisen Melodien mir die Brust wie von Elysium herüber, vernahm ich seine Zukunft, wenn die todten Zweige sich regten und ein lindes Wehen meine Wange beruhrte . . . .

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[13] Francesco d'Assisi, "Laudes Creaturarum" in La Letteratura Italiana, ed. Gianfranco Contini (Milano/Napoli, n.d.), p. 33.

> Ich erhob mich, wie vom Krankenbette, leise und langsam . . .
>
> (II, 137)

Clearly, the analogy here is between the natural cycle of death and regeneration and Hyperion's inner, spiritual loss and recovery. But Hyperion's recovery is, most importantly, described as only analogous to the great natural cycle. However similar, the two movements are not identical. But the analogy is sufficient to suggest that (like the necessity of separation and loss) the inner movement toward recovery is a necessary and just response both to the natural world and to the demands of Hyperion's inner condition. It must be pointed out, however, that it is Hyperion's awareness of what has happened which prevents the all too simplistic "return" to nature in the rather more naive fashion of Wordsworth. Precisely the growing inner strength which Hyperion develops causes him to remember and to mourn his past: "Ach! meinen Adamas sucht' ich, meinen Alabanda, aber es erschien mir keiner." (II, 138).

In the important concluding letter of Book I, Hyperion questions just this double aspect of growing inner strength and its concomitant destructiveness. The letter begins: "Zuweilen regte noch sich eine Geisteskraft in mir. Aber freilich nur zerstörend!" (II, 139.) But, despite his recognition of destructiveness as inherent in the process of spiritual growth, the tone of Hyperion's reflections become increasingly, almost heroically,

optimistic, even as he acknowledges human aspirations as essentially doomed to failure. Hyperion describes these aspirations as, on the one hand, a nostalgia for simplicity and, on the other, a nostalgia for the divine; neither ideal seems capable of accomplishment--but the process (the movement from "ich war" to "ich will werden") is recognized as both necessary and inevitable. The sense of optimism emerges from what Hyperion recognizes as the result of the enterprise:

> Zu den Pflanzen spricht er, ich war auch einmal, wie ihr! und zu den reinen Sternen, ich will werden, wie ihr, in einer andren Welt! inzwischen bricht er auseinander und treibt hin und wieder seine Künste mit sich selbst, als könnt' er, wenn es einmal sich aufgelost, Lebendiges zusammensezen, wie ein Mauerwerk; aber es macht ihn auch nicht irre, wenn nichts gebessert wird durch all sein Thun; es bleibt doch immerhin ein Kunststük was er treibt.
> (II, 140)

In its general outlines, this statement recapitulates Hölderlin's theoretical formulation of Bildung ("Es giebt zwei Ideale unsweres Daseyns . . ."), but here the emphatic recognition of historical process, and historical destruction, as well as the punning recognition of the "artifice" (that is, the man-made quality) of the endeavor clearly indicates Hyperion's Bildung to be a process which is more or less pointed to, rather than actually achieved, in the course of the novel. Therefore, despite the alternations of tone, the radical attitude of the novel is one of intense optimism. Hyperion's commitment to resolving the "dissonances" of existence is a process of becoming and

therefore the past, however,it is marked by failure, may still be redeemed in some future act. It is for this reason that reflection is such a problematic attitude in the novel. Mere reflection is seen by Hölderlin as temptation, which results only in elegiac remorse. Just after Hyperion acknowledges his own actions--and by extension all human actions--as "Kunststücke," which are at best dangerous and at worst fatal, but which are not acknowledged as futile, he notes that an attitude of futility is only the result of reflection on a frustrated action. In an allusion to the disappointments of achieving an ideal Golden Age in historical time Hyperion suggests that the "emptiness" of disappointment resides in the very act of "reviewing" the past:

> O einst . . . war es anders. Da war es über uns so schön, so schön und froh vor uns; auch diese Herzen wallten über . . . und wie sie sich umsahn, wehe, da war es eine unendliche Leere.
>
> (Italics mine. II, 140)

The attitude of despair is all the more tempting the greater one's historical consciousness, particularly in the case of Hyperion who so definitely rejects the titanic dream, the possibility of a humanity becoming divine. For Hyperion, historical endeavor is acutely mortal and men are called (in a fine Homeric echo), "Kinder des Augenbliks . . . (II, 141)." Because the gods are above simply removed from historical time, the historical lesson which Hyperion assumes to be true is that both millenial

hopes and elegiac remorse are temptations, which once recognized as such and overcome, permit a new movement towards historical fulfillment.

WILHELM MEISTERS LEHRJAHRE:

IRONY AS CONSOLATION

I

An aphorism of Goethe's, written late in his life, identifies the novel as a rather special kind of exercise in the art of narration--

> Der Roman ist eine subjective Epopee, in welcher der Verfasser sich die Erlaubnis ausbittet, die Welt nach seiner Weise zu behandeln. Es fragt sich also nur, ob er eine Weise habe; das andere wird sich schon finden.[1]

The remark illuminates the attitude governing Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre and, further, distinguishes the Lehrjahre from both The Prelude and Hyperion. While Wordsworth and Hölderlin display their narrations of Bildung in a language of heroic tonality and by a rhetoric ultimately derived from epic tradition, Goethe's attitude, to the contrary, is cast ironically and implies at every turn that narrative exists by virtue of artifice. The manner of narration in the Lehrjahre suggests nothing heroic about Wilhelm, nor about the world in which he moves. Goethe's irony is at once an acknowledgement of subjectivity and an attempt to affirm subjectivity by means of stylistic assertion. The

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[1] Goethes Werke, XII (Hamburg, 1953), 498.

emphasis points toward manner of utterance; the object of utterance, the world, *das andere* in Goethe's words, is left to take care of itself.

The *milieu* of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, Goethe's language of narration and his rhetoric of depiction, derives from, and resembles, the great exemplary novels of the eighteenth century, the novels of Fielding and Richardson. Narrative tone suggests the nature of the similarity most clearly: the novelistic world is realized in a language of urbane conversationality. Affirmation of the historical and praise of ideal human actions within a context affirmed as an historical reality no longer remains strictly relevant to the rhetoric of the novel. The emphasis shifts rather to the narrator himself, whose voice interrogates and qualifies his assumptions of an ordinary reality and an everyday life. For all of their obvious differences, both Tom Jones and Wilhelm Meister are novelistic heroes saved by the artifice of narrative. Neither the gods, nor the heroic ideal of *Virtú*--that inner excellence of personality--determines what shall happen in the novel. Rather the *mythos* derives its definition in the consciousness of the narrator who manipulates event into fiction, a generalization which in itself seems too obvious to be confuted, but which is nevertheless illuminating when we observe that in the case of Goethe narrative manipulation is a highly self-conscious act. Goethe's rhetorical

strategm in the Lehrjahre is to admit the world in fiction as a play on, and a playing with, reality in the ordinary sense. Goethe begins by drawing attention to the principle that the totality of his narrative exists as if it were a Schauspiel. With the first sentence of the novel--"Das Schauspiel dauerte sehr lange"--the narrator describes not only an event in the fiction, but also describes self-consciously the event of the fiction, the novel called Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre. Goethe's opening sentence may be seen as a rhetorical figure, a synecdoche, describing the narrative history of Wilhelm Meister which follows, but the point is that the act of naming the narrative a Schauspiel itself makes an ontological claim. In contrast to the claims of epic narration, Goethe precisely denies his novel the kind of "truth" which the epic narrator must assume. However complex and ambivalent Milton's feelings about the Fall might have been, his poem contends quite seriously that Paradise has in fact been lost. The narrator of the Lehrjahre contends, however, that the history of his hero exists only as a play, a particular Schauspiel among many in the history of theater.

By making his manipulation of the fictive event apparent, Goethe draws attention to his own voice as an act of consciousness, mediating experience as appearance and ultimately defining fiction as a display which allows the world to remain mute. Irony is the device par excellence

which expresses poetic self-consciousness; its function is to draw attention away from what the narrative ostensibly describes and to draw attention to its nature as narrative, to the fact that narrative events are not events at all but fictions, pieces of language. The reader, therefore, cannot take anything Goethe says in the Lehrjahre in an absolutely straightforward way; the tone of voice always obtrudes upon the narrative event and insinuates that the event is after all only a manner of speaking.

II

From the outset the authorial voice in the Lehrjahre establishes itself as final arbitrator, mediator, and judge of presented events, by suggesting the uncertain ambiguity of event, as event, and thereby rendering only the apparitional quality of the event. "Das Schauspiel dauerte sehr lange" seems so entirely ingenuous and matter-of-fact a statement of narrative exposition. Yet the very tone of matter-of-factness initiates an immediate ambiguity. The sentence suggests why "die Alte" runs towards the window at frequent intervals, but hovering somewhere around the laconic directness of statement about the play, which lasted a long time, there remains an uncertainty: the play itself is never named. Die alte Barbara awaits Mariane, her mistress, an actress, who appears as a young officer in the theater, but not in the Schauspiel itself. If, or whether, Mariane appeared in the play is simply left open. We know

only that Mariane appeared in the Nachspiel, the epilogue. The specific event to which the Schauspiel of the first sentence refers, initiating the action of the novel with such grace and apparent ease, is itself not indicated; the Schauspiel could be Phaedra or As You Like It.

Mariane herself is introduced as a character, playing a role, and utterly charming the public because she is beautiful, but, more importantly, because her youth and femininity is at once hidden and enhanced by the masquerade of costume. The youthful grace of the girl (seen as) officer reveals itself only through the charming fraud of disguise. In a rather similar way Barbara, her servant, is also an actress; her existence in the narrative is described by a leisurely catalogue of the roles she plays:[2]

> Dienerin, Vertraute, Ratgeberin, Unterhändlerin und Haushälterin im Besitz des Rechtes die Siegel zu eröffnen. (P. 9.)

In addition to her other abilities, the old servant betrays a keen talent for mise en scene. Her eye for production, and sense of setting, reveals itself in the care with which she places the gift to Mariane from Norberg, Wilhelm's competitor, in order to enhance its value dramatically. The present itself is only an unbleached calico scarf, but its arrangement on a tiny table and the setting of lights create

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[2]Unless otherwise noted, all textual quotations from Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre are from Goethes Werke, ed. Erich Trunz (Hamburg, 1950), VII. Page references will follow quotations in parentheses.

an ambience which makes this bit of cloth seem "ein Christgeschenk auf dem Tischchen; die Stellung der Lichter erhöhte den Glanz der Gabe." (P. 9.)

These examples should suggest the opening thematic organization of Goethe's narrative; the theme is theater, not only the adventures of a young actress and her boy friend in the theatrical milieu of an unnamed German town of the late eighteenth century, but the physical space confining the narrative, Mariane's room, the characters' manner of action, and the arrangement of objects, all are revealed as on a three-sided stage and function theatrically. The opening of the Lehrjahre is theater and, moreover, theater directed in a particular style; the narrative of Book I, Chapter 1, imitates and, to a certain extent, parodies the stylistic characteristics of German Baroque-Rococo theater by its elaborate placing of people and props, definition of space, as well as by a heightening of emotion through dialogue.[3] Die Alte, for example, effusively flutters about her mistress with comic--because we know she is not quite sincere--anxiety:

> "Was hast du Liebchen?" rief die Alte verwundert aus. "Um's Himmels willen Tochterchen, was gibt's? Sieh

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[3] In his discussion of the qualities of German Baroque theatrical style, Fritz Martini describes "das Theater der barocken Neigung . . ." as aiming "zum Repräsentativen, Rhetorischen, zum Pathos des Geistigen Wortes und der grossen Gebärde, zum Prunk des festlichen Schaustellung" (Deutsche Literature Geschichte [Stuttgart, 1961], p. 153).

> hier diese Geschenke! Von wem können sie sein, als von dienem zartlichsten Freunde?"
> (Pp. 9-10)

Mariane's protestations of affection towards Wilhelm also exhibit qualities of melodramatic effusion, but with the difference that Mariane views her love self-consciously, quite aware that her passions, however deeply felt, bloom like passions on the stage, in the mode of "as if." "Ich will mich dieser Leidenschaft überlassen, als wenn sie ewig dauern solite." (Italics mine.) (P. 10.) With the soul of a genuine actress, Mariane realizes that a Schauspiel may last a long time, but hardly forever.

In a final imitation of Rococo theatricality, the narrator closes the chapter with a highly stylized, decorous flourish:

> Wilhelm trat herein. Mit welcher Lebhaftigkeit flog sie ihm entgegen! . . . Die Alte ging murrend beiseite, wir entfernen uns mit ihr und lassen die Glücklichen allein.
> (P. 11.)

In an essay on the Lehrjahre Hans-Egon Hass has observed that the chapter concludes on the topos of aposiopesis (a breaking off suddenly, as if unwilling to express one's mind).[4] But Goethe's device reaches beyond the rhetoric of affected modesty, beyond the suggestion that further observation of the two lovers might be an impropriety; the authorial intrusion into the scene at this point and in this

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[4] In Der Deutsche Roman, ed. Benno von Wiese (Düsseldorf, 1963), pp. 132-210.

manner defines the scene itself as a metaphor of theatricality, revealing that the action unfolds as on a stage, precisely because it affirms the existence of an audience--"wir." The reader and the authorial commentator are acknowledged as spectators to the scene. As audience, the reader's knowledge of events is controlled by the authorial voice, which casts itself in the double role of commentative observer and director of narrative action. The narrator asserts both roles at once, revealing only those aspects of the action which he considers appropriate and simultaneously commenting on the delicacy and propriety of the revelation. A sense of drama and decorum both, not a consideration of the propriety of dramatic action only, determines just when and how the curtain might best be closed on the first scene.

The first chapter of the Lehrjahre is, therefore, something more than a moment of narrative exposition rendered in the bravura style of Rococo theatricality; imitation of Rococo style becomes exploitation to indicate that the fictive event reveals itself only by grace of authorial mediation, a mediation which makes itself felt by the fact of its style. A sharply defined tone and a precisely functioning authorial intrusion casts the opening chapter in a theatrical light, reveals it as a species of theater, an illuminated appearance, and moreover as appearance staged, directed, and enacted in a particular style.

Goethe's spectacular controlling metaphor of the

novel-as-theater does not imply that the novel, the Lehrjahre, is theater--it only resembles theater. In the course of the narrative itself, numerous theoretical discussions among characters, acting on a number of stages, also suggest possible definitions for the concept "novel" within the dramatic context of this particular novel, Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre. Taken by themselves, the excursions of Goethe's characters into speculative aesthetics often display considerable acuity and insight, but the appearance of such speculations as part of the dramatic fabric of the narrative itself suggests also that the Lehrjahre is that peculiar kind of novel which essays its own self-definition as part of its dramatic unfolding. In a general way the literary discussions in the Lehrjahre must be felt as intrusive interruptions; they retard the more dramatic movements of the narrative as surely as an entre-acte retards the dramatic movement of a play, but a discussion of the concept "novel" occurring within, and interrupting the developing narrative of, a particular novel implies a larger strategy of self-conscious redefinition, and, further, a kind of redefinition which assumes its own place as part of a larger dramatic context. In Book V, Chapter vii, for example, Serlo's theater group, in an attempt to get things straight in principle, preparatory to the final practice of acting, enters on a speculative discussion, about which the author informs us he will

deliver only a synoptic summary. The subject under dispute is "ob der Roman oder das Drama den Vorzug verdiene" (p. 307). Serlo, the director of the company, with a hard-headed toughness typical of him, suggests that the question as it stands is a false one. He notes that before the company may decide which genre is better, it must first decide on epitomic definitions of each genre as it is: "es sei ein vergeblicher misverstandener Streit; beide (the novel and the drama) könnten in ihrer Art vortrefflich sein, nur müssten sie sich in den Grenzen ihrer Gattung halten" (p. 307). Serlo's remark may be taken as an appeal for an orderly dialectic and nicely suggests the Gründlichkeit of his personality. But more importantly the remark suggests an intellectual provincialism and perhaps a conservative timidity, because its presuppositions--separation of genres, purity of genres--come straight from French neo-classical aesthetics. Serlo, in other words, offers what had become an intellectual cliché for the sake of intellectual order.[5] The company, however, agrees to the imposed limitation and in the ensuing discussion it attempts

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[5]Goethe's own position on the question of "die Grenzung der Gattungen" is difficult to determine; certainly the issue was of central importance to Goethe during the late 1790's. See, for example, "Uber epische und dramatische Dichtung," Goethes Werke, XII (Hamburg, 1953), 249-251. In contrast to the discussion of genre in the Lehrjahre, which studiously ignores the question of narrative voice, in "Uber epische and dramatische Dichtung" Goethe acknowledges the critical, and controlling, importance of manner of narration.

to define the two genres within the limiting circumscription of Serlo's premise.

The company notes first of all that "im Roman sollen vorzüglich Gesinnungen und Begebenheiten vorgestellt werden; in Drama Charaktere und Taten" (p. 307), a distinction which in the abstract is sane enough to be uninteresting. More interesting is that the distinction is based on such generic models as Clarissa, The Vicar of Wakefield, and Tom Jones; in other words, the classic eighteenth century examples of the genre. The choice is logical enough, because precisely these works exerted pervasive influence and were simply au courant for a literate continental society in the latter part of the eighteenth century. We know from other sources, however, that Goethe considered Sterne the great genius of this period of English letters.[6] It may not just be an accident therefore that Sterne's novels are absent from the catalogue in the Lehrjahre. Because Goethe's characters think along rather conservative, Frankified Aristotelian lines, they would certainly choose clear, rather than problematic, cases for their generic paradigms.

The theater group's conventional Aristotelianism

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[6] For an example of Goethe's opinion of Sterne, see "Lorenz Sterne," Goethes Werke, XII (Hamburg, 1953), 345-346. See also the strange emphasis on Sterne, although coming from a fictionalized voice, in the account, "Aus Makariens Archiv," Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre. Goethes Werke, VIII (Hamburg, 1957), especially p. 480 and p. 482.

influences its formulations concerning the drama in a more apparent way; it takes the defining quality of drama to be the direct representation of an action by a character. And because event is controlled directly by character, chance (Zufall) is therefore inappropriate to the tragic drama. If a dramatic action is to take a genuinely tragic turn, it must do so directly as a product of the protagonist's actions.[7] In tragedy, "das Schicksal . . . werde im höchsten Sinne tragisch, wenn es schuldige und unschuldige, voneinander unabhängige Taten in eine unglückliche Verknüpfung bringt" (p. 308). By contrast, the heroes of novels are "retardierende Personen, und alle Begebenheiten werden gewissermassen nach ihren Gesinnungen gemodelt" (p. 308). The novel therefore cannot represent tragic situations because the hero of the novel cannot directly initiate or enact his destiny; he enacts nothing. He only apprehends circumstances and responds to the pressures of situation. For this reason, also, the novel can, at best, represent the pathetic--pictures of heightened feeling, sensibility, suffering, and the like.

Again, the inferential process which leads the theater company to its theoretical formulation is more

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[7]Cf. Aristotle's Poetics (Sec. V): "For Tragedy is an imitation, not of men, but of action and of life, and life consists in action, and its end is a mode of action, not a quality. Now Character determines men's qualities, but it is by their actions that they are happy or the reverse." (Tr. Butcher [Hill and Wang: N. Y., 1961], p. 62.)

instructive than the formulation itself. Because the group has inferred its generic definition from extant, "pure," "classic," and unproblematic models, their definitions are historical-descriptive and reductive, based on the assumption that the novel or the drama as literary genres are fulfilled and completed by the examples which already exist. The discussion avoids confronting the ontological question: what is a novel?; as indeed Aristotle's Poetics avoids the ontological question: what is a tragedy? Serlo's company has only described, although quite elegantly, the major characteristics of certain paradigmatic eighteenth century English novels--and only that.

The question remains in which ways the theater company's discussion functions thematically in the Lehrjahre. Is the episode of the company's discussing a theory of the novel an occasion to intrude a bit of expertise upon the plot of the Lehrjahre, or is this discussion, as it appears within its larger fictional context, an attempt to define the relationship of the Lehrjahre to its novelistic ancestors and perhaps also an attempt at self-exegesis? In a letter to Goethe, in language rather similar to that of the theater company's, Friedrich Schiller identifies Wilhelm himself as a typical hero quite in the tradition of the exemplary eighteenth century English novel:

> Wilhelm Meister ist zwar die notwendigste, aber nicht die wichtigste Person; eben das gehört zu den Eigentümlichkeiten Ihres Romans, dass er keine solche wichtigste Person hat und braucht. An ihm und um ihn

> geschieht alles, aber nicht eigentlich seinetwegen; eben weil die Dinge um ihn her die Energien, er aber die Bildsamkeit darstellt und ausdrückt, so muss er ein ganz ander Verhältnis zu den Mitcharakteren haben, als der Held in andern Romanen hat.[8]

The point Schiller clearly recognizes and Goethe obliquely indicates by the theater company episode is that the world assumed in the novel is a very different place from the world assumed in tragedy. The "sentimental," novelistic hero is more than a specific psychological type; he is not merely a character different from the character capable of tragic action, but a character who exists in a fiction which represents the world as a phenomenon where things occur without respect to the hero's intentions, wishes or expectations. Tragedy, to the contrary, assumes a world which is an outward manifestation of a hero's enactments. This suggests, then, that events, and the principles of causality or logic which order events, have a special kind of autonomy in the novel; the "realism" of the Lehrjahre is more than a mimetically accurate rendition of bourgeois and aristocratic life in eighteenth century Germany. Goethe's "realism" is the product of a pervasive, fundamental attitude at work in the novel; an attitude which assumes a world where events flow beyond and outrun an individual's

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[8]To Goethe--28 November 1796, Briefwechsel zwischen Goethe und Schiller. Goethe Gedenkausgabe, ed. Ernst Beutler (Zurich, 1950), XX, 280. All further quotations from the Goethe-Schiller correspondence will refer to the pagination in this edition.

capacity to confront them directly by action. In tragedy, event is the intimate consequence of the pattern of the hero's action. In the novel, by this view, the hero cannot directly determine events, and even less grasp event and consequence in an intimate totality; the novelistic hero may only exhibit "Bildsamkeit" (Schiller's word), a certain capacity for self-development through an inward ordering of consciousness, to achieve retrospectively some sense of harmony with outward circumstance.

One criterion of a hero's Bildung is, therefore, his capacity to cope with the accidental and the circumstantial, to deal with Zufall. It is not surprising that the progression of events in the Lehrjahre weaves a fabric of Zufall and the central theme of the novel emerges from Wilhelm's changing attitude toward, and developing awareness of, the meaning of Zufall. Of the many readers of the Lehrjahre, perhaps none was as passionately receptive and attentive as Schiller. Yet he had his reservations, especially concerning the resolution of the novel in Book VIII. Schiller's doubts were, I think, the result of a misunderstanding of Goethe's conception of the interaction of Zufall and individual sensibility. Shortly before Goethe completed the latter part of the Lehrjahre, Schiller published his famous treatise on Bildung--"Briefe über die Ästhetische Erziehung."[9] According to Schiller, Ästhetische

[9] Schillers Werke, XX (Weimar, 1962), 309-412.

Erziehung would permit a human sensibility, in its highest development, to effect a synthetic resolution among bewildering proliferations of epistemic, psychological and moral oppositions: what we apprehend as the irreconcilable oppositions of Natur-Vernunft, Stofftrieb-Formtrieb, and the like, could be resolved by an active mankind incarnating for itself the insubstantial ideals of art. Schiller was committed to a notion of an ideal art which would reveal itself totally to consciousness and equally committed to a notion of consciousness which would find total access to art. His doubts about the Lehrjahre grew out of the conflict between his commitment to an art which generously reforms the whole world and all things in it and what he actually saw in Goethe's novel. In his most outspoken objection to the Lehrjahre, Schiller accuses Goethe almost naively of hiding the answers in his art:

> Was ich also . . . wünschte, wäre dieses, dass die Beziehung aller einzelnen Glieder des Romans auf jenen philosophischen Begriff [the concept "Lehrjahre" and its relation to the concept "Meisterschaft"] noch etwas klarer gemacht würde. Ich möchte sagen, die Fabel ist vollkommen wahr, auch die Moral der Fabel ist vollkommen wahr, aber das Verhältnis der einen zu der andern springt noch nicht deutlich genug in die Augen.[10]

In answer Goethe offers the famous comment:

> Der Fehler, den Sie mit Recht bemerken, kommt aus meiner innersten Natur, aus einem gewissen realistischen Tic, durch den ich meine Existenz, meine Handlungen, meine Schriften den Menschen aus den Augen zu rücken behaglich finde.[11]

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[10] To Goethe--8 July 1796, Briefwechsel, p. 206.

[11] To Schiller--9 July 1796, Briefwechsel, p. 208.

For all of its seeming frankness, Goethe's explanation to Schiller nevertheless is colored by an attitude of ironic duplicity; while Goethe admits the air of secretiveness which hangs about the novel as a "mistake" or a "weakness"--an expression of an idiosyncratic "realistic whim"--he announces at the same time that this mistake has its source in his innermost nature, the ground of his being and his art. Goethe's answer to Schiller suggests how his "realism" is in fact an ironic mode; the unexplained--and by implication the unexplainable--inner meaning of events cannot be fully invaded by the development of consciousness. In its highest development consciousness recognizes that nature (outward reality) remains stubbornly secret; at best, consciousness may be seen as a skillful capacity to play with, and ironically manipulate, a stubbornly secretive world.

Irony and the mode of its functioning in the Lehrjahre remains the key to an understanding of the novel. Oddly enough, Schiller's brilliant and attentive criticism of the novel misconstrues the function of irony in the Lehrjahre. This misunderstanding is paradoxical, because it is Schiller's pervasive, unflinching, seriousness which causes him to misinterpret Goethe's ironic voice, while at the same time his entire aesthetic theory depends on an abstract conception of "playfulness" (Spieltrieb) as an ideal which would reconcile the opposing claims of art and ordinary reality. In a theoretical way Schiller sees the

playfulness of art as the last possibility of generating order out of the conflicts of human instincts.[12] Yet, Schiller's most serious doubts concerning the Lehrjahre focus precisely here--on the problematic aspect of the novel's playfulness. Schiller notes in the tone of Goethe's narrative:

> Dass bei dem grossen und tiefen Ernste, der in allem Einzelnen herrscht und durch den es so mächtig wirkt, die Einbildungskraft zu frei mit dem Ganzen zu spielen scheint.[13]

A little further on in the same letter he refers specifically to Goethe's strategy of manipulating Zufall:

> Wenn je eine poetische Erzählung der Hülfe des Wunderbaren und Überraschenden entbehren konnte, so ist es Ihr Roman; und gar leicht kann einem Solchen Werke schaden, was ihm nicht nützt. Es kann geschehen, dass die Aufmerksamkeit mehr auf das Zufällige geheftet wird, und dass das Interesse des Lesers sich konsumiert, Rätsel aufzulösen, da es auf den innern Geist konzentriert bleiben sollte. Es kann geschehen, sage ich, und wissen wir nicht beide, dass es wirklich schon geschehen ist?[14]

Clearly Schiller considers Goethe's manipulation of circumstance an extraneous, even obtrusive, device, which distracts the reader's attention away from the "spirit," or meaning, of the novel. In short, in the Lehrjahre Goethe is too playful for Schiller's taste. The matter of authorial tone for Schiller is fundamentally a question of decorum, of

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[12] "Briefe über die ästhetische Erziehung," particularly letters 14, 15, and 16.

[13] To Goethe--8 July 1795, Briefwechsel, pp. 203-204.

[14] Ibid., p. 204.

finding a rhetorical strategy which directly reveals the moral seriousness of the artist's intention, and which can therefore persuade the artist's audience that "art" is, after all, a very serious business. Indeed, Schiller questions the decorum of Goethe's tone specifically in a number of places. At one point, for example, he suggests: "Sie (Goethe) . . . die freie Grazie der Bewegung etwas weiter getrieben haben, als sich mit dem poetischen Ernste verträgt."[15] Such an objection first of all assumes that narrative tone functions supportively and peripherally rather than centrally and structurally in the work of art. Secondly, it ignores the possibility that tone furnishes meaning in the work of art. But in the Lehrjahre especially, authorial tone constitutes the central order of meaning in the narrative. Goethe's avuncular voice not only intrudes upon and retards dramatic action in addresses and asides to the reader, for example, but also his very manner of narration controls the event under scrutiny, in order to suggest always that the event will not explain itself. There is no sense of a chronologically coherent sequence of temporality in the novel, rather coherence resides in the logicality of the narrative voice. Only the manner of telling reveals--and conceals--meaning. Goethe's predilection for masquerade, which we have noted before, expresses

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[15] Loc. cit.

at once his "realism" and an obeisance to the demands of his "innermost nature." Taken all in all, Goethe's masquerade is an admission really that the best one can do before the brute, secretive forces of existence is to hide; and the work of art becomes therefore an articulate hiding, a dissimulation in the face of natural fact. It is Goethe's tone which reveals the direction and purpose of his dissimulation.

The first chapter illustrates how complexly the theme of Wilhelm Meisters Bildung has evolved in the Lehrjahre from the Theatralische Sendung, Goethe's early and fragmentary attempt at the theme. It has often been noted that the Lehrjahre begins in medias res, in contrast to the Sendung which narrates Wilhelm's development as a coherently progressive, sequential history. The first chapter of the Lehrjahre provides the dramatic occasion for the recollection of Wilhelm's history; the narrator reaches into the past to flesh out the drama of the present moment, but more importantly the reach in to the past is accomplished as an autobiographical act by a dramatic persona, Wilhelm. Wilhelm's history reveals itself dramatically as recollection and therefore the notion of "history" and "recollection" are conceptually linked. The theatrical atmosphere and the occasion of Wilhelm's courtship of Mariane provide the dramatic occasion and offer psychological propriety for what immediately follows in the novel, those chapters

devoted to Wilhelm's extensive autobiographical ruminations. But, whatever the psychological and dramatic relevance of Wilhelm's recounting his first theatrical enthusiasms, his childhood love of Puppenspiel, to the young actress he is courting, the placing of Wilhelm's history after the narrative context of the first chapter suggests a more intimate relevance of Wilhelm's past for his present. As I have noted earlier, the action of Chapter I (Barbara waiting for her mistress, Marian's arrival, Wilhelm's entrance--finish) reveals itself in a dramatic style and through conventions which can be identified in time and place; the style of narration, more perhaps than the content of the narration, can be identified as Baroque-Rococo, as it might have been staged in Germany in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Wilhelm's autobiography which follows turns out to be a history of his own personal relationship to the theater. If we consider Chapter I as the enactment of one moment in the history of theatrical style, on a level beyond the particular delineation of an individual character and quite apart from the particularities of narrative context, then also Wilhelm's autobiographical account of his own development genetically traces a phylogeny of theatrical history. The progression from the naive, mysterious atmosphere and clumsy production of his childhood Puppenspiel to the sophisticated pretense and elegant self-consciousness of Baroque theatrical style describes not

only Wilhelm's history, but also historical stages of theatrical style, so that the time-present of the narrative, the drama of his present feelings cause Wilhelm to confess that his love affair with Mariane seems almost a destined consummation of his long developing flirtation with theater itself.

Wilhelm's account of his love for Puppenspiel is charming; his half-condescending, half-nostalgic, sentimental recollection reveals, first of all, Wilhelm's fundamental decency and sensitivity. But the framework of authorial comment complicates Wilhelm's account by its insinuating irony: there are obviously things which Wilhelm fails to see about himself, and the narrator's commentative attitude reveals his hero's limited vision, offering the ironic context for Wilhelm's recollections. The context demands that the reader question his initial response to the seeming simplicity of Wilhelm's autobiography. Chapter III introduces an ironic ambiguity while pretending simple clarity: is the invocation apropos of Wilhelm's love for Mariane or for the Puppenspiel? There is in fact no way of telling directly from the language, but by this time the context suggests that Wilhelm's love for Puppenspiel and his love for the young actress are indeed cut from the same cloth of feeling. At a point considerably later in the novel Wilhelm himself recalls the possible confusion of his two loves:

> War es denn bloss Liebe zu Marianen, die mich ans Theater fesselte? oder war es Liebe zu Kunst, die mich an das Mädchen festknüpfte?
> (p. 277)

At this early moment in the narrative Wilhelm only recognizes a kind of affective continuity between his recollections of former feelings and his present mood in the company of Mariane. But the language Wilhelm uses to describe the Puppenspiel episode suggests already that the reach into the past is more than simple nostalgia, but rather an affirmation, however obscure, of the inseparability of his history and his existence, a recognition that what he was then informs what he is now and determines what he will be in the future:

> Es ist so angenehm selbstzufrieden sich mancher Hindernisse zu erinnern, die wir oft mit einem peinlichen Gefühle für unüberwindlich hielten, und dasjenige, was wir jetzt, entwickelt, sind, mit dem zu vergleichen, was wir damals, unentwickelt, waren. Aber unaussprechlich glücklich fühl' ich mich jetzt, da ich in diesem Augenblicke mit dir von dem Vergangnen rede, weil ich zugleich vorwärts in das reizende Land schaue, das wir zusammen Hand in Hand durchwandern können.
> (P. 17)

Taken in isolation, and especially considering their portentous, self-congratulatory tone, these observations nicely illustrate what Schiller identified in Wilhelm's character as "ein Hang zum Reflektieren," the on-going, but often mistaken, impulse to seek out the principles of order which determine his existence. Wilhelm's remarks express his present feelings with passionate accuracy, but the irony of his evaluation of his new love for Mariane as the

entelechy of his first love for the theater lies in his conclusion, his confusion of enthusiasm and fact; both loves are false indices of a precious and sentimental "reizendes Land" Wilhelm sees shimmering before his eyes, because in both instances Wilhelm projects subjective feelings outward to make these feelings themselves prophesy the joys of the future.

Although Wilhelm rather wildly misunderstands the significance of his affair with Mariane, his effort to relate present experience to past history does establish the central pattern from which his Bildung subsequently reveals itself. At this point in Wilhelm's history, a suggestion is introduced, perhaps only obliquely, that the intensity of subjective feeling has something indirectly to do with development, but hardly as a reliable guide and direct imperative for action. The problem is in how feelings are related to action: in the first few chapters Wilhelm finds himself confronted repeatedly by imperatives for moderation which, one need hardly wonder, go unheeded. In Chapter I, die alte Barbara warns the young lovers: "mässigt Euch . . . mässigt Euch," and at the opening of Chapter II, Wilhelm's mother frowningly comments on his "unmässige Leidenschaft zu diesem Vergnügen" (his present excursions to the theater). Interestingly enough, Wilhelm's mother identifies his childhood experiences with the Puppenspiel as the source of his present immoderation:

> Wie oft musste ich mir das verwünschte Puppenspiel vorwerfen lassen das ich euch vor zwölf Jahren zum heiligen Christ gab, und das euch zuerst Geschmack am Schauspiele beibrachte.
> (P. 12)

In the perspective only of psychological "realism" it is difficult to see the importance either Wilhelm or his Mother attaches to the episode of the Puppenspiel. If we consider the episode as a relevant "fact" which explains Wilhelm's history, or some part of it, then the episode is not more than an overextended indulgence by a sentimental character. It is difficult ot see what all the fuss is about. The manner of narration suggests, however, another context of meaning for the episode. No doubt the recollection of the Puppenspiel seems realistic, psychologically and dramatically appropriate, but at the same time the narration offers a symbolic pattern of which Wilhelm-as-narrator is clearly not aware, but which is nevertheless implied by the language of narration itself.

The language of description suggests that the Puppenspiel is considerably more than an afternoon's entertainment for children in an otherwise empty bourgeois household; the Puppenspiel is treated more as a mystic rite of initiation. Partly, no doubt, this use of language is an irony at Wilhelm's expense. Wilhelm, the adroit and witty lover, narrates the episode in a melodramatic tone as a condescension toward his own past naivete, yet the tone itself indicates that the experience is extraordinary,

indeed revealing it as a kind of drama through the very manner of its description. In other words, the puppet-play is significant not only for its individual content, or for its place in the fabric of Wilhelm's memory, but for its existence as a type of experience which is ontologically distinguished from experiences of ordinary life. More through tone than through content, the ostensibly particular, episodic description generates an aura of mysterious universality. The decisive, initial force of the puppet-play on Wilhelm's development results from his apprehension of the Puppenspiel as a phenomenon of pure spectacle, from his initial naive delight in pure appearance (rather in the Nietzschian sense of the word). The puppet-play is repeatedly defined by terms like "secrecy," "initiation," and by a symbolically functioning "key," until the terms themselves describe an atmosphere. The words Heiligtum, einweihen, and Schlüssel assume symbolic weight gradually through repetition, while the total rhetorical effect suggests that the Puppenspiel is a symbolic episode as well as a recollected event. As a symbolic concept "Puppenspiel" becomes associated with the concept "appearance" and what the episode implies about the influential secrecy of "appearance" then develops as the fundamental theme of the novel itself.

The puppeteer, an army officer with architectural talents, because he performed some service for Meister pere,

descends like Prospero on the barren island of bourgeois life. He is described as "der Erbauer und heimliche Direktor des Schauspiels" (p. 18). The place of his performance, usually the doorway between two rooms, is transformed by virtue of the spectacle into a holy place:

> Allein nicht wie sonst zum Hin- und Widerlaufen, der Eingang war durch eine unerwartete Festlichkeit ausgefüllt. Es baute sich ein Portal in die Höhe, das von einem mystischen Vorhang verdeckt war.
> (P. 12)

And finally the stage (which-once-was-a-doorway) receives full metaphorical redefinition as a temple: "eine Pfeife gab das Signal, der Vorhang rollte in die Höhe und zeigte eine hoch-rot gemalte Aussicht in den Tempel" (p. 12). The puppet play is, after all, the first Schauspiel to be enacted in the Lehrjahre and appropriately the mythos of the first play is religious, just as the atmosphere of its enactment is mystical and ritualistic. The story is that of David and Goliath and although the actors are merely puppets, the language they speak is the language of Scripture: "Saul hat tausend geschlagen, David aber zehntausend!" (p. 13). The actual surroundings and circumstances of the performance attenuate the force of the play's mythos and casts an ironic shadow about the significance of the performance, but the tone in which the episode is recollected suggests that while the particular event of the performance might well demand an attitude of good-humored skepsis, the mysterious fact of enactment itself has crucial impact upon Wilhelm

and fully deserves the total panoply.

The actual process of Wilhelm's development begins at the moment he attempts to penetrate the mystery of the spectacle which has just revealed itself before him. His naive joy in front of the "magische Gerüste" and the "mystische Schleier" of spectacle is short-lived, giving way almost immediately to the demands of consciousness which must know what the spectacle is. What Goethe has called elsewhere "Lust zum Wissen" exerts itself as an attempt to penetrate mysterious appearance, to rend the veil of spectacle, to know secrets. And therefore Wilhelm's "einziger Wunsch war nunmehr . . . eine Zweite Aufführung des Stücks zu sehen" (p. 18). But Wilhelm's response to the second performance already differs quite radically from his original naivete:

> Hatte ich das erste Mal die Freude der Überraschung und des Staunens, so war zum zweiten Mal die Wollust des Aufmerkens und Forschens gross. Wie das zugehe, war jetzt mein Anliegen . . . diese Rätsel beunruhigten mich um desto mehr, je mehr ich wünschte, zugleigh unter den Bezauberten und Zauberern zu sein, zugleich meine Hände verdeckt im Spiel zu haben und als Zuschauer die Freude der Illusion zu geniessen. (Pp. 18-19)

The pathos of Wilhelm's wish to have it both ways is all the more profound because the wish at once impels Wilhelm's development and is totally impossible of fulfillment. Further, in his intense subjectivity, Wilhelm misconstrues the wish to account for his sense that his destiny lies in the theater. Indeed, the difference between

the conception of development found in the early version of Goethe's Bildungsroman and the conception found in the Lehrjahre depends on the fact that in the Lehrjahre the notion of a "theatralische Sendung" becomes a subject for ironic treatment. In the Sendung the narrator reports Wilhelm's feelings (Hatte Wilhelm das erste Mal die Freude der Überraschung . . .),[16] while in the Lehrjahre Wilhelm reports his recollections in his own voice, which separates Wilhelm 's construction of his situation from the way the authorial voice construes the situation. At the expense of his character's illusions, Goethe makes a crucial shift of emphasis from the notion of development as a Sendung to the notion of development as Lehrjahre. Goethe's new conception implies that Wilhelm develops despite his own conceptions of what his destiny is; development is seen as a process towards a goal which at the outset is unforeseen and indeed only becomes dimly apparent in serial process of realizations, retrospectively apprehended as "mistakes," in the arena of experience.

The remainder of Wilhelm's recollections of his theatrical childhood reveals that although he learned the secrets operative behind the magic curtain of the stage, his initiation into these secrets hardly indicated mastery.

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[16] Wilhelm Meisters Theatralische Sendung. Goethes Poetische Werke, Vollstandige Ausgabe, VI (Stuttgart, 1958), 846.

Although Wilhelm's imagination grasps the general concepts which govern theater, his very lack of experience prevents success in enactment; Wilhelm absorbs theater in imagination without learning the means of realizing an imaginative conception in enactment. Throughout his childhood Wilhelm remains a curious, intelligent, imaginative, and very bad, theater director. What he says of his first discovery with regard to theater remains true of his entire career:

> Nachdem ich etwas erfahren hatte, kam es mir erst vor, als ob ich gar nichts wisse, und ich hatte recht; denn es fehlte mir der Zusammenhang, und darauf kommt doch eigentlich alles an.
>
> (P. 19)

It might be well to consider this observation as yet another gloss (like "Das Schauspiel dauerte sehr lange"), or proleptic statement, of the theme of the novel itself, Wilhelm's experiences throughout the novel form a successive repetition, representing in their design the events of the first book of the novel. Wilhelm's development in the world of the theater continues until he recognizes the Zusammenhang of the theater world; but, interestingly enough, although his realization of the Zusammenhang is something less than perfect, the realization simultaneously involves a recognition of the limitations inherent within the experience itself and implies therefore a negation of the experience. Wilhelm recognizes, although with a too easy condensation, his childhood rapture with the Puppenspiel as a seductive illusion. Nevertheless, just at the point when he

recognizes the nature of a childhood illusion he re-enacts an adult version of the same love affair with the same illusion and in the first half of the novel Wilhelm remains bound by the seductive secret of the theater which has occupied his history from the first.

It has been generally agreed by critics that Wilhelm's experience in the theater-world is, as it were, a development in the wrong direction and it has generally been agreed that the second part of the novel, the world of the Turmgesellschaft, in some way suggests the true direction of Wilhelm's development. But the relationship between the two parts of the novel and, more precisely, the kind of resolution which the second part of the novel accomplishes has proven itself a stubborn and difficult matter. At the end of the novel Wilhelm acknowledges he has discovered a great deal, but he denies his discoveries any final conclusiveness, by evincing only a tone of wonder at the nature of the world which seems to lie before him and conclusively admitting only an intensely subjective happiness: "Ich kenne den Wert eines Königreiches nicht . . . aber ich weiss, dass ich ein Glück erlangt habe, dass ich nicht verdiene, und dass ich mit nichts in der Welt vertauschen möchte" (p. 610). The final note of the novel is that the protagonist has still not quite understood the Zusammenhang; and such an admission is more than a modest pose. Despite Wilhelm's considerable accumulation of experience the forces

of Zusammenhang still lie somewhere beyond his ability to apprehend them totally. As Schiller noted in his criticism of the Lehrjahre, the notion of "Lehrjahre" is a relative concept, its correlatum is the notion of "Meisterschaft," and there can be no "Lehrjahre" without the postulation of "Meisterschaft." "Meisterschaft" as a concept is not dramatically realized or enacted in Goethe's novel; it remains only as a hint towards which Wilhelm's history spirals. It would be a mistake therefore to argue that the Turmgesellschaft simply corrects the illusions binding Wilhelm in the first part of the novel, or that the ideals of the Turmgesellschaft are meant to be taken entirely seriously. Doubtless the second half of the novel at once reveals a change in the direction of Wilhelm's development and comments retrospectively on Wilhelm's past illusions, yet whatever is revealed in the second half of the novel is in itself treated as still another mode of theatricality, of Schauspiel; the second half of the novel unveils the illusions of the first half, but the unveiling itself is as the raising of a curtain on another theatrical performance. At the risk of seeming perverse, it is necessary to consider the action of the second half of the novel as yet another dimension of the controlling metaphor Schauspiel which governs the novel, and, further, to consider this Schauspiel as an illusion which comments on the nature of illusion.

Quite within the framework of narrative assertion, or plot, in the broadest sense, Wilhelm's development consists of successive recognitions by the act of recollection of earlier images. Acts of discovery, near discovery, and re-discovery furnish the novel's units of narrative structure. We have noted earlier that Wilhelm's development is not revealed as a chronicle history, but dramatically as an act of recollection, recording his first confrontation with image and illusion and containing his first attempt to penetrate the secretive curtain of illusion, Schauspiel. The further record of Wilhelm's development expands to a catalogue of his occasional success but far more frequent failure at capturing appearance in its myriad disguises. Mariane herself is a re-appearance of the young artillery officer, who was the secretive wizard operating the Puppenspiel. She appears first dressed as a young officer, her costume identifies her and makes her attractive, seductive as well as essentially secret; and Wilhelm's love for her is summarized as a series of images composed on a ground of mist with no substance: "Gemälde auf Nebelgrund, dessen Gestalten freilich sehr in einander flossen; dafür aber auch das ganze eine desto reizendere Wirkung tat."

Doubtless, the images of the second part of the novel seem of somewhat solider stuff. Indeed, in the second part of the novel Wilhelm re-discovers images about which he was confused or mistaken; these discoveries resolve

relationships, both familial and social, into new patterns whose design and outlines are perhaps more clear. In this respect certain episodes of the second part of the novel have the force of an unmasking after the play, yet an unmasking which generates its own ambiguity by suggesting that Wilhelm's acts of discovery involve the displacement of one set of images by another. It remains a question whether the images of the Turmgesellschaft are all that much more trustworthy than those of the theater world. Wilhelm's successive recognitions of identities about which he was previously mistaken suggests its own moral: it is a temptation, and, therefore, dangerous, to make the leap of imagination and eagerly to believe the mask synonymous with identity.

The scene which ends Book VII of the Lehrjahre offers a key example of Wilhelm's retrospective re-identification of images out of his past. The scene itself is theatrical, a ritual of initiation performed on a stage in a place which once had been a chapel (a reverse of the Eastern Church, which is a temple developed architecturally from the theater of Hellenic tragedy). In its outlines and atmosphere the scene is reminiscent of the first ritual of imagination in the novel--the Puppenspiel of Wilhelm's childhood. Again in this scene, after a mysterious voice directs Wilhelm to his seat, a curtain is opened and closed, revealing only appearances--actors who enter, speak

their piece and exit. These appearances are not, however, entirely new, but rather reconfrontations of earlier experiences in the novel; the stranger in the Gasthaus, an officer, who met and embraced Jarno on the grounds of the earl's estate in Book IV, and who now indicates to Wilhelm his previously mistaken judgment of Jarno, but whose own identity still remains "völlig ein Rätsel." The biggest riddle of all--the ghost of Hamlet's father, who saved the show in Book V, does not quite reappear but is heard from and remembered again from the sound of his voice. In a typical commentative intrusion which underscores its ambiguity by its very matter-of-factness, the narrator makes no attempt to explain in his own voice what is going on, but notes only that this confrontation between "Gegenwart" and "Erinnerung" leaves Wilhelm in rather a confused state. The narrative contribution, in its net effect, only heightens the ambiguous atmosphere of the dramatic situation. And, indeed, the scene must remain a riddle for the reader if, like Wilhelm, he tries to fathom the immediate significance of these appearances.

Any such attempt at judgment would presume to understand the second part of the Lehrjahre as directly exhibiting solutions to the mysteries raised throughout the novel and by the novel as a whole. But one of the peculiar distinctions of the Lehrjahre is its very lack of conclusiveness; despite the continuing pretense at explanation (the

discussions: what is a novel?, the reappearance of mysterious characters), the riddles in the novel and of the novel are finally not solved directly. This is what bothered Schiller about the book; symbolic suggestions and thematic implications in the novel only pretend towards conclusive resolution. The second part of the novel provides a reflexive focus of vision on the first. In this sense, the novel does not unfold a linear progression of episodes, but presents successive reworkings, syncretic reappearances, developing its themes through the reworking of presented material. Recall the author's comment that in the "chapel" scene Wilhelm is confronted by Gegenwart and Erinnerung; the comment concerns not only Wilhelm but refers to the thematic organization and the narrative movement of the novel itself. What is crucial in the formula is that the term is Erinnerung and not Vergangenheit. Present action in the novel receives its significance and is organized through Erinnerung, in the strongest sense of the word--as an inward realization of past event. We have therefore the same kind of psychology of development in the Lehrjahre as we find in The Prelude: the present obtains its significance as the occasion for an inward recollection and ordering of the past. But in the Lehrjahre, unlike the Prelude, the narrator dramatically opposes his hero's subjectivity; he articulates how his hero subjectively construes the meaning and relationships of the world around

him, while at the same time reserving comment on the significance of events. The relevance of Wilhelm's Erinnerung to external events, and to the possibility of future shape of reality (what Wilhelm so passionately thinks of as Schicksal), is always treated with irony and always remains problematic.

III

Wilhelm's development throughout the first part of the Lehrjahre recapitulates in symbolic form certain stages in the developmental history of Western theater itself. Wilhelm's developmental history may be described as a series of successive involvements with increasingly complex forms of theater and theatrical expression. From the very beginning, however, the notion of "theater" in the Lehrjahre carries a shadowy range of meaning which resonates beyond any particular theatrical event or rendition which the novel describes. In Wilhelm's first theatrical experience, the Puppenspiel, the clumsy charm of the event's actual execution conflicts with the rather different atmosphere which permeates the actual play. The mythic dimensions of the story of David and Goliath--and the iterated mysterious machinery of production--the strange curtain, the secret director of the action, the strangeness of the illusion--all suggest a dimension of significance which transposes the particular event to metaphor. The atmosphere of this first performance finally predominates over the event itself and

indicates that the prime area of meaning lies in the fact of mimesis, a magic action which at once represents and seems to sanctify experience.

From Puppenspiel Wilhelm goes on to associate with acrobatic troupes, Melina's wandering players, and finally Serlo's theater company in the city of H. That Wilhelm's search for theater ends finally in a city without a name implies either universality or indefiniteness, the lack of any temporal or geographical particularity in Wilhelm's theatrical world. No doubt this nominal vagueness is partly a convention, taken perhaps from the Fielding-Richardson novelistic tradition.[17] No doubt, the vagueness comments

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[17] The rhetorical strategy of not naming (but initialling) a character or a place is certainly widespread enough in the eighteenth century English novel. The strategy at first seems simply a device of "realism," permitting the novelist to pose as a faithful historian. A name indicated only by an initial suggests, at once, verisimilitude and the gesture of protecting the "true" character who stands behind the name. Lord B. in Richardson's Pamela is one such example.

Fielding uses a whole range of such devices with considerable self-consciousness. In Joseph Andrews, for example, Fielding spins out a trope about Morning: "that beautiful young lady the Morning now rose from her bed, and with a countenance blooming with fresh youth and sprightliness . . ." Fielding then turns the allegorical personification back on itself by means of a "realistic" joke: "Morning . . . like Miss ____*," adding the note, "whoever the preader pleases." (Joseph Andrews, ed. M. Battestin [Cambridge, Mass.: Riverside Press, 1961], p. 190).

Nominal vagueness as a self-conscious rhetorical strategy is intricately connected with the very origins of novelistic technique. Witness the author's preface to The Adventures of Master F. J.: "concerning this work: F. J. whom the reader may name Freeman Jones, for the better understanding of the same: he that would see any particular pang of love displayed, may here approve every Pamphlet by

satirically on the wretched conditions in German theater in the mid-eighteenth century. [The city could have no name because theater hardly stayed put long enough to associate itself with a city's name.] But the level of German theater had improved considerably by the time the Lehrjahre appeared in 1796, thus blunting the edge of Goethe's satire, if indeed his intention was primarily satiric-didactic at all. Rather the parallel between Wilhelm's history and the development of theatrical forms represents a metaphorical relationship seen from the perspective of some general time and locale, enumerating and rehearsing a highly generalized typology of theatrical forms and a tracing of a biography analogous to such forms. Wilhelm's development, through the first six books of the Lehrjahre, therefore, patterns itself according to a conceptual model: a schematic and symbolic picture of the historical development of the art form called "theater."

Because of this analogy alone it is not surprising that Wilhelm's successive associations with theatrical history and types of theatrical endeavor culminate in the attempted production of a Shakespeare play. It may be necessary only to recall the impact of Shakespeare on German literary and cultural life during the latter half of the

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the title, and so remain contented. . . . To conclude, the work is so universal, as either in one place or the other, any man's mind may therewith be satisfied." (George Gascoine, The Adventures of Master F. J. [London: Richard Smith, 1575].)

eighteenth century to account for the almost revolutionary role accorded Shakespearian theater in the Lehrjahre. Shakespeare's influence on Goethe's poetic development need hardly be rehearsed. It is difficult not to see the analogy between Wilhelm's theatrical longings and Goethe's own hopes of the 1770's. The ultimate expression of these longings comes in the double wish of the Shakespearian dream, the wish for a national renaissance of culture which would have as its spiritual source the founding of a national theater and its fruition in the production of Shakespeare's dramas. Yet in the Lehrjahre the great Shakespearian dream vanishes, not as a wisp but with a bang. This is not to suggest that the dream itself is false, but rather that Wilhelm is incapable of donating to the dream a real shape and substantiality; Wilhelm's hot pursuit of his imagined destiny engenders the collapse of the dream, simply because the pursuit represents an attempt to transfigure immediately the longings of imagination into act. Throughout the first half of the Lehrjahre it is Wilhelm who uneasily senses an imminent destiny in seemingly incoherent and inconsequential successions of events. The imperturbable voice of the narrator only withdraws its judgment, countering Wilhelm's enthusiasm with urbane and sympathetic skepsis. The narration displays at every turn Wilhelm's inability to translate his fair dreams directly into dramatic event. Ironically, it is the confrontation

with Shakespeare--the supreme dramatic illusion--which forces upon Wilhelm the sad realization that he has in fact no theatrical "mission," that his search for theater is an extension, both symbolically and actually, of his first love affair, the elusive and lovely dream which remains beyond possession, but which is, nevertheless, as the narrator has informed us, still "das Schönste."

Wilhelm is first introduced to Shakespeare in the banal society of petty nobility congregated at the mansion of "der Baron" (Book III, Chapter viii). In a high moment of ironic juxtaposition, as Wilhelm naively and passionately praises Racine to a pretentious count, who only has the dimmest grasp of the matter under discussion, the mysterious Jarno relieves the embarrassment of Wilhelm's enthusiasm by interrupting: "Haben sie denn niemals . . . ein Stück von Shakespeare gesehen?" Wilhelm's initial response is a characteristic expression of eighteenth-century "good taste"; Shakespeare presents monsters (Ungeheuer), which transgress all bounds of credibility (Warscheinlichkeit) and decency (Wohlstand).

But Jarno's abrupt suggestion arouses a curious and poignant sadness in Wilhelm, who realizes again "dass es in der Welt anders zugehe, als er es sich gedacht" (p. 180). Wilhelm picks up and reads:

> In dieser Stimmung erhielt er die versprochenen Bücher, und in kurzem, wie man es vermuten kann, ergriff ihn der Strom jenes grossen Genius und

> führte ihn einem unübersehlichen Meere zu, worin er sich gar bald völlig vergass und verlor.
> (Pp. 180-181)

The image of the great torrent of Shakespeare's genius is made all the more startling because it comes so abruptly after the casual, imperturbably urbane, parenthetical qualification: "wie mann es vermuten kann." Wilhelm's first reaction to Shakespeare is rich in implication and complexity. The narrator's pose of assumed superiority and his conspiratorial suggestion that we, the audience, might well expect Wilhelm to be swept away by Shakespeare's genius as a matter of course, is sharply qualified by the final phrase (worin er sich gar bald völlig vergass und verlor) which hints that this immersion in Shakespeare is like the self-forgetfulness which Wilhelm felt during the first performance of the Puppenspiel. Further, the narrator's generalization a paragraph earlier suggests yet another danger about falling in waters too deep for swimmers:

> Der Mensch kommt manchmal, indem er sich einer Entwicklung seiner Kräfte, Fähigkeiten und Begriffe nähert, in eine Verlegenheit, aus der ihm ein guter Freund leicht helfen konnte. Er gleicht einem Wanderer, der nicht weit von der Herberge ins Wasser fällt; griffe jemand sogleich zu, risse ihn ans Land, so ware es um einmal nass werden getan, anstatt dass er sich auch wohl selbst, aber am jenseitigen Ufer, heraushilft und einen beschwerlichen weiten Umweg nach seinem bestimmten Ziele zu machen hat.
> (P. 180)[18]

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[18]The constellation of imagery in this passage (the wanderer, the hut, the fall into the rushing torrent) represents a central Goethean iconological motif. Similar

Clearly, Wilhelm's initial marvel at Shakespeare's genius springs from his identification of the sheer complexity of Shakespeare's art with the complexity of his own subjective longings: in short, Wilhelm's enthusiasm again leads him to believe he has found the key to unlock the riddle of his existence:

> Alle Vorgefühle, die ich jemals über Menschheit und ihre Schicksale gehabt . . . finde ich in Shakespeare's Stücken. Es scheint als wenn er uns alle Rätsel offenbarte.
> (P. 192)

At this point, however, despite his usual eagerness to jump from the particular subjectivity of experience to most general intimations of "Schicksal," Wilhelm qualifies his observations sufficiently to suggest that he is beginning to realize something of the inherent mystery and fundamental secretiveness of this matter of destiny.

> Es scheint, als wenn er [Shakespeare] uns alle Rätsel offenbarte, ohne dass man doch sagen kann: hier oder da ist das Wort des Auflösung!
> (P. 192)

If at this point Wilhelm demonstrates some controlled grasp and understanding of Shakespeare's art, the metaphorical force of the narrative nevertheless suggests the peculiar quality of experience is that of a young man drowning, whether in the torrents of Shakespeare's genius, or in the subjective seas of his own confusions and longings; Wilhelm himself reflects:

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versions appear in Goethe's lyrics; perhaps the most important versions appear in Faust II, Die Wahlverwandtschaften, and Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre.

> Diese wenigen Blicke, die ich in Shakespeares Welt getan, reizen mich mehr als irgend etwas andres, in der Wirklichen Welt schnellers Fortschritte vorwärts zu tun, mich in die Flut der Schicksale zu mischen, die über sie verhängt sind, und dereinst, wenn es mir glücken sollte, aus dem grossen Meere der wahren Natur wenige Becher zu schöpfen und sie von der Schaubühne dem lechzenden Publikum meines Vaterlandes auszuspenden.
>
> (P. 192)

Ironically, Wilhelm's initial attraction to Shakespeare, particularly the richness and complexity of Shakespeare's "naturalness," provides an ideal of order, an image of harmony and moral sense, in an atmosphere of considerable external and internal disorder. Shakespeare provides Wilhelm with an aesthetic, aristocratic ideal to replace the corrupt and pretentious aristocracy which in fact surrounds him. So Wilhelm finds "sein Freund Shakespeare, den er mit grosser Freude auch als seinen Paten anerkannte" (p. 210), a spiritual prince and an ideal father in whom he can truly believe. Thus Wilhelm's first insight to Hamlet's character is a direct projection of his own feelings of confusion concerning the duplicity of his present circumstances. Wilhelm indeed adopts the trappings and accoutrements of Hamlet-like irony: "Er fing an über seine Kleidung nachzudenken" (p. 210). The point is that Wilhelm finds Hamlet an expression of his own feelings, his own sense that his inner nobility of purpose and fineness of soul falls degraded and corrupted as a victim of the disorder and meanness of the life which surrounds him. When Wilhelm begins his analysis of Hamlet's character,

the seemingly objective intellectuality of his dissection of Hamlet's dilemma reflects the intense identification of Hamlet's situation with his own. The foundation has been prepared for Wilhelm's famous transfiguration of Hamlet to the Romantic hero, incapable of action.[19]

The objective relevance of Wilhelm's analysis of Hamlet's character is, however, something of a side issue; more importantly, the context of Wilhelm's immediate situation determines the progress of his extended attempt to define his conception and to make that conception conform to the demands of his subjective wishes. Therefore, at the moment Wilhelm joins Serlo's theater group, his subjective state of feeling is described as:

> der Faden seines Schicksals hatte sich so sonderbar verworren; er wünschte die seltsamen Knoten aufgelöst oder zerschnitten zu sehen"
> (P. 241)

It is within such a context of subjective feeling that Wilhelm offers his interpretation of Hamlet's tragic dilemma:

> Denken Sie sich einen Prinzen . . . Ehrgeiz und Herrschsucht sind nicht die Leidenschaften, die ihn beleben; er hatte sich's gefallen lassen, Sohn eines Königs zu sein . . . Das Recht zur Krone war nicht erblich, und doch hätte ein längeres Leben seines Vaters die Ansprüche seines einzigen Sohnes mehr befestigt . . . er fühlt sich nun so arm an Gnade, an Gütern und fremd in dem was er von Jugend auf als sein Eigentum betrachten konnte.
> (P. 244)

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[19] For a reasonable discussion of Wilhelm's "mistakes" in interpretation, see William Diamond, "Wilhelm Meister's Interpretation of Hamlet," Modern Philology, XXII (1926/7), 89-101.

This line of interpretation translates Hamlet's initial tragic perceptions of all nature in a state of decay into the purely subjective dimensions of feelings of Beleidigung, at the expense of ignoring the force of Hamlet's introspective metaphysics. In fact, Hamlet's melancholic agony appears in Shakespeare's play without cause in the narrower psychological sense and develops directly as an intense perception of an ontological fact. Hamlet's wish: "Oh that this too, too sullied flesh would melt," expresses rather more than subjective poverty of spirit and personal shame at unjust treatment; it is immediately expressed as an objective perception that flesh, because it is part of Nature, is subject to natural corruption, the victim of the "weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable . . . uses of the world!" At any rate, Wilhelm's account of Hamlet's character as self-pitying sensitivity only suggests that his interpretation, for all its liveliness and keen intensity of perception, is mainly the refraction, in an outward display of intelligence, of Wilhelm's inward wrestlings and fearful premonitions of his own fate.

It is no accident that Wilhelm receives the news of his father's death just prior to his decision to assume a directorial post in Serlo's theater company under the condition, among others, that Hamlet be performed in its entirety and without any sort of cuts or emendations. Wilhelm's reaction to his father's death is most curiously

dispassionate and abstracted. As one might expect, the news, which Wilhelm receives from his friend Werner, is presented in straight-forwardly bourgeois, passionless, and pragmatically materialistic fashion. Werner reports "den Tod seines [Wilhelm's] Vaters nur mit einigen Worten" (p. 284). The old Meister died after a short illness and it is noted that the old Meister, with true bourgeois punctilio, had left the affairs of his estate in the best of order. But Wilhelm's reflection on the news of his father's last moments gives rise to a curiously sober and unsentimental perception of the old man's character which mitigates his grief:

> Auch konnte der Schmerz über das zeitige Absterben des braven Mannes nur durch das Gefühl gelindert werden, dass er auf der Welt wenig geliebt, und durch die Überzeugung, dass er wenig genossen habe. (P. 284)

With this sentence Wilhelm's short memento mori ends and his thoughts immediately turn to his own affairs and his own expectations. The matter of Wilhelm's deeper feelings towards his father is dropped rather abruptly. Wilhelm's replies to Werner are instructive precisely because they make clear that Wilhelm finds his father's death the final persuasive occasion to decide "dass er nur auf dem Theater die Bildung, die er sich zu geben wünschte, vollenden könne (p. 289). Wilhelm's line of reasoning reveals at once that his attraction to theater is far more than an accidental or capricious involvement, but rather is

perceived as the opportunity to donate to himself an integrity and totality of self which would be of his own making and independent of his actual history. In other words, the death of Wilhelm's real father permits Wilhelm the chance to ask himself the question "Wer bist du?" in a radically new way. Because Wilhelm is a bourgeois,

> er darf nicht fragen: "Wer bist du?" sondern nur, "Was hast du? welche Einsicht, welche Kenntnis, welche Fähigkeit, vieviel Vermögen?" Wenn der Edelmann durch die Darstellung seiner Person alles gibt, so gibt der Bürger durch seine Persönlichkeit nichts und soll nichts geben.
>
> (P. 291)

The distinction Wilhelm makes in his letter to Werner between what he, as a bourgeois, necessarily lacks and what the aristocrat has is a crucial one: the bourgeois has only talents, abilities, accomplishments--in short, Personality. The aristocrat has a self, a person. But, still more importantly, the aristocratic self "darf und soll scheinen" (p. 291), while the bourgeois

> soll nur sein, und was er scheinen will, ist lächerlich oder abgeschmackt . . . er [the bourgeois] soll einzelne Fähigkeiten ausbilden, um brauchbar zu werden, und es wird schon vorausgesetzt, dass in seinem Wesen keine Harmonie sei noch sein dürfe, wiel er, um sich auf eine Weise brauchbar zu machen, alles übrige vernachlässigen muss.
>
> (P. 291)

Whether Wilhelm's analysis of the aristocratic wholeness of being is correct or not is highly problematic, but the articulation of his dilemma remains nevertheless of greatest significance. Wilhelm sees the problem of "Harmonie des Wesens" as a matter of "Darstellung," a display of

being as appearance. It is precisely for this reason (at the moment when Wilhelm's strongest tie to his historical, actual being is most tenuous, precisely at the moment when his real father dies) that he can with such certainty decide for theater, a mode of existence which is pure illusion:

> auf den Brettern erscheint der gebildete Mensch so gut persönlich in seinem Glanz als in den obern Klassen.
>
> (P. 292)

It is only in assuming a role, in projecting an illusion, that Wilhelm feels he can at once find his whole self and eradicate the distinction between aristocratic wholeness and bourgeois fragmentation. To do so means of course to deny his actual being and his actual history.

Precisely because Wilhelm's total personality is projected into theatrical existence, when he assumes his directorial responsibilities for Hamlet he exhibits unwavering fidelity to text and stage directions and insists, with something like stubborn pedantry that the play must have its ghost--Hamlet's father must appear, and in full armor. The problem is solved in a most mysterious way, by means of a letter "mit wunderbaren Zügen versiegelt" (the stamp of a higher power, although hardly of the supernatural kind), which Wilhelm finds on his table. In sententious accents the letter informs Wilhelm he shall have his ghost:

> "Du bist, o sonderbarer Jüngling, wir wissen es, in grosser Verlegenheit. Du findest kaum Menschen zu deinem Hamlet, geschweige Geister. Dein Eifer verdient ein Wunder; Wunder können wir nicht tun, aber etwas Wunderbares soll geschehen."
> (P. 304)

The letter goes on to assure Wilhelm that, if he remains steadfast in his belief, a ghost will appear for his performance. When the figure, whose identity still remains a secret, comes to play the ghost, appears and speaks the lines, "Ich bin der Geist deines Vaters," the effect is quite startling:

> Das ganze Pulikum schauderte. Die Stimme schien jedermann bekannt, und Wilhelm glaubte eine Ähnlichkeit mit der Stimme seines Vaters zu bemerken.
> (P. 322)

The narrator immediately shatters the effect, describing the rest of the performance by a deft off-handedness, disposing of the question of the ghost's identity with hasty ease, by generating a situation and an atmosphere of continually increasing antic raucousness--drunken actors, flirting, singing, and general Unmässigkeit. The ghost keeps his secret and disappears, but not without a trace; he leaves behind a veil and in the veil a note with the cryptic message: "Zum ersten--und letztenmal. Flieh! Jüngling, flieh!" (p. 328), a message which presages a succession of seemingly arbitrary and chaotic disasters which fall in upon Wilhelm. Significantly, as Wilhelm prepares to leave Serlo's company, it is Mignon who packs his belongings and with her intuitive thoughtfulness, tucks the

ghost's veil in Wilhelm's suitcase.

As becomes evident later, the ghost who "saves" the performance acts as an agent for the Turmgesellschaft and the imperative to flee which he leaves for Wilhelm represents a symptomatic judgment on Wilhelm's way of life--the imperative refers directly to Wilhelm's decision to follow the road from the Scheideweg (p. 286) toward the theater. The note he finds tells him the turn he took was the wrong one. Yet when Wilhelm leaves Serlo's company he is not directly following the abstract imperative to flee; he is, in fact, unconscious of the significance of the note and rather considers himself as leaving on a just mission to avenge the actress Aurelie's suffering and death. Along his journey from the theater-world to the aristocratic community of the Turmgesellschaft, Wilhelm still rehearses the role of the chivalric, revenging prince in his hot imagination, resolved to confront Aurelie's wrongdoer with, of all things, a speech presumably fit to catch a conscience:

> Er fing . . . an, sich dieses Kunstwerk vorzusagen; es fehlte ihm auch nicht eine Silbe, und je mehr ihm sein Gedächtnis zustatten kam, desto mehr wuchs seine Leidenschaft und sein Mut.
> (P. 422)

Wilhelm's carefully planned speech, yet another Kunstwerk, goes for naught, because once in the presence of the Turmgesellschaft he realizes that this rehearsed grandiloquent gesture, his artfulness, is irrelevant to the human situation involved. Under the proddings of a hysterical,

egocentric actress and his own inmost love of Schauspiel Wilhelm once again, but perhaps for the last time, has fallen into misconstruing the secret complexities of the situations of life into grand but shadowy projections of theatrical gestures.

In the end, Wilhelm's experience with Shakespeare, and with Hamlet in particular, succeeds not in fulfilling his nostalgia for fully translating experience into the luminescent illusion of theatricality, but rather because of the very nature of illusion itself, Wilhelm's enchantment ends in something very like madness. Wilhelm's Shakespearian dream in a sense then represents the highest temptation of the theatrical which Wilhelm must overcome in the process of development. And the temptation is indeed as formidable as it is attractive: the institutional motto of the Globe Theater--Totus Mundus Agit Histrionem--is accepted whole by Wilhelm, in attempting to enact the course of his life according to dictates of Schauspiel. The rising crescendo of disasters in Book V of the Lehrjahre reveals in a peculiarly dramatic way the principle of contradiction implicit in Wilhelm's own attempt at drama. By taking over what is after all only a metaphor and attempting to apply it literally to the real world, Wilhelm makes his illusions bear too much weight; the conflicting pressures of Wilhelm's real history and quotidian accident fragment the illusion into chaos.

It is easy to understand Wilhelm's attraction to the character of Hamlet; it is also not hard to understand the subtle distortions Hamlet's character undergoes as a result of Wilhelm's need to find an ideal figure through which he may represent his own sense of being and interpret his sense of his own destiny. But it must at the same time be remembered that the figure of Hamlet is always an idealized projection of Wilhelm's sense of self, an illusion which would attempt at once to deny Wilhelm's own real history and to project outward upon circumstance a pattern which indicates a destiny. The pattern Wilhelm imposes on experience is therefore the most dangerous of illusions. He imposes upon the world something which is in fact not there and then tries to act upon that very insubstantial ground.

In the larger context of the relationship of the novel to the genres of epic and tragedy, it can be seen that Hamlet stands as a shining exemplum in this particular novel, the Lehrjahre, as the work of art which would serve for all other works of art to model the extremities of illusion, the work of art which questions most trenchantly the categories of appearance and reality, precisely through its probingly ironic questioning of appearance. When Hamlet claims: "I know not 'seem'," the question behaves as a negative reminder, implying precisely the opposite; that Hamlet indeed knows "seems," that he has seen through, or at least questions most sceptically, the veil of

appearance. The question of "seems" is also raised in the Lehrjahre. It is entirely right that this particular play, Hamlet, is used at once as the highest example and the instrument of profound sceptism concerning the nature of Schauspiel, the game of artistic illusion.

IV

In the first part of the Lehrjahre, the theater world, Wilhelm's history has progressed through a series of successively more complex and more dangerous "Dummheiten"--a word Goethe used in his Gesprache mit Eckermann to describe his hero's actions.[20] These "inanities" are invariably the delusions of imagination, responses of a sensibility which assumes accident, coincidence and appearance to be suggestive of destiny. The pattern of action, at least through the first part of the novel, is therefore a pattern or error. But, as the novel plots its pattern of error in action, its manner of presentation, the tone and allusiveness of its language, asserts, at every turn, the integrative, shaping, organizing power of imagination, and with tremendously attractive persuasiveness. Thus, while the manner of the novel affirms the integrity of imagination, the argument of plot is that appearances deceive, imagination gets one into considerable trouble, and, finally, in

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[20] Gedenk-Ausgabe, Vol. 24, ed. by Ernst Beutler (Artemis Verlag: Zürich, 1948), p. 142.

the disastrous culmination of events in Book V, it is precisely intensity of imagination coming into conflict with the awkward and baffling, but inevitable, coincidences of experience, that begins to drive a number of characters quite literally mad. Certainly der Harfner is an incontestable case and Aurelie, if not mad, comes awfully close. Moreover, the atmosphere of events including and following the Hamlet performance assumes an increasing air of manic insanity, quite different from anything earlier in the novel. (Although the intensity is prepared for by an elaborate panoply of evocative coloration and nuance.) How then can the opposing stresses of the Lehrjahre, the narrative action and the ostensible argument of the book, be reconciled, or can they at all?

The central example to consider in this connection would be the "Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele." By its very position in the novel, the chapter acts to bridge (or, to look at it paradoxically, to separate) the narratives of the theater world and the world of the Turmgesellschaft. At the most obvious level of resemblance, the Bekenntnisse, like the novel in which they are set, purport to be a Bildungsgeschichte. Here, however, the history of development is dramatically cast as a self-reflection, and the Bildungsgeschichte which the autobiography reports, therefore, is rooted ultimately in the subjective reflections of memory; unlike other characters in the novel (with the

exception of Mignon and der Harfner), the schöne Seele becomes progressively more socially isolate. In the same way as the spiritual autobiographies of Augustine and Wordsworth, the Bekenntnisse do not narrate a history in the strict sense of a temporal chronology. The temporal organization of the past corresponds to objective chronology only in an insignificant way. Rather the past is treated as a succession of events which prefigure the narrator's present state of being and ultimately it is only the narrator's present state of being which lends to the past a significant shape.

The general direction then of the Bildungsgeschichte of the schöne Seele is clear: to see the past as flowing toward and culminating in a state of conversion. The narrative of the Bekenntnisse asserts that the ideal has already been accomplished. Because her ideal is an existence of direct communion with the divine, apprehended in a totally inward way, the schöne Seele assumes a totally subjective stance, averted from the world of natural objects and historical time. The immediacy of the communion necessarily demands isolation from the world and necessarily precludes the possibility of social intimacy, such as conversation or marriage, for example. Most importantly, however, a narrative account of such an unmediated apprehension of the divine involves a tremendous strain on language itself. What kind of language can accurately

depict, or even evoke, the ideal towards which the schöne Seele strives and what already early on in her autobiography she calls "mein Hang zum Unsichtbaren"? At the moment the schöne Seele attempts to represent her experience of conversion, her immediate communion with the divine, she is driven to an outburst of despair over the nature of language which represents only appearances: "O, warum müssen wir, um von solchen Dingen zu reden, Bilder gebrauchen, die nur aussere Zustände anzeigen!" (p. 394). As she recollects the experience of her conversion, the schöne Seele makes it perfectly clear that her communion with the divine occurs, in strict Protestant fashion, as totally subjective apprehension, without aid of earthly symbol, ikon or sacrament:

> Bei diesen Empfindungen verlassen uns die Worte, Ich konnte sie ganz deutlich von aller Phantasie unterscheiden; sie waren ganz ohne Phantasie, ohne Bild, und gaben doch eben die Gewissheit eines Gegenstandes, auf den sie sich bezogen, als die Einbildungskraft, indem sie uns die Züge eines abwesenden Geliebten vormalt.
> (P. 395)

The disjunctive, "und gaben doch," indicates nicely the paradox inherent in the schöne Seele's ideal of Bildung. Her development is towards an ideal of existence which ultimately cannot be imaged--a Bildung which is ultimately bildlos. Because of the ineffability of her ideal, and her insistence on inward revelation, the only evidence that her ideal has in fact been reached is her report that it has. Because what is being described here is non-sacramental conversion, no external symbols of conversion appear, no

stigmata, no lightning on the road to Damascus, only the disjunctive analogy that the apprehension was yet like the act of imagination by which the mind can find the traces of an absent love pictured most dimly before it.

Yet, in order to represent her conversion, to convey something of its psychological intensity, the schöne Seele suddenly resorts to unexpected kind of language--a language of simple natural images. Following hard upon her despairing outburst over the inadequacy of language "um von solchen Dingen zu reden" the schöne Seele describes what her conversion was like:

> Nun hatte ich aber seit jenem grossen Augenblicke Flügel bekommen. Ich konnte mich über das, was mich vorher bedrohte, aufschwingen, wie ein Vogel singend über den schnellsten Strom ohne Mühe fliegt, vor welchem das Hündchen ängstlich bellend stehenbleibt. (P. 395)

Whatever esoteric reference, pietistic topos, or iconographic emblem the simile may develop, the passage describes a state of transcendent bliss in a language which is odd by virtue of its imagistic directness and simplicity yoked in an elaborate syntax. The image of the bird in flight receives an elaboration, luxurious in its detail, which contrasts quite strikingly with the usual, rather sparse and dryly straightforward narrative tone of the Bekenntnisse. Here the schöne Seele describes her feelings by the most intricate route of analogy. The image of the bird in flight above the dangerous stream is suspended and held rigorously fixed by the syntactically rather formal

qualifying image of the thwarted, fearful dog brought suddenly to a stop by the stream: all this to represent a quality and intensity of feeling. But note that such language, at once formal and syntactically elaborate as well as seemingly direct and unaffectedly natural, is unusual in the Bekenntnisse; immediately following the simile of the bird, which attempts, after all, to capture feeling by means of metaphor, the schöne Seele returns to her more characteristic mode of reportage with the statement: "Meine Freude war unbeschreiblich." Here once again the words themselves assert their own descriptive insufficiency. Only one image, then, conveys, or attempts to convey, the culminating experience of this Bildungsgeschichte. But because of its peculiar lyric quality and its unusual metaphorical elaborateness, this one image expresses at once the fragility of the inner feeling which it represents and suggests the difficulty of fixing such feeling in language.

The schöne Seele herself admits she lives in an impoverished world.[21] Her consciousness is poor in images:

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[21]Compare Kurt May's observation: "Die schöne Seele hat nicht Kunst noch Wissenschaft noch auch tätige Menschenliebe. Sie hat schliesslich nichts als den Zug ihrer Seele zum Kreuz. Damit ist sie arm in ihrer Fülle, d.h. arm, gemessen an dem strengsten und höchsten Mass, das in dieser poetisch gestalteten Welt bisher aufgerichtet worde, sie ist arm und verkümmert an Bildung," in "'Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre', ein Bildungsroman?," DVjs, XXXI (1957), 25.

"meine Seele hat nur Fühlhörner und keine Augen; sie tastet nur und sieht nicht; ach! dass sie Augen bekäme und Schauen dürfte!" (p. 396). And a little further on she admits directly: "Bilder wollte ich haben, äussere Eindrücke bedurfte ich" (p. 396). But because of her moral commitment and her metaphysical orientation, the schöne Seele denies herself the possibility of acquiring a wealth of images. Her particular form of piety entails a turning away from the world, a denial of the perception of things. Here the analogy the schöne Seele makes between her soul and the tender, blindly feeling horns of a snail has both homely pathos and justice.

Following the account of her religious conversion, the confessions of the schöne Seele continue as a seemingly straightforward, slightly unfocused reportage of her history; we receive accounts of family events, descriptions of familial relationships, and her general reflections upon the course of her life. What emerges in the course of this account reveals first of all that the Bekenntnisse are more than an intrusion on the plot of the Lehrjahre; the account of her family ties reveals the schöne Seele to be the niece of the Oheim of the Turmgesellschaft, that Natalie, in turn, is her niece, that her nephew is the lover of Aurelie, and indeed that the schöne Seele is a blood relative of most of the major figures in the later part of the Lehrjahre. But the schöne Seele's familial relationship to the Oheim,

and, by extension, to the Turmgesellschaft, is more than a novelistic or technical trick establishing the relevance of the Bekenntnisse to the main narrative of the novel; her family ties supply an appropriate occasion for a Zwiegespräch between the Oheim and the schöne Seele, which relates the schöne Seele's course of Bildung dramatically to the rest of the novel. In the dialectic of their conversation, the Oheim's view of Bildung and the schöne Seele's are opposed and compared. And although these two views of Bildung turn out to be antithetical, the schöne Seele nevertheless becomes a model, indeed, a sort of ideal Bildnis, for the younger generation of the Turmgesellschaft. Her image is sufficiently persuasive, in fact, for Wilhelm to confuse her Bildnis with that of Natalie. But as with most Bilder in this novel, its acceptance and recognition comes about through a rather complex process of ironic qualification. For the schöne Seele, the ideal of Bildung is to recognize and then hold fast to "das eine, was not ist" (p. 404),[22] The Oheim argues: "Es muss also in dem Begriff des Menschen kein Widerspruch mit dem Begriff der Gottheit liegen" (p. 404). For the Oheim, therefore, the refinement of social development, which is the search for the correspondences of human aspirations in objects of nature and in the

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[22]Note alternate orthography and punctuation in the Weimar edition: "das Eine was Noth ist." Goethes Werke, XXII (Weimar, 1899), 331.

making of works of art, is at once a celebration and a revelation of the divine. This ideal of Bildung to which the Oheim subscribes finds its richest expression in the cultivated discipline of four and eight part choral music, which the schöne Seele admits gives "wirklich einen Vorschmack der Seligkeit" (p. 410). By contrast, she admits that the only expression open to her religious sensibility is in Pietistic hymns, which are sung "oft mit heiserer Kehle, wie die Waldvögelein, Gott zu loben glauben, weil sie sich selbst eine angenehme Empfindung machen" (p. 410). Because of this repetition of the soul-wood bird analogy, as well as the ironic judgment on the expressive and aesthetic limitations of her kind of song, the schöne Seele's words reveal dramatically that she understands the force of the Oheim's argument. She admits further that although she can recognize the attractiveness of the Oheim's world, she cannot, however, assume such ideals for her own: "Ich war zu sehr gewöhnt, mich mit mir selbst zu beschäftigen . . . als dass ich mit Aufmerksamkeit ein Kunstwerk hätte betrachten sollen, ohne bald auf mich selbst zurückzukehren." (P. 411.) The schöne Seele, in short, has her God, her subjective apprehension of His presence, but at the price of living averted from the external world, finally at the price of almost, but not quite entirely, rejecting images. Her Bildung is a "zurückkehren" from the world. What remains for the schöne Seele is the homely and tender image of the

woodbird isolated in its flight toward transcendence. We might recall in this connection that at the moment when his project for the theater, his world of images, comes to its dangerous culmination, Wilhelm questions the mysterious imperative he has received to flee his world:

> "Flieh! Jüngling, flieh!" rief er aus. "Was soll das mystische Wort heissen? was fliehen? wohin fliehen? Weit besser hätte der Geist mir zugerufen "Kehre in dich selbst zurück!" (p. 425).

In exactly these terms the schöne Seele has fled the world and the Bekenntnisse as a whole are the testimony of that flight.

However self-conscious the schöne Seele's temperament, and despite her acutely self-reflective nature, she fails ultimately to recognize the paradoxical destructiveness her religious sensibility has for her "natural," that is, her quotidian, social existence. The paradox is revealed through the cruel irony of the Oheim's attitude that this "beautiful soul" would in fact be a maleducative influence upon the development of her nieces and nephew. It is precisely her increasing certainty of the reality of her belief ("der Realität meines Glaubens") (p. 420) which renders her dangerous. She is a schöne Seele only because of the encompassing subjectivity of her point of view and in the final paragraph of her confession the schöne Seele describes herself as living out an ideal of total harmony, without the conflicts of inner desires and outward demands,

of achieving, in short, the eighteenth century ideal of Kalo kai Agathon:[23]

> Ich erinnere mich kaum eines Gebotes, nichts erscheint mir in Gestalt eines Gestetzes, es ist ein Trieb, der mich leitet und mich immer recht führet; ich folge mit Freihet meinen Gesinnungen und weiss so wenig von Einschränkung als von Reue.
> (P. 420)

But her freedom is purchased at a price; the harmony between the schöne Seele's desires and moral imperatives exists only under the condition of her removal from the arena of conflict. Her freedom is the product of only the most intense kind of self-denial imaginable.

By her own admission, the schöne Seele's way of life is the inexorable product of long habit, with its source in the single experience of crisis and conversion, which she takes to be the turning point for her life, and which commits her finally to one and only one mode of behavior. This source of crisis and the impetus for conversion lies in the schöne Seele's attitude toward sensual experience, her response to what in the Middle Ages was called the World, the Flesh and the Devil. The schöne Seele describes her spiritual crisis as beginning with a

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[23] In his notes to the Hamburger Ausgabe, Erich Trunz briefly discusses the intellectual context of the "schöne Seele" phrase and cites the chief bibliographical references on 18th century neo-Humanism, including Schiller's essay, "Über Anmut und Wurde." It is in Schiller's essay that the concept of Kalo kai Agathon is made to stand for that ideal of harmonious existence in which there is no conflict between desire and duty. Goethes Werke, VII, 639.

deep fear of sin. She equates sensual experience with temptation and the fall and, not by accident, she cites the temptation of David before Bathsheba, which was a sexual temptation, as her prime example. Interestingly enough, the temptation which the schöne Seele cites as critical for herself is not at all a real one, but one which she discovers through her imagination. As a result of hearing the confessions of "der innige Freund," whom she chooses to call "Philo," the schöne Seele realizes with a kind of fear and trembling: "'Du bist nicht besser als er'. . . . Die Anlage dazu fühlte ich deutlich in meinem Herzen. Gott, welche Entdeckung!" (p. 392). For the schöne Seele, sinfulness is a matter left entirely in the subjunctive mood, "ich fühlte, dass ich schuldig sein könnte" (italics mine) (p. 392), but precisely because she recognizes no clear distinction between inward feeling and outward reality, her realization of "die Anlage" has all the force of an actual event. Because of her vivid imagination the possibility of sin suffices to convince her of the actuality of her spiritual sickness and all that remains is the necessity "von dieser Krankheit und dieser Anlage zur Krankheit erlöst zu werden" (pp. 392-393). The very grammar of her description raises possibility to the status of an event. "Anlage" has already become "Krankheit" and the only question which remains for the schöne Seele is how she may be cured. The answer, not surprisingly, is renunciation of the flesh.

But just at the point where the schöne Seele describes her victory over the sins of the flesh and notes that only now does she begin to understand "die Antwort aus den symbolischen Büchern . . . dass das Blut Jesu Christi uns von allen Sünden reinige" (p. 393), the suggestion emerges that the schöne Seele's symbolic marriage with Christ could represent a conversion in another, rather untoward, sense of the word.

Throughout, the Bekenntnisse reveal a marked and curious tension between matter and manner of narration. For an autobiography which purports to recount the soul's journey to God, the descriptive manner of the Bekenntnisse is nevertheless peculiarly objective, self-consciously mundane and physical in places. Especially in the earlier sections of the autobiography, events and actions are described with an almost morbid attention to certain particular and minute, physical details and qualities. Indeed, the review of the past consists of sequences of highly particularized recollections of physical objects and circumstances. The schöne Seele pays only a most perfunctory attention to temporal relationships among past events, moving from moment to moment often with only the word "nun" as a transitional bridge (of the twelve paragraphs between pages 359-362, five begin with "nun"), with the result that each described event emerges almost as if it were an isolated object. But these isolated moments cohere because the physical qualities and atmospheric circumstances of

these events are related through manner of rendition and the similarity of the terms of description: the schöne Seele's past coheres as single constellation of symbolic qualities. Thus, in the opening paragraph of the Bekenntnisse, the schöne Seele dates her Vita Nuova from a time of childhood illness, a time which left her "ganz Empfindung und Gedächtnis" (p. 358), and she describes that illness specifically as a "Blutsturz" (p. 358). In her state of heightened sensitivity she learns "Geschichten" (p. 358) from mother and aunt and of "Dinge . . . erklärte . . . nach der Wahrheit" from her father, with the result that after her illness, "es war mir aus der Kindheit nichts Wildes übriggeblieben. Ich konnte nicht einmal mit Puppen spielen, ich verlangte nach Wesen, die meine Liebe erwiderten." (P. 359.) And indeed she moves from playing with dolls to playing with real creatures--dogs and cats and birds. But, interestingly enough, the schöne Seele continues directly from this list of domestic flesh and fowl to "ein Schäfchen," seemingly livestock like the other creatures but existing only in a fairy tale of her aunt. It is this creature which the schöne Seele would possess for the same reason that she longed for the other creatures: "ich verlangte nach Wesen, die meine Liebe erwiderten." All this seems innocent enough, nothing more than a touching, if slightly whimsical, condescension toward the naivete of childhood longing and an acknowledgement of the ease with

a child will confuse "real" creatures with those in fairy tales. But with the first erotic encounter during her adolescence, an infatuation with two brothers which the schöne Seele summarizes in her characteristic tone: "nun hatte ich auf einmal zwei Liebhaber bekommen" (p. 362), the crisis which distinguishes the experience (and further which compels the schöne Seele to decide between her two adolescent courtiers) is the sudden illness of the elder brother. Accompanying the illness is a "Zärtlichkeit" (p. 362) and a surrounding atmosphere of stillness and secrecy. Thus, in its characteristic qualities, this experience recapitulates the circumstances of the schöne Seele's first decisive illness. The analogy between the two situations is summed up by the schöne Seele's allusion to the lamb of the fairy tale: "Nun hatte ich denn wirklich das gewünschte Schäfchen gefunden." (P. 362.) At the same time the schöne Seele also reveals that the connections between her "Leidenschaft," her "Krankheit," and her "Gott" are not accidental. She recalls

> diese Leidenschaft hatte, wie sonst eine Krankheit, die Wirkung auf mich dass sie mich still machte und mich von der schwarmenden Freude zurückzog. Ich war einsam und gerührt, und Gott fiel mir wieder ein." (P. 362)

Thus the outward situation serves only to set up the conditions, to provide an occasion for the schöne Seele's withdrawal into the subjectivity of finding her God. The very passivity of tone extends even to God, who seems almost

to drop ex machina. Because her impulse is entirely in the direction of subjectivity, the schöne Seele can dispose of the objective reality of events with a remarkable directness and laconic lack of affect. She recounts the untimely fate of her two adolescent admirers in the curiously off-handed way: "Nicht lange Zeit darauf starben beide blühende Jünglinge. Es tat mir weh, aber bald waren sie vergessen." (P. 363.) Objective reality, with its active complexity and amplitude is forgotten, what remains is a symbolic framework, structuring past events and leading ultimately to a concern exclusively with "das eine, was not ist." (P. 404.)

In this sense then the schöne Seele's conversion to Christ, who is described as an "abwesenden Geliebten" (p. 394), is quite literally a "making over" of qualities which the schöne Seele perceived in the lovers and friends of her real experience. As H. R. G. Günther has observed, eighteenth century "Sentiment," the cult of "feeling," represents the secular form of eighteenth century Pietism.[24] And truly the sentimental-pastoral tone of the more secular episodes of the Bekenntnisse, a tone revealed, for example, in the self-conscious artifice of the names which the schöne Seele gives her lovers (Damon, Narziss, Philo) and herself (Phyllis), prefigures the sacred pastoral of the

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[24] Hans R. G. Günther, "Psychologie des deutschen Pietismus" in DVjs, IV (1926), 167.

soul's marriage to the Agnus Dei. Thus, Narziss, one of the schöne Seele's "sentimental" lovers, is memorable because of his rather remarkable tendency to bleed. A nose bleed occasions his temporary withdrawal from a courtly ball, with the resulting opportunity for the schöne Seele to withdraw with him to the intimacy of conversation, which she remarks on as a way of protecting "unsere Gesundheit" (p. 366). But the central occasion which alters the schöne Seele's "Verhältnisse" to Narziss, and which she describes as "einen sonderbaren Zufall" (p. 366), is again Narziss bleeding. The curious disparity between the comic-erotic quality of the episode in which Narziss is wounded and the resulting effects upon the schöne Seele can perhaps best be revealed by noting just what the schöne Seele emphasizes in her reportage. The wounding occurs in a blur of comic confusion in opera buffa style, complete with erotic by-play, whispering, slaps in the face, and flying wig-powder. The rest is a minutely detailed account of Narziss bleeding, with the schöne Seele removed and isolated with the bleeding man in her arms. Most importantly, this isolation is quite self-imposed, although seemingly reasonable enough: "Ich nahm Narzissen beim Arm und führte ihn zur Türe hinaus . . . und weil ich meinen Freund vor seinem tollen Gegner nicht sicher glaubte, riegelte ich die Türe sogleich zu." (P. 367.) Throughout the episode, the temporal succession of events remains confused, oddly,

because of the laconic, step-wise fashion of the schöne Seele's manner of narration (again the transitional "nun" is richly employed here). The episode unfolds rather as a series of sharply articulated and discrete images. The image which is at the very center of the episode has some of the static excessiveness of a baroque Pieta; the participants are dressed in the style of eighteenth century social comedy but the pose they hold is startlingly ambiguous, because the attitude is also that of Mary and the suffering Jesus.

> Nun kam endlich die tätige Hausfrau, und wie erschrak sie, als sie den Freund in dieser Gestalt in meinen Armen liegen und uns alle beide mit Blut überströmt sah, denn niemand hatte sich vorgestellt, dass Narziss verwundet sei, alle meinten, ich habe ihn glücklich hinausgebracht.
>
> (P. 368)

Clearly, this single sentence paragraph achieves one effect of incongruity through the dramatic action of comic discovery (the Hausfrau finding the schöne Seele and Narziss in a socially compromising position). But the paragraph also reveals an incongruity richer than a comedy of manners revelation, which only plays off private aspirations against public and social norms. Ultimately it is the language of understatement, the reasonable, explicative tone, which renders the situation grotesque rather than comic, as if language here seeks to suffocate the passionate and erotic qualities of the image it describes. The concluding paragraph of the episode again intensifies the

atmosphere of suffused eroticism, again because of the most disarmingly reasonable narrative tone:

> Nun führte mich die Hausfrau in ihr Schlafzimmer, sie musste mich ganz auskleiden, und ich darf nicht verschweigen, dass ich, da man sein Blut von meinem Körper abwusch, zum erstenmal zufällig im Spiegel gewahr wurde, dass ich mich auch ohne Hülle für schön halten durfte.
>
> (P. 368)

This vision of herself naked and the washing off of her lover's blood parodies the sacrament of communion, but precisely because it is quite secular and, needless to say, erotic, it evokes in the schöne Seele that peculiar admixture of fright and longing which she calls love.

Conversion, then, for the schöne Seele is an application of "die Antwort aus den symbolischen Büchern" (p. 393) to the events of her past experience; indeed, it is a way of reading objective reality as a symbolic book and is therefore a process of transmuting experience into subjective mystery. Considered in one way, the mystery of conversion is as the schöne Seele puts it, a "Menschwerdung des ewigen Worts" (p. 393). But, at the same time, conversion is "ein Zug . . . zu einem abwesenden Geliebten" (p. 394), a process which substitutes visible lovers with an invisible One. For this reason, the conversation between the Oheim and the schöne Seele poses two conflicting claims of Bildung in dramatic terms: and the Oheim's decision that the schöne Seele's influence upon children would be maleducative is a dramatic irony, because in effect it severs and isolates

the schöne Seele from the human world which surrounds her. Yet she is called "eine schöne Seele" and the appellation may hardly be dismissed as merely ironic. Despite the fact that her Bekenntnisse are introduced into the fiction with the justification only that they are "interesting" and her piety seems in some ways to be the case history of a pathological personality, as symptomatic of an unbalanced nature as Aurelie's theatrics, the schöne Seele has, however, developed toward the ideal of Kalo kai Agathon. If only from the perspective of her own subjectivity, the schöne Seele approaches that harmony of action and desire which is symbolized by her name.

Thus, the schöne Seele is dramatically isolate while at the same time symbolically central to the fiction of the Lehrjahre. Nomen est omen; the schöne Seele remains as a symbolic image, but a disembodied one. Her Bildungsgeschichte has been a movement toward a purely inward development, but one which carried to its logical extreme results in the despairing cry: "O warum müssen wir um von solchen Dingen zu reden, Bilder gebrauchen, die nur äussere Zustände anzeigen." In this respect the Bekenntnisse reflect Wilhelm's own attempts to apprehend those most shadowy images, which he tries to represent through his theatrical ambitions in the first part of the Lehrjahre. But the schöne Seele, with her ideal of harmony between inner feeling and outward action, is also a Vorbild, a prefiguration,

which presumably should find its concrete realization in the strivings of the Turmgesellschaft and, particularly in Natalie, the "schöne Seele's ideal of harmony should find its reflection. Natalie would then be the Bildnis of the "schöne Seele presented again in a more fully human and active form. As Georg Lukacs has observed, the turning point in the narrative of the Lehrjahre occurs precisely here, in the Bekenntnisse, in the movement away from the ideal of an inward development:

> Die Wendung in der Erziehung Wilhelm Meisters besteht gerade in der Abkehr von dieser reinen Innerlichkeit, die Goethe, ebenso wie später Hegel in der "Phänomenologie des Geistes, als leer und abstrakt verurteilt.[25]

In this respect the Bekenntnisse, while they are a narrative intrusion, also provide an intense, dramatic commentary on the central Bildungsgeschichte of the Lehrjahre.

V

In a suggestive discussion of the Lehrjahre and Novalis' Heinrich von Ofterdingen, where he attempts to redefine the concepts of "classical" and "romantic" novel, Kurt May has argued--although more implicitly than explicitly--that the developing pattern of narrative action throughout the latter half of the Lehrjahre achieves its amplitude and logic from the "classical" "Princip der

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[25] Goethe und seine Zeit (Bern, 1947), p. 38.

Vorbereitung," a technique which he finds missing in Heinrich von Ofterdingen.[26] No doubt, the action of the last two books of the Lehrjahre recapitulates, comments upon, and finally seems almost to resolve the mysteries raised by the earlier books of the novel. Yet the very agility with which the plot unravels towards the end of the novel has disquieted any number of readers of the Lehrjahre since Schiller.[27] The difficulty and the greatness of the Lehrjahre reside in that almost resolution: the progressive revelation and explanation, the relentless symmetry of reward and (to a lesser extent) punishment, in short, the plotting at the end of the novel defies logical and psychological expectations and very nearly destroys aesthetic expectations. Formal symmetry in a work of art is always a dangerous business because it may be so easily attenuated to the mechanical, or to the merely boring. Goethe was surely aware of the excessively "novelistic" character of the resolution in the Lehrjahre and the critical conjecture that the last two books of the Lehrjahre evidence Goethe's anxiety to get done with the novel would seem much too easy an explanation. Rather the relentless plotting at the end of the novel

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[26]Kurt May, Form und Bedeutung (Stuttgart, 1957), p. 171.

[27]See Schiller's letter to Goethe, July 9, 1796; especially the series of questions concerning "jene geheime Maschinerie" of the Turmgesellschaft. (In Gedenkausgabe, p. 211.)

evidences Goethe's intention to call the meaning of the dramatic action into question, precisely by drawing attention to the subtlety with which he has designed the action (whether this is "really" subtlety or not is a moot question). The very facility with which the resolution takes place engenders doubt. Goethe himself alluded to this strategy of arbitrary resolution in a letter to Schiller:

> Es ist keine Frage dass die scheinbaren, von mir ausgesprochenen Resultate mehr beschränkter sind als das Inhalt des Werkes, und ich komme mir vor wie einer, der, nachdem er viele und grosse Zahlen übereinander gestellt, endlich mutwillig selbst Additionsfehler machte, um die letzte Summe aus Gott weiss was für einer Grille zu verringern.[28]

Goethe's image of himself as a contrary bookkeeper is both witty and revealing; it suggests once again that what happens *in* the novel must be understood in the context of what the author does to the novel. The course of Wilhelm Meister's destiny is ultimately plotted not by the *Turmgesellschaft* but by Goethe. The *Lehrjahre* is surely a novel about spiritual education and development. But the guiding spirits who manipulate events in the novel are themselves the objects of manipulation: their actions are therefore cast in an ironic light. Goethe's fundamental strategy does not change in the second half of the novel; only his metaphors change. In the first half of the *Lehrjahre* the *Schauspiel* is misleading, deceptive and strange. In the second

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[28] *An Schiller*, July 9, 1796. In *Goethe Denenkausgabe*, XX, ed. Ernst Beutler (Artemis Verlag, Zürich, 1948), 209.

half Gegenstände are strange. But the thematic issue remains constant throughout: how is the self defined in relation to the objects which surround it?

"I am thy father's spirit," the line which the ghost speaks in Hamlet, reflects and relates the contrasting impulses of inward and outward development in the Lehrjahre. The Hamlet performance of Book V raises to a crisis the conflict between the theater-world and the attitudes of the Turmgesellschaft expressed in the latter half of the novel. Wilhelm's portrayal of Hamlet, we are given to believe, represents his highest success as well as his farewell performance in the theater. But the Schauspiel lasts longer than any particular play performed in the novel. Wilhelm moves from the theater world to the Turmgesellschaft because of a dramatic interruption, the "Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele," an entre-acte which rehearses the major themes of the novel in a unique modality.

The dramatic isolation of the schöne Seele, just as the rhetorical isolation of her Bekenntnisse, is nevertheless a rehearsal (but a critical one) for the culminating drama of the Lehrjahre. Because the Bekenntnisse intrude upon the central narrative of the Lehrjahre, the chapter complicates just as it reveals its relevance to the major thematic issues of the novel. Like Wilhelm, the schöne Seele suffers from a species of Wahn, of delusion, as seductive as it is dangerous. Early in Book VIII, the

narrator, referring to Wilhelm, says: "alle Übergänge sind Krisen, und ist eine Krise nicht Krankheit?" (p. 505), a remark which might also describe the Bekenntnisse, both its explicit content and the thematic function of the chapter for the novel. The Bekenntnisse at once explicate the crisis of a sensitive soul and seem to be a propaedeutic to the ideas of Bildung so intensively treated in the last two books of the novel.

Educational aspirations, which are no more and no less than an implicit world view articulated as Bildungsideen, of the Turmgesellschaft may be summed up as a commitment to a world of accident (Zufall), rather than to a world of destiny (Schicksal). By Bildung the Turmgesellschaft means a manipulation of Zufall: the individual directs himself outward towards the world by exerting himself against its manifold secrets. For this reason, the schöne Seele's exclusive commitment to "das Eine, was Noth ist" (sic in the Weimar Ausgabe) is the source of the Oheim's critical judgment against her. Precisely because the schöne Seele seeks only "das Eine," which is the same as her "Hang zum Unsichtbaren," that she is left ultimately alone, isolated in a world (nearly) without images. The contrast between the two worlds, ultimately suggested by the "Schattenbilder" of the schöne Seele and the "Marmorbilder" of the Turmgesellschaft, is most remarkably established by an atmosphere, a landscape description which

introduces the world of the Turmgesellschaft.

Book VII of the Lehrjahre opens with a landscape, unusual if only because of the rarity of such "set piece" descriptions in the novel. After the interruption of the Bekenntnisse, the main narrative here resumes with Wilhelm on his way to Lothario's castle, but, unlike the narrations of Wilhelm's previous wanderings, outward nature, the surroundings, are described with unique clarity and precision, with a remarkably intense objectivity:

> Der Frühling war in seiner völligen Herrlichkeit erschienen; ein frühzeitiges Gewitter, das den ganzen Tag gedrohet hatte, ging stürmisch as den Bergen nieder, der Regen zog nach dem Lande, die Sonne trat wieder in ihre Glanze hervor, und auf dem grauen Grunde erschien der herrliche Bogen.
> (P. 421)

In its tone, as well as in its thematic similarity to the "anmutige Gegend" of the opening of Faust II, the described landscape here suggests a moment of beneficent, "natural" revelation, evoked through the measured, propulsive amplitude of a rather long series of independent, declarative clauses. The rhetoric of the sentence puts its emphasis on the clarity and spatial openness of the landscape. In part, the sense of fullness and extension is achieved through the periodic effect of the concluding image, "der herrliche Bogen." As this "objective" description is dramatically linked to the course of the narrative action, Wilhelm's "Wehmut," his Rousseauistic nostalgia, is played off against this "new world" before him. The

landscape around Wilhelm has changed, but his mood (and therefore his perceptual response to the world he sees) is hardly different from what it was much earlier on in the novel. The earlier part of the Lehrjahre is not notably rich in landscapes. There is one, however, in Book II, in an episode where Wilhelm, also on a journey, muses on horseback:

> Er durchstrich langsam Täler und Berge mit der Empfindung des grössten Vergnügens. Überhangende Felsen, rauschende Wasserbäche, bewachsene Wände, tiefe Gründe sah er hier zum erstenmal, und doch hatten seine frühsten Jugendträume schon in solchen Gegenden geschwebt.
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> (P. 87)

Clearly, Wilhelm's "Wehmut" is more appropriate to the landscape in Book II than to that which appears at the beginning of Book VII.[29] The ironic dissonance between the landscape and Wilhelm's mood exists because Wilhelm fails to see the landscape as "Gegenstand" which reflects his own "Neigung":

> "Ach!" sagte er zu sich selbst, "erscheinen uns denn eben die schönsten Farben des Lebens nur auf dunklem Grunde? Und müssen Tropfen fallen, wenn wir entzückt werden sollen? Ein heiterer Tag ist wie ein grauer, wenn wir ihn ungerührt ansehen, und was kann uns rühren, als die stille Hoffnung, dass die angeborene Neigung unsers Herzens nicht ohne Gegenstand bleiben werde?

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[29] In both content and rhetoric of depiction, Goethe's evocation of the "picturesque" landscape in the Lehrjahre, Book II, 87, strangely recalls Rousseau's scenic preferences in the Confessions, Book IV: "Never does a plain, however beautiful it may be, seem so in my eyes. I need torrents, rocks, firs, dark woods, mountains, steep roads to climb or descend, abysses beside me to make me afraid." (J. M. Cohen translation, p. 167.)

> Uns rührt die Erzählung jeder guten Tat, uns rührt das Anschauen jedes harmonischen Gegenstandes; wir fühlen dabei, dass wir nicht ganz in der Fremde sind, wir wähnen einer Heimat näher zu sein, nach der unser Bestes, Innerstes ungeduldig hinstrebt." (P. 421)

This startling and complex self-interrogation shows quite clearly how far Wilhelm has travelled since Book II. Gone to a certain extent is the dramatic posturing. In the earlier episode, the romantic backdrop (Überhangende Felsen, rauschende Wasserbäche, bewachsene Wände, tiefe Gründe) sets the scene for Wilhelm's poetic monologues from Il Pastor Fido. Yet, at the beginning of Book VII, Wilhelm's feeling of tender melancholy is still nearly a pure expression of inward nostalgia. In this landscape, which is described so objectively, so brilliantly pure and ample, Wilhelm's heart still searches for good omens. Therefore he considers "Erzählungen jeder guten Tat," rather than deeds themselves. He still listens for stories, answers with happy endings; he is still isolated in the longings of imaginations, while the world around him has already changed.

In this respect the world which is revealed in the second half of the Lehrjahre comments upon the inwardness of Wilhelm's development. The central question of the second half of the novel is really a question of the epistemology of objects. So, for example, in the episode at the end of Book VII which was discussed earlier, the appearances--the stranger from the Gasthaus, the officer, and the ghost of Hamlet's father--are in fact re-appearances out of

Wilhelm's past and, taken separately, indicate to Wilhelm that somehow his past apprehension of them has been inadequate, that the final word on appearances has not yet been revealed. But, nevertheless, the scene in the room-which-once-was-a-chapel, is at best a further hint, and one which is as much deception as revelation, of the real "Zusammenhang," the necessary significance and connection of these appearances. But all these appearances nevertheless are related to one another and the second half of the novel as a whole may be considered as an extended thematic allusion--in short, a representation of the earlier thematic pattern of Wilhelm's history.

The first apparition in the "chapel" scene, the stranger from the Gasthaus, recalls to Wilhelm their prior conversation, where among other things they discussed Wilhelm's favorite painting in his Grandfather's collection: Der kranke Königssohn. The thematic significance of the painting has been noted in a general way by commentators, but mostly in connection with the re-appearance of the painting in Natalie's possession. But the painting is mentioned and alluded to with sufficient frequency throughout the novel that one might suspect it functions more pervasively than to hint merely that Natalie is the right woman for Wilhelm. In his notes to the Hamburger Ausgabe (VII, 632), Erich Trunz describes the iconographic content of the painting:

> Die dargestellte Geschichte ist ein stoff aus Plutarch, Demetrios, Kap. 38: Antiochus Soter I., Sohn des Königs Seleukos I von Syrien ist erkrankt. Der den Puls fühlende Arzt erkennt, als Strationike, die junge Stiefmutter des Erkrankten, eintritt, das dieser sie liebt.

Of the figure of Strationike herself, Carl Roos has suggested she symbolizes the immanence of the unattainable (presumably because of her marital status) and it is this crisis which constitutes the prince's illness.[30] But the painting itself displays further analogies to the thematic situation of the Lehrjahre: Strationike, who stands in the foreground, is surrounded by five women in a rather hazy middleground. On a wall in the background hangs what is clearly a bas-relief Marmorbild.[31] The subject-matter of the painting, as well as its iconographic arrangement, suggests a certain resemblance to the Hamlet-myth which so captivates Wilhelm's imagination. In the painting, as in Hamlet, we find a young courtier who suffers an "illness" in silence and secrecy, an "illness" which cannot be understood or even find acknowledgement in the public world of the court. Thus, in Hamlet, we find the peculiar logic which demands that if Gertrude is "innocent" then Hamlet

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[30]Carl Roos, "Bildsymbolik in Faust," Euphorion, XLVI (1952), 33.

[31]The painting is, to my knowledge, best reproduced in A. Pigler, Barockthemen: Eine Auswahl von Verzeichnissen zur Ikonographie des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts, II (Budapest/ Berlin, 1956), reproduction (black and white), 349.

must be "mad." But Der kranke Königssohn iconographically recapitulates still another thematic situation which appears and re-appears (sometimes most covertly) in the Lehrjahre: that is, the story of David the King, most particularly David's temptation before Bathsheba.[32]

In Wilhelm's conversation with the stranger in the Gasthaus, he recalls what he felt about the painting. Wilhelm's remarks about Der kranke Königssohn obviously resemble his interpretation of Hamlet's character in an extraordinary way:

> "Wie jammerte mich, wie jammert mich noch ein Jüngling, der die süssen Triebe, das schönste Erbteil, die uns die Natur gab, in sich verschliessen und das Feuer, das ihn und andere erwärmen und beleben sollte, in seinem Busen verbergen muss, so dass sein Innerstes unter ungeheueren Schmerzen verzehrt wird!" (P. 70)

The resemblance of this to Wilhelm's analysis of Hamlet's character and dilemma is sufficiently obvious, so

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[32]It is interesting, but perhaps only coincidental, that Andrea Celesti, the disputed painter of "Il figlio del Re ammalato" was inordinately fond of the David story as an iconographic subject for his paintings. Perhaps half the paintings in the catalogue (by A. M. Macchi and C. Della Croce, Il Pittore Andrea Celesti [Milano, 1954]) of Celesti's works concern themselves with the David story. Most of Celesti's other works depict the life of Christ. One painting, the "Morte d'un re ammalato" has an ostensibly secular subject, but the pose of the dying king in the arms of a woman is clearly a Pieta. It might also be apropos to point out the usual Patristic reading of David as a figura Christi. This in itself casts an interesting light on the "Bekenntnisse einer schonen Seele," in which the story of David's temptation is the symbolic text which leads to the schone Seele's conversion. Also, the only extended biblical allusions in the Lehrjahre throughout are to the stories of Saul and David (I and II Sam. and I and II Kings).

that the comments which the stranger in the Gasthaus offers to Wilhelm's interpretation of the painting can be applied with equal relevance to Wilhelm's involvement with the theater. The stranger, quite straight-forwardly, tells Wilhelm that subjective identification is the lowest criterion for aesthetic judgment.

> "Diese Gefühle sind freilich sehr weit von jenen Betrachtungen entfernt, unterdenen ein Kunstliebhaber die werke grosser Meister anzusehen pflegt; wahrscheinlich würde Ihnen aber, wenn das Kabinett ein Eigentum Ihres Hauses geblieben wäre, nach und nach der Sinn für die Werke selbst aufgegangen sein, so dass Sie nicht immer nur sich selbst und Ihre Neigung in den Kunstwerken gesehen hätten."
> (P. 70)

At this point, of course, Wilhelm fails to recognize the point of the stranger's comments; instead, he sees the fact that his grandfather's art-collection was sold (preparatory to the financing of a new business enterprise of his father's, and the family's subsequent removal to a newly-built, but empty house as a stroke of destiny. For it was in this new house the following Christmas that Wilhelm first became acquainted with Puppenspiel.

In the conversation which follows, Wilhelm's recollections of Der kranke Königssohn, the stranger objects to Wilhelm's ascribing to these turns of events the name of "destiny":

> "Leider höre ich schon wieder das Wort Schicksal von einem jungen Manne aussprechen, der sich eben in einem Alter befindet, wo mann gewöhnlich seinen lebhaften Neigungen den Willen höherer Wesen unterzuschieben pflegt."
> (P. 71)

(We may recall, parenthetically at this point, Wordsworth's strenuous ambivalence in The Prelude concerning an external, controlling destiny over his own spiritual development.) The stranger points out, with a certain sententious diplomacy, that Wilhelm has confused "destiny" (Schicksal) with "accident" (Zufall). Further, the stranger suggests, by an odd sort of dogmatic pragmatism, that these metaphysical disputes may best be settled by that conceptual framework which proves most useful: "hier ist nur die Frage welche Vorstellungsart zu unserem Besten gereicht. Das Gewebe dieser Welt ist aus Notwendigkeit und Zufall gebildet." (P. 71.) Altogether, the stranger's tone is of a peculiar sort of eighteenth century rationalistic Humanism. He speaks in the accepts of Mozart's Sarastro rather than those of Pope in his Essay on Man: beneath the dogmatic sententiousness lies a profound skepsis and uncertainty. Thus the stranger ascribes to "necessity" a mysterious, demonic force, missing in the more relaxed versions of rationalistic Humanism. Consider, for example, the stranger's admonition to Wilhelm against finding in "necessity" only something meaninglessly arbitrary:

> "Wehe dem, der sich von Jugend auf gewöhnt, in dem Notwendigen etwas Willkürliches finden zu wollen, der dem Zufalligen eine Art von Vernunft zuschreiben möchte, welcher zu folgen sogar eine Religion sei. Heisst das etwas weiter, als seinem eignen Verstande entsagen und seinen Neigungen unbedingten Raum geben? Wir bilden uns ein, fromm zu sein, indem wir ohne Überlegung hinschlendern, uns durch angenehme Zufälle determinieren lassen und endlich dem Resultate eines

> solchen schwankenden Lebens den Namen einer gottlichen Führung geben."
>
> (P. 71)

As evasive and duplicitous as these remarks are, they nevertheless predict the course of Wilhelm's "Dummheiten," just as they predict those of the schöne Seele, without of course any real preventative effect.

In retrospect, at his initiation to the secrets of the Turmgesellschaft, when he reconfronts the stranger from the Gasthaus, Wilhelm recognizes the point of the stranger's earlier argument.

> "Sonderbar!" sagte er bei sich selbst, "sollen zufallige Ereignisse einen Zusammenhang haben? Und das, was wir Schicksal nennen, sollte es bloss Zufall sein?"
>
> (P. 494)

In one respect, Wilhelm now realizes that his notions of a destiny in the world of theater was in fact no such thing; he realizes that his intimations of "destiny" were perhaps nothing more than the projects of an enthusiastic, sentimental imagination upon the coincidences of external existence. Yet, Wilhelm's realization is nevertheless tentative; it does not take the unequivocal form of assertion, or self-statement. Rather, his realization carries some equivocal force, because it is posed in the form of self-interrogation (. . . sollen zufallige Ereignisse einen Zusammenhang haben?). As far as Wilhelm's character is concerned, his developmental history has reached its turning point (or, to use Goethe's metaphor, his development has

come to the crisis, which is illness) with his realization in the "chapel." After this moment, Wilhelm assumes a new attitude towards his history and a new stance towards the world. He realizes that his past, which he had imagined as a destined and progressive Bildung, was in fact no real development, because it was a continuing and exclusive attempt to act out, even to exhaust, in experience the unmediated, fervent, nostalgic wishes of imagination. It is no accident, therefore, that the episode which immediately follows the "chapel scene" in the Turm predicts a totally new beginning, a start at the process of re-education. It is of course ironic that a novel which calls itself Lehrjahre should have its hero begin learning virtually at the end of the book. Indeed, the representation of this new start at education is perhaps the best example of Goethe's staggering control of dramatic irony.

The scene is Edenic, set in a garden, with Wilhelm acknowledging his real paternity by taking his son for a walk. Taking his cue from his son, Wilhelm now approaches the objects as if born again, in (almost) total ignorance and innocence; he sees as if for the first time, because he now addresses himself to external reality in an immediate, unselfconscious, selfless way:

> Felix war in den Garten gesprungen, Wilhelm folgt im mit Entzücken, der schönste Morgen zeigte jeden Gegenstand mit neuen Reizen, und Wilhelm genoss den heitersten Augenblick. Felix war neu in der freien und herrlichen Welt, und sein Vater nicht viel bekannter mit den Gegenständen, nach denen

> der Kleine wiederholt und unermüdet fragte. Sie gesellten sich endlich zum Gartner, der die Namen und den Gebrauch mancher Pflanzen hererzählen musste; Wilhelm sah die Natur durch ein neues Organ, und die Neugierde, die Wissbegierde des Kindes liessen ihn erst fühlen, welch ein schwaches Interesse er an den Dingen ausser sich genommen hatte, wie wenig er kannte und wusste, An diesem Tage, dem vergnügtesten seines Lebens, schien auch seine eigene Bildung erst anzufangen; er fühlte die Notwendigkeit, sich zu belehren, indem er zu lehren aufgefordert ward.
> (P. 498)

It is exactly with this representation of the crisis and turning point in Wilhelm's history that the dissonance between what the Lehrjahre pretends and what it actually says is most apparent. The force of this scene with Wilhelm and Felix in the garden, as well as the dramatic argument which leads up to it, demands that one question the power of imaginative constructs to order the world. Wilhelm's new process of learning, which is a process of learning the names of things, is also a process of forgetting: Wilhelm forgets himself as he ruminates on objects. That this process should find its symbolic expression in Wilhelm's naming of plants is richly paradoxical precisely because of its seeming innocence and simplicity. One need search no further than Rousseau's Confessions to discover this same paradoxical attitude most explicitly articulated. In Book XII of his Confessions, Rousseau retreats to l'ile de Saint Pierre to escape from the possibly dangerous consequences of his literary endeavors, and to pursue his passion for idleness, which he defines as:

> L'oisiveté que j'aime n'est pas celle d'un fainéant qui reste à les bras croisés dans une inaction totale, et ne pense pas plus qu'il n'agit. C'est à la fois celle d'un enfant qui est sans cesse en mouvement pour ne rien faire, et celle d'un radoteur qui bat la campagne, tandis que ses bras sont en repos.[33]

Rousseau continues by saying that botanizing is precisely the sort of activity which affords this kind of blissful idleness. Rousseau's description of botanizing, as he conceives of it, is immediately relevant to the garden episode of the Lehrjahre. It is clear from the tone that Rousseau indulges his passion for metaphysical as for physical reasons:

> La botanique, telle que je l'ai toujours considérée, et telle qu'elle commencoit à devenir passion pour moi, étoit précisement une étude oiseuse, propre à remplir tout le vide de mes loisirs, sans y laisser place au délire de l'imagination, ni a l'ennui d'un désoeuvrement total. Errer nonchalament dans les bois et dans la campagne, prendre machinalement cà et là, tantôt une fleur, tantôt un rameau, brouter mon foin presque au hazard, observer mille et mille fois les mêmes choses, et toujours avec le même interet, parce que je les oublíois toujours, étoit de quoi passer l'éternité sans pouvoir m'ennuyer un moment. Quelque élegante, quelque admirable, quelque diverse que soit la structure des vegetaux, elle ne frappe pas assez un oeil ignorant pour l'interésser.[34]

Rousseau implies that "educated" observing is really a most subtle and difficult activity; the simplicity and idleness of which Rousseau talks is not that of the child.

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[33] J. J. Rousseau, Oeuvres Completes, IX (Libraire Hachette, Paris, 1883), 70-71.

[34] Ibid., p. 71.

For unconscious admiration of nature Rousseau has only contempt: "Les autres ([those who do not have] déjà quelque idée du systeme végétal) n'ont, à l'aspect de tous ces trésors de la nature, qu'une admiration stupide et monotone."[35]

In the same way, Wilhelm does not become a child again towards the end of the Lehrjahre: the simplicity he achieves (if it may be called simplicity) is not a return to a primal harmony with nature, rather it is an enactment of the imperative Wilhelm found with the mysterious veil. It is a fleeing from his successive mis-recognitions of the world. It is a renunciation, an "Entsagung"--a word which begins to appear with some frequency towards the end of the novel, and only towards the end. The dramatic argument of the Lehrjahre clearly indicates that Wilhelm's successive mis-recognitions of the world, as charming and seductively convincing as they might seem, are nevertheless the results of imagination imposing an order upon a stubbornly intractable world. And the second half of the Lehrjahre can be seen as a retrospective explanation of the doomed enterprise. Here the etymological force of the German language itself is suggestive: imagination in German is a Vorstellung and as such carries considerable, concrete, connotative force. Vorstellung, too, is a species of

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[35] Loc. cit.

theatricality, a Schauspiel. Further, Einbildung, the other word commonly used by Goethe for "imagination," suggests the inward nature of Wilhelm's development implicit through the first half of the novel and suggests also the way in which the second half of the novel is a critique of the first half.

Surely it was the recognition of this attitude which infuriated Novalis sufficiently to call the Lehrjahre:

> Im Grunde ein fatales und albernes Buch--so pretentiös und pretiös--undichterisch im höchsten Grade, was den Geist betrifft, so poetisch auch die Darstellung ist. Es ist eine Satire auf die Poesie, Religion, usw . . . "Wilhelm Meister" ist eigentlich ein "Candide" gegen die Poesie gerichtet.[36]

Although Novalis' polemic sounds in places as if he objects to Goethe's lack of moral decorum, or "high seriousness," to use the suggestive Arnoldian phrase, his most strenuous criticism and central objection concerns the arbitrary way in which Goethe handles dramatic motivation in the novel. But if Novalis perceives the artificiality of Goethe's narrative strategy, he also understands how Goethe relies on artifice to resolve the manifest paradoxes of dramatic situation in the novel:

> So sonderbar, als manchen scheinen möchte, so ist doch nichts wahrer, als dass es nur die Behandlung, das Äussere--die Melodie des Stils ist, welche zur Lekture uns hinzieht und uns an dieses oder jenes Buch fesselt. "Welhelm Meisters Lehrjahre" sind

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[36] Novalis, Werke und Briefe, ed. by Alfred Kelletat (Winkler Verlag, München, 1953), pp. 487-488.

> einmächtiger Beweis dieser Magie des Vortrags, dieser eindringlichen Schmeichelie einer glatten gefälligen, einfachen und manigfaltigen Sprache.[37]

The last two books of the Lehrjahre do not finally depict a convincing alternative to the ideal of inward development. In a general way I agree with Kurt May's argument that the Lehrjahre seems a quite conscious moving away from the Bildung expectations of eighteenth century German neo-Humanism, the conceptions of harmonious educational development idealized in the writings of Herder, Humbolt and Schiller.[38] But May is quite vague about what actually happens in the final books of the Lehrjahre, where Goethe's critique of Bildung is most explicit. Although May notices that Wilhelm's course is away from the active strivings of imagination, he does not seem to notice that the alternative possibility of "Tätigkeit" presented by the Turmgesellschaft is treated as equally problematic and is the butt of Goethe's irony in much the same way that imagination was during the earlier sections of the novel. Toward the end of the novel Wilhelm actually does very little. He remains rather the passive and rather dumbfounded observer, whether as a spectator to the performance in the chapel or to the performances of "nature" which occupy such a central position towards the end of the novel. This

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[37] Ibid., p. 488.

[38] "Wilhelm Meister: Ein Bildungsroman?," DVjs (1957), 1-42.

passivity is described as an Entsagung, which seems to be the condition necessary for the process of learning from nature. The resolution of the mysteries which have surrounded Wilhelm is the gift of nature to her diligent student. But the "Glück" which is nature's bounty and unravels like a skein of yarn around the hero towards the end of the novel remains in the perfect symmetry of its unravelling inexplicable and mysterious. Not only the happiness which comes to the hero, but the relentless revelation of histories (most notably Mignon's), the appropriate matching of characters, all comes pat like catastrophe out of old comedy. When Friedrich appears on the scene as yet another and final master of ceremonies figure, perhaps in this way related to the Abbe or even to the artillery officer of Book I, Lothario explains Friedrich's function quite clearly:

> Die Natur hat gewirkt, und der tolle Bruder hat nur die reife Frucht abgeschuttelt.
> (P. 608)

The best which the Turmgesellschaft has to offer is a series of cultivated expectations, based on their assumptions that nature is a rich and beneficent garden. Whether their assumptions are in any sense true is a matter which the narrator of the Lehrjahre keeps secret, from Wilhelm and from the audience.

CONCLUSION:

BILDUNG AND NATURE

Very near the end of Goethe's Bildungsroman comes the poignant assertion that "die Natur hat gewirkt." The assertion is surprising in a number of respects, but mainly because that slippery word "nature" has simply been absent as a term in the dialectic of Wilhelm's Bildung. Wilhelm and other major characters--the Abbe, Jarno, the stranger in the Gasthaus--have explicitly asserted that the dialectic of Bildung depends upon the relation or lack of it between Schicksal and Zufall. So it is something of a surprise when Lothario, as spokesman for aristocratic value, would have us believe that in some sense nature "works," that nature participates in and indeed supports the human project of Bildung. Not only in Goethe's novel, but in The Prelude and Hyperion also, the relation of nature and human development remains as the final and critical problem for interpretation. All three works establish some kind of analogy between inward development and the natural cycle of growth, decay and regeneration. But in all three examples there remains an ironic disparity between the hero and nature. Neither the Wordsworth who is the protagonist of The Prelude nor Hyperion, nor Wilhelm Meister becomes as a little child

again participating unconsciously in the life of natural process. We may see the ironic disparity most strongly in Goethe because, while he evokes a notion of natural bounty which suggests optimism, Goethe nevertheless maintains that natural forces are fundamentally inimical to human planning and defy expectations. Bildung in Goethe is an unnatural business. The point may come clear if we consider the fate of Mignon in the Lehrjahre and suggest that Mignon's fate finds at least oblique analogies in The Prelude and Hyperion.

Mignon, the "natürliche Tochter" of Goethe's novel and the adopted child of the novel's hero, is also the figure who, in her actions and by her speech, interrogates the categories of Schein and Sein by opposing art and nature, finally going zu Grunde in the conflict. Mignon's last song is, therefore, perhaps not surprisingly, a most explicit statement of the conflict between being and appearing. Her song, which is in the vocative mood, expresses the intense wish for a future resolution. But at the same time that she wishes the conflict to be resolved, her very words indicate that in time the terms of the conflict cannot be resolved, precisely because the conflict is acknowledged as inhering in time. She says therefore: "So lasst mich scheinen, bis ich werde." By the very articulation of her wish for being she defines herself as an apparition, a Schein. It is, I think, not an accident that Mignon's explicit wish for permanence is reproduced in the novel by

report, at second hand from Natalie, in the course of her description of Mignon's final days of earthly suffering. Mignon dies and upon her death she is elaborately decorated and becomes the object of an artful requiem. The antiphonal exchange between the chorus and the children produces an apparent consolation, but one which is troublesome. The traditional consolations of Christianity, the resurrection and the life, are quite conspicuously absent. Instead, here we are given to believe that the human community is to take comfort because one of its members has become "das schöne Gebild" resting permanently and finally "hier im Marmor" (p. 578). Mignon has become as one of those figures on Keats' urn, a participant in "cold pastoral."

Still more troublesome are the stigmata of Mignon's sanctity. The sign is "ein Kruzifix, von verschiedenen Buchstaben und Zeichen begleitet . . . blaulich auf der weissen Haut"(p. 577). The Marchese at this point discovers and reports the unhappy history of Mignon who is hardly a saint but an "armes Kind! unglückliche Nichte!" (p. 577). No amount of artful dodging on Goethe's part can obscure the unhappy fact that the Saal der Vergangenheit, which elicits from Wilhelm his characteristic confusion: Welch ein Leben (p. 541), is after all a morgue. What the Saal der Vergangenheit displays are images of life, not life--and the command, Gedenke zum Leben, which stands as a motto for the place, would for another age have been a

memento mori.

In what sense then can the command of the chorus at Mignon's pseudo-requiem: "Kinder! kehret ins Leben zürück!" (p. 575) be taken as an imperative which demands serious attention? It seems true that the Turmgesellschaft is persuaded by its own art. About Wilhelm the narrator only tells us that his deepest thoughts on the matter are secret. Goethe's own attitude may well be that Mignon is a necessary sacrifice in the course of Wilhelm's Bildung. If this is true, then she is playing Gretchen to Wilhelm's Faust.

Mignon is a character of ambiguities, but her function in Wilhelm's Bildungsgeschichte can be better understood if we observe that she is essentially a typological character--she is a schöne Seele--with a psychology quite exactly like that of the beautiful soul in the Bekenntnisse. Just as Wilhelm's Bildung leads him to reject the psychology of the schöne Seele, so finally his Bildung is at least a component of the destruction of Mignon as a human being. She remains, however, as "das schöne Gebild"--only that.

Such a description of the role of Mignon in the Lehrjahre should make apparent the analogous role which Diotima plays in Hyperion. A relationship perhaps only obliquely analogous to that of Wilhelm-Mignon and Hyperion-Diotima also appears towards the end of The Prelude. In

Book XI Wordsworth thanks his sister for "whisper[ing] still that brightness would return" (345). Further, he asserts his sister's guiding function:

> [she] led me back through opening day
> To those sweet counsels between head and heart.
> (XI, 352-353)

In the Book following, Wordsworth invokes "a maid/ A young entuisiast." The disagreement between Professors de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire about whether this passage concerns Dorothy or Mary Wordsworth (see notes to The Prelude, pp. 611-612) suggests perhaps that Wordsworth was more interested in depicting a type of feminine figure which symbolizes simplicity and is unambiguous only by virtue of its contrast to the image of the poet's present self. In this respect, as an image of a former, simpler self which functions to contrast and thereby to define dramatically the poet's present state of being, the figure which appears in Books XI and XII of The Prelude shares essential characteristics and functions in a way similar both to Diotima and Mignon.

Very clearly, the theme of The Prelude is the essential isolation which characterizes consciousness, an isolation which is the necessary consequence of Bildung. It is this isolation which Wordsworth alludes to at the end of the poem when he speaks of "that love,/ And . . . that beauty, which, . . ./ Hath terror in it" (XIV, 244-246). This same isolation is implied by the sub-title of

Hölderlin's Hyperion: "der Eremit in Griechenland." In Goethe the theme of isolation of consciousness as a necessary consequence of Bildung is obscured by the social dramatics which occupy the last book of the Lehrjahre. But, as I have tried to show, the social consequences of Wilhelm's acceptance into the Turmgesellschaft is a motif which works ironically to counter the pattern of Wilhelm's Bildung.

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