

FUNCTION AND DYSFUNCTION:
The depiction of family occasions in selected
works of German fiction from Gotthelf to Grass

PhD Thesis

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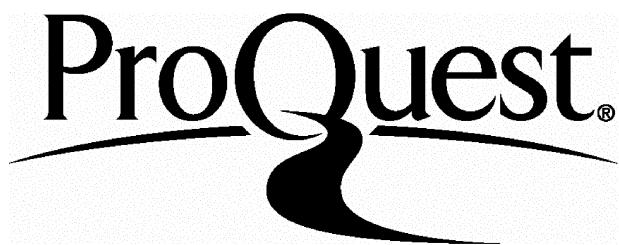
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In memoriam

Susanne und Wilhelm Stauf

Für sie wurde diese Arbeit begonnen

ABSTRACT

FUNCTION AND DYSFUNCTION: The depiction of family occasions in selected works of German fiction from Gotthelf to Grass.

This thesis offers close textual analysis of a number of scenes from selected works of German narrative literature, scenes which depict family occasions—engagements, weddings, baptisms, funerals, for example. At such moments the family is concerned to make public declaration of certain articles of dynastic and religious faith. The familial will to self-symbolisation is echoed by the powerful metaphorical charge that informs the narrative expression of such moments in the text.

The chapters of specific textual analysis are arranged chronologically: the period covered extends from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. The authors discussed are Gotthelf, Stifter, Storm, Reuter, Broch, Mann, Fallada, Böll, Wolf and Grass.

The early chapters explore sacramental occasions in which the characters' behaviour and attitudes are underwritten by a substantial religious faith and by a rhetoric of narrative assent. Gradually, however, it becomes clear that the metaphysical validation fades from the more modern texts. As we move through the twentieth century we encounter more and more scenes of ritual behaviour in which the characters are simply going through the motions. And frequently we find that the symbolic mode of literary articulation gives place to a more sceptical (at best allegorical) statement as the narrative uncovers a dissonant subtext behind the ritualized foreground.

The thesis is intended primarily as a contribution to literary history; but the sequence chronicled does, of course, have significant sociocultural implications. The changing face of family ritual, as chronicled by a number of German prose writers, tells us a good deal about the broader tendencies at work in the society of the German speaking lands over the past one hundred and fifty years.

FOREWORD

It is perhaps appropriate to begin by stressing what this thesis is not. It is not, nor is it intended to be, a systematic and exhaustive overview of scenes of family ritual in German prose from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. Any such attempt would have gone beyond my energies and capabilities – and would, I suspect, have gone beyond what a Ph.D. thesis can appropriately seek to accomplish. In place of a general survey I have elected to concentrate on a number of texts for detailed analysis. Of course, one could have chosen others, and there are many omissions that I regret (Fontane being one, Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks* being another). In any event, I hope that my selection will appear neither arbitrary nor hackneyed.

Having conceded the unsystematic nature of my list of texts, I would also, however, wish to claim that more is at stake than simply personal preference. The texts in question are not simply a random list of works I happen to like reading; rather, I do claim that they bear witness to important shifts in German culture over the 150 years that separate Gotthelf from Grass. Other texts could just as well have borne witness to this change; but the change itself would be unaffected in its essentials. Put simply and crudely: Gotthelf shows us a world in which the rituals of family life are truly sustained by theological signification; the humble doings of the Swiss christening have a kind of sacramental force. Whereas, by the time we get to Grass, there is precious little sacramentalism left, merely a desperate attempt to dignify a questionable union. All my texts tell a story; to read them in sequence, as this thesis does, is also to register a larger story, an historical sequence, one whose implications are more than narrowly literary.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is with enormous gratitude that I wish to pay tribute to Professor Martin Swales who, by his unwavering conviction of the rightness of this thesis, by his faith in its – and my – potential, by his inspirational and generously given support and advice, enabled me to bring this project to fruition. No ‘Doctor-Daddy’ could be more deserving of my expression of deep indebtedness. My gratitude further extends to William Abbey, of the Institute of Germanic Studies, and his staff, for the extent of their willing and friendly help with the research needed for my thesis. My inclination is also to include in my thanks the authors whose works I set out to analyse, for the great pleasure their creative spirit has afforded me.

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INTRODUCTION

At one level the aim of this dissertation is unashamedly thematic – it is to survey the depiction of family rituals, scenes in narrative texts where two levels of representation are involved; characters seek to represent the operative values of their lives in a moment of ritual statement (christening, engagement, wedding, funeral); and the literary text represents their act of self-representation. A set of enacted symbols are housed, then, in the symbolic statement of the literary text. To the issue of aesthetic representation I want to return at the end of this dissertation. Its starting point is, however, thematic.

That theme, in its sociocultural implications, has been well expressed by a number of studies. Perhaps, to begin very much from first principles, it is important to reflect on the human need for *Feste*, for ritual, for symbolic statements of belief and value. Odo Marquard makes the point that the human species is unique in its scrupulous and circumstantial predilection for moments that, as it were, seek to transfigure the everyday world.

...der Mensch ist unter den Lebewesen der Exzentriker. Alle anderen Lebewesen leben ihr Leben; der Mensch lebt sein Leben nicht nur, sondern verhält sich auch noch zu ihm, und das kann er nur, weil er auf Distanz geht zu seinem Leben. [...] Sein Leben leben: das ist beim Menschen sein Alltag. Auf Distanz gehen zu seinem Leben: das ist beim Menschen das Fest. [...] So gehört das Fest zur Lebensexzentrität des Menschen: als eine Art Aussetzung, Unterbrechung des Alltags...¹

Marquard's argument is existential in its import; he draws attention to the primary need for ritual which, in his view, is deeply rooted in the human capacity for self-awareness. Norbert Elias's magisterial work, *The Civilizing Process*, bears witness to the many different forms of convention, ritualization, and sublimation by which men and women in European cultures seek to elevate the various forms of their social proximity by making

them ever more decorous. Elias uncovers what one might call an anthropological constant, a recurrent feature of human behaviour. Yet what his study also highlights are the specific forms that, at any given juncture of a society's evolution, characterize and define a stage in an historical development. That is to say: even the existential needs of men and women have their inalienable dimension of historicity; their character changes through time and different cultures find different expression for perennial human needs. Precisely that sense of historicity is at the forefront of a very fine article, written to greet the new millennium, by Nicci Gerrard.² She argues that, in an increasingly Godless world, Western man, a modern and rational being, is, on the one hand, unwilling and unable to surrender his gradually acquired individuality to a higher power, the belief in which had inspired traditional ritual. Such ritual carries within it a kind of conservatism which is at odds with the perception of ourselves as modern and liberated selves. But, on the other hand, we experience a yearning for the old rituals, myths, and the continuity with our past. Rituals – rites of passage – take us from one state to another.³ They are vital in a community; they offer coherence; they give us meaning and a chance to look at ourselves.⁴ We tend to think of rituals as good and ennobling, lifting us temporarily outside ourselves. (They can, of course, also be repressive or even brutal, and farcical too, perversely tying us to a past from which we want to escape). Shared ritual not only anchors us within our society but also measures out the year to take us, step by step, from New Year's Day to Christmas. Many of these ritual celebrations are of a religious, sacramental nature, others merely mark highpoints and special moments in a family's, or an individual's, life. When religion fades, many rituals fade, too; we try to fill the void left behind with our own meanings, in an attempt to recreate a magic, in which once everyone believed and which had given shape to shapeless time, and order to the random age.⁵ Without belief, however, rituals can on occasion turn into mere spectacle, a charade, a piece of theatre, a custom, no longer underwritten by real spiritual meaning. Thus modern

ritual, instead of being an assertion of faith, becomes an expression of nostalgia and longing. The erstwhile function of ritual – namely to connect the individual with the community, the present moment with the past, the living with the dead, the earthly with the transcendental – is all but lost. Instead, rituals become a set of private traditions, filled with our own meanings.⁶ Since rituals are dependent on repetition, they can over time become imbued with a private belief and resonance which is not necessarily to be equated with religion. Yet, even so, many people still turn to the ritual offered by the Church at moments of great personal significance. The solemnity involved in such ceremonies clearly fulfils a deep need. To quote Nicci Gerrard: ‘The most unbelieving heart throbs to the words of the church wedding or to the words of the Book of Common Prayer’⁷. When such ‘regression’ is deemed too hypocritical for self-confessed enlightened man, ‘do-it-yourself’ ritual is substituted, such as naming ceremonies in place of christenings. They attest to an underlying desire to mark private events, if not publicly, then at least by some form of manifest ritual. Secular funerals, described cynically by Jonathan Miller as ‘a scrappy suburban business’⁸, fall into this category. Such elective ‘homemade’ ceremonies, our secular myths, do not, however, generally convey the required solemnity and spiritual nourishment. Where faith no longer resides, material objects tend to flood in to the emptied-out symbols, and individual family customs acquire potent significance over the years, rarely, or only partly, shared with the wider community. Christmas may be seen as an exception, since it has always been seen primarily as a *Familienfest*, the importance of which has not been obliterated, despite the obvious and glaring commercialization in evidence today. The process of modern rationalization and demystification of age-old traditions has, however, had the effect ‘...Feste als *Mythenrelikte* jeder höheren Bedeutung zu entkleiden. So schrumpften sie auf den harmlosen Rest materieller Belustigung und Verköstigung, gleichsam auf Jahrmarkt, Wurst und Wein’.⁹

In a particularly fine passage Wolfgang Lipp reflects on the place of festivals in the modern world and also distinguishes between the terms *Feste* and *Feiern*:

Zwischen Fest und Feier bestehen [...] Übergänge, Verschachtelungen, die oft unentwirrbar sind; kann man Feiern aber als Veranstaltungen begreifen, die bestimmte hervorgehobene Inhalte, die im Dasein von Bedeutung sind, vom Geburtstag bis zum Begräbnis, vom Betriebsjubiläum bis zum nationalen Ereignis, dergestalt überhöhen, daß sie den Alltag, seine Teilbereiche und Einzelzwecke rückwirkend bestätigen, stellen Feste Aktivitäten dar, die die Routinen hinter sich lassen, sie übersteigen und virtuell außer Kraft setzen. Wenn ich mich [...] auf Feste konzentriere, haben wir es [...] weniger mit Phänomenen zu tun, die – wie die Feiern – durch jenen Ernst, jene Getragenheit und Würde gekennzeichnet, bedeutungsvollen, regelgerechten, sozialpraktischen Anlässen entsprechen; wir sind vielmehr mit Antrieben konfrontiert, die mit Gelächter, Vergnügen und Lust einhergehen [...] und die Schwere des Daseins, solange der Becher gefüllt ist, die Tänze wirbeln und man schunkeln und plaudern kann, für eine Weile abstreifen.¹⁰

The added dimension of leaving the *Alltag* behind, of putting a celebratory gloss on special events in the familial calendar, of adding the patina of tradition and its implied gravitas to otherwise ordinary life, all lead to a new perspective on a restructured modus vivendi. Rüdiger Bubner comments on the tendency in the modern world to replace corporate festivals by a stylization of the individual life-style: ‘Auf dem Vormarsch ist die generelle Freizeitgesinnung, die im Jargon, in Attitüden, im persönlichen Erscheinungsbild jedem erlaubt, sich selbst zu feiern...’¹¹ There can be detected a modern tendency ‘...zur Ästhetisierung der Lebenswelt. Sie stellt im Kern den Versuch dar, den *Alltag zum permanenten Fest zu machen*.’¹²

In today’s society celebrations display characteristically post-modern features: they reflect variety and diversity, the individualisation of ritual and a democratically underwritten choice of lifestyle, which define this epoch and its rituals largely by its packaging: ‘...es sind weniger ihr Inhalt und eine substantielle Bedeutung, die die Menschen ansprechen, als die Raffinesse ihrer “Verpackung”...’¹³ Ritual celebration in the year 2000 appears to be seen, despite a vaguely – or sometimes acutely – felt desire for deeper meaning, as primarily an antidote to daily drudgery, stress and strife.

Thus far I have been concerned to explore ritual and the various forms that it takes in the modern world. But all the literary texts discussed in this thesis locate the issue of ritual at the heart of the family; and it is to that institution that I now turn. The family has undergone – and no doubt will continue to undergo – great changes. Perhaps one can feel some of the paradigm shifts expressed by the writers covered by this thesis if one juxtaposes two perceptions of the family, taken from the utterances of two authors, one included in my thesis, the other the troubled son of another. In his novel *Der Nachsommer* Stifter formulates the following paean to the family:

Risach sagte, 'Mein Sohn, [...] [es] ist deine erste Pflicht, ein edles reines grundgeordnetes Familienleben zu errichten. [...] Die Familie ist es, die unsern Zeiten nottut, sie tut mehr not als die Kunst und Wissenschaft, als Verkehr, Handel, Aufschwung, Fortschritt oder wie alles heißt, was begehrenswert erscheint. Auf der Familie ruht die Kunst, die Wissenschaft, der menschliche Fortschritt, der Staat...'¹⁴

This speaks of deep conviction in a man, Stifter, who was unable to establish such a family himself. By contrast, when we move into the twentieth century with its altered mores and less firmly structured family relationships, it is one of Thomas Mann's sons, who, having grown up in a large, sophisticated, and far from harmonious family, seems to speak for the problematic perceptions of the modern age: '...jeder Einblick in eine Familie eröffnet so viel Geheimnis, mir scheint, von allen möglichen menschlichen Gemeinschaftsformen ist die Familie die eigentlich mystische.'¹⁵ Several decades have elapsed since these words were written – and felt. And that sense of mystery and bafflement has, if anything, got stronger. The changing roles and status of men and women within the family and society as a whole, the movement away from the patriarchal structure, everything conspires to deny us a clear sense of what the family amounts to nowadays. As Weber-Kellermann points out in her seminal study: 'Viele suchen und erfinden neue Verhaltensweisen, formalisierte und spielerische Muster der alltäglichen zwischenmenschlichen Beziehungen. Fast alles ist erlaubt, nur frei von Zwängen soll das

Leben sein.¹⁶ Weber-Kellermann argues that much has got lost as the family has changed and adapted to constantly shifting circumstances. But – and in this respect she differs from many of the authors examined in this thesis – the loss is offset by a gain. That nowadays tradition and ritual are felt to be variable, renegotiable, brings a measure of freedom into operation. She writes:

‘Jede Generation sollte sie überprüfen und neu gestalten. Die Weihnachtszeit kann man auch heute genießen: als eine willkommene Gelegenheit für freudige Überraschungen, besonders an Kinder, - als eine zeitbewußt gepflegte Kommunikation, auch zwischen sonst Fremden, - als einen Freiraum für den spielenden Menschen im Rhythmus des Jahres.’¹⁷

The individual may perceive the family structure and ritual, whether accompanied by sacramental or by secular validation, as warming and supportive. This is a conciliatory possibility which she holds out. Many of the literary texts that will concern us take a darker view.

One final word before we turn to the chapters of detailed textual analysis. In addition to the obvious moments of thematic overlap between the various scenes discussed, there are two particular issues which recur throughout the following pages. One is the fact that the family rituals depicted do have a certain generalizing force, in the sense that both the family portrayed and the textual mode of that portrayal are transparent upon an implied social generality. Thus, the family has a representative function in respect of the larger society around it. Secondly, the mode of narrative statement varies from text to text. In some instances we shall find ourselves in stable narrative territory, whereby a certain congruence obtains between the values expressed in the scene of family ritual and the values informing the narrative mode of the literary text itself. In other cases, however, there can be a disturbing discrepancy, whereby the narrative contrives to question, perhaps even to undermine, the values that are so overtly on display.

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

1. See: Odo Marquard, 'Moratorium des Alltags' in *Das Fest*, ed. by Walter Haug and Rainer Warning (Munich: Fink, 1989), p. 685.
2. The Observer, 2. 1.2000.
3. Ritual is 'eine geregelte Gesamtheit von Vorkehrungen – Handlungen, Gesten, Wörtern –, die in einer angemessenen Inszenierung oder Dramatisierung die Gefahr bannen. Das Ritual ist also der typische Eingriff in eine gefährliche oder unsichere Übergangssituation im Leben eines Kollektivs oder eines Einzelnen.' See: Emile Fachinelli, *Der stehende Pfeil: Drei Versuche, die Zeit aufzuleben* (Berlin: 1981), p.36.
4. 'Feste sind die außergewöhnlichen Momente in unserem Leben, in denen dieses selbst, ästhetisch verwandelt, vor uns tritt.' See: Rüdiger Bubner, 'Ästhetisierung der Lebenswelt' in *Das Fest*, as above, p.651.
5. See also Pannenberg: 'Feste gliedern die Zeit. Das gilt jedenfalls für alle alten, religiös geprägten Kulturen, in Resten sogar noch für die moderne säkulare Gesellschaft.' See: Wolfhart Pannenberg, 'Mythos und Dogma im Weihnachtsfest' in *Das Fest*, as above, p.53.
6. For the 'privatisation' of ritual and the resulting devaluation, as well as the exceptions to this assertion, see also Pannenberg: 'Zu den Auswirkungen der Säkularisierung der öffentlichen Kultur gehört die Privatisierung des Sinnbewußtseins. Damit hängt es wohl zusammen, daß öffentliche Feiertage und Feste ihre das Gemeinschaftsleben strukturierende und orientierende Funktion mehr oder weniger weitgehend verlieren. Sie werden, soweit sie arbeitsfrei sind, zu Anlässen vorwiegend privater Freizeitgestaltung. [...] Ausgenommen von der Entwertung der Feste sind die das Individuum unmittelbar betreffenden Familienfeste um Geburt, Hochzeit und Tod. Unter den christlichen Festen bildet allein das Weihnachtsfest eine Ausnahme. Sogar die Kommerzialisierung, die dieses Fest umgibt, ist noch ein Indiz seiner anscheinend unverwüstlichen Lebenskraft. [...] Weihnachten unterscheidet sich von den anderen christlichen Festen dadurch, daß es nicht so sehr ein kirchliches, sondern mehr noch ein Familienfest ist.' See: Wolfhart Pannenberg, as above, p.56.
7. The Observer 2. 1.2000, Review Section, p.1.
8. Quoted by Nicci Gerrard, *ibid.* p.2.
9. Rüdiger Bubner, 'Ästhetisierung der Lebenswelt' in *Das Fest*, as above, p.656.
10. Wolfgang Lipp, 'Feste heute: Animation, Partizipation und Happening', in *Das Fest*, as above, pp.664/5.
11. Rüdiger Bubner, 'Ästhetisierung der Lebenswelt' in *Das Fest*, as above, p.656.
12. *ibid.* p.659.
13. Wolfgang Lipp, 'Feste heute etc.', in *Das Fest*, as above, p.682.
14. See: Adalbert Stifter, *Gesammelte Werke in 14 Bänden*, ed. by Konrad Steffen (Basel: Birkhäuser Verlag, 1964), III: *Der Nachsommer*, p.268.
15. Klaus Mann to Heinrich Kurtzig 26. 6.1927.
16. See: Ingeborg Weber-Kellermann, *Die deutsche Familie: Versuch einer Sozialgeschichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch, 1974), p.253.
17. *ibid.* p.243.

CHAPTER 1

Tradition and ritual in the *Rahmen* of Gotthelf's *Die schwarze Spinne*

Most readers of the story will, no doubt prompted by the title, remember Gotthelf's *Die schwarze Spinne* (published in 1842) for the ferocity and horror with which it evokes the release of the black spiders. Even in an age where horror films are ten-a-penny, Gotthelf's prose can shock and frighten. But we would do well to remember that the double narrative of the spider is housed within a narrative frame in which a secure, trustworthy and beautiful world is put before us in all its rightness¹. At the centre of that rightness is a family occasion, a christening. That moment of ritual is the answer to the ghastliness of the spider. Little Hans Uli is safe in the world, in stark contrast to the unbaptized child sacrificed to the Devil in return for his help when the villagers of an earlier age are unable to fulfil the cruel task set by their monstrously uncaring feudal lord.

* * * * *

Jeremias Gotthelf (real name Albert Bitzius 1797-1854), who worked as a country parson in the Bernese Oberland, closely observed the traditions and customs of his homeland and preserved them in literary form in his novels and stories². He clearly saw himself as the defender of traditional values in an age which was gradually becoming swallowed up in the strong current of the materialistic thinking of the age, a development which he thought was undermining the Christian ethos of Switzerland. Aware of the futility of trying to stem the destructive tide of the *Zeitgeist*, Gotthelf (the significance of his chosen nom-de-plume is obvious) took up the pen at the age of 40 in order to pursue his moral crusade.

Reprehensible features such as arrogance, avarice, and callous egoism displayed by the haves in relation to the have-nots, sloth and immorality among the rural population and their inability to correct these inadequacies and deficiencies are highlighted by Gotthelf as a warning against the perceived slide into a godless lifestyle.

Die schwarze Spinne, undoubtedly the most powerful of Gotthelf's cautionary tales³, draws its strength from the striking contrast between the peaceful Bernese baptism with its closely observed ritual and the drama of guilt and atonement told by the grandfather, superficially as an entertainment for his guests between sumptuous meals, but, in the intention of Gotthelf, as an exhortation to his contemporaries not to stray from the path of Christian belief and morality.⁴

I shall reflect on the interpretation, in the spirit of the sacrament, of physical and metaphysical experiences. Even superstition and mere social convention will be seen to be transformed into an affirmation of the highest purposes. Essentially Gotthelf is depicting a sacramental occasion, one in which the outward and visible forms of people's behaviour are underwritten by a sense of spiritual validation. Just as in church the recurring form of ritual is the measure of the unchanging truth of God's purposes, there is here an observable link between human actions and utterances and transcendental truths, hence Gotthelf's rhetoric of recurrence, heritage, transmission, and his attention to both physical and spiritual aspects. Nature, human living, and food are all of a piece. There is no contradiction between an admirably scrubbed floor, as found in his text, and the mystery of the Christian faith. Whereas, the inset stories are about a world in which that unity fractures and the benign powers at work in the frame become malignant forces. Nature will be seen to go mad, as will human relationships.

The story of a Bernese baptism begins auspiciously:

‘Über die Berge hob sich die Sonne, leuchtete in klarer Majestät in ein freundliches, aber enges Tal und weckte zu fröhlichem Leben die Geschöpfe, die geschaffen sind, an der Sonne ihres Lebens sich zu freuen.’(p.27)^{*} - the words at the beginning of *Die schwarze Spinne* evoke a vision of the creation of the world as if Genesis was unfolding anew before the reader’s inner eye. Just as the divine creator gave life to all earthly beings at the beginning of time, so the sun echoes this majesty and wakes all living creatures. The tone employed in the description of the sunny landscape is both biblical and Homeric, and everywhere there is an air of fecundity directing the reader’s thoughts towards birth and the baptism which, further on in the story, will be the central event of the *Rahmenerzählung*. The *Kindstaufe* taking place on this day will be contrasted with the sinful pact made by the people of this same village centuries earlier, namely the disastrous and godless promise to trade an unbaptized infant for the assistance rendered by the Devil to the hard-pressed villagers.

The paradisiac setting, an alpine Garden of Eden, is filled with lush vegetation, amorous animals voicing their *Minnelied*, and feathered mothers cooing loving lullabies. Nature at its most joyous and fertile offers no hint of the ghastly arachnoid horror which once terrorised this valley of peaceful existence, a horror conjured up later, ostensibly as entertainment for the guests at the christening of little Hans Ulrich, by the cautionary tale of the grandfather. It comes as no surprise to the reader that the infant, who this day will join the community of Christians in order to become sheltered in the love of God, will bear the shortened form of the name Johannes, thereby making the link with John the Baptist.

Having led into the story by bringing the abundant fauna to life, Gotthelf now introduces man, the crown of creation, into this fertile valley. In keeping with the biblical images the reader is told that the house which will be the focus of the tale⁵ to be told is

* Page numbers in this chapter refer to: *Jeremias Gotthelf, Gesammelte Werke*, VII (Zürich: Eugen Rentsch Verlag, 1982).

placed 'in der Mitte der sonnenreichen Halde...', suggesting a womblike setting, sheltered and protected, surrounded by the carefully tended and nurtured domestic flora indigenous to the region. As is to be expected in paradise, there are '...einige Hochapfelbäume...' (p.27) to be found.

It becomes clear that this house, which is sparklingly clean and well kept, as a result of loving and conscientious work, generation after generation, thus becoming '...ein Zeugnis [...] des köstlichen Erbgutes angestammter Reinlichkeit...' (p.27) reflects the family honour which likewise needs to be guarded and maintained with unwavering effort. This cleanliness points to the sadly neglected, and thereby forfeited, spiritual purity which in an earlier age decimated the population of this flourishing and God-fearing community⁶. There is, perhaps, an allusion here to the Black Death which wrought havoc in Europe centuries earlier, symbolized by the terrifying black spider. Clearly material inheritance or transmission of values needs to be diligently maintained.

Gotthelf links God's creation and '...das von Menschenhänden erbaute Haus...' by telling the reader that '...über beide erglänzte heute ein Stern am blauen Himmel...'. Although the narrative only suggests that this is no ordinary day in the life of the world, and of that of the local inhabitants encountered later, it is stated clearly that the story will unfold on a day which is '...ein hoher Feiertag' (p.27). It is, in fact, Ascension Day, 'dem Menschen ein alle Jahre neu werdendes Sinnbild seiner eigenen Bestimmung' (p.28). The interpolated comment here – a brief gloss on the meaning of Ascension Day – in fact serves to align the interpretative thrust of the narrative performance with the Christian message. There is a sense in which Gotthelf's text addresses less a community than a congregation of readers. On this day everything appears to reach upwards, a reminder that earth is not man's ultimate dwelling but should be seen only as an intermediate stage in the soul's progress towards eventual union with God; it can thereby achieve eternal salvation and regain the blissful state experienced by Adam and Eve before their

expulsion from Paradise. Gotthelf here impresses upon the reader the crucial element of symbolization by which physical things are made transparent upon metaphysical truths. The bells being rung in every village church for miles around call the faithful to worship, reassuring them that there need not be fear abroad as long as mankind is aware of the right path and does not allow its mind and soul to be tainted by any of the successors of the serpent which led man into original sin.

The feeling generated by this very strong emphasis on the spiritual aspect of human existence, evidenced by the frequent reference to Christian faith, is transmitted to the reader and has an uplifting effect, almost as if the Star of Bethlehem, which first announced the birth of Christ, was once more pointing the way to the true home of man's soul. Heaven is the realm to be shared by God, Father and Son, and man, Ascension Day being the annual reminder of this generous promise.

Until the day for man's release from the terrestrial bonds comes, however, there is a great deal of bustling life and activity to be seen around the homestead. Again Gotthelf highlights the abundant fertility of this rural setting. Handsome mares with their foals, fat cows, and robust wenches go about their tasks. They refresh and wash themselves at the *Brunnen*, the symbol of life, foreshadowing thus the font of holy water later used to baptise the newborn child in church and thereby drawing together the processes of physical and spiritual purification. Smoke issuing from the chimney of the farmhouse signals frantic indoor activity, the cooking and baking entailed in family celebrations, and mirrors the dark wooden beam, the *Bystel*, which is incorporated in the new house and which is believed to be holding captive the deadly black spider which had wrought havoc so long ago. The reader is tempted to see this '...dunkle Rauchsäule...' which '...hob sich gerade und hoch in die blaue Luft empor...' (p.28) as a kind of votive offering expressing recognition of God's omnipresence and man's gratitude for His beneficence.

Everything having pointed upwards, thus reinforcing the theme of Christ's ascension and the need for humanity to direct its gaze heavenwards, narrative attention is now turned to earthly matters. Members of the oldest generation within the extended family, living and working at the farm⁷, conduct themselves with the dignity of old age, accorded due respect by the younger generations and by the collective experience of ancient tradition. They fulfil a guiding function and, by example, pass on the customs of their native region. There is an air of peace around the farm buildings and the reader is reminded that God looks after all beings just as the grandmother feeds the many feathered creatures in whose midst she is seated. The act of cutting bread sends a powerful message that all is well with the world. The '...schüchternes Täubchen...' (p.29) contributes to the peaceful atmosphere. The adjectives Gotthelf uses are outward signs of diligent work being done, such as *rein gefegt*, *recht*, *nicht unachtsam* and *wohlgenährt*, of attention to detail and order, categories of social decency in tune with the religious precepts, very different from the later depiction of this same farm after, in an earlier age, it had been allowed to fall into disreputable hands, given over to greedy and undisciplined masters and their servants, to godless and unrestrained behaviour, wasteful consumption and unbridled passions. On this Ascension Day, the constraints imposed by moral and religious certainties are seen to be beneficial and to link with the outward signs of secular orderliness. The reader is alerted, however, to the slovenliness and moral laxity revealed later in the course of the grandfather's warning story.

The management of the household is in the capable hands of a '...schöne, etwas blasse Frau...' (p.29), the mother of the infant whose baptism is to be celebrated with all the decorum of a traditional country feast. The pale young woman puts us in mind of the Madonna and Child seen in paintings by many a devout artist, her pale skin looking translucent and other-worldly, a mother beyond the earthly experience of maternity, but, of course, suggesting also the physical strain of childbirth having been endured by her.

Like the godparents she, too, is not given a name, the role of these characters being that of representatives of all humanity and of intermediaries, their significance resting on the function they assume in the baptism, in which they will become the guardians of the infant's religious and spiritual development. The Godparents, *Gotte* and *Götti*, by their names deputising for God, will hand over the child to the ministrations of the priest, who will receive it into the Christian fellowship, thus paving the way for another soul to reach heaven at the appointed hour.

The *Kindstaufe* which will be enacted by the sacrament of the church through the *Amt* of the priest has its physical counterpart in the *Amt der Köchin* who reigns in the kitchen. She is in charge, under the guidance of the young mother, of implementing '...was die Sitte fordert'(p.29)⁸. Gotthelf details the traditional ritual of the baptism minutely, almost giving the precise recipes for all the dishes which are served on such occasions. The 'Weinwarm', a rich and satisfying soup, and an essential part of a Bernese christening, corresponds to the wine of holy communion, the transsubstantiation of which allows Christians to partake of Christ's body and blood through the act of taking communion. This soup is, therefore, the secular equivalent of the religious experience. In the midst of all the domestic preparations and the proud display of lavish hospitality there is, to give one example, the special plate which will be passed round the table '...mit einem mächtigen Stück Käse...' (p.29), '...umgeben mit sinnigen Sprüchen...' (p.30), simple folk rhymes. These rhymes do not, however, neglect to remind those who partake of the feast of man's ultimate fate: 'Der Mensch, der muss ins Grab' (p.30), heaven or hell being the choices determined by God's grace or man's transgressions. The transient nature of man's sojourn on earth cannot be ignored even at a time of joyous celebration. Peasant wisdom is shown to be as strong as the abundant physicality.

The richness and abundance of the food offered is such '...wie es Fürsten selten haben...' (p.30). But the Bernese country folk offer these traditional dishes on the day on

which the *Himmelsfürst* is honoured and on which he will gain a new servant and will receive him into his protection; so the circumstantial display of wealth can be said to be ennobled by the deeper meaning concealed behind their efforts to observe decorum and to comply with the demands of custom (even though one does also detect elements of the all too human desire to impress family and friends)⁹. The tradition depicted by Gotthelf at this particular farm is evidently shared by others in the region since everyone involved knows exactly what is expected of them. All are thus firmly rooted in their society and, like Christians who adhere to the traditions of the established church and to the commandments imposed by God, enjoy the privileged position of being members of a caring community.

There is a warm golden glow over these festivities and over the objects and victuals involved in them. The traditional ‘Züpfen’¹⁰, the word derived from the women’s habit of wearing their hair in plaits, namely *Zöpfe*, is ‘...schön, braun und gelb...’(p.30); even the coffee pot is said to be yellow. Eggs and butter add to the glowing, gleaming look of the celebrations and help to suggest a golden age, an ideally ordered world. The material richness of the foods is cognate with its spiritual richness. But even here a warning note is introduced by the grandmother who castigates the assembled company and the still absent godparents for their tardiness. It grieves her that the young people, chosen to present the infant for his baptism, are late arriving, in contravention of the age-old custom of being ready early in the day so as not to keep God waiting: ‘Ehemals ist das doch nicht so gewesen, da wußte man, daß man an solchen Tagen zu rechter Zeit aufzustehen habe und der Herr niemanden warte.’(p.31). The old priorities are clear but there is also a sense of *tempora mutantur*, even in a valley which is not exposed to a great deal of social and cultural change. One is aware, though, that the spiritual aspect of this celebration is far from being ignored and is accorded due reverence.

When the godmother arrives she, too, becomes part of the traditional procedure of a country baptism. Her individuality is subsumed in the occasion. She arrives ‘...beladen wie das Neujahrskindlein’(p.31), an obvious allusion to the Christ child bearing gifts in the popular belief, and to the three Magi who brought their offerings to the town of Bethlehem for the infant Jesus. She carries traditional presents, three in all. There are the ‘...Wartsäcklein[s], in welchem [...] eine große Züpf[e] stach...’(p.31), tiny clothes and ‘...ein blanker Neutaler, eingewickelt in den schön gemalten Taufspruch...’(p.33), suggesting the idea of the bread for Holy Communion being carried inside the monstrance. Everything is wrapped in white cloth, giving proof of cleanliness and hard work. The reader is also inclined to think of the white clothes worn at Christ’s transfiguration. The ‘Züpf[e]’ is the secular counterpart to the bread eaten by those present at the sacrament of Holy Communion who believe themselves to be partaking of Christ’s body. The three presents given to mother and child by the godmother reflect those found in the Bible, gold, frankincense, and myrrh, which the three Magi from the East brought to honour the new-born king.

There are other references to the Orient, such as when the godmother joins the men, all enjoying the ‘Weinwarm’, the ‘...altermüliche[n], aber gute[n] Bernersuppe...’(p.33), and is seen to be ‘...wie eine junge Morgensonnenne...’(p.34). The East, where the sun rises and where the infant Jesus was born, is further conjured up by the customary ingredients in several of the traditional dishes served on this special day with all its religious significance, namely saffron and cinnamon. Each is an old-fashioned spice ‘...das an einem Kindstaufeschmaus in der Suppe, im Voessen, im süßen Tee vorkommen muss’(p.33). Gotthelf appears to be reminding the reader yet again that, however lovingly the worldly side of the traditional Bernese baptism is depicted, the subtext is always that a sacred duty is being carried out by Christian families when they

arrange for an infant from their midst to be baptized (hence the resonant force of the ‘muss’).

The clothes worn by the godmother on this day are equally traditional and clearly not chosen by her or dictated by her personal taste. The festive local costume has obviously clad many a young woman on just such an occasion across many generations in the past, a tradition to be continued by those who are yet to be born. This costume denies the individual any separate identity but it also anchors those who uphold the tradition securely in the community. Gotthelf gives a detailed description of the costume worn by the godmother. By using definite articles when speaking of the various items of clothing he makes it clear that it is the ‘...Spitzenkappe mit den prächtigen, schwarzseidenen Haarschnüren’(p.31), which will be the crowning glory of her dress; the reader is left in no doubt that it can be only this headgear and not any other type. Personal whim or individual choice have no place in this well-ordered and tradition-bound society. Firm adherence to ancient custom even goes as far as the greetings to be exchanged by the guests and their hostess for ‘sie könnten ja drinnen einander sagen, was der Brauch sei’(p.31).

The mood is one of welcoming warmth, the air filled with the many ‘Gottwillchen’ which are extended to family and friends, thus producing a sharp contrast to the birth of Christ at Bethlehem where his desperate parents had been unable to find a room at the inn. The setting into which little Hans Uli is born is, although rural, infinitely superior to the stable in which Jesus found his first abode on earth, initially welcome only to God and to Mary who had been chosen to bring forth the human incarnation of the divine spirit. Such affluence, as evidenced in the grandfather’s warning tale contained within the *Rahmen*, may, however, generate problems and must not be allowed to govern conduct and thinking to the exclusion of spiritual values.

The baptism appears safe in the hands of the women and it is truly a day on which the distaff side of the household enforces the traditions of the region, be they of a religious or of a social nature. This means, for example, that it is not deemed appropriate for the young mother, newly delivered of her infant son, to venture outside the confines of the homestead until eight days after the birth, lest it be thought that the family belongs to the ranks of those too poor to allow their womenfolk the luxury of a gradual recovery after the birth of a child. This is the prerogative of women from a more prosperous milieu.

Reminiscent of many a painting of the Nativity, of shepherds gazing in adoration at the infant Jesus, is the scene in which 'man umstand das Kind und rühmte es...' (p.34), as if paying homage to a latter-day Christ child, '...dem schön eingewickelten Kinde...' (p.34), an image which powerfully suggests the parallel of the infant Saviour in his swaddling clothes. Just as Mary had her son taken from her, so the *Kindbetterin*, much distressed, has to relinquish her offspring in order that he may be taken to the village church to become a member of the Christian community¹¹, although not before midwife and grandmother have uttered fervent prayers and '...einen inbrüstigen Segen' (p.35) commanding the child to God's love and protection. The grandmother sends the procession on its way by intoning: 'So geht jetzt in Gottes heiligen Namen!' (p.35). It is His holy name and their faith in Him which underpin this celebration and, more importantly, which are the foundation on which they have built their lives.

The grandfather relates that on the day of his own baptism many years earlier, on the way to the church '...vor Hagel und Blitz hätten die Kirchgänger kaum geglaubt, mit dem Leben davonzukommen' (p.35). As happens elsewhere in the cautionary tale within the *Rahmenerzählung*, Gotthelf suggests that at times God's presence manifests itself in extreme and frightening storms which indicate the overwhelming nature of divine omnipotence, a reminder to mortal man not to subscribe to human hubris, neglecting his spiritual needs and duties at his peril. The act of faith shown by the willingness to have

the child baptized and received into the church through the sacrament of baptism is shared by a large section of the village population and ‘...einer großen Prozession ähnlich rückten sie ins Dorf’ (p.36), procession being also a tradition on Ascension Day and on Corpus Christi Day.

The infant is the only member of the family, whose house the reader is invited to enter, who is given a name. He alone, on this day, assumes a personal identity but initially only in order to become a unique being in the sight of God. The secular benefits of a distinct and separate identity are of no importance at this stage, unless they are used to indicate that he is joining a long line of ancestors. Unaware that the priest has been informed of the baby’s name by others, the godmother, instead of enjoying her special status on this significant day, is mortified when she realizes that she has not been told the names to be given to the infant at the baptism ceremony. Tradition normally dictates that it is part of her duty to whisper the baby’s names when handing the infant to the pastor for the actual baptism so as to avoid any likely confusion should more than one child be presented during the same service. Because of the many ‘...zu besorgenden Dinge[n] und der Angst, zu spät zu kommen, hatte man die Mitteilung dieses Namens vergessen...’, yet superstition decrees that, should the godmother need to enquire as to the baby’s name, this child would be endowed with an unattractive character, namely: ‘...so werde dieses zeitlebens neugierig’. Not only would her inadequate preparation spell such disaster for her charge, she herself would be disgraced and ridiculed forever, a bitter fate indeed. Little wonder therefore that ‘...dem starken Mädchen zitterten die Beine wie Bohnenstauden im Winde, und vom blassen Gesichte rann der Schweiß bachweise’ and, with the authorial tongue firmly in cheek, ‘an grässlicher Angst litt die Gotte und durfte sie nicht merken lassen.’ (p.37). In anticipation of the terrible moment when, on being asked by the vicar to declare the names, she would be exposed to the ridicule of all those present, she feels that ‘die Stimmen prasselten ordentlich an den

Wänden, und die Gotte wußte nicht mehr, wo sie war...’(p.38), the word *prasseln* even suggesting the crackling flames of Hell. Later it will be revealed that this particular superstitious belief is not to be taken too seriously. Many a joke is told ‘...über die Neugierde, und wie sich die Weiber davor fürchten und sie doch allen ihren Mädchen anhängten, während sie den Buben nichts täte’(p.38/9).

The actual moment of baptism, through the office of the ordained minister, affords the hard-pressed and erstwhile mortified godmother a supreme feeling of relief and comforting reassurance, as if ‘...aus einem feurigen Ofen sie jemand trage in ein kühles Bad...’(p.38), conjuring up visions of an escape from hell and damnation and of immersion in the holy waters of the river Jordan, the method of baptism used by early Christians. Gotthelf adds a wonderfully Swiss touch to his description of the revived and unburdened godmother by allowing her to feel as if ‘...sämtliche Emmentalerberge ihr ab dem Herzen fielen...’(p.38), a felicitous choice of simile in the land of cheese, and one which evokes the renowned productivity of this particular area of Switzerland. In her distress, this simple country girl imagines her immediate world and its very fruitfulness passing judgment on her. The assembled company of guests at this baptism, when told of her near calamity, with great relish and much laughter inform the erstwhile hapless godmother, with what today would be seen as an openly sexist remark, that, of course, curiosity and nosiness are exclusively visited on the female of the species whereas ‘...sie den Buben nichts täte. Da hätte sie nur getrost fragen können’(p.39). It is the men who see the need to wag a warning finger at all women who appear to fear such an ignoble character trait and yet invariably pass on such propensity to ‘...allen ihren Mädchen...’(p.38). In a moment such as this Gotthelf allows the sublime (the sacrament of baptism) and the mundane (the men’s view that all women are potential gossips) to co-exist without friction or disturbance.

The preparations on the domestic front having been completed before the service got under way, the baptism now concludes with the priest's sermon '...recht schön und eindringlich, wie eigentlich das Leben der Menschen nichts anders sein solle als eine Himmelfahrt...' (p.38), preparing man's soul for life in the hereafter. The 'klare[r] Majestät' and the exhortation to mankind to orient itself heavenwards, established at the beginning of Gotthelf's story, have been reaffirmed and reiterated, as have man's spiritual needs and the succour to be found in a strict adherence to traditional values, age-old customs and the moral tenets of the church, as a baby needs to be sustained by food.

At this stage, the terrible events of an earlier age are still safely locked in the pages of Gotthelf's story, mirroring the captivity of the ghastly spider biding its time inside the *Bystel*, always ready to pounce. On the day of Hans Uli's christening, God's supremacy remains unchallenged in the hearts of the people of Sumiswald.

* * * * *

Both stylistically and structurally Gotthelf's tale in every sense contains (and, by containing, tames) the eruptive evil of the spider. At the end of the story we return to the frame.

Bald war es still ums Haus, bald auch still in demselben.
 Friedlich lag es da, rein und schön glänzte es in des Mondes Schein das Tal entlang, sorglich und freundlich barg es brave Leute in süßem Schlummer, wie die schlummern, welche Gottesfurcht und gute Gewissen im Busen tragen, welche nie die schwarze Spinne, sondern nur die freundliche Sonne aus dem Schlummer wecken wird. Denn wo solcher Sinn wohnet, darf sich die Spinne nicht regen, weder bei Tage noch bei Nacht. Was ihr aber für eine Macht wird, wenn der Sinn ändert, das weiß der, der alles weiß und jedem seine Kräfte zuteilt, den Spinnen wie den Menschen (p.113)

The weighty cadences of Gotthelf's prose, with its powerful Homeric rhythms ('...sorglich und freundlich [...] Schlummer...'), and its resonant sense of a world held in balance ('...still ums Haus [...] still in demselben [...] den Spinnen wie den Menschen') bespeak a narrative universe rendered strong and secure by an indwelling faith. That faith truly ensures that all the humble details (of clothing, of food, of furniture) are underwritten by a kind of sacramental significance whose presence can be felt at every turn in the narrative. Perhaps it is true to say that none of the texts subsequently discussed in this thesis even comes close to Gotthelf's certainty of a symbolic statement. As we shall see, our movement towards the modern world brings with it growing instability of signification.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

1. Rudolf Hunziker quotes J.J.Reithardt in praise of Gotthelf: 'Jeremias Gotthelf ist nach unserer Überzeugung einer der genialsten Schriftsteller unserer Zeit und als Seelen- und Volkskundler unübertroffen. [...] Mit erschütternder Sprachgewalt stellt er die Verirrungen des Volkslebens, die geheimen Motive seines Verfalls, die Quellen seines Elendes – mit herzgewinnender Wahrheit und tiefer Innigkeit die schönen und anmutigen Seiten und Erscheinungen desselben, die liebenswürdige und sinnige Weisheit einfacher Seelen und die keuschen und heiligen Freuden ländlicher Wesen dar [...] Seine Sprache ist körnig und kraftvoll, zart und lieblich, wie die Sache es mit sich bringt, pracht- und kraftvoll seine Bilder, schlagend seine Beweissätze, überraschend seine Wendungen.' See: Rudolf Hunziker, *Jeremias Gotthelf und J.J. Reithardt in ihren gegenseitigen Beziehungen* (Zürich: 1903), p.73.
2. In the introduction to his book (Albert Brüschweiler, *Jeremias Gotthelfs Darstellung des Berner Taufwesens: volkskundlich und historisch untersucht und ergänzt* (Bern: Verlag Gustav Grunau, 1926), Brüschweiler says: 'Mit dieser Arbeit möchte ich nachweisen, wie ausführlich und wahrheitsgetreu Gotthelf sein Volk schildert.' He recognises Gotthelf's 'überragende Stellung als Volkskundler und Kulturhistoriker.' Brüschweiler used archive material, questionnaires and oral tradition to back up his research. Gotthelf's account of an Emmental baptism is shown to be virtually complete. Gotthelf uses dialect words so that one feels that the Emmental and Oberaargau dialects could almost be reconstructed from his works. He made home visits to parishioners, listened to gossiping women, to the *Dorfklatsch* in pubs with friends and in neighbouring vicarages, and since he had a very good memory he retained the information for years, to be drawn on later.
3. Bernd Rieken refers to M. Sooder, 'Sagen aus Rohrbach', in *Schweizerisches Archiv für Volkskunde* 25 (1925) when he mentions the existence '...einer Emmentaler Sage, welche man als verkürzte Fassung der Gotthelfschen Novelle *Die schwarze Spinne* ansehen kann...'. See: Bernd Rieken, 'Die Spinne als Symbol in Volksdichtung und Literatur', *Fabula: Zeitschrift für Erzählforschung* 36 (1995), p.191.
4. For one of the many different readings of *Die schwarze Spinne* see: William Collins Donahue, 'The Kiss of the Spider Woman: Gotthelf's "Matricentric" Pedagogy and its (Post)war Reception', *The German Quarterly*, 67.3 (1994), 304-324. Donahue sees it as part of the task of his study 'to lay bare the rather pervasive gender polemic which makes *Die schwarze Spinne* both a cautionary and retaliatory tale against female independence. Like venomous spiders, women, we learn, must be shown their proper place.'
5. According to Walter Muschg, the farmhouse itself is the novella's real 'hero': '...es ist das Haus der Welt selber in seiner ewigen Harmonie' See: Walter Muschg, 'Jeremias Gotthelf, *Die schwarze Spinne*' in *Pamphlet und Bekenntnis: Aufsätze und Reden*, ed. by Peter André Bloch (Freiburg: Walter, 1968).
6. Berta Huber-Bindschedler also states the link clearly: 'Was im Bereich des Menschen nicht gepflegt wird, zerfällt in Unordnung.' See: Berta Huber-Bindschedler, *Die Symbolik in Gotthelfs Erzählung 'Die schwarze Spinne'* (Zürich: Polygraphischer Verlag, 1956).
7. The *oikos*, the 'ganze Haus', was the old system of having one big household, including the extended family as well as those working on the farm, under one roof. 'Das Bauerndorf älterer Prägung formte sich als Addition von individuellem Besitz an Haus und Feld. Jeder Hof war auf seine Weise autark organisiert. Man produzierte möglichst alles, was man brauchte, selbst und darüber hinaus so viel an verkaufsfähigen Produkten, daß man auch am Konsum so weit wie materiell notwendig und wie es dem Prestigedenken entsprach, teilnehmen konnte. Diesem System ordnete sich nicht nur rein äußerlich die bäuerliche Wirtschaftsführung unter, sondern auch die gesamte familiäre Struktur, die auf "das Haus" konzentriert war. Sie umfaßte die Arbeitsteilung, die Rollenzuordnung im patriarchal-autoritären Sinne, die Bildung der Kinder im traditionellen-konventionellen Lebensverständnis, - aber auch die Heiratsvorschriften und die materielle Versorgung der alten Familienmitglieder.' See: Ingeborg Weber-Kellermann, *Die deutsche Familie: Versuch einer Sozialgeschichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch, 1974) pp. 85/86.
8. Unlike this young mother '...will Christine Menschenunmögliches vollbringen und wird [...] zur Strafe in eine Spinne verwandelt, [...] "sie war nicht von den Weibern, die froh sind, daheim zu sein, in der Stille ihre Geschäfte zu beschicken, und die sich um nichts kümmern als um Haus und Kind" (Gotthelf, *Die schwarze Spinne*). Den Männern ist sie unheimlich, weil sie den Gesetzen des gottgefälligen Patriarchats nicht folgt.' Christine, having been 'impregnated' by the Devil by a kiss on the cheek, eventually 'gives birth' to a multitude of black spiders, which makes Rieken come to the conclusion '...in dieser Szene eine nur schwach verhüllte Metapher für Geschlechtsakt und Schwangerung zu sehen.', indicating an '...Ineinssetzung von (starker) Frau, Teufel, Sexualität und Spinne...'. See: Bernd Rieken, as above, p.201.
9. A statement from one of Gotthelf's unpublished sermons reads: '[Die Taufe bildete] den feierlichen Anfangspunkt des neuen Lebens, sie war das öffentlich verbindende Bekenntnis Christi, sie war gleichsam die Schwelle, welche um das Christentum gezogen war, daß sich niemand heimlich in dasselbe hinein und hinausschleiche.' See: Kurt Guggisberg, *Jeremias Gotthelf: Christentum und Leben* (Zürich: Max Niehans, 1939), p.213. This attests clearly to Gotthelf's certainty of the deeply spiritual nature of the christening. Given the didactic nature of his literary efforts, Jamie Rankin feels justified in doubting that such an awareness exists also among those taking part in the baptismal celebration and concludes that, despite their

superficially convincing observance, Gotthelf is obliquely criticising them for their obsession with the secular detail of the proceedings.: ‘...from lowest to highest, the members of the *Taufgesellschaft* base much of their behaviour on what they want others to think of them; hence the hesitation to be first at the meal; the strict adherence to the rules of customary compliment and gift-giving; and most important, the failure to accord the celebration the solemnity and spiritual consideration that Gotthelf himself advocated.’ Nevertheless, as Rankin points out, most critics have seen the device of the frametale as simply providing narrative contrast: ‘Critics will suggest that the inner story is plunged into darkness, while the frame setting radiates light; the inner story pulses with terror, the frame with lively festivity; the inner story provokes tension, the frame provides release.’ See: Jamie Rankin, ‘Spider in a Frame: The Didactic Structure of *Die schwarze Spinne*’, *German Quarterly*, 61 (1988), 412 and 405.

10. Gotthelf refers to the traditional loaf as the *Züpfle* (singular) since the dough is ‘...geflochten wie die Zöpfe der Weiber’(p.30), but elsewhere the women’s plaited hair is referred to in a different spelling : ‘...an den Züpfen halte...’(p.36).
11. ‘Christian baptism has long been seen by feminist theologians as (at least in part) a patriarchal encroachment on motherhood: a male appropriation of childbirth.’ See: William Collins Donahue, as above, p.310.

CHAPTER 2

The celebration of Christmas in Stifter's *Bergkristall*

At first sight, Stifter's *Bergkristall* (published in 1845), still beloved as a Christmas story, seems to partake of the theologically grounded certainties that animate Gotthelf's world. *Bergkristall* is a genuinely touching and celebratory story. Yet, as we shall see, there are moments of thematic, and narrative, disturbance.

* * * * *

The first sentence of *Bergkristall* makes it clear to the reader that there is to follow a description of one of the Church's deeply significant '...Feste, welche zum Herzen dringen'(p.183)*; it is also 'eines der schönsten Feste...' (p.183) in the Christian calendar. It is in fact the night of Christ's birth, celebrated at the darkest time of midwinter and thereby becoming linked with the pagan rite of the Nordic festival of light which is still reflected in many of the customs and traditions of Christmas. In the central event of Stifter's story there is the suggestion that a supernatural and inexplicable light, showing mankind the way through terrestrial life, lifting it onto a higher spiritual plane and filling the human soul with awe and faith in the divine creator and in His presence on earth, is the force experienced in the icy wilderness by the two lost children and which is later perceived as a miracle by their community.

The nexus of the church festival and the family celebration is established in the second paragraph of the narrative where Stifter writes: 'Mit dem Kirchenfest ist auch ein häusliches verbunden.'(p.183).

* Page numbers in this chapter refer to: *Adalbert Stifter, Werke und Briefe, Historisch-Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 2.2 (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1982).

It provides the link not only between the individual and the community but draws in the wider circle of all Christendom. In two paragraphs of simple prose giving a detailed and lovingly painted picture of Christmas festivities prepared for in every house¹ (the presence of children is seen as an obvious prerequisite) and repeated generation after generation to a long-lost blueprint, prose filled with warmth and wonder and echoing with adult nostalgia for the days of childhood² when the customs and traditions associated with Christmas ‘...alle Vorstellungen ihrer Einbildungskraft weit übertreffen...’(p.184), Stifter evokes in masterly fashion both the secular and sacred aspects of Christmas as observed in a snow-covered alpine valley and its villages. And, with great delicacy, he also touches on that form of modern adult self-consciousness which means that the sacrament can never be as sacramental again.³

The presents brought by the *Christkindlein* for the children and the lavish food dictated by time-honoured tradition, only eaten at Christmas ‘...wenn zu Mittage ein feierliches Mahl ist, ein besseres als an jedem Tage des ganzen Jahres...’(p.184), create a festive atmosphere in the houses of the villagers and fill their minds and hearts with profound satisfaction and happiness. It is, however, the signal given by the parents to herald the imminent *Bescherung*, the longed-for and joyously greeted distribution of gifts⁴, and later the sound of the midnight bells calling the faithful to Mass and absorbed subliminally by the blissfully sleeping children into their peaceful dreams, which give Christmas its real significance and which announce ‘daß der heilige Christ zugegen gewesen ist...’(p.184), words which later on in the story will be invested with poignant meaning. The narrative statement then moves into metaphor, raising the issue of human perception, of the interpretative context of facts. Christian hearts are filled with a mysterious awareness ‘...als zögen jetzt die Englein durch den Himmel oder als kehre der heilige Christ nach Hause...’(p.184). One notes the subjunctive mode here; the

notion of Christ's return to his heavenly home is expressed not as a certainty but as a conjecture, as a possible interpretation.

The pattern demands that Christmas must pass but Christ's return to earth is eagerly awaited in the following year in a never-ending cycle, especially by the children who feel '...als sei seit seinem letzten Erscheinen einige Zeit vergangen und als liege die damalige Freude in einer weiten nebelgrauen Ferne'(p.185). The sentiments conjured up - once again in the conjectural mode - are also those of Christians who are awaiting with impatience the second coming of the Messiah. The actual birth of Jesus, nearly two thousand years earlier, also appears to have occurred 'in einer weiten nebelgrauen Ferne'. Its effect, rather than being allowed to wane and become forgotten and hidden in the grey mists of time, must be rekindled anew every year.

The world painted on the canvas of Stifter's narrative is one of isolated communities, small mountain-enclosed, self-sufficient parishes in which '...sie kennen einander alle mit Namen und mit den einzelnen Geschichten von Großvater und Urgroßvater her, [...] haben eine Sprache, die von der Ebene draußen abweicht, [...] stehen einander bei und laufen zusammen, wenn sich etwas Außerordentliches begibt'(p.186). The reader is also told that 'sie sind sehr stetig, und es bleibt immer beim Alten'(p.187). The notion that nothing changes may be seen at one level as admirable; but at another we detect a hint of criticism voiced by the narrator.⁵ Unchanging lifestyles and rigid adherence to set patterns may lead to bigotry and rejection of new ideas or indeed newcomers, sometimes occasioning uncomfortable or even tragic consequences. What the people of Gschaid share with the inhabitants of other communities, though, is '...daß sie an Herkömmlichkeiten und Vaterweise hängen...' (p.192). The name Gschaid may be taken to indicate linguistically that this village is *geschieden* from other similar places by mountain ridges and by the observance of its own traditions. The extraordinary event at the heart of *Bergkristall*

will serve to overcome the implications of the divisive name and the mentality which could be detected behind it.

When the shoemaker from Gschaid defies the unwritten rule of being expected to make one's life entirely within this rather narrow locality and chooses a beautiful wife from a neighbouring valley, he thereby makes their children virtual outsiders, too. And that outsiderdom finds climactic enactment in the children's enforced stay on the mountain. It is the regrettable lack of contact between these villages and the sadly neglected social exchange, even at an emotionally highly charged time such as Christmas, which necessitates the children's visit to the house of their maternal grandparents which causes them to lose their way on the long trek back across an initially unseasonably dry, but later snow-enveloped, mountain.

The setting for the spiritual experience undergone by the cobbler's young children is the *Gars*, a large mountain in the vicinity of their home village. Heavy and unexpected snowfall leads them into a world outside the protective warmth of human habitation, of man-made shelter and parental love and into a bluish-white icy world containing '...eine große Lichtfülle...' (p.215) and yet impenetrable to the eye. Everything appears to be '...in eine einzige weiße Finsternis gehüllt...' (p.216). The oxymoron is an apt and inspired description of the icy world of nothingness they have entered, a world which does not afford the children any means of orientation; they are deracinated beings without the customary human support system. The reader is left with the feeling that they have stepped out of time and earthly space into an unknown and unknowable realm.⁶ And yet, it will be precisely this monstrous experience which will be instrumental in integrating those hitherto excluded into the communal world.

The guiding sun which so often helped them to maintain their bearings on earlier excursions, '...die Sonne, die so blutrot war wie eine Lampe bei dem heiligen Grabe...' (p.208), an obvious reference to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in

Jerusalem and also to the eternal lamp in all Catholic churches and chapels, denoting everlasting life, is now hidden from view. Red being also symbolic of life sustaining blood, the loss of this colour, in the world the children have inadvertently entered and which is characterized only by shades of white, carries with it ominous connotations. Despite the reference to the children's familiarity with the Christian faith and its benign nature, usually a source of succour and reassurance in adversity, their exposure to extreme danger in this inhospitable, harsh and icy, in fact, lifeless terrain is terrifying. Their gradual but inevitable ascent into a more and more hostile environment on this holy day in the Christian calendar is accomplished in a silence which is felt to be pregnant with threat and there are indications that something out of the ordinary is about to unfold. All around there is virgin snow; no-one has entered this world before the children set foot in it. The reader is aware of the parallel drawn here with the virgin birth which is celebrated on this very day and with the children's own innocence. On a more practical level, there is also the implication that this forbiddingly untouched icy world in which no-one has set foot nor ever seems likely to is no place for young and thus very vulnerable children to find themselves marooned.

The relationship between the boy and his younger sister mirrors that of the children's parents. A natural and spontaneous deference displayed by mother and daughter alike towards husband and brother can be taken to reflect the role assumed by Christian believers as servants or disciples who are happy to follow and be guided by their lord and master, be he celestial or familial. The trust inherent in this unquestioning faith and the acceptance of the superior status of the 'senior' being express themselves in a quasi-liturgical repetition of identical phrases, just as in church the congregation traditionally and willingly falls in with the age-old words of the prescribed responses. It is Sanna's repeatedly uttered 'Ja, Konrad' in response to all his suggestions which most clearly conveys this impression and displays her unshaken faith in her brother's ability

to lead them out of the icy wilderness to safety, and thus to life. The parallel with the Christian belief in Christ's role as the Saviour is obvious. Yet at the same time we sense the presence of another, less sacramental, level of statement at work in Stifter's text: the boy's advice is not soundly based and does not merit the sister's blind obedience; he does after all not actually lead them to safety⁷. Sanna's 'Ja, Konrad' vibrates with the possibility of disaster. The seemingly imperturbable rhythms of Stifter's prose are not as reassuring as they seem at first sight.

Having entered the white and amorphous infinity of the mountain, the children are removed from any of the landmarks which have hitherto guided them on their path through their familiar local environment. Even the red (the colour is once again significant) 'Unglückssäule' which has '...das schwarze eiserne Kreuz auf der Spitze...' (p.210), symbolically and literally an indispensable aid to spiritual and geographical orientation for them, has been swallowed up by the menacing whiteness of the snowy scene⁸. All life hitherto known to the children has been obliterated and only disaster appears to beckon. The comforting expectation voiced by Konrad that they may eventually reach a point beyond which they will be able to find the way down the hostile mountain is not fulfilled: 'Aber es gab kein Jenseits' (p.220). This stark sentence stands alone in the narrative and it highlights the mysterious nature of the realm which the children have penetrated⁹. In physical terms the children have obviously reached a point in their odyssey beyond which they cannot venture; they appear to be standing at the edge of an abyss and cannot move further. Yet, paradoxically, that point of literal, material, brutal finality does not have the last word. Spiritually, there is a *Jenseits*. And the children, taken to the very limits of the humanly interpreted world, gain a glimpse of it.

In fear, the children retreat from a vaulted cave which might have afforded them shelter for the looming night. It is '...viel tiefer und viel schöner blau, als das

Firmament...' (p.219), illuminated by a light streaming in as if filtered through the stained glass windows of a church, but, sensing danger, the young children reject this protection because '...es war so schreckhaft blau, die Kinder fürchteten sich und gingen wieder hinaus...' (p.219). Their hope of finding a way back to life and to the world of human warmth remains undiminished¹⁰. The shelter they eventually do find and welcome gratefully is located between rocky boulders which form a roof structure, '...ein Häuschen, das gebildet war...' (p.221). The domestic metaphor is comforting, but one wonders how long the comfort will last. Having temporarily left the ice and its cold sterility behind them, they are '...recht froh, daß sie nicht mehr in dem Eise waren und auf ihrer Erde standen' (p.221), regaining the reassuring terra firma of life on Earth and thus reasserting their hold on physical existence. They have distanced themselves from the peril of an icy death.

At the same time, the villagers in the alpine valleys begin to set in motion the traditional sequence of lighting up their nocturnal world. As the stars appear in the sky one by one, so the Christmas candles in all the houses and humble cottages are lit to greet the arrival of the infant Jesus in their midst and to receive, with joy and gratitude, the gifts designated for all children:

In allen Thälern bekamen die Kinder in dieser Stunde die Geschenke des heiligen Christ; nur die zwei saßen oben am Rande des Eises, und die vorzüglichsten Geschenke, die sie heute hätten bekommen sollen, lagen in versiegelten Päckchen in der Kalbfelltasche im Hintergrunde der Höhle' (p.224).

The narrator stresses the perilous marginality of the children here. The notion of threat is urgent. It is the miraculous possibility that the grandparents' presents - 'die vorzüglichsten Geschenke' - are not the ultimate reward because something more exquisite and valuable lies in store for these two chosen and, perhaps, blessed children.

The strong coffee from the ‘Kalbfelltasche’ drunk by Konrad and Sanna succeeds in warding off life-threatening sleep by keeping them awake and thus allowing their circulation to continue pulsating and to maintain warm life in their small bodies despite the encroaching icy threat and oblivion. At such altitudes Morpheus and Death go hand in hand. The strong brew also stimulates ‘...ihre unschuldigen Nerven zu einem Fieber...’(p.226) which fills them with life-saving vigour and may help to account for the heightened state of perception in which the children face midnight on this very special holy day of Christ’s birth. Once again, we note a moment of ambivalence in the text. The physical changes caused to the children’s metabolism may in part explain the metaphysical possibility which the story expresses.

‘Es war nun Mitternacht gekommen’(p.226), and all over the land church bells begin to call the faithful to midnight mass, ‘...von Dorf zu Dorf ging die Tonwelle [...] um die Leute zu erinnern...’(p.227). This appears to be necessary since busy lives and the unusually elaborate preparations for this much-loved and eagerly-awaited celebration might otherwise, by too much emphasis being placed on the secular trimmings and preoccupations connected with the material side of the festival, obscure the deeper and essentially spiritual meaning of this day. It is all too easy to become absorbed in safeguarding the more tangible external traditions of a religious feast and neglect its inward significance. But in the world into which the children have inadvertently, or perhaps by divine intention, been led there is no such audible exhortation, ‘...denn hier war nichts zu verkündigen’(p.227). These words suggest both negatively – there is no message to be heard here – and positively - that the children, in this inhuman and untainted world, are about to undergo a miraculous experience, superior in its impact and intensity to any to be found in the bustle of their familiar surroundings. Another dimension will be added to their lives. It will not be a recurring announcement of a divine truth but, miraculously, the substance itself that may be their

precious gift. They will also be in a state of readiness to receive it, since they are no longer subject to the inadequate human awareness of 'ordinary mortals'. Nature itself enables them to confront the phenomenon about to become manifest in the sky. They are alerted to it when they hear '...dreimal das Krachen des Eises'(p.227). The magic figure three has obvious biblical overtones. In front of the spellbound children

...erblühte am Himmel vor ihnen ein bleiches Licht mitten unter den Sternen, und spannte einen schwachen Bogen durch dieselben. [...] der Bogen wurde immer heller und heller, bis sich die Sterne vor ihm zurückzogen und erblaßten[...] Dann standen Garben verschiedenen Lichtes auf der Höhe des Bogens wie Zaken [sic] einer Krone, und brannten. Es floß helle durch die benachbarten Himmelsgegenden, es sprühte leise, und ging in sanftem Zucken durch lange Räume(p.228).

The children gaze '...mit offnen Augen in den Himmel'(p.228), mesmerized, speechless, overcome by this wonderfully extravagant display and deeply affected by the splendour and extraordinary impact of this magical, even mystical, experience.

Yet the narrator guards against our becoming absorbed in this seemingly supernatural phenomenon. There is for him, and us, no longer the unquestioning acceptance of divine manifestation found in an earlier age. Despite the religious references, such as the crown pointing to the new-born king and saviour, his light coming into the world, linking Christians like the arc with its greenish hue and heralding hope for all mankind, the parallel of the star of Bethlehem having announced the birth of the infant Jesus at the beginning of the Christian era, Stifter also feels the need to offer an alternative, and more scientific explanation for the stunning occurrence with the words: 'Hatte sich nun der Gewitterstoff des Himmels durch den unerhörten Schneefall so gespannt, daß er in diesen stummen herrlichen Strömen des Lichtes ausfloß...'(p.228). We find ourselves asking whether 'Himmel' is to be read as 'sky' or as 'heaven'. Our ambivalent feelings are reinforced by the juxtaposition of the equally unanswered question: '...oder war es eine andere Ursache der unergründlichen

Natur?’(p.228). There is no final explanation offered – only a strange balance between enchantment and disenchantment. Having confronted the spellbound children and the uncertain reader with this wonderful spectacle, the narrative quickly allows the light to fade and a semblance of normality and, soon afterwards, daylight to return. The boy utters the solemn words: ‘Sanna, der Tag bricht an...’(p.229). One can hear a joyous *Hosanna* behind the name to which the little girl answers. The day which is dawning not only confirms the children’s faith in their ultimate survival and rescue; it also suggests that the events of the holy Christmas night, witnessed by the children in their enforced isolation, are a potent reminder that the birth of Christ nearly two millennia earlier heralded a new beginning for mankind.

The liturgical tone of the children’s dialogue is resumed, clarity of vision and visibility are restored and ‘es geschah nun nichts Besonderes mehr.’(p.228). The ‘...riesengroße blutrothe Scheibe...’(p.230) of the sun rises again, able to guide them on their path and symbolizing the blood red life force which had been absent in the frightening and life threatening *Eiswelt*. The ice which had engulfed and potentially destroyed them can also be seen as having preserved their innocent and trusting lives. The two children turn their backs on the forbiddingly inhospitable icy realm and gradually approach the lower slopes of the dangerous mountain. An alpine horn sounded, not surprisingly to the reader, three times and reminiscent of the words of the psalm *Der Herr ist mein Hirte*, and a red flag, planted earlier on the summit of the formidable *Gars* mountain and mirroring the redness found in the ‘blutrote Scheibe’ of the sun and the red of the eternal flame, signal the lost children’s return to the land of the living. The immediate reaction of the shepherd Philipp is to thank God for their safe return and to call for the bell in one of the alpine huts to announce the virtual rebirth of their own *Christkinder* on this auspicious day. ‘Rauchfeuer’ are to be lit to spread the modern-day Christmas news; at the same time, the smoke plumes will rise up to heaven

as a prayer offered to the Almighty for His benevolence and generously renewed gift. The tremendous relief felt by all those involved in the desperate search for the seemingly doomed children explodes in the simple shepherd's exclamation: 'Das sind Weihnachten!'(p.234). He realizes the implications of the children's miraculous deliverance from extreme danger after the wonder of the Christmas night. The hut at the *Sicheralp* takes on the air of the stable of the nativity scene known to every Christian. The children's distraught mother, having anxiously waited there for news, '...wollte sie in vorhandenes Heu legen...' (p.235). The echoes from the Christmas story as told in the Bible are plain to hear, as is the parallel of the glad tidings given here to a small community but by implication to all mankind through the redemption offered by the birth of God's son.

When the children were confronted with the luminous spectacle in the midnight sky they were rendered speechless, since man is unable fully to comprehend such natural or divine grandeur. It is now their father who is bereft of words to express his relief, love, and gratitude. One can assume, though, that his moving lips, in their soundless urgency, are sending a fervent prayer to heaven. Although he appears to utter his wife's name twice, 'Sanna, Sanna!'(p.236), the reader is inclined to receive the message in its biblical form of 'Hosanna, Ehre sei Gott in der Höhe...'.

The delayed Christmas mass is taking place as the rescue party makes its way down to the welcoming valley. The bell, signalling the beginning of the sacrament of Holy Communion being enacted, is clearly audible, '...die Wandlung des heiligen Hochamtes verkündend'(p.236). The faith which binds together this small community and those elsewhere comes strongly to the fore and allows them to celebrate mass in the snow. The 'Wandlungsglöcklein' not only announces the transformation of the bread and wine of the sacrament into Christ's body and blood; it also denotes a change in the status of the cobbler's family within the village¹¹. Their hitherto enforced isolation, their

non-acceptance by the inhabitants of Gschaid is at an end. The children's role is that of messengers from a sphere of higher awareness, and they become instrumental in uniting and bringing closer all members of the hitherto not homogenously constituted parish. Not only the villagers of Gschaid are united by the events of the holy night. A true and meaningful link is at last established between them and the inhabitants of Millsdorf, the original home of the children's mother. The lack of real contact with this other village had necessitated their perilous journey to the grandparents' house the previous day. Not much more time elapses before everyone resumes the traditional Christmas celebrations. The *Bescherung*, much delayed by events, takes place, the customary visits are paid, the tree is admired in the glow of its candles. The two children appear to revert to their normal childish behaviour, having given a new impetus to the family and village festivities. The deeper meaning of the miracle of their rescue is not lost on those involved.

Stifter carefully plants the notion of the children's experience on the mountain as having been a purely natural phenomenon to offset the strongly religious connotations of this event occurring during the Christmas night. It is left to the reader to come to a conclusion; the frequently invoked 'as if' connotation, which converts physical into metaphysical and mere repeated events into sacramental ritual and which converts repeated phrases into articles of faith, is evidence of ambiguity.¹² There is, however, no doubt at all in the mind of the little girl when she confides to her mother her interpretation of the revelation seen in the vastness of the night sky. She says with utter conviction: 'Mutter, ich habe heute Nachts, als wir auf dem Berge saßen, den heiligen Christ gesehen' (p.239). Unable at the time to express this reaction, she has now come to terms with the momentous experience and feels singled out and blessed because of it. Both children's lives have been affected for ever, just as the community around them will display a deeper spirit of cohesion and God-fearing faith.

Die Kinder aber werden den Berg nicht vergessen und werden ihn jetzt noch ernster betrachten, wenn sie in dem Garten sind, wenn wie in der Vergangenheit die Sonne sehr schön scheint, der Lindenbaum duftet, die Bienen summen, und er so schön und so blau wie das sanfte Firmament auf sie hernieder schaut(p.240).

For them the celestial arc connects this world with a higher sphere; one end of it now rests within their souls. The words of Jesus, 'Lasset die Kindlein zu mir kommen...', spring to mind. Can only the innocent truly recognize the manifestations of divine power and receive them with undiluted and unquestioning faith? It may be necessary to remove even such receptive souls from the impurity and doubt encountered in the lowlands of mundane existence and everyday concerns, be they of a humdrum or even of a festive and celebratory nature. The *Christkinder* of Stifter's story *Bergkristall* are a sparklingly pure and crystal-clear reminder of the true significance of the Christmas experience with all its glorious promise extended to mankind: peace, love, harmony, fellowship and compassion. The *Ereignis* itself '...hat einen Abschnitt in die Geschichte von Gschaid gebracht...' (p.239), giving the history of the village a new *Zeitrechnung*, just as the birth of Christ gives our own calendar the year zero and allows us to refer to time and events in terms of BC and AD.

* * * * *

Like Gotthelf's *Die schwarze Spinne* Stifter's story of village life also expresses the ultimate unity and purpose of the universe. Yet there are differences. Gotthelf tells of events that seem to shatter the firmly grounded world. But in the last analysis, his tale is sustained throughout by complete certainty of narrative purpose. Even the horror of the spider is intelligible within a didactic framework. By contrast, Stifter's tale is narratively unstable. At one level, *Bergkristall* is conceived in a celebratory mode. The

innocent children, lost in the glacial landscape, are saved by the glory of the world on Christmas night. Yet that glory is not as comforting as it might seem at first sight. Stifter's unforgettable prose bears witness to the sheer enormity and otherness of nature¹³. In a key phrase the narrator comments that the children would have perished 'wenn nicht die Natur in ihrer Größe ihnen beigestanden wäre' (p.227). The noun 'Größe' vibrates with wonderful unease; it could refer to the magnanimity of nature, or to its sheer material massivity. The children are saved, of course; for them the world remains intact. But for us as adult readers, matters are by no means so simple. Clearly, at a human and social level, *Bergkristall* ends on a conciliatory and reassuring note. Two communities come together in unity and common purpose. Theodor Storm's *Die Söhne des Senators*, which we shall come to later, is also concerned with processes of exclusion and inclusion. Yet Storm's claim is a much more modest one than Stifter's. There is no hint of a metaphysical validation. Stifter's story is, as we have seen, conceived on a much grander scale. But even that grandeur is not bereft of second thoughts.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

1. See also Schleiermacher: '...das Andenken an Christus werde in größerem Umfange durch das Fest erhalten als durch die Schrift, nämlich gerade unter dem Volke' and '... daß offenbar das Fest selbst seine Geltung größtenteils dem Umstande verdankt, daß es in die Häuser eingeführt worden und unter die Kinder.' Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Die Weihnachtsfeier* (Berlin: Grosser, 1806), p.109.
2. For the adult family members Christmas is linked with the 'Zurückgehn in das Gefühl der Kindheit, die heitere Freude an der neuen Welt, die wir dem gefeierten Kinde verdanken.' See: Friedrich Schleiermacher, as above, p.46.
3. Christmas also symbolizes, by linking the human child with the Christ child in the celebration a direct 'Vereinigung des Göttlichen mit dem Kindlichen' The 'Dogma der Einheit von Gott und Mensch in diesem Kinde' is thus made the substance of Christmas. See: Friedrich Schleiermacher, as above, p.67.
4. The magic of the Christmas night can only be truly experienced by a child with its untainted imagination. Martin and Erika Swales go on to say: 'But so strong is the spell of that magic that even in old age, within the barrenness of adult reality, man will be able to recapture some of that glory.' See: Martin and Erika Swales, *Adalbert Stifter: A critical study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).
5. Ingeborg Weber-Kellermann observes the 'Bescherung' with particular reference to middle-class and city practice: 'Besonders das Weihnachtsfest entwickelte sich im 19. Jahrhundert zu einem Kinderbescherfest unter dem Lichterbaum mit seinen Geheimnissen und seinem Glanz, eine kulturelle Leistung des Bürgertums, gestaltet aus dem innigen Gefühl, das dem familiären Innenraum entgegenbracht wurde. So nimmt es nicht wunder, wenn die Einzelheiten der Familien-Liturgie am Heiligen Abend in vielem das Sozialbild der Familie getreulich widerspiegeln.'
6. More critically Weber-Kellermann also points to the growing consumerism associated with Christmas: 'Durch sie [die Bürger] verwandelten sich die Jahresfeiern zu Familienfesten mit dem vornehmlichen Sinn, den Kindern Spielzeug zu schenken. Vom Bürgertum her kam die Nachfrage. Hier war der große Konsument der wachsenden Spielzeugherstellung, während sich auf dem Lande das Schenken noch lange Zeit auf nützliche Gegenstände beschränkte.' See: Ingeborg Weber-Kellermann, *Die deutsche Familie: Versuch einer Sozialgeschichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch, 1974), pp.112 and 240.
7. Thomas Bernhard accords the Austrian valleys the status of negative idylls, relegating stories like *Bergkristall* to the category of *Heimatliteratur*. This, however, ignores the multi-faceted covert criticism voiced in the story.
8. The chapter entitled *Schnee* in Thomas Mann's *Der Zauberberg* also shows that man enters such an icy world at his peril and has no control over it. 'Diese Welt in ihrem bodenlosen Schweigen hatte nichts Wirtliches, sie empfing den Besucher auf eigene Rechnung und Gefahr, sie nahm ihn nicht eigentlich an und auf, sie duldeten sein Eindringen, seine Gegenwart auf eine nicht geheure, für nichts gutstehende Weise, und Gefühle des still bedrohlichen Elementaren, des nicht einmal Feindseligen, vielmehr des Gleichgültig-Tödlichen waren es, die von ihr ausgingen'. See: Thomas Mann, *Gesammelte Werke in Einzelbänden*, ed. by Peter de Mendelssohn (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag), *Der Zauberberg* (1981), pp.665/666.
9. A different view appears to be taken elsewhere: 'Auch der Sohn Konrad trägt des reifen Vaters Gepräge: Mit offenen Augen bemerkte er die Dinge und stellt alle Einzelheiten ins Gefüge seiner jungen, aber sichern Erfahrung. So vollkommen ist er den Dingen zugewendet, daß während des Schneetreibens und beim Klettern auf den Gletscher nicht ein einziger Blick seinem eigenen seelischen Zustande gilt.' See: *Adalbert Stifter, Gesammelte Werke in 14 Bänden*, ed. by Konrad Steffen (Basel: Birkhäuser Verlag, 1962-72), II: Nachwort to *Bergkristall* (1963), p.364.
10. In the Nachwort we read: 'Der Gletscher bedeutet in dieser Novelle das sichtbar gewordene Chaos: das Ungefüge, das zyklopisch Große, aus der Ordnung Gerückte, das in "Zacken, Spitzen, Troddeln" Zerbrochene, das Gestaltlose, das in "fürchterlichen Trümmern", "ungeschlachten Knollen", "breitgelagerten Blöcken" daliegt, in "Eiskörpern"..."gleichsam aneinander geschmettert starrt"' See: Nachwort to *Bergkristall*, as above, pp.366/367.
11. 'As the style of this passage suggests, Stifter would ideally wish to fuse scientific fact and religious meaning, in keeping with the preface to *Bunte Steine*, which sees the natural scientist as the interpreter of God's creation. But such is the impact of the snow and ice description that one may read that previously quoted phrase 'Aber es gab kein Jenseits' as a metaphorical statement on the narrative act itself: within the perspective of the 'colourful shimmering wings' of imagination, there *is* a Beyond. But within the perspective of the narrator's meticulous observation of the natural world, there are only mighty phenomena – and no Beyond'. See: Martin and Erika Swales, as above, pp.202/203.
12. Stifter allows a comforting realisation to prevail: 'In Wirklichkeit stößt jedes Wissen ins Leere. Aber die Zuversicht trägt wie ein Flügel über den Schlund hinweg und bewahrt vor Ermattung und Verzweiflung bis zum Durchbruch der kosmischen Gewalten: Die Macht der Ordnung und des Seins ist zuletzt größer als die Trümmerwelt des Chaos und der Leere.' See: Nachwort to *Bergkristall*, as above, p.368.
13. Other critics have made this connection. See: Swales, as above, p.195: 'the *Wandlungsglöcklein* is linked with the motif of *Wandlung*, transformation, and thus prefigures the changed attitude of the villagers who now welcome both mother and children into their community.'
14. Eve Mason also concludes that Stifter leaves the question of the children's rescue open and 'does not instruct us how to interpret or relate the parts played by nature and what seems to us to amount to divine intervention', expecting readers 'to suspend their allegiance to any *one* explanation'. This would have been rather easier in the mid-1850s than it is for a modern reader. See: Eve Mason, *Stifter: Bunte Steine* (London: Grant & Cutler, 1986).

13. Lachinger and Sturm are among the critics who point to the insignificance of man vis-à-vis nature: 'Die "ungezähmte", elementare Natur, *die ihren eigenen unerbittlichen Gesetzen folgt* und auf den Menschen *keine Rücksicht* nimmt, ist ein zentrales Motiv Stifters.' See: Johann Lachinger and Martin Sturm, eds., *Adalbert Stifter: Schrecklich-schöne Welt : Vierteljahresschrift des Adalbert-Stifter-Institutes des Landes Oberösterreich*, 39 (1990), 66.

Larry Wells makes the point: '...den Kindern [...] [und dem Leser] ist eine neue Einsicht zuteil geworden, eine Einsicht nicht in die gnadenhafte Größe Gottes, sondern in das unergründliche Wesen der Natur und in die wesenhafte Andersheit der reinen Natursphäre im Vergleich zu dem geordneten, christlich bedingten Bereich des Tales.' See: Larry D. Wells, 'Adalbert Stifters *Bergkristall*', *Vierteljahresschrift des Adalbert-Stifter-Institutes des Landes Oberösterreich*, 19 (1970), 146.

CHAPTER 3

Family and faith - celebrations in Stifter's late work *Der fromme Spruch*

Stifter's *Der fromme Spruch* (published in 1869), like so much of his late prose, displays an extraordinary, almost excessive, need for solidity, orderliness, for unruffled stately calm. The result is, as we shall see, some of the most remarkable prose ever written; but the modern reader may be hard pressed to accept that prose at face value.¹

* * * * *

The annual joint birthday celebration of Gerlint and Dietwin von der Weiden produces for the reader of this story a posed tableau of a perfectly staged ritual. The air of extreme formality is conjured up both by the exquisite clothes worn for this occasion and by the stilted language used by brother and sister for their mutual congratulations and the expression of the required felicitations on this day. This ritualised communication appears to derive from a privately observed catechism and takes the form of utterances which are in the nature of a liturgical refrain: 'Sei begrüßt, Dietwin' and 'Sei begrüßt, Gerlint' (p.371)*, and further on: 'Erfreust du dich einer vollkommenen Gesundheit?' or '...und kann ich von dir das Gleiche erfahren?' There is no room, or it seems desire, to voice spontaneous thoughts or sentiments despite the close family ties².

In a narrative in which inner turmoil will not be allowed to surface on the page, emotions can only be gauged from phrases hinting at unusually long and rare spells of inactivity, such as when one of the characters is observed to be staring into space after a

* Page numbers in this chapter refer to: *Adalbert Stifter, Gesammelte Werke*, V (Basel: Birkhäuser Verlag, 1964).

troubling encounter - Stifter conveys to the reader the sense of an ambiguous narrative stance being taken. Anyone familiar with Stifter's own biography and his dealings with aristocratic employers is left to decide independently whether the ability to control emotion so tightly is to be commended as a sign of good breeding, as fear of giving full rein to unwelcome inner anarchy or as a lack of human potential and thus an indication of shallow emotional life which does not feel the need to express itself freely. The words *Gleichmut* and *Seelenruhe* are emphasized, though, as if to hint that it was not always thus, as if after earlier emotional upheavals inner peace has finally been achieved and must be maintained by the exercise of vigorous control over any troubling and potentially unsettling incidents.

Unpleasant occurrences during the year are shared by brother and sister and are to be regarded as '...Schickungen Gottes...'. As a result '...so kommt stets dauernder eine Stille meines Herzens zu mir...'. Gerlint is even able to state that '...bei mir ist gar nichts vorgekommen' to which her brother ventures the reply: 'So stehen die Sachen vortrefflich'³. This ultimate goal of an untroubled life, a life not riven by strife and frustrated aspirations, allows them both to resume the reassuringly formal exchange with the words: '...und so sei mir noch einmal gegrüßt, Dietwin' and 'Sei gegrüßt, Gerlint'(p.372). These incantatory utterances are, for the reader, an indication that perhaps the most gratifying birthday gifts have thus already been bestowed. The sought after inner peace and equilibrium have once more been affirmed, just as the familiar repetition of the liturgy of a religious service reassures the congregation that all is well. Clearly what is at issue in any ritual is not novelty but continuity. The religious content, however, appears to be lacking in Stifter's late work, its place having been taken by a man-made formula designed to comfort and to dignify those who avail themselves of it. The self-stylization of the characters' speech is replicated by the narrator's relentlessly measured discourse.

Since the eve of these joint birthdays does not require any elaborate manifestations of its significance, there follows '...ein einfaches Mahl...'(p.372). There are echoes here

of Stifter's *Der Nachsommer*, simplicity being regarded as a great virtue on all but the most special of occasions. Formal splendour is reserved for the actual birthday of Gerlint and Dietrich. For the reader these names stress the fact that these personages are scions of an old family which can trace its genealogy back to medieval times. It will be found later that the nephew and niece for whom the *fromme Spruch* of the title will be invoked also bear these very names, further accentuating the ancient and continuing blood line.

The birthday itself is duly marked by a *Gottesdienst* and by more formally expressed good wishes: 'Das Heil Gottes, Gerlint...', 'Das Heil Gottes, Dietwin [...] und möge dir dieser Tag noch recht oft wiederkehren' (p.373). Clearly there is no scope for tolerance of individually fashioned rhetoric or for any warm spontaneity. Even the gifts exchanged between brother and sister are virtually identical; any idiosyncratic and potentially diverging impulse has been extinguished. This can also be seen, despite the opulence of the ancestral castle, in the uniformity of the colourless scene, drained of all primary colours which would denote vitality and exuberance. There appears to be room only for muted colours, as evidenced by the grey, black, and white of the attire worn by those present.

The old feudal system is evidently alive and flourishing at the seat of the von der Weiden clan, albeit in gently subdued fashion. Family, friends, and servants alike are gathered to help celebrate 'ein hohes, erhabenes, preisliches Geburtsfest...' (p.375). Stifter employs several similes to convey a sense of joint purpose, of the bond between all those present, finding them 'in diesen Strauß vereiniget...' (p.375) like the flowers from many parts of the world which serve as decoration on this special day. The reader is made aware that, of course, the noble family members are in possession of a wider knowledge of world affairs and have international contacts and commercial know-how, unlike the local inhabitants whose concerns are restricted to more parochial matters. This birthday becomes a general holiday and feast day quite as much as any of the celebrations contained in the

church calendar, to be observed with equal, or at least comparable, devotion. The 'Holy Family' appears to have acquired the surname of von der Weiden, thus almost setting this family on a par with the biblical unit - for all those existing in their orbit.

The largesse handed out to the servants in the form of gifts in return for their good wishes is in keeping with the concept of the lady of the manor in her role as 'Lady Bountiful', the age-old condescension extended to the lower orders. They are graciously told: 'Jetzt, Kinder, geht und genießet des heutigen Tages als eines Feiertages'(p.377), words which might have been appropriated from a biblical text but used in an entirely worldly manner, despite the solemnity of the language employed.

The public birthday celebrations now give way to an intimate conversation between brother and sister. But there is no significant shift of linguistic register as the conversation moves from the public to private sphere. Their ritualized communication retains its formal character so that outward things are shown to be of a piece with inward concerns and attitudes. These highborn architects of family continuity have been bred to internalize the ethos and conduct of their class and, in particular, their own illustrious family. The central concern now is the idea of forging a 'Güterverein' linking their unsuspecting nephew and niece, Young Gerlint and Young Dietwin, whose official guardians they have been since childhood after the early deaths of both sets of parents. This union is something '...was wir beide so sehnlich wünschen...' (p.379). With careful cultivation and land management, the family fortune and fortunes would be guaranteed, and, by amalgamating the inherited estates of the childless uncle and aunt, be given to the next generation '...so könnten sie mächtig und tüchtig und reich sein in undenkliche Zeiten hinein'(p.380). What is discussed here is the wish to see innumerable descendants of this old and illustrious family stretching into the distant and glorious future, a family renewed in vigour and influence existing in perpetuity.

As was the case in the earlier exchanges between brother and sister, the deliberations are couched in linguistically elevated terms. Dietwin is addressed as 'mein sehr verehrter Bruder...' (p.380). Gerlint appears to avail herself of such high-flown language in order to invest the practical and mundane considerations with due solemnity and noble dignity. The issue of love and passion is firmly kept at bay. There is no danger here of untoward and irksome plebeian sentimentality invading the measured tone of the siblings' discourse. The fact that brother and sister address each other in terms of great formality would indicate an awareness that where the matter of family continuity is concerned they are acting in a formal capacity, transcending a merely familial and familiar discourse. They are at this point inhabiting the roles of agents for a powerful and ancient institution and thus need to invest themselves with such linguistic formality as befits weighty deliberations. It is, after all, no ordinary marriage which is being envisaged here; they are not only acting but speaking with appropriate solemnity. On occasion the reader cannot help wondering if Gerlint is not using this stilted language to help her hold back painful memories of her own happy marriage which sadly ended all too prematurely with her husband's untimely death. But the text offers no support for such a hypothesis. Just as she is convinced that her marriage was ordained by a higher power, she now feels compelled to call on the folklore, masquerading as religious belief, of a *frommer Spruch*, namely that 'Ehen werden in dem Himmel geschlossen' (p.380), thus adding an ennobling element to a man-made contract.

The desired outcome of any matchmaking efforts cannot be taken for granted, however, and the assistance of the pious saying may be required, or rather the professed belief in its validity. Gerlint realizes that 'mit den Gütern können wir schalten, aber mit der Ehe nicht' (p.380). Despite their otherwise confident behaviour and optimism, there is here the slight admission of incalculability inherent in such a scheme and a realistic awareness that people, even an otherwise obedient younger generation, cannot be

managed as easily as can estates. Brother and sister remind themselves with slight alarm that the orphaned children had been particularly contrary whenever they were in each other's company, an antagonism felt to be present and noticeable even in their later years. The desired union may, therefore, not be seen as a foregone conclusion. In order to ensure that God's schemes coincide with man's wishes, uncle and aunt alight on a gratifying and expedient idea and ask themselves and each other: 'Könnten wir nicht dem Himmel ein wenig helfen?'(p.383).

At this point Stifter diverges from his earlier writings such as his story *Bergkristall* in which he appeared to accept, despite indications of an ambivalent stance, the interpretative possibility that there could be a beneficent deity who would ensure that human desires might lead to a happy outcome. Here the reader is persuaded that Stifter intends to show that, despite the *fromme Spruch* being invoked on behalf of the next generation of aristocratic spouses, only lip service is being paid to any religious underpinning of human machinations. Pious language and superficial adherence to traditionally held tenets of faith appear to have superseded the real substance of erstwhile genuine belief. God may be appealed to at times but it is only in clichéd phrases uttered automatically at certain points in the dialogue, such as 'Gebe es Gott...' (p.426). Dietwin senior may state that 'der Himmel schließt ja die Ehen...' but the reader receives this assertion as mere rhetoric and is far more inclined to accept as real the pragmatic thinking voiced by the older Gerlint: 'Er schließt sie, wenn eine rechte zu schließen oder wenn überhaupt eine zu schließen ist...' (p.427). Heaven will be given credit for 'getting it right' only if the outcome of such apparent intervention coincides with the wishes of these terrestrial beings. The dry irony of the siblings' exchange is a refreshing antidote to the otherwise overly formal tone of their dealings. But one wonders how to read the irony. Is it intended to debunk the pretensions of the older generation? Or is it meant as an affectionate, albeit not uncritical, acknowledgment of their wish to sustain the family

dynasty? In any event, *Finger des Himmels* are seen in the strikingly similar features of the male and female protagonists of both generations and in their identical names. Not only are these taken as portents of ultimate success for this ‘arranged marriage’, but they once more remind the careful reader that behind this plan to engineer the happiness of two young individuals there is, first and foremost, the wish to ensure the continuation and preservation of the genetic material of an ancient and influential family. It is of paramount importance that the next generation should guarantee the survival of the house of von der Weiden. The interests of the individual are patently of secondary concern, despite protestations to the contrary, divine intervention also playing only second fiddle to human scheming.

Passionate courtship, the trials and tribulations of a young marriage, the difficulties presented to those in the midst of active and vigorous life are seen as experiential phases to be overcome by the serene and tranquil continuity of family life. This old family has traditionally divided the lives of its members into three neat sections: ‘Unser Leben hat drei Abteilungen. In der ersten Abteilung herrscht die Heftigkeit, dann kommen allerlei Einbildung, und dann erscheint eine große Sanftmut und Gutmütigkeit, die bis in das hohe Alter andauert’(p.384). The likely unattainability of such a tranquil state of mind is underlined by the repeatedly stated insistence on its availability. On the other hand, there is perhaps a belief in the talismanic power of language; the fervently hoped-for solution may be brought closer by such verbally expressed desires, making the wish finally fulfil itself by the energy and momentum of its linguistic articulation.

Familial and matrimonial matters having been aired to their satisfaction, brother and sister once again revert to the stupefying, and stultifying, formality of their discourse and bring their earnest deliberations to a suitably majestic conclusion: ‘So ist unser Frühlingsreichstag geschlossen...’, ‘Er ist geschlossen, und habe Dank dafür, geliebter Bruder...’, ‘Habe Dank, geliebte Schwester...’(p.388). Such language invests this private matter with all the gravity and significance normally only accorded to matters of state. It

appears to reflect the conviction residing in the hearts of these aristocrats that any matter relating to this exceptional family is to be treated with the same degree of respect as that given to *Staatsaktionen*.

The same elevated language is also employed by the younger Gerlint in her written greetings sent dutifully and, so it seems, with genuine affection to uncle and aunt on the anniversary of their shared birthday. The reverential tone adopted by the niece is entirely in keeping with the scrupulously observed rules of conduct seen in this mighty family. Dietwin, the nephew and Gerlint's intended bridegroom, now enters, demonstrating the same degree of *Ehrfurcht* witnessed in the exchanges of all the characters of the Novelle. His greeting '...hochverehrter [...] hochgeliebter Oheim...' (p.392) mirrors that of young Gerlint. This linguistic genuflection is taken to extremes; the archaic and overformal tone goes far beyond the normal bounds of filial deference and sounds ossified. Such rigid formality of speech suggests that there exists a 'family bible', a well-thumbed tome without any kind of religious content, its pages merely containing the procedural guidelines to be observed by the scions of this distinguished family when dealing with the world and particularly with one another. This studied and exquisitely honed behaviour and obedience accords with the established litanesque expectations. There is no room for originality, only for strict adherence to established form, the emphasis being on transmission, on continuity which is achieved by endlessly replicated actions and utterances⁴. Symmetry is clearly one of the aims of the narrative voice when conjuring up the characters of this story. Dialogue lines are almost exactly matched by those of the interlocutor and harmony in this stylized world is mediated through carefully structured textuality. An example can be found in one of the many exchanges between brother and sister: '...warten wir, was uns die Geschicke bringen werden' and the reply 'Warten wir [...] wir können warten' (p.427). Balance is maintained, internally as well as externally, hinting at a painstakingly nurtured equilibrium. There is a somewhat antiquated air around

the giving of presents, too. Established etiquette is closely followed. Even the 'gift horses' are '...sittig wie Pagen...' (p.396). Unruly behaviour would be alien to man and beast in this controlled environment of aristocratic refinement. And yet, surprisingly and suddenly, the scrupulously maintained order is threatened. The uncle and aunt suddenly and openly express the suspicion that, just possibly, the young contenders for the future estate ownership might be, contrary to the perceived laws of nature, in love with the uncle and the aunt respectively. The latter show themselves to be so startled and unsettled, after having given expression to such unwelcome possibilities, that their usually utterly controlled speech patterns betray their temporary alarm most strikingly. Both become virtually incoherent and fail to articulate complete sentences. The reader is shocked to hear the aunt say: 'Das wäre ja, wenn es wäre, das ist, ich weiß es nicht, sage es mir, das wäre merkwürdig' (p.437) echoed by equally disjointed observations issuing from the uncle. Such linguistic inadequacy is incompatible with the perfection the reader has come to expect from these two masters of formal and flawless articulation. The disturbance is left unresolved because it is time now for the multitude of *Gratulanten* to be received as if on cue. 'Sofort hörte man auch das Wagenrollen im Schloßhofe...' (p.397), the scenario of the grand occasion unfolding according to tradition. The *Festmahl* is waiting to be consumed, '...ein heiteres Mahl' (p.397), then the guests leave and the castle can return to quiet normality.

As a result of the earlier conversation, the girl Gerlint has been summoned home from her school to become part of the life of Schloß Biberau, a companion for her loving aunt and namesake, unaware that her future has already been mapped out. 'Dunkelgrau Pferde...' (p.398), mirroring the aunt's preferred attire of semi-mourning, draw the carriage which conveys Gerlint, the young niece. Once again Stifter chooses very formal, even stylized, language with which to allow his characters to greet each other: 'Komme an mein Herz, du liebes Kind [...] sei willkommen...' (p.399). Before ushering her niece into the

suite of rooms which are to be the girl's private quarters, this welcome is repeated with '...sei noch einmal willkommen...' (p.399).⁵ The sign of the cross made on Gerlint's forehead presumably expresses the fervent wish that the anticipated match will materialize as expected. Despite this symbolic gesture of piety, the reader is tempted to conclude that an essentially secular ritual has replaced any erstwhile more truly devout conduct in this family. Does one detect a critical intention on Stifter's part, or disapproval of human hubris and of class arrogance? Perhaps only lip service is being paid to religious convention, the latter having been reduced to folklore and *fromme Sprüche*, of no more consequence than old wives' tales. The ambiguity conveyed by the narrative voice can be sensed throughout the work; symmetry is achieved through the evenly matched statements of the protagonists. But one wonders how far we, the readers, are being asked to endorse the formulaic lives put before us.

It is, however, Aunt Gerlint's firm belief that 'das Zusammenkommen mit dem Vetter wird die Verwandtschaftsbande stärken' (p.401). This somewhat problematic view will later on in the story have to overcome the legal obstacles to the union of two people rather too closely related. Young Gerlint, at this stage, is convinced that she will never be interested in marriage, be it to her cousin or to any other likely suitor, however eligible. Despite her personal wishes dictated by the desire to promote the best interests of the all-important family, the aunt reassures the girl that 'Zwang und Willkür herrscht nicht in unserem Stämme' (p.402). It serves as a proud reminder of historically granted freedom of choice and noble conduct within the family.

The estate manager, too, greets young Gerlint with the ringing words: 'Das hochgeborene Fräulein blüht schöner als die Rosen von Jericho...' (p.403). Such hyperbole chimes with the tone encountered throughout this story. It is the fact that she is *hochgeboren* which supremely singles her out as praiseworthy. Roses will later take on a symbolic meaning in the carefully concealed courtship ritual. The next day the young girl

wears ‘...ein dunkel veilchenfarbenes Seidenkleid’(p.405). The violets conjure up visions of spring, a new beginning, the hope being that new vigour may be injected into the somewhat desiccated trunk of the old family tree.

The girl Gerlint is not only compared with flowers, though, but also with a young horse. The reader’s mind is clearly being directed towards the notion of breeding and the reference is only semi-veiled. At this point in the story, the word husbandry springs to mind; it is even more appropriate in the German form of *Zucht* which not only covers the aspect of breeding but also the essential quality of discipline and control which is so powerfully evoked by the rigidly imposed linguistic formality Stifter uses throughout. The *Zuchtbuch* kept for animals is also maintained for the roses which are later grown in competition by the younger Gerlint and Dietwin, the parallel with human select breeding having been clearly established.

As one would expect, the young cousins echo in their greeting the style of their older relations when they say: ‘Sei gegrüßt, meine sehr liebe Base Gerlint’ and ‘Sei gegrüßt, mein sehr lieber Vetter Dietwin’(p.406), thereby replicating with perfect symmetry the stiffly formal tone adopted by uncle and aunt. ‘Alle Glieder des Stammes derer von der Weiden, die sich auf dieser Erde befinden, sind in diesem Saale versammelt’(p.407). Great family pride is expressed, but this does not hide the uncomfortable possibility that this very *Stamm* might become extinct like a dying breed from among the families of animals. There is palpable urgency in the cordial family gathering despite its formality. Gerlint’s duty is pointed out to her: ‘...was du wirkest, den Ruhm und Wert derer von der Weiden zu erhöhen; denn alle haben Ruhm und Würde in die Zweige ihres Geschlechtes zu bringen gesucht’(p.410). Clearly, the individual is seen primarily as a link in a long genealogical and dynastic chain, the obligation to the greater whole being paramount. This is perfectly clear to the well-bred young girl, indicated by the response: ‘Ich werde die letzte nicht sein, den Wert des Stammes zu bewahren...’(p.410).

In the course of a walk in the grounds of the castle, Gerlint's gaze is arrested by a lone majestic oak tree with its many branches. No doubt the previous day's conversation, focusing on family continuity and tradition and the role to be played by the individual, reverberates through her mind and becomes associated with the figure of Dietwin whom she sees three times, the splendidly mythical number making it doubly meaningful, during this walk. The link is quite obviously established in her thoughts and leads her to contemplate it at leisure on her return to the castle. Knowing her to be tirelessly active at all times, the reader is surprised to find that '...sie blieb lange auf dem Sofa sitzen' (p.415), undoubtedly pondering the concept of the *Stammbaum*, a powerful symbol of blood supremacy. The secret feelings experienced by her at this stage can only be guessed at; Stifter makes no attempt to reveal them either in his narrative or in the form of an inner monologue.⁶

Not only the mode of speech is firmly regulated. This control applies equally to another important aspect of human communication, namely the meals accompanying and enlivening such encounters and contributing physical enjoyment. When young Gerlint first arrives at the castle there is a '...kleines Ankunfts- und Verbindungsmahl...[...] ein Mahl zweiten Ranges...' (p.415), as dictated by family etiquette and custom. 'Die Mahle ersten Ranges...' (p.415) are reserved for weddings, engagements, and other festive occasions. The young people remain respectfully silent at table, dressed very formally like the older members of the family circle. The festive 'Ordnungen dieses Schlosses', an indication that they are following old and cherished rules, or even commandments carrying biblical weight, are designed to reflect the importance of all occasions by the gradations in the lavishness bestowed on them. The subsequent 'Feierlichkeitsbesuche' undertaken by all the *Schloßbewohner* in the neighbourhood are the traditional means of allowing young Gerlint, the newcomer to the circle of the local aristocratic society, to be acknowledged as a member of an illustrious old family as befits her rank. It appears that the enforced

formality in her life, though willingly accepted, kindles the wish in Gerlint to balance stifled impulses of warm emotion by filling her rooms with living plants, having first banished all unnecessary man-made ornaments.

The hoped-for marriage, deemed to be equally desired by heaven and expected to be brought about by divine intervention, is seemingly no closer to being achieved. Dietwin and Gerlint senior, despite their strong preference for this one particular union, are realistic enough to allow for potentially different choices to be made. There is, however, a strong conviction that, whatever the outcome, the young people will be guided by inbred decorum and a sense of duty towards the family; they expect their conduct to be instinctively in line with tradition, leading uncle and aunt to rest assured that ‘...eine Wegwerfung ist nicht zu befürchten’(p.427). The genetic material will triumph and not ‘throw itself away’. The notion of noblesse oblige, as if carved on tablets of stone, has, it seems, been internalized by all.

The following chapter in the story brings echoes of Stifter’s *Der Nachsommer*. He again uses ‘...die Zeit der Rosenblüte...’(p.428), the culmination of loving and skilled cultivation of rose gardens by both young Gerlint and Dietwin, the symbolism attached to roses, of secretly nurtured romantic feelings so often employed in stylized celebrations of love from the days of the *Minnesang* onwards, to alert the reader to the gradual blossoming of love between the two young cousins believed to have been destined by God to marry. They tend their exquisite roses from many parts of the globe, producing around them the glowing shades of the sunset, conjuring up a rose-red hue of warm and vibrant love, in stark contrast to the human conduct witnessed in the narrative and dialogue. The hierarchy, later to be found in marriage and accepted as ordained and fitting between husband and wife, is even now mooted by implication. Dietwin has produced a ‘Rosenwald’, whereas Gerlint’s accomplishment is a mere ‘Wäldchen’. The obvious subtext is surely intended by Stifter and the attentive reader will understand

this. It is, however, as so often in Stifter's work, not made clear whether this fact should be applauded or found to be reprehensible. There is tantalizing ambiguity as to the narrator's own views regarding the status of women.

Cousin Dietwin encourages Gerlint to ask for 'Stämmchen' from his rose bushes, a clear hint that this is seen as not only botanically inspired generosity but as an oblique and potent allusion to the biblical, and genealogical, exhortation to 'go forth and multiply'. It enables the reader to enjoy a felicitous *Vorausdeutung* when Gerlint answers politely: 'Wenn ich Stämmchen bedarf, so werde ich meinen guten Vetter darum ersuchen...' (p.429). The reply is an early hint of marriage and childbirth and of who the partners in matrimony and the providers of new branches on the *Stammbaum* will be. There is perfection in everything around Dietwin's estate; human effort and expertise exercise total control over nature. He voices the hope eventually to have everything '...in der vortrefflichsten Zucht...' (p.430). Surely that will include his chosen wife, the genetically carefully selected mother of future generations of the family. The parallel being drawn here between *Rosenzucht* and the supervised breeding patterns of people from the highest strata of society is not lost on the reader. It is the ground rules of rose cultivation, and by extension those of human matchmaking endeavours, which are rather more relevant than the *fromme Spruch* which initially had been claimed as inspiration and guidance. New shoots must be grafted onto old stems, be they woody and gnarled or contained, in the form of names, within the pages of a fat *Stammbuch* dating back centuries.

Three more birthdays and the accompanying celebrations in their calibrated appropriateness pass before there is sufficient impatience felt by uncle and aunt. The older Gerlint clearly feels anxious at the lack of progress made in this matter. Stifter allows the reader to find this concern in the fact that, when alone she '...hielt ihr Haupt in den beiden

Händen' and '...konnte sie den ersehnten Schlummer nicht finden'(p.432). This masterly oblique style conveys that message unequivocally.

Several small ruses are employed to help the cherished plan to gather momentum; patently God in His heaven cannot be relied on to achieve the desired goal. Separately the young people are taken to the *Ahnengalerie* to look at paintings of parents, grandparents and great-grandparents, a powerful reminder of genetic and genealogical obligation towards such illustrious forebears. It is the firm belief of uncle and aunt that, were they to remove themselves from the scene for a time, nature might be given a chance to assert itself in the desired and time-honoured manner and '...weil die Natur nach dem Natürlichen drängt, so ist vielleicht die Lösung leichter, als wir ahnen'(p.443). Once again they appear to pay only lip service to religious faith when they call on heaven to bless the journey to be undertaken in the interests of the family '...und möge der Himmel die Reise segnen'(p.445), to engender and to sanction the wish in the hearts of the two young cousins to be joined in marriage. After the announcement of the guardians' imminent departure, it is another visit to the hall containing the family portraits which occasions the much delayed confession of love young Gerlint and Dietwin have been nurturing for each other but have felt unable to reveal sooner. Their very formal, but private, betrothal is enacted with the seemingly scripted words normally heard in classical drama. The stichomythia employed to convey their feelings and to plight their troth to each other replicates the formality of all the earlier exchanges.⁷ *Gatte* and *Gattin* are at once the preferred terms by which to address each other. The brief and almost liturgical assertion that '...nun sind unsere Gedanken ein Gedanke...' (p.447), solemnly repeated by the other party to the betrothal, is followed by the 'Verlobungskuß', a moment which allows emotion to overcome some of the accustomed formality. But even at this point the reader is aware that they are nevertheless observing convention, with the kiss needed to seal the contract.

Family tradition requires them to obtain permission from uncle and aunt who have been acting in loco parentis for so many years. This formal permission will be requested when Dietrich asks to be received ‘...in dem großen Saale von Biberau in einer feierlichen Angelegenheit...’(p.448). As on all important family occasions, Aunt Gerlint sits resplendent ‘...auf einem Prunkstuhle, der einen kostbaren Teppich unter sich hatte...’(p.448), with the uncle seated next to her in the manner of a king and his queen holding court and granting an audience. Servants ‘...in Prunkkleidern...’ are in attendance. The significance of this occasion for all the participants, but above all for the family as a living structure, is stressed by this emphasis on the elegantly displayed accoutrements of such an event. Young Dietwin arrives in a ‘Prachtwagen’ with the coachman ‘...im Silbergewande auf dem Bocke...’(p.448), and ‘...zwei Jäger standen silberschimmernd auf dem Brette’(p.449). All the splendour and accumulated wealth of this old family are displayed for all to see, highlighting the nature of the commitment about to be made and impressing upon everyone present that its significance extends far beyond the happiness of two individuals. The language assumes an archaizing tone. The names of all family members are intoned in full, down to the aunt’s maiden name. One hears the genealogy of this great family sounding proudly across the centuries. The long lineage suggested by all the paraphernalia and ritual of this occasion adds weight to the existence and status of the protagonists acting out yet another rite of passage. It takes on the solemn grandeur of an important event in the church calendar, in accordance with the high regard in which the family is held by society and their own awareness of their exalted status. Thus a personal and intimate agreement is enhanced by the pomp of aristocratic tradition; this family celebrates itself. The ‘Stamm von der Weiden’ is invoked several times.

The ever-present, because internalized, family ‘style book’ provides the rules which are to be followed. Only periods officially set aside for private leisure and recreation, at certain times of day, when activities can be indulged in which do not provide

a nexus between duty or public appearances and personal pursuits, are exempt from the otherwise rigid discipline, such as 'die Zeit nach dem Abendmahl...' (p.424) which might from choice be spent in the company of the aunt, 'es war aber dies keine Regel, und jedes durfte diese Zeit auch verwenden, wie es wollte' (p.424). Dietwin's words when asking for Gerlint's hand in marriage, '...so werbe ich nunmehr in Zucht und Recht um die Hand...' (p.449), are surely identical to those uttered by similarly eligible suitors for as long as this illustrious family has existed. The family etiquette book, so rigidly adhered to, provides the words for all such solemn occasions. The response is equally pre-programmed: '...in unserem Stamme von der Weiden ist die Sitte, daß auf eine Werbung nach einer Bedenkzeit die Antwort gegeben wird' (p.450). Dietwin expects nothing less. The German word *Sitte* makes the reader's mind jump to the related word *Sittlichkeit*. Custom and the old established order are clearly the cornerstones of the guiding morality, a link accepted by all including Dietwin. The delight of the older couple at the successful outcome of their plans is tempered, even suppressed, as always by decorum and by the realisation that they have assisted heaven in bringing about the desired result. The announcement of their travelling plans obviously accelerated developments, so they are conscious that 'wir haben nun wirklich Gott bei der Bewerkstelligung dieser Ehe geholfen...', but they also voice the belief that '...der Himmel schließt die Ehen und hat unerforschliche Wege...' (p.451).

This apparent contradiction arises from the fact that their casual acknowledgment of God's purposes, in marked contrast with the rigid observance of family rules, elevated to virtually sacred status, allows them to pretend to believe in such divine benevolence and in His complicity in their familial schemes.⁸ The prospective bride and bridegroom have no difficulty in accepting that they are not free to decide such important issues; for them, as was the case for other generations, *tempora non mutantur*. Gerlint agrees to the proposal

of marriage without availing herself of the ‘Bedenkzeit’. She is immediately ‘...zu diesem Bündnisse entschlossen’(p.454).

As with all families, thoughts now turn to the *Ausstattung* for the young couple and ‘nun begann die eifrigste Tätigkeit von allen Seiten.’(p.455). Practicalities prevail. The narrator now assumes the role of provider of description as befits the outwardness of the proceedings. At this point attention will not be paid to feelings and commitment as the domain of practical necessity takes over. After the stipulated period of the *Bedenkzeit* the path is clear for legalizing the contract bringing the two branches of the family and the accompanying estates together in the blood of the cousins Gerlint and Dietwin. Although the family regards this union as very desirable, the authorities need to be applied to for the ‘...Behebung des Verwandtschaftshindernisses...’. The required document is submitted ‘...in der zierlichsten Art, wie solche Schriftstücke verfaßt werden...’(p.455). All the preparations for the wedding continue simultaneously, the implication being that there has been many a precedent in earlier generations. This procedure is patently a mere formality and the favourable outcome a foregone conclusion. The undeniable ‘clout’, conferred on this distinguished family by history, wealth, and privileged social status, is about to be exerted once more in the pursuit of an issue close to its collective heart.

The day of the nuptials dawns and the occasion is marked by traditional pomp and festive splendour. ‘Die Vermählung wurde mit jener Festlichkeit, die in dem Geschlechte derer von der Weiden gebräuchlich war, in der Kirche von Biberau vollzogen’(p.457). The church ritual is allied to the family celebration, but it appears to be peripheral, not at the centre of the solemn function as might be expected. The ministrations of the servant of God in the person of the old priest are clearly of secondary importance when set against the meaning this wedding assumes in relation to the requirements of such an old family. It is they who need to give the ultimate and binding blessing, that of the church sacrament is merely incidental. The priest has presumably officiated on many such occasions in the

lives of 'his' family. The reader, however, wonders whether the old priest's *Tränen* and *Schluchzen* are manifestations of dutifully demonstrated emotion and loyalty only or are the expression of gratitude for his generous sinecure, which presumably is in the gift of the family. The (at least in the pages of Stifter's story) speedily completed sacrament of marriage is followed by a '...Mahl, wie es seit den ältesten Zeiten in dem Geschlechte gebräuchlich gewesen ist, für die Gäste, für die Besucher, für die Dienerschaften, für das Volk' (p.457). The nexus of family and community event is thus established. One cannot regard these nuptials as an ordinary wedding. The larger context and the obligation felt towards the entire population of the locality elevate it to the status of a *Volksfest*. The *Volk*, for whom this is as important a day as any religious festival would be, shows itself grateful⁹. 'Empfangsfeierlichkeiten' are enacted along the route taken by the newly-weds on the way to their future matrimonial home, evidence that these rites are also enshrined in tradition.

In the space of a few pages, when informing the reader of the various customary ways of celebrating such events in this family, the narrator uses the words 'gewohnt' and, more particularly, 'gebräuchlich' several times, thereby highlighting the strongly traditional ritual aspect which gives substance to such occasions. The other important element in the description of this happy and exceedingly convenient wedding celebration is the emphasis Stifter places on the fact that '...die Geschäfte wegen der Übertragung des Eigentums von Biberau und Weiden an Dietwin und Gerlint' (p.458) take place. The presumed happiness of the young married couple will be underpinned by the substantial transfer of goods and chattels from the older generation (Dietwin the uncle, having celebrated his *Abschnittsgeburtstag*, his 50th birthday and the signal that it is time for the next generation to shoulder the burden of generating and safeguarding the prosperity of the family) to those whose youthful vigour and sense of duty is now deemed to be more equal to the onerous task. Continuity is yet again assured and this 'arranged marriage' can be

gratefully reflected on. 'Ein sehr freundlicher und herzlicher Verkehr...' (p.458) between the generations now takes the place of the competition earlier engaged in by young Dietwin and Gerlint, evidenced by their efforts to surpass each other's prowess as rose growers. Although the narrator avails himself of emotionally and usually erotically charged words, such as 'Zucht', 'Geschlecht' and even 'Verkehr', any implied sense of sexuality, of joyous and pleasurable human coupling, appears to have been virtually drained from these terms.¹⁰ In the story the sexual dimension is only acknowledged once it can do no harm. The erstwhile separate estates, like their newly-installed master and mistress, are free to flourish jointly and in harmony, without being in any danger from the rampant spread of the symbolic roses. This allows a grateful uncle to say with satisfaction: '...Gott sei Dank, jetzt ist die Grenze für die Rosen gefunden, daß sie nicht das ganze Gebiet unserer Güter bedecken' (p.457), obliquely voicing an awareness of the potentially detrimental effects of unchecked emotion, of proliferating amorous fervour, unbridled ambition, and divisive conduct. Does one detect a hint of humour in the obvious overkill of symbols, the great tide of roses, the symbolism being perhaps used to reflect the elaborate textuality of these lives? Uncle and aunt can, however, calmly retire to the *Altenteil* such estates offer to those whose main task has been completed on behalf of the family.

Both aunt and uncle are conscious of their contribution, by their gently manipulating matchmaking, to the gratifying outcome. They nevertheless claim to be unshaken in their belief that '...die Ehen werden in dem Himmel geschlossen' (p.458), the so-called *fromme Spruch*, which was the basis for the initial wish to encourage this union for the benefit of the illustrious von der Weiden family, protestations which by their excessive assertiveness lack conviction and fail to persuade the alert reader of their genuine nature. One is tempted to suggest a new family motto on the lines of 'Man proposes, God - is disposed to concur'. Is not the proof in Stifter's story of *Der fromme Spruch*?

* * * * *

It is difficult to know quite how to take *Der fromme Spruch*. If it is persuasive and moving, then it probably is so as some kind of grandiose and circumstantial piece of wish-fulfilment. If only families could be persuaded to behave this way, then all would be well. But they do not, as we all know. It is interesting to think back in this context to Gotthelf's *Die schwarze Spinne*. There the text has the courage to acknowledge violent disturbance, because ultimately it can exorcise that disturbance. Perhaps Stifter's tale dare not acknowledge the disturbance, because, were it to do so, it would have to concede that it has no powers of exorcism to hand.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

1. Stifter submitted the story to the journal *Die katholische Welt* but the editor and his editorial committee refused to accept it. He explained their decision thus: 'Die Erzählung ist unnatürlich; solche steife Personen gibt es nicht, ihre Reden sind alle wie auf Schrauben gestellt; die alltäglichen Dinge sind in endloser Breitspurigkeit vorgeführt; die Handlung ist fast null; der Stil ist gezwungen und voll Wiederholungen; man glaubt kaum, daß es dem Verfasser ernst ist, und man ist manchmal geneigt, das Ganze für eine Karikatur der aristokratischen Familien zu halten' (Leo Tepe to Adalbert Stifter 17.10.1867). Stifter in his reply attempted to give credibility to his story by claiming comic intention: 'Es sollte allerdings die Lächerlichkeit nicht des hohen Adels, dessen Benehmen bei uns durchgängig leicht und fein ist, sondern gewisser Leute auf dem Lande mit veralteten Formen nicht gerade satirisch sondern scherzend dargestellt werden, diese Leute sollten aber doch gut und ehrenwert sein' (Adalbert Stifter to Leo Tepe 31.10.1866) It is difficult to detect irony here but one might argue that the petrification evidenced in conduct and dialogue is the 'extreme product of Stifter's ideology of Reason, his unceasing and ever-increasing determination to build texts which would stand as unshakeable houses of meaning.' See: Martin and Erika Swales, *Adalbert Stifter: A critical study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 170.
2. The example of Friedrich Fröbel, a pupil of Pestalozzi and founder of the *Kindergarten* and the *Landerziehungsheim*, effected a change in the intercourse within the family, leading to more relaxed exchanges. It helped to remove '...zum Beispiel die Steifheit des Sie-Sagens und die allzu devoten Formen in Briefen an Respektspersonen'. See: Karl Buchheim, *Deutsche Kultur zwischen 1830 und 1870* (Frankfurt am Main: Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft Athenaion, 1966).
3. Koschorke and Ammer comment on the significance of the word *vortrefflich*: 'Vortrefflich ist die Bedeutungslosigkeit der Ereignisse. Vortrefflich ist es, wenn nichts geschieht. Darin ist implizit mitgedacht, daß jedes Ereignis nur eine potentielle Störung der Regelwelt bedeuten kann. Das stets gefährdete Ordnungsdenken sucht sich in Richtung Immobilität zu retten. Die Subjekte müssen sich auf diese Immobilität einschwören lassen. Stifters Gestalten wünschen nichts, leben auf nichts zu, als was nicht ohnehin Gang der Dinge ist und in Erfüllung geht.' See: Albrecht Koschorke and Andreas Ammer, 'Der Text ohne Bedeutung oder die Erstarrung der Angst: Zu Stifters letzter Erzählung *Der fromme Spruch*', *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 61(1987), p.714.
4. In an essay on *Der fromme Spruch*, Koschorke and Ammer analyse the significance of the stilted and repetitious, even tautological, language used by Stifter in this late work: 'In Stifters letzter Erzählung wird viel geredet. Vieles, was in dem Text, der Macht und Würde eines sprachlichen Zeichens im Titel trägt, gesagt wird, wird doppelt gesagt. *Der fromme Spruch* bedient sich der Regeln der Rede nicht, um Informationen austauschbar zu machen. Getauscht wird nur, was jeder weiß. Der Austausch von Wörtern richtet keine Differenzen auf oder behebt sie und erstattet den gesichtslosen Figuren, von deren Physiognomie nur ihre Ununterscheidbarkeit der Rede wert ist, keine Individualität zurück. Ihre Sprache ist nur eine lautliche Verdoppelung des bereits Gesagten.' Furthermore, they feel: 'Der Text hat die Schwelle von der Kulthandlung zum reinen Spiel überschritten; die eingesetzten Zeichen enthalten kein Element von Überschreitung mehr, ihre Affinität auf das Vorsprachliche oder Außersprachliche wird gezielt unterbunden. Damit hängt logisch zusammen, daß die Welt des *Frommen Spruches* eine reine Kunstwelt ist, auf Zeremonien und sprachlichen Konventionen aufgebaut.' See: Albrecht Koschorke and Andreas Ammer, as above, pp.676/677, 702.
5. There is another example of such a ritualistic exchange in *Witiko*, another late work:
 "Dieser Jüngling ist Witiko, unser Nachbar im Walde und, so lange es ihm genehm ist, unser Gast".
 "Er ist willkommen", rief einer der Männer.
 "Er ist willkommen", rief ein anderer.
 "Und er ist willkommen", riefen alle.
 See: Adalbert Stifter, *Gesammelte Werke in 14 Bänden*, ed. by Konrad Steffen (Basel: Birkhauser Verlag, 1962-72), IX: *Witiko I* (1967), p.215.
6. 'Stifter empfand tief, daß das Innerliche nur angedeutet, nicht völlig ausgesprochen werden könne. Die Zone des Unsagbaren mußte [...] gewahrt bleiben'. See: Walther Rehm, 'Stifters Erzählung *Der Waldgänger* als Dichtunr der Reue' in *Begegnungen und Probleme: Studien zur deutschen Literaturgeschichte* (Bern: Francke, 1957), p.343.
7. Referring to a young couple like Dietwin and Gerlint, Max Rychner says: 'Ihr Ernst – und der des Dichters – hat archäische Züge [...] die zahllosen Förmlichkeiten, die den Umgang der kleinen Gemeinschaft beinahe bis zur Pedanterie bestimmen: sie sind Zauber, der das so leicht verwundbare Innere behüten soll. Bis ins Geringste ist das wohl ausgebildete gesellschaftliche Zeremoniell als von Urzeiten her bewahrte, grundlegende Menschenerfahrung beschrieben; das ganze Buch ist ein Ritual.' See: 'Stifter's *Nachsommer*' in Max Rychner, *Welt im Wort: Literarische Aufsätze* (Zürich: Manesse, 1949), pp. 157-180.
8. Stifter himself expressed his belief in God's guidance in a letter in 1856: 'Gott fügt die Dinge, und sie werden gut sein'. See: Walther Rehm, as above, pp.317-345.
9. Hermann Mang comments on the significance of an important wedding for the community: 'Eine richtige ländliche Hochzeitsfeier bringt bei uns geradezu eine ganze Reihe von gemeinschaftlichen Eß- und Trinkgelegenheiten und ist dadurch eine vielseitige Stärkung des Gemeinschaftsempfindens. So ist es auch begreiflich, daß die ganze Einwohnerschaft einer Gemeinde sich benachteiligt fühlt, wenn eine feierliche Hochzeit durch eine stille Feier ersetzt wird. Tatsächlich entgeht den Leuten dadurch nicht bloß eine schöne Festlichkeit, alle Gemeinschaft verliert eine wertvolle Auffrischung.' See: Hermann Mang, 'Essen und Trinken als Gemeinschaftsförderung in Südtirol', in *Volkskundliches aus Österreich und Südtirol I*, ed. by Anton Dörrer and Leopold Schmidt (Vienna: Österreichischer Bundesverlag, 1947), p.165.

10. In a letter quoted by Max Rychner, Stifter says: 'Leidenschaft ist verächtlich, darum die neue Literatur häufig verächtlich.' Where passion breaks through erstwhile calm, Stifter transforms it into renunciation and, thus, purification. For him passionate love spells small-scale revolution with unreasonable demands and destructive consequences. In another letter in 1850: 'Meine Dichtungen sind nicht Dichtungen allein, [...] sondern als sittliche Offenbarungen, als mit strengem Ernste bewahrte menschliche Würde haben sie einen Wert, der bei unserer elenden, frivolen Literatur länger bleiben wird als der poetische; in diesem Sinne sind sie eine Wohltat der Zeit...'. See: Max Rychner, *as above*.

CHAPTER 4

Hanseatic baptism and reconciliation in Storm's *Die Söhne des Senators*

Storm's story *Die Söhne des Senators* (published in 1880) hinges on patterns of inclusion and exclusion. The interplay between them is carefully woven into the text.¹ Essentially the tale told concerns a crisis in the life of a family, as inclusiveness is threatened by the divisiveness of jealousy. The story is conciliatory in spirit, and exclusion ultimately gives place to inclusion. Yet, for all his ability to celebrate the beauty of the moments of inclusiveness – the integration of individuals into the corporateness of family life, of citizens into the life of their community, of the poor into the bounty of the rich, of the memory of the dead into the consciousness of the living – Storm is clear-sighted in his perception that all identity depends on a complex dialectic of inclusion and exclusion, a dialectic which has to be sustained rather than obliterated. Hence the constant references to points of crossing and transition, to doors or windows, to hedges, fences and walls, each symbolizing inclusion or deliberate division, demarcation, and reconciliation. The *Gassenbrut*, initially excluded from the fruit bearing garden, at the end of the story are included by an invitation warmly issued.

The words of the parrot, heard in the old senator's garden 'Komm röwer!'(p.724)*, which are the exotic bird's party piece, '...wenn an Sonntagnachmittagen die Familie sich hier zum Kaffee versammelt hatte...' (p.723), take on several meanings in the course of the story. These dialect words, which are associated with rituals of family togetherness, will be seen to represent the link which this patrician

* Page numbers in this chapter refer to: *Theodor Storm, Sämtliche Werke* II (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1987).

family maintains with the local community, at times asking the less privileged inhabitants of the old Hanseatic town to cross over to the sunny side of the street and to share the good things in life available to merchants grown rich through trade with other parts of the world. They also later provide the necessary impetus that allows the divide between the estranged brothers, Friedrich and Christian Albrecht Jovers, to be overcome, metaphorically and literally. The issue will be centred on the garden wall erected between their two houses and the inner wall which arises from deep sibling rivalry and resentment. At the baptism the words can be taken also to symbolize the acceptance of the new baby into the Christian faith.

* * * * *

Die Söhne des Senators was completed in 1880 but it reflects an earlier age of even more rigid social stratification, based on Storm's own family history. A quarrel between two brothers, arising out of the disputed ownership of an out-of-town garden, is shown to put a brutal end to family harmony. Regret is voiced by all those who witness the discord since it is in stark contrast to the harmony indicated by the family gatherings² having taken place in the merchant's elegant house '...inmitten der Stadt in einer nach dem Hafen hinabgehenden Straße'(p.722) or in the fenced-in botanical profusion of the garden which is to become so important later in the story³. The open air setting for family gatherings on summer afternoons is off-set by the '...nur bei feierlichen Anlässen gebrauchte[n] große[n] Festsaal'(p.722). The '...niedrige Grenzmauer...' (p.722) divides the two houses in which the two brothers conduct their married and bachelor lives as well as their different businesses. Initially, morning greetings are exchanged daily in an atmosphere of cordial brotherly affection. It is in this garden⁴ and in the grand ballroom of the family house that the story is essentially played out.

With the deaths of the old senator, and afterwards that of his wife, the tradition of family closeness, of shared celebration and hospitality, even with the 'Gassenbrut', appears to have ended. 'Diese Familienfeste waren nun vorüber'(p.725). This brief and starkly expressive sentence points the way to the cooling of relations between the brothers, even to strife. The exclusion of the poor children will be reversed at the end of the story to allow the inclusion in the Jovers family circle which by then, after the serious rift, will re-establish harmony.

Behind the garden which has seen so much jollity and shared delight, a small cemetery is separated from the land of the living by '...einen niedrigen Zaun...' (p.725). It mirrors the 'niedrige Mauer' between the brothers' houses in town. The elder of the brothers is keen to see that '...eine hohe Planke oder Mauer hier die Aussicht schließen möchte' (p.725). He is reluctant to be exposed to the 'Grabstätte' of his parents whenever he recharges his mental and physical batteries in the green and peaceful surroundings of the garden. Clearly, for him, the worlds of life and death need to be visibly separated. He, therefore, wants to exclude the idea of the parents' death from the vibrant world he has shaped for himself and his young wife, whereas Friedrich, at this stage, still needs the link with the past and, more particularly, with their parents' guiding spirit. At the end of the story, however, he concurs with his brother's desire to hold the past at bay. This is not to be understood as repudiation; the brothers' filial relationship with the deceased parents had clearly been one of affection and respect. Hence the parents can quite properly be included in their sons' lives as a reminder of an earlier shared life, genealogy being a lasting influence; but the past should not be allowed to dominate the present, to dictate the decisions and conduct of the younger generation. Excessive dependence would prevent the sons from living abundantly in the present. The compartmentalisation of experience is, then, a necessary requirement. But this process of demarcation contrasts strongly with

what will be erected between the brothers' houses as the result of their inability to resolve the issue of the ownership of this attractive garden.

The meeting which produces the unfortunate rift in the affairs of this old-established patrician family takes place '...in dem großen ungeheizten Festsaal des Familienhauses...' (p.726); it takes place not on a sunny summer's day but on a cold day in November. Thus the brothers are entering a formal, cold, grey, and uninviting world, filled with regret at the broken bond, nostalgia for an untroubled past and a violent refusal by the younger man to accommodate the arguments of his married brother. Even 'die Morgensonnen [...] war schon fortgegangen...' (p.726). As adults and heirs to the family wealth, they are able to enter a room to which in their childhood '...der Eintritt hier nur bei Familienfesten und zur Weihnachtszeit vergönnt gewesen war' (pp.726/7). Here, too, the grand room is a place of ritual, the ritual of establishing the details of an inheritance. Family members are made aware of the continuity which manifests itself in the many portraits of ancestors which line the walls. 'Ehrfurcht' is felt and a determination that everything must be left unchanged as Friedrich says: '...hier darf nichts gerückt werden' (p.727). These words appear to bode well for future relations; they are, however, a bitterly ironic pointer to the radical change in the relationship which is brought about by the bone of contention, i.e. the disputed garden. This is left to be the last item in the morning's deliberations. The contents of the parental house pose no problem when it comes to dividing up the brothers' inheritance. Both are in agreement. The garden is mentioned reluctantly by the lawful heir '...als ob er etwas ganz Beiläufiges erwähne' (p.727). Ominous clouds have been gathering quietly since nothing is 'wie damals' any longer, words the narrator uses several times in this scene; and the ensuing dialogue highlights the differences in temperament, status, and expectations of the brothers. It becomes the battleground for their self-esteem on the one hand, and stubborn adherence to a legal right granted, signed, and sealed by the deceased father on the other.

The suddenness of the quarrel which develops between the brothers is surprising. One can perhaps guess at the underlying psychology. It may attest to the younger brother's desire to assert himself against one who appears to have been favoured by life in terms of primogeniture, personal circumstances and temperament. 'Little brother' feels compelled to make his mark by demanding that his rights, enshrined in the will, be upheld to the letter. Stubbornness is allowed to cloud the issue. As Storm himself makes nothing of the individual psychology here, one might conclude also that he is not really interested in Friedrich's jealousy but rather more in the psychological mechanisms of identity, of self-assertion, of demarcation. He therefore focuses on Friedrich's suddenly triggered need to erect barriers, highlighting once more the processes of sundering and linking.

The portraits painted by Storm at this point of the two warring brothers are contrasting ones: on the one hand '...ein geborener Hagestolz...' (p.727) (Friedrich) and, on the other, a young man (Christian) who expects marriage to his beloved, warm, and cheerful Christine to bear abundant fruit. The image of the garden reflects this assumed fecundity from which Christian draws his conviction that he should be the rightful owner of the disputed piece of land, whereas Friedrich, to whom it has been willed officially, insists 'was mein Recht ist [...] das setze ich nicht aufs Los' (p.729), thereby rejecting the suggestion that it might become the object of a gamble. This intransigence produces the severance of family ties which will exercise both the brothers and the citizens of the town for some time to come. In the background the parrot can be heard suggesting to the reader that the incongruous North German sounds issuing from this alien *Kubavogel*⁵ will be instrumental in overcoming this serious rift and will symbolize the need for reconciliation by the exhortation 'Komm röwer!'.

Although both brothers bear names which speak of peace or Christian kindness, the '...Trotzkopf...' in Friedrich, the instigator of '...der kleinen Differenze...' (p.731) does not allow him to settle the familial dispute amicably. His decent and good heart

which is at the core of his character will be submerged under the legal wrangling which ensues under advocate Sönksen's unhelpful guidance. It is said of the latter that '...er jagte wie ein Trüffelhund nach verborgen liegenden Prozessen...', making him a '...spitzfindigen Gesellen und höchst beschwerlichen Gegenpart auch in den einfachsten Rechtsstreitigkeiten'(p.733).

Old Friedebohm, the trusted bookkeeper in the family firm of Jovers, on the occasion of the feared solicitor's visit to the principal's office, finds confirmed the rumours circulating in the town as to the severance of sibling relations in the family of his employer; and he reflects sadly on this unwelcome development: 'Er [...] schaute eine Weile durch das Fenster auf den Steinhof, wo ihm die niedrige Mauer jetzt auch eine innere Scheidung der beiden verwandten Häuser zu bedeuten schien...'(p.734).

There is tacit agreement between the brothers that the quarrel can be resolved ultimately only by personal reconciliation and that '...das Wort der Güte nur fern von fremder Einmischung von dem Einen zu dem Andern gehen könne'(p.737). Nevertheless, the tiresome legal struggle continues until the brothers can truly communicate with each other once more. It will take the baptism of the younger senator's first born son to heal the rift or at least to begin the healing process. Initially their quarrel appears to grow in intensity, a fact which is made visible by the ever increasing height of the dividing wall. The inner division thus finds external expression, for all to see and bemoan. Storm describes this 'Grenzmauer' as '...diese große steinerne Gardine...'(p.739). The idea of a curtain conjures up domestic cosiness and warmth around the hearth, negated here by the stony material. Christian's choice of the word 'Gardine' appears to indicate that he can risk belittling the controversial construction, since in this family the individual members clearly have the measure of one another and can afford to amuse themselves (the light-hearted tone employed by brother and sister-in-law is evidence of that). The implication is that affection and commonsense will eventually prevail. Old Friedebohm, by reminding

his new master that such contrariness would not have occurred in the lifetime of the old senator, indicates that 'the good old days' were preferable, a sentiment shared by all generations whenever the realization of *tempora mutantur* emerges.

The young senator takes a psychological approach to his brother's apparent antagonism, whereas the old bookkeeper looks for guidance and explanation to his religious faith, of which there is little evidence in the younger generation. He is certain that all will be well - '...Gott lenkt die Herzen...' (p.740) - and He will do so again. The chief bricklayer, piling stone upon stone to achieve the maximum screening effect between the two hostile backyards, is referred to as 'der struppige Assyrer!' and he '...mag wohl am Turm zu Babel schon getagwerkten haben; wird aber diesmal auch nicht in den Himmel bauen!' (p.740). Clearly the old man confidently expects such hubris to be punished just as it was all those millennia ago in Babylon.

While the controversial wall is growing ever higher, the young senator's household is being taken over in large measure by the lavish preparations for the infant heir's christening, '...denn auf morgen gab es ein großes Fest im Hause' (pp.742/3). The young mother and mistress of the house bustles around and neatly demonstrates the age-old division of labour when the everyday lives of families and also their special celebrations need to be planned and supervised.⁶ She is allowed to enter '...das Allerheiligste ihres Mannes...' and she '...ließ sich ihr blaues Haushaltungsbeutelchen bis zum Rande füllen und verließ das Stübchen, den Kopf voll junger Wirtschaftssorgen' (p.743). The language employed by the narrator, with its diminutives, suggests on the one hand a girl playing with her doll's house, playing at being grown up, while the young husband is in charge of the serious business of earning the family's living. The diminutives also convey by their gentleness the fact that Christine has acquired an easy familiarity with, and efficient mastery of, the domestic sphere despite her girlish demeanour. The reader is, however, made aware that in the course of the

unfolding story she displays the more thoughtful side of her character, an insight into the human psyche and more specifically into the feuding brothers' souls. It is she who becomes the agent for their reconciliation, it is she who takes the step of opening the window during the baptismal feast to indicate to the lonely and excluded figure outside that there exists goodwill and a hand to help him cross over into the warmth of family life, offering hope of renewed inclusion. The full purse highlights that there are plentiful funds available to provide an abundance of food and drink on the occasion of the baptism of this important child. This family has the means to employ additional staff⁷ for the great day commensurate with their position in society: '...die Kochfrau war eben angelangt, und der Bratenwender sollte aufgestellt werden...' (p.742).

Preparations are in full swing not only in the house of the young senator but also in the town. This is no ordinary infant about to be baptized, the event is to be staged '...bei den allerersten Honoratioren...' (p.743). The grimly malicious housekeeper, who presides efficiently but without warmth over the bachelor household of the litigious Friedrich Jovers, voices outrage at the traditional civic acknowledgment of this day. Friedrich's realization that 'die Schiffe flaggen ja!' and his assumption that a wedding must be about to be solemnized is dismissed with the words: '...es ist nur eine Kindtaufe!' (p.743). Friedrich is instantly aware that, of course, there is private and public significance attached to such an event. The old family is being honoured, tradition is being upheld, private joy is finding outward expression and civic approval. The town is thus included in the family celebration, thereby obliterating the usual division between the private and public sphere. At the same time Friedrich, who has turned himself into an outsider, cast out of the warm and welcoming family circle by his intransigence, realises with pangs of sadness and bitterness that he will now be unable to fulfil the role intended for him in more peaceful days since '...Herr Friedrich Jovers hatte ja für solchen Fall Gevatter stehen sollen!' (p.738). He remains silent but the

beady-eyed housekeeper does not fail to notice ‘...wie ihm die Hand zitterte, während er schweigend den Rest seiner Suppe hinunterlöffelte’(p.744) As every German child knows, one has to ‘auslöffeln, was man sich eingebrockt hat’. The trembling hand is a sign of some likely change taking place in his hitherto firmly controlled emotions which previously had been suppressed with the aid of a feeling of righteous insistence that the letter of the last will and testament of his father be adhered to.

The lonely man is inescapably drawn to the festivities taking place in the adjoining house, albeit as a solitary onlooker and listener.

Am selbigen Abend, da es vom Kirchturme acht geschlagen hatte, stand Herr Friedrich Jovers auf seinem Steinhofe mit dem Rücken an der Mauer eines Hintergebäudes und blickte unverwandt nach den hell erleuchteten Saalfenstern seines Elternhauses, deren unterste Scheiben die neue Mauer noch so eben überragten(p.745).

He is ashamed of giving in to the need to feel part of the family he loves but is unable to resist its pull. It is interesting to note that once again the younger brother is referred to by his full name, even preceded by ‘Herr’. One might infer from this that such formality on the part of the narrator is intended to convey Friedrich’s wish to assert at all times his autonomous adult existence, an identity owing nothing to his family. The reader is reminded that the parrot, whose words ‘Komm röwer!’ echo subliminally throughout the story, is in residence at the elder brother’s house. Friedrich clearly hears them in his aching heart. The experience of being so totally excluded from the joyous occasion of his infant nephew’s christening is all too painful. We are not allowed to witness this celebration directly, thus being made to share Friedrich’s exclusion. The narrator filters the sights and sounds through Friedrich’s perception of, and reaction to, them. The details of this baptism, the feasting, and shared joy of the guests, can only be gleaned from the frustrated godfather’s thoughts. He is taking part in spirit against his will, compelled by emotions he cannot fathom, and barely able to withstand their impact,

...denn mit jedem Gläserklingen, das zu ihm herüberscholl, mit jeder neuen Gesundheit, deren Worte er deutlich zu verstehen glaubte, drückte er die Zähne fester aufeinander. Gleichwohl stand er wie gebannt an seinem Platze, sah in das Blitzen der brennenden Kristallkrone und horchte, wenn nichts Anderes laut wurde, auf den Schrei des alten Papageien, der, wie er wohl wußte, bei der Festtafel heute nicht fehlen durfte(pp.745/6).

His own vivid imagination provides the narrative focus at this point as he visualizes the elegant setting for this baptism, the happy mood enjoyed by the young parents and their guests, offset by the startling contribution of the exotic bird. The parrot represents the idea of reconciliation, of forgiving and tolerance, of sharing freely and gladly, all encompassed in the cry 'Komm röwer!'.

The young *Senatorin* takes a conciliatory approach, appears at one of the windows and extends a whispered invitation to the unhappy man. Behind his name being called there is the echo of the parrot's exhortation. Her hand gestures towards the brightly lit ballroom, indicating a readiness to draw him into the warm circle despite the conflict the brothers are engaged in. She is aware that nothing would better please the new father, who in other respects finds himself in the enviable situation of possessing worldly goods, a respected position in the community, great marital happiness, and a genial nature, than to see family harmony restored. His bliss would then be complete. Unwilling to deny his stubborn brother the longed for role of godfather, Christian Albrecht has decided to assume his part by proxy, in the hope that at a later date when circumstances would allow the rightful godfather to accept spiritual responsibility for the latest addition to the family; his thoughtfulness will be rewarded. This baptism is depicted as a primarily secular event, there are no references to any religious ceremony. One can assume, however, that earlier in the day a service to mark the acceptance of the child into the faith of the family will have taken place, perhaps conducted by the '...Vetter Kirchenpropst...' (p.751). Although the members of the Jovers family draw a good deal of strength from their own traditions

and their standing in the community, they undoubtedly belong to the mainstream Protestant church which is central to the life of this Hanseatic city.

The fact that Storm omits to elaborate on the baptism and fails to give a detailed description of the subsequent festivities would indicate that he is concerned to show the event only as seen through the eyes of Friedrich, as an experience from which he is excluded, has little knowledge of, and in which he can take part only as an outsider from a distance. This distance does not allow him to enter into the spirit of the event, be it the religious or secular angles. Equally the reader has to be content with, figuratively speaking, pressing noses against window panes, trying to gain a greater sense of involvement, however unsuccessfully. Clearly exclusion limits and deprives.

In writing about the defiance of the younger brother, the narrator often adopts a conciliatory tone, thus reassuring the reader that ultimately all will be well.⁸ A lasting severance of family ties and of mutually harmonious contact is unlikely. At this stage, what is in question is the length of time that will be allowed to elapse before peace is permanently restored. The wall Friedrich has erected around himself is crumbling, ‘...aber-der Garten!’ and still ‘Herr Friedrich Jovers wollte sein Recht [...] der Bock hielt ihn mit beiden Hörnern gegen die Mauer gepreßt’(p.746). The hour of reconciliation is delayed for the moment, and ‘ da drüben aber wurde das Fenster zögernd wieder zugeschlossen’(p.747). Regret is felt on both sides of the divide, tempered presumably by the expectation that the defiance - like the wall - is on course for demolition and contrition.

Before peace can be allowed to reign again, matters are aggravated by the court’s decision to grant judgment against the intransigent younger brother, thereby making the rift worse. Christian Albrecht feels compelled to be included in the wretched building process. As a consequence, the elder brother’s contribution of half the cost of the unfortunate dividing wall is used to increase its height yet again, focusing attention on

hardening attitudes. Ostensibly Friedrich feels the need to dispose of his brother's money '...damit ich der Unruhe in Bälde wieder ledig werde!' (p.750). That way solace does not, of course, lie, but 'er schien keine Gedanken zu haben; vielleicht auch wollte er keine haben' (p.751).

The equivalent of the exotic parrot at the parental home of the warring Jovers brothers is the foreman bricklayer, '...der struppige Assyrer...', who lustily sings '...alle Lieder, die er auf seinen Kreuz- und Querzügen aus der Fremde heimgebracht hatte' (p.751). This is the reverse of the parrot's skill which allows him to mimic the local dialect. The erstwhile familiar and homely worlds of the Hanseatic merchants' houses are rendered ever more sinister with every stone which is piled on top of the existing layers. They become '...immer mehr verdunkelt...'. The old bookkeeper's Christian soul is mortified when faced with this '...babylonischen Beginnen...' (p.751) It is to him reminiscent of an alien pre-Christian world of dark hopelessness. Is this, perhaps, also an intriguing sidelight on the issue of the familiar versus the foreign world, on places of felt inclusion and exclusion?

On Friedrich the wall exerts '...nach ihrer abermaligen Vollendung eine geheimnisvolle Anziehungskraft...' (p.752). One evening, he yet again confronts the stark horror of the stone monstrosity. 'Herr Friedrich stand jetzt an derselben Stelle, von wo aus er an jenem Abend ein stummer Zeuge der Familienfeierlichkeit gewesen war [...] auf seinem Antlitz lag jetzt ein unverkennbarer Ausdruck der Bestürzung.' He is shocked into the realisation that '...hinter dem neuen Maueraufsatz waren die Fenster des alten Familienfestsales bis zum letzten Rand verschwunden' (p.753). The wretched quarrel has caused all that was good in his life to disappear, the past he had shared with his brother, the opportunity to play his part at vibrant family gatherings, the satisfaction of being valued as a welcome friend and companion by those living on the other side of the forbidding wall. There is now only the cold crescent of the moon and its '...bläuliches

Licht...'. Lifelessness surrounds him, '...nichts regte sich, weder hüben doch drüben...'.

It is a bitter moment for the hitherto implacable man. The words *hüben* and *drüben*, the two worlds divided by misguided pride and intransigence, again bring to mind the familiar cry of the parrot. As if on cue he can suddenly be heard to utter the croaky 'Komm röwer!', twice even, '...ein eindringlicher Ruf...', followed by '...ein gellendes Gelächter...'. This usually expresses the bird's own satisfaction at having succeeded in emulating his human masters in their speech, 'aber was sonst als der unbehülfliche Laut eines abgerichteten Tieres gleichgültig an seinem Ohr vorbeigegangen war, das traf den einsamen Mann jetzt wie der neckende Hohn eines schadenfrohen Dämons'(p.753).

From deep within him the same words form on his own lips, indicating the virtual collapse of his earlier resolve. One can almost hear the masonry collapsing too, the building blocks crumbling and tumbling to the ground, but '...über seine selbstgebaute Mauer konnte er nicht hinüberkommen'(p.753). It is, of course, the *Mauer im Kopf* which keeps this family apart. Another jolt is clearly needed before the desired outcome can be brought about. Friedrich longs to hear the call of the parrot for the third time- his own words will not suffice. Eventually, in the semi-sleep he falls into, Friedrich is taken back to the days when his parents were alive, but instead of receiving comforting signals from them, they approach him in his dream on the way to the garden with their eyes firmly closed, thus denying him recognition and succour: they are finally hidden by the monstrously high wall erected by him from spite. The mocking laughter of the *Kubavogel* shakes him to the core. It takes on a nightmarish aspect, an echo which '...an hundert Mauern hin und wieder sprang'(p.754). This provides a reminder, yet again, of the tantalising words 'Komm röwer!', containing both promise and rebuke to one who has removed himself from the intimate shelter of the family. The dream finally makes it clear to Friedrich that he has put himself beyond the pale, a position in which even formerly

loving parents cannot, or will not, reach him. It proves to be the psychological turning point.

During the absence from home of the elder brother and his young family, on a visit to the parents of the young *Senatorin* in order to show off her infant son, Friedrich feels compelled to pay a visit himself; it is to the churchyard which contains the graves of his parents and to the disputed garden. The weather is gratifyingly pleasant, trees and shrubs ‘...standen schon in lichtem Grün...’(p.755) - a sign of renewal and hope- and the garden has been, as in all previous years, perfectly tended. It is a scene which suggests peace, nature, and the man-made order visibly in harmony. Gruffly, Friedrich challenges old Andreas, who has been in charge of the Jovers’ garden for a very long time. The gardener bristles at the enquiry as to who might have ordered him to continue his work despite the rift between his old master’s sons. He is even prepared to give his time and energy free to ensure that this controversial piece of land does not go ‘...in die Wildnis...’(p.756). This may have occurred in the siblings’ dealings with each other, but it is not acceptable to the old retainer whose motives are based on love for the soil and its riches but even more on a sense of loyalty and affection for his former master whom he obviously held in high regard: ‘...das aber tu ich meiner alten Herrschaft da zu liebe’(p.756), proof that he has reason to be grateful for fair and generous treatment by previous masters. The quiet and dignified determination of the old man shames Friedrich and impels him to seek out the graves of his beloved parents who succeeded in inspiring such devotion. A period of calm reflection ‘...auf den Steinen, welche die Familiengruft bedeckten...’(p.756), a reminder of his being a link in a long chain of family members, prepares the ground for a renewal of friendly contact with his brother. His resentment will no longer reign supreme now that ‘...wie von einem frohen Entschluß, ein stilles Lächeln auf seinem Antlitz lag’(p.757). One can readily visualize a beatific look on a face which up to this point in the story had been painted as wearing the grim and forbidding

expression of a man who has been denying himself the life-enhancing participation in the rituals of family life.

The week during which the elder brother is absent from home allows the recalcitrant Friedrich to remove the excessive height of the hated wall and to prepare himself for the longed for reconciliation. Once the ‘...schlafende Erbe...’(p.757), the infant nephew and the newest link in the familial chain promising continuity for this old family, is safely installed in his cot after the return of the young family, the long overdue meeting of the two brothers and the young *Senatorin* can be convened. Across the new low wall ‘...stand Herr Friedrich Jovers und streckte schweigend dem Bruder seine Hand entgegen’(p.757). At this point the formal description of the younger brother as ‘Herr Friedrich Jovers’ is no longer an obstacle to an acknowledgement of his brother. A newly mellow Friedrich is eager to extend a friendly hand to him in order to begin to heal the rift. The seemingly unbridgeable gap between the warring parties can now be consigned to history. Addressing each other by name appears not to suffice; they feel the need to emphasize the fact that they are brothers repeatedly. Something is missing, though; Friedrich is hoping to hear the necessary ‘Komm röwer!’ uttered by the parrot from the other house. It does not occur at this stage, although this hardly mars the reconciliation.

Instead Friedrich takes the initiative and leaps across the wall- ‘hinüber’. He is now where he has wanted to be throughout, despite appearances to the contrary. Tears fill the eyes of the startled Frau Christine as she tells him: ‘...ich habe dich noch niemals springen sehen!’(p.758); there is a deeper significance in this leap across the divide, since it reflects the change which has taken place within the stubborn man. It is hard *über seinen eigenen Schatten zu springen*, as folk wisdom knows. Friedrich has accomplished this feat with great aplomb. He does not feel the need to postpone the outward gesture which seals this transformation in him and says: ‘Ich meinte, Bruder, daß unser alter Papagei mich riefe; aber er hat es neulich Abends schon getan.’(p.758).

This is the culmination of the signals he has been receiving from his less intransigent, and more forbearing, brother and his wife. The parrot might be seen as their messenger, conveying at the same time a subliminal appeal from generations of members of the Jovers family. The leap, as Friedrich tells his sister-in-law; ‘...war nur ein Symbolum’(p.758). In fact ‘...die ganze Mauer war ja eigentlich nur ein Symbolum...’(pp.758/9), a reminder that in the context of modern domesticity, walls have less a functional aspect than a symbolic one, one which asserts property, and even propriety. And here, supremely, notions of inclusion and exclusion are operative.

The newly reconciled trio undertake a walk in the family garden which is found ‘...in schönster Ordnung...’. This too might be seen as ‘ein Symbolum’ because it reflects the newly restored harmony. There is, however, a new wall between the garden and the churchyard, screening the world of the living from that of the dead, ‘...wie Herr Christian Albrecht sie sich immer hier gewünscht hatte’. Friedrich’s decision to have this wall built has been based on the expectation of ‘...des Herrn Bruders gütigen Konsens...’(p.759). This wall has rightly been removed from the boundary line between the siblings’ houses and will no longer be an instrument of exclusion and division. Its new, and appropriate, purpose is that of delineating the world of the living from the realm of the dead. This will, however, not mean that the memory of the revered senator and his wife will be diminished. It clearly lives on in their children and also, very strikingly, in the respect and affection expressed by the old gardener.

The removal of the wall to its new location will allow the brothers to live henceforth in the ‘...nun wieder frei gewordenen Luftraum’(p.758). Friedrich also agrees to abide by the elder brother’s verdict as to the division of the formerly disputed garden. The dialogue is conducted ‘...in herzlichem Tone...’(pp.759/60), ruling out any notion of controversy in the reader’s mind and in that of the delighted brother. The rift has finally been overcome and Christian Albrecht is able to announce with joy and relief: ‘...so

teilen wir gar nicht...' (p.760). This garden has been known as 'Jovers Garten' for generations and is to continue thus. Strife could have been avoided if this idea had been seriously entertained from the outset. In the heat of the moment when the ownership was discussed, so states the *Senator*: '...wir haben damals Beide etwas laut geredet; da konnten wir die eigene Herzensmeinung nicht vernehmen' (p.760). Hearts had been overruled by stubborn minds, points had been scored by brothers intent on staking out their individual territories after the death of the father who had controlled the affairs of family and firm for so long. The seal is set on the happy outcome of a potentially damaging quarrel and is represented by the question: 'Und, Friedrich, du speisest doch heut Abend bei uns?' (p.760). This is a key moment where family cohesion takes the immediate and palpable form of shared nourishment. Families who eat together can also live together amicably.

The summer brings much activity in the now jointly owned garden, '...in "Jovers Garten" war heute überdies ein großer Familienkaffee'. The extended family is present as well as trusted members of staff, '...jeder an dem Platze, der ihnen zukam...' (p.761). Everything is as it should be; the old order has been re-established. Naturally the old parrot, who has played such an important part in the developments, is also of the party. Outside the garden gate the 'Gassenbrut', mentioned at the beginning, who long to partake of the abundance of ripe gooseberries in the garden, are biding their time in the hope of being invited in, as was the custom in the days of the old senator. It had been perceived to be a duty to share one's wealth with those less fortunate, but the presence of the '...gefürchteten Herrn Friedrich Jovers...' (p.762) leaves the 'Buben' cowed and anxious.

The two brothers, reconciled and '...in stummem Einverständnis...', are jolted out of their quiet conversation by the shrill and lusty cry of the parrot '...als wolle er's nun ein für alle Mal gesagt haben: "Komm röwer!"' (p.762). Although Friedrich had longed to

hear this cry for the third time in the dark night of his abject misery and loneliness, the reality now causes a shadow to cross his face; the reminder is not welcome. His brother's quietly reassuring words, 'Mein Friedrich, das hat jetzt keine Bedeutung mehr; du bist nun ein für alle Mal herüber'(p.763), transform the sombre younger brother into a cheerful, almost mischievous, man. He elects to use the refrain from which he himself has benefited so greatly to communicate his new-found humanity to the gawping urchins outside the garden fence. In unison, they happily supply the answer to the smiling man's teasing question: '...wat seggt de Papagoy?'(p.763); Friedrich has made himself an accepted member of the community by employing the local dialect. In turn, these doubly meaningful words invite the reluctant boys into the garden, reluctant only initially since '...sie konnten sich's nicht denken, daß der böse Herr Friedrich Jovers mit einem Male so erstaunlich gut geworden sei'(p.763). The '...herzliches Lachen...' issuing from both brothers, however, opens the floodgates of boyish appetite for the plump, ripe and freely available gooseberries. Not only the berries have ripened in the fullness of time; Friedrich Jovers, too, has acquired a mature and caring disposition. He is looking forward to sharing the expected warm richness and fecundity of his brother's married state, beginning by assuming, at last, the role of godfather to his brother's firstborn. This first of the intended multitude of offspring is now being held up towards the reunited brothers by the pretty young *Senatorin* who presides over this happy scene, having taken over the role formerly played so successfully by the brothers' mother, who had held the family together and who had succeeded in also extending the hand of goodwill and charity to all those less privileged than the Jovers family. The narrative circle closes to the sound of a joyously uttered 'Bravissimo'(p.764) from the throat of the young *Senatorin* and the *Familienkreis* once more embraces Friedrich.

The reader, who may share the views of Storm's young friend Petersen (for whom the story was written and who 'das Tragische nicht leiden kann'), will lean back after reading the *kleine idyllische Geschichte*⁹ and experience the satisfaction of noting the careful crafting of the story¹⁰ and, by that token, of comprehending the complex mechanisms of human relatedness and separation which Storm puts before us. Their alpha and omega are to be found in family rituals. But the substance of the tale concerns a drama in which simple ritualizations of belonging no longer help, and in which the complexities of psychological, familial, and civic identity are thematized. The story is very reticent in terms of detailed, intimate psychological analysis. In fact, the narrative voice aligns itself very much with the awareness of the community. We note at the beginning that the father of Christian and Friedrich was 'einer der letzten großen Kaufherren unserer Küstenstadt' (p.721). Three paragraphs later we are introduced to a part of the Jovers family property thus:

Gleichwohl fehlte es der Familie nicht an einem stattlichen Lust- und Nutzgarten, nur lag er einige Straßen weit vom Hause; doch immerhin so, daß er, wie man sich hier ausdrückt, "hintenum" zu erreichen war. (p.722)

The 'unserer' and 'hier' speak volumes. The narrator observes from the outside the strange occurrence that is the family feud – and most particularly its fantastic outward and palpable symbol – the immense wall between the two houses. The inner life is, then, only registered in terms of its outward manifestations. The disturbance between the brothers starts suddenly – and it stops just as suddenly. Ultimately the world is set to rights at the end of the story. But it is a smaller world and a smaller reconciliation than in either Gotthelf or Stifter. *Die Söhne des Senators* bears abundant witness to the ways in which families can generate hatred, jealousy, rivalry. Of course, good fortune can restore order and harmony – as in this tale. But reconciliation is brought about less by a

process of moral growth and purification, less by dependable agencies, than by instinctive emotion. That the chief spokesman is an animal who speaks dialect touchingly and humorously suggests how tentative the resolution is.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 4

1. Storm voiced disappointment at the quality of his story: 'Der Stoff leidet am Anekdotischen und hat überdies bei den wenig günstigen Verhältnissen, unter denen er bearbeitet wurde, wohl kaum die Tiefe erhalten, deren er dennoch fähig war', in a letter to Paul Heyse (15.11.1880). Heyse replied (26.11.1880): 'Die eigentliche Höhe, den Umschlag, hätte ich gern noch etwas gesteigert gesehen, *meinem* Naturell nach; aber diese Pastelfarben vertragen schwerlich so heftige Drücker. Das Dinglein wimmelt von hübschen, zarten und doch kräftigen Details'. See: *Theodor Storm, Gesammelte Werke in 4 Bänden* (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1987-88), II: 'Wirkung und Würdigung' (1987), pp.1050/1051.
2. For another example of familial discord and a troubled sibling relationship, see also *Thomas Mann, Gesammelte Werke in Einzelbänden*, ed. by Peter de Mendelssohn (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag), *Buddenbrooks* (1974), pp.49/50. In a heated dialogue between father and son, financial demands by the half-brother Gotthold are discussed and dismissed: ' "Vater, - dieses Verhältnis mit Gotthold bedrückt mich!" sagte der Konsul leise. "Unsinn, Jean, keine Sentimentalitäten! Was bedrückt dich?" "Vater,... wir haben hier heute so heiter beieinander gesessen, wir haben einen schönen Tag gefeiert, wir waren stolz und glücklich in dem Bewußtsein, etwas geleistet zu haben, etwas erreicht zu haben... Aber Vater, diese böse Feindschaft mit meinem Bruder, deinem ältesten Sohne... Es sollte kein heimlicher Riß durch das Gebäude laufen, das wir mit Gottes gnädiger Hilfe errichtet haben... Eine Familie muß einig sein, muß zusammenhalten, Vater, sonst klopft das Übel an die Tür..." "Flausen, Jean! Possen! Ein obstinater Junge..." Es entstand eine Pause; die letzte Flamme senkte sich tiefer und tiefer. "Was machst du, Jean?" fragte Johann Buddenbrook. "Ich sehe dich gar nicht mehr." "Ich rechne", sagte der Konsul trocken...' Wolfgang Tschorn says: 'Der Garten als Besitz wird immer kenntlich durch die Umzäunung [...] wird die Grenze nach draußen markiert' See: Wolfgang Tschorn, 'Die Familienidyllen als Versuche zu einer Gegenwelt – ihre Requisiten und Rituale' in *Idylle und Verfall: Die Realität der Familie im Werk Theodor Storms* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1978), pp. 80/81.
3. Wolfgang Tschorn provides an interesting historical background to the importance of the garden for bourgeois society: 'Ebenso wie das Haus und dessen Einrichtung gehört der Garten zur biedermeierlichen Familienszenerie. [...] sind die Gärten des Bürgertums entstanden aus der Nachahmung des Adels und seinen zunächst französischen absolutistischen Gärten mit ihrer völlig formalistischen Anlage. In England mit seinem frühen Erstarken des Bürgertums werden diese völlig verändert, indem parallel zur bürgerlichen Freiheit auch eine freie "natürliche" Parklandschaft zum Ideal des sich bürgerlich gebenden Adels erhoben wird.', and he goes on to refer specifically to Storm's work: '[Der]Garten in seinen verschieden weit entwickelten Formen findet sich bei Storm als unabdingbarer Bestandteil bürgerlicher Familie und ihrer Ausstattung. So gibt es keine positive Darstellung des häuslichen Lebens, bei der nicht zumindest mit einigen Worten die Wichtigkeit des Gartens hervorgehoben wird.' He sees the function of the garden as being part of harmonious family life; at the same time the size of the garden represents the economic potency of the family, thus becoming a status symbol. See: Wolfgang Tschorn, as above, p.80.
4. One assumes that Storm was inspired to use the parrot from Cuba by the family trading connection, on the maternal side, with some of the Caribbean islands. Storm's love for, and observation of, birds and insects emerges in letters and stories. To balance the sinister wall, which marks the stubborn resentment of Friedrich Jovers, there is the garden, representing the security of a family rooted in tradition, and the parrot pleading for reconciliation. See also: Margaret Mare, *Theodor Storm and his World* (Cambridge: Cambridge Aids to Learning , 1985), p.157.
5. 'Neben dem mit allen patriarchalischen und vormundschaftlichen Rechten ausgestatteten pater familias, der außerhalb des Hauses dem Berufe und Gelderwerbe nachging, waltete als Gegenpol am häuslichen Herd die Mutter, die züchtige Hausfrau, deren Aufgaben sich auf die Pflege des Haushaltes und die Aufzucht der Kinder konzentrierten' See: Ingeborg Weber-Kellermann, *Die deutsche Familie: Versuch einer Sozialgeschichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch, 1974), p.108.
6. In the foreword to her book *Die Hausfrau* (1860), Henriette Davidis says: Zu den rühmlichsten Bezeichnungen einer Frau gehört die, daß der Mann von ihr sagen kann "ich habe eine Hausfrau". Mindful of the fact that the 'bürgerliche Hausfrau' of the nineteenth century, unlike her predecessors in a different era who were not averse to manual housework, was not expected to fulfil 'menial' tasks herself, the author, nevertheless, recommends the acquisition of a degree of domestic competence and knowledge, if only in a supervisory capacity: 'Wenn die junge Hausfrau in Verhältnissen lebt, in welchen sie keine der hier erwähnten Arbeiten mit eigener Hand zu verrichten hat, so wird es doch keineswegs überflüssig sein, das Hauswesen wenigstens in den Hauptzweigen zu erlernen, um nötigenfalls der Dienerschaft Anleitung geben zu können, nicht von dieser lernen zu müssen, was stets auf Kosten der Autorität geschieht'.
7. Tschorn refers to the humour in the story: "...der Humor, der zu der harmonischen Grundstimmung beiträgt. Er besitzt etwas Beschwichtigendes; Gegensätze und Konflikte erhalten einen versöhnlichen Zug durch den Humor...[...] Obgleich hier eigentlich ein sehr ernster Konfliktstoff angegangen worden ist, wie das Eigentum zu vererben ist, erscheint die Darstellung eher optimistisch-fröhlich. Dies wird neben der Schilderung der Hausgebräuche und Feste besonders durch die Übersteigerung des Konflikts ins Groteske und Absurde erreicht. Die Lächerlichkeit schlägt nicht um auf das System, das solche Machtkämpfe um den väterlichen Besitz erst möglich macht, sondern führt vielmehr zu verständnisvollem Lächeln über die individuelle Trotzköpfigkeit des jüngeren Bruders..." See: Wolfgang Tschorn, as above, pp.89/90.
8. Letter to Gottfried Keller, 9. 6.1880.
(The story is based on a family chronicle of Storm's great-grandfather Woldsen, (1696-1765), mayor of Husum.

10. Keller responded in a letter to Storm, 1.11.1880, 'Mit den "Söhnen des Senators" habe ich mich vergnüglich wieder einige Stunden in Haus und Garten der bekannten Biederstadt Husum aufgehalten und zu meiner Zufriedenheit von neuem gesehen, wie Sie an Straffheit und Kraft der Komposition und Darstellung eher zu – als abnehmen.'

CHAPTER 5

A confirmation service for a *höhere Tochter* in Reuter's *Aus guter Familie*.

Gabriele Reuter's *Aus guter Familie*, (published in 1895) is a novel that is not part of the traditional literary canon. And perhaps one can see why. It is not, by any stretch of the imagination, a complex or subtle narrative. It may indeed be both melodramatic and obvious. Yet it is remarkable for its sheer intensity and sense of outrage. It is about the destruction of a woman by her family; and the anger can be felt on every page of the novel.

* * * * *

Aus guter Familie is set in the second half of the nineteenth century and describes the life of Agathe Heidling, the daughter of a typical upper middle class Prussian *Beamtenfamilie*. Her father, the *Regierungsrat*, is shown to be the archetype of the pater familias, a figure whose stern and autocratic presence, pronouncements, and control ensures that the rules in the family domain are observed without hindrance or contradiction.¹ Frau Heidling is a compliant, largely ineffectual, woman, at times given to cruel punishment meted out to her daughter when she is deemed to be disobedient and thus potentially dangerous to the carefully maintained façade of orderliness. This mother's own history of suppression and exploitation would explain the psychology of her behaviour. She is not a monster of evil; rather she is seeking to pass on to her child the only kind of life that she knows. In all her anguish, Agathe is aware, as is the reader, that these parents are endeavouring to do what is best for their child.

Regrettably, indeed disastrously in this case, they are guided not so much by any natural instinct or by the immediate needs of their daughter but instead the rigid rules of Wilhelminian society. She is treated in line with the rules pertaining to the upbringing of girls, in a culture that does not generally grant education, travel, financial or intellectual autonomy to women. The sad decline of an initially vivacious, intelligent, and inquisitive girl, increasingly frustrated by the evidence of the double standards operating in the treatment of sons and daughters, is charted by Reuter with a mixture of accusation, irony, even sarcasm. Agathe, denied any kind of fulfilment, be it as a respectable wife and mother (circumstances prevent this), as a fighter for social reform or as an emotionally fulfilled human being, is destined, in this story at least, for a mental breakdown.

From the ashes of her erstwhile vibrant personality only the desire to serve her widowed father and the urge to collect crochet patterns remain. The *Jungfrau*, fresh and eager to experience life to the full as the reader encounters her at the beginning of the story, will be turned into an *Alte Jungfer* who at the age of forty has become a woman without ambition, real thought, or feelings. Ultimately Reuter's novel is less about the conditioning than about the destruction of a human being.

The publication of Gabriele Reuter's book was a bombshell in Germany, the reception being either violently opposed to such heretical ideas or, from other quarters, grateful for the insight into unacceptable discrimination and hypocrisy:

Ganz Deutschland beschäftigte sich mit dem Buche. Es weckte einen Sturm in der Frauenwelt – die wildeste Erregung unter Vätern und Müttern. Ernste, reife Männer haben mir noch nach Jahren versichert, die Lektüre habe ihr Herzensverhältnis zu ihren Töchtern von Grund auf verändert. Die Verwandten erklärten das Buch für ein Teufelswerk. Auf einen literarischen Erfolg hatte ich gehofft – den kulturellen Einfluß, den mein Buch auf die Entwicklung des deutschen Mädchens, der deutschen Familie haben würde, konnte ich nicht voraussehen! ... Mein Roman wirkte wie das Durchstechen eines Dammes, hinter dem die Fluten sich schon angestaut haben².

Although this novel is not widely known today, my imagination was particularly captured by the description of the confirmation service, and the subsequent family get-together, for a *höhere Tochter* in Wilhelminian Prussia. The fairly high-ranking civil servant father and his family might be taken to epitomise the values of Prussian society, the tenets and constraints of which have been internalised by the members of a system which, by its rigid moulding and unforgiving treatment of the individual, emotionally stultifies those who are unwilling or unable to heed the demands of *Pflicht* and *Anstand* without baulking. The word duty is probably the pivot on which this society turns. Its fulfilment is demanded of men, women and children, of the middle classes as well as of the proletariat, the army, and the church. Each social category pays its own price for the longed-for acceptance by, and into, the greater good known as 'Society'.

Clearly Gabriele Reuter's own frustrations and dreams reflect some of the preoccupations of the time, e.g. the revolutionary fervour before and after 1848 - as evidenced by the references to Georg Herwegh's poems³ - , the longing for German unification and women's desire to be free and independent, not only as citizens but as men's equals.⁴ They inform the thoughts she ascribes to Agathe Heidling, the girl whose transition from girlhood to womanhood the first chapter illustrates. We meet her on the day of her confirmation (aged 17) at a village chapel deemed by her father to be more suitable for the occasion than their more sophisticated city church. She has been duly instructed in the Protestant faith which is one of the pillars of Prussian society. Agathe herself is deeply religious and has not been diverted from her faith either by a beloved teacher or by her best friend, both of whom reject religion. Agathe has clearly internalized the teachings of her church and is given to a high degree of inwardness, very different from her best friend Eugenie who is of a strikingly different temperament, averse to introspection, and who contrives to make the world do her bidding. Eugenie is aware of a woman's limited prospects in a male dominated society but is supremely able to exploit

her sex appeal and power over men and to manipulate them to her advantage. She thinks that 'nur ein beschränkter Verstand an Wunder glauben könne' (p.43)*. Agathe, by contrast, feels a fundamental need for spiritual nourishment in an otherwise materialistic world which is devoid of metaphysical values. The narrator comments: 'Ohne Wunder und ohne das Walten überirdischer Mächte schien die Welt ihr öde und langweilig'. She feels 'umgeben von unbegreiflichen Geheimnissen' (p.43). Agathe thus has no problem in facing the solemn moments which will occur in the course of her confirmation service.

It will become apparent that many parallels can be drawn between this ostensibly religious rite of passage and her expected role in society as wife and mother. The ceremony is to lead Agathe not only to God but in equal measure towards 'den gottgewollten und zugleich so süßen entzückenden Beruf einer deutschen Hausfrau' whose duties are to be carried out 'mit froher Andacht' (p.62). One notes the religious terminology. This secular catechism, intended to circumscribe the sphere of activity of women, echoes to the sound of 'thou shalt' or 'thou shalt not' - rather more of the latter - down to the instruction not to acquire too much knowledge which would only lead to doubt and an uncomfortable life for a woman. The sphere of activity set aside for women at the time is pegged out with words beginning with 'K' - the famous three Ks: *Kinder, Küche, Kirche*.⁵

The Regierungsrat has endeavoured to preserve his daughter's purity of thought, to confirm her in her allegiance to mainstream religious belief, and to curb her aversion to non-intellectual feminine interests⁶. As he points out to her in a later chapter of the novel, he, too, is subject to the constraints imposed by the society which also confers privilege on their class. It becomes a personal credo for all of them:

* Page numbers in this chapter refer to: *Gabriele Reuter, Aus guter Familie* (Berlin: S Fischer Verlag, 1897).

Liebes Kind, du hast nicht nur Verpflichtungen gegen dich selbst, sondern auch gegen die Gesellschaft, vor allem aber gegen die Stellung deines Vaters [...] Wir Männer des Staates haben nach oben und nach unten, nach rechts und nach links zu blicken, um keinen Anstoß zu erregen - wir sind keine freien Menschen, die ihren Launen folgen dürfen(p.222).

This is reminiscent of what Fontane calls *das Gesellschafts-Etwas* which shackles all members of Prussian society⁷ but at the same time provides a structure of belief for those whose inner substance is not equal to the task of thinking and acting independently.

At her confirmation Agathe is filled with religious fervour, excited expectation, the anticipation of finding perfect love, a girl on the threshold of adult life. Yet, although she has been brought up in a sheltered bourgeois milieu,⁸ protected from 'allerlei Leute'(p.27), she cannot be insulated later from her rebellious nature, some of which emerges during her stream-of-consciousness-like reflections during the ceremony. This manifests itself in her quest for knowledge, her desire to change the world especially for the poverty-stricken workers, her yearning for personal freedom – 'sie wollte immer so gerne fliegen lernen'(p.30) - a poignant echo of Effi Briest and her swing - and her fervent wish to break the shackles which confine her spirit and which ultimately ruin her life. At an intermediate stage of her sad life she will resign herself to the fate of having to be like other women of her class, with the doors of their often golden cages closing on them.

Ihr Los wird ähnlich sein wie das ihrer Mutter, ihrer Freundinnen. Sie wird eben in ihrem Kreise bleiben. Eine Beamtenfrau - sie kennt das ganz genau. Sie kennt eine Menge von Beamtenfrauen, und alle denken und thun und reden und erleben so ziemlich dasselbe. Was sie in der Seele trug von Keimen zu köstlichen seltenen Blüten, das würde da wohl verborgen bleiben [...] Nur nicht mehr ausgeschlossen daneben stehen, neben den tiefen, heiligen, reifenden Erfahrungen des Lebens(p.248).

One notes the intensity of the narrative commentary and the judgmental irony here. The *erlebte Rede* brings us close to Agathe's oppressed and anguished condition,⁹ her fear of what awaits her, and at the same time her fear of exclusion.

In the confirmation chapter of the novel it is Spring, there is a great deal of light in the church. The sun, however, shines through ‘...das verstaubte Bogenfenster einer Dorfkirche’(p.1) indicating that Agathe is but one link in a long chain of *Konfirmandinnen* who over the centuries have been blessed by, and received into, the Christian community, just as she is about to take her place in a society which rests on the foundations of tradition, custom, and decree. Although strength can be drawn from such an edifice, there is a suggestion that the dust on age-old belief and moral certainties is in need of being swept away by challenge and renewal.

Agathe is wearing ‘...das schöne Kreuz an seiner goldenen Kette...’(p.10), a present from her parents to mark this day. It instantly becomes a potent symbol, signifying enslavement, a cross to bear. Agathe is standing at the altar while ‘...das kleine Kreuz glühte [...] gleich einem überirdischen Symbol...’(p.10), and one cannot help feeling that this is yet another female lamb (not the *Agnus Dei* but an *agnus hominis*) being led to the ritual slaughter, a ritual enacted by a society which expects its women and, to a lesser extent, its men to conform or be destroyed. A *Gelübde* is expected of Agathe to indicate her acceptance of the role she is to play. Superficially this oath relates only to the religious ceremony and celebration depicted in this opening chapter. But every line points to a deeper secular meaning; it foreshadows Agathe’s prescribed path and draws an obvious parallel with a wedding service which is assumed to be the logical next stage in her life. The bride of Christ will then become the bride of man. Agathe’s face is described as fresh, pink and young, like a bud waiting to open in order to experience her full flowering as a devout Christian and, of course, a woman. The ‘...Rauschen ihres seidenen Kleides...’(p.4) (black on this day) conjures up the splendid wedding dress (white, needless to say, and probably being designed in her mother’s mind at this very moment). The normally strict and emotionally controlled parents are either sobbing quietly (her mother, who no doubt knows of the anguish and pain that awaits her young

daughter) or, in the case of the *Regierungsrat*, turning away slightly ‘...um mit der Fingerspitze eine leichte Feuchtigkeit von den Wimpern zu entfernen’(p.8), a fact which is noted with satisfaction by the women.

The confirmation chapter neatly adumbrates the course of Agathe’s later life; it charts almost minute by minute the changing state of her inner development, her reaction to the sequence of events, beginning with her deep spiritual love for Jesus, her subsequent admission of doubt because of her own rebellious thoughts, the uncomfortable realisation of her otherness, her fear of the life lying ahead, and also her craving to be absorbed into all that is familiar and secure. Her erotic thoughts when contemplating Christ ‘...in seiner schönen, jungen Menschlichkeit...’ while ‘...ein schmachtendes Begehrn nach der geheimnisvollen Vereinigung mit ihm durchzitterte die Nerven des jungen Weibes’(p.8), are the obvious post-pubertal stirrings of sexual awakening.¹⁰ As in the marriage ceremony by which the church sanctifies and sanctions the gratification of such desires, Agathe is blessed by the ‘segnenden Hände’ of the pastor, signalling acceptance into the adult community. This also puts the seal of approval on one who is willing to conform. She is giving up her spiritual and personal freedom, at this stage for Christ, just as she will later be expected to surrender her independence to a husband. When Agathe receives Holy Communion, for the first time on this day, the wine being poured ‘...aus der schöngeformten [...] Kanne in den silbernen Kelch...’(p.6), one is reminded of Christ’s urgent plea to His father: ‘Laß diesen Kelch an mir vorübergehen...’. One wills Agathe to utter such a prayer on her own behalf. Furthermore a ‘...Leinentuch...’ at the altar and ‘...hohe[n] Wachskerzen...’(p.6) are mentioned, so that the image conjured up speaks of death, of a wake, or at least of a girl’s life doomed, of a spirit about to be crushed, even buried. Later in the novel, when Agathe has descended into madness and has been subjected to electric shock treatment, she will be seen to be behaving like a

gentle,uncomprehending lamb, unable even to understand her earlier emotional turmoil, let alone experience it again.

A look at some of the presents given to Agathe on the occasion of her confirmation will demonstrate that they, too, have special significance. Among them are several books, suitable for a *höhere Tochter*, notably one called 'Des Weibes Leben und Wirken als Jungfrau, Gattin und Mutter...' (p10)¹¹ ; the golden chain and cross have already been referred to. There is also a tasteful little golden bracelet which efficiently snaps shut around Agathe's wrist, yet another pointer to chains being fastened. It does not surprise the reader that a wreath of '...Schlüsselblumen...' surrounds the place set at table for the '...Konfirmandin...' (p.13).

Amid the joy and satisfaction of the guests, pastor and father in well-crafted speeches take the opportunity to spell out Agathe's duties in her future life.

Hatte der Pastor dem Kinde seine Verantwortung als Himmelsbürgerin klar zu machen gesucht, so begann der Vater Agathe nun die Pflichten der Staatsbürgerin vorzuhalten.

Denn das Weib, die Mutter künftiger Geschlechter, die Gründerin der Familie, ist ein wichtiges Glied der Gesellschaft, wenn sie sich ihrer Stellung als unscheinbarer, verborgener Wurzel recht bewußt bleibt.

Der Regierungsrat Heidling stellte gern allgemeine, große Gesichtspunkte auf. Sein Gleichnis gefiel ihm.

"Die Wurzel, die stumme, geduldige, unbewegliche, welche kein eigenes Leben zu haben scheint, und doch den Baum der Menschheit trägt..." (p.17).

One notes the feminine virtues¹² defined by the Regierungsrat; they are all to do with self-effacement in the name of the greater good. Like a bombshell the last and most exciting (for Agathe) present is deposited before the assembled company. Cousin Martin, currently serving *in des Königs Rock*, has sent 'Herweghs Gedichte...', a source of delight for Agathe which, nevertheless, produces '...peinliche Stille am Tische...' (p.18) and 'es lag etwas Unangenehmes in der Luft' (p.19). Just as Herwegh had to leave Germany to escape arrest for subversive activities, so Cousin Martin later exiles himself for the same

reason. Agathe's reaction betrays her own revolutionary thoughts and leanings, as well as her intoxicating early stirrings of love. The word *schwärm̄en*¹³ could be seen to describe both her awakening political and amorous interests.

Herweghs Gedichte - Und die Sommerferien bei Onkel August in Bornau - der sonnenbeschienene Rasen, auf dem sie gelegen und für die glühenden Verse geschwärmt hatten, die Martin so prachtvoll deklamieren konnte...Wie sie sich mit ihm begeisterte für Freiheit und Barrikadenkämpfe und rote Mützen - für Danton und Robert Blum... Agathe schwärzte dazwischen auch für Barbarossa und sein endliches Erwachen(p.18).

The predictably agitated and worried minds around the girl are calmed by the pastor's conciliatory words.

“Ich glaube, wir brauchen die Sache nicht so ernst zu nehmen,” meinte Pastor Kandler, mit seinem stillen ironischen Lächeln den Regierungsrat betrachtend. “Die Jugend hat ja schwache Stunden, wo ein berauschendes Gift wohl eine Wirkung thut, die bei gesunder Veranlagung schnell vorübergeht. Das wissen wir ja alle aus Erfahrung!”. Er legte das anstößige Buch bei Seite und ging auf seinen Platz zurück(p.20).¹⁴

This spiritual oil on troubled waters is neatly mirrored by the subsequent activity engaged in by one of Agathe's uncles. He opens a celebratory bottle of champagne.

Onkel Gustav ließ von einer Champagnerflasche, die er mit weitläufiger Feierlichkeit behandelte, weil sie seine Beisteuer zum Feste war, den Ppropfen mit einem Knall in die darüber gehaltene Gabel springen. Die beiden Pastorsjungen jauchzten über das Kunststück, der schäumende Wein floß in die Gläser, man erhob sich und stieß an. Der Schatten, den die blutdürstige Revolutionslust der Konfirmandin auf die Gesellschaft geworfen, war der alten, stillbewegten Heiterkeit gewichen. Nur in Agathes braunen Augen war noch etwas Sinnendes zurückgeblieben..(p.20/1).

It has to be noted that he does not allow the unruly cork full rein; its would-be explosive force is held in check by the fork. Its impact is thus suitably diminished and rendered safe. It is difficult not to hear the political implications; the revolution will be curbed, if not actually rooted out altogether. The ‘Knall’ suggests the gunshot, the sound of which is the

harbinger of riot, upheaval, anarchy and it is anathema to all those who have been entrusted with the task of preserving the status quo, secure in the knowledge that their existing standard of living and their social position leave little to be desired.

The Herwegh poem *Die Jungen und die Alten*¹⁵ is hinted at in the pastor's words and again later towards the end of the chapter:

'Du bist jung, du sollst nicht sprechen!
 Du bist jung, wir sind die Alten!
 Laß die Wogen erst sich brechen
 Und die Glüten erst erkalten!'

Du bist jung, dein Tun ist eitel!
 Du bist jung und unerfahren!
 Du bist jung, kränz deinen Scheitel
 Erst mit unsern weißen Haaren!'

Lern, mein Lieber, erst entsagen,
 Laß die Flammen erst verrauchen,
 Laß dich erst in Ketten schlagen,
 Dann vielleicht kann man dich brauchen!'

Kluge Herren! Die Gefangnen
 Möchten ihresgleichen schauen;
 Doch, ihr Hüter des Vergangnen,
 Wer soll denn die Zukunft bauen?

Sprecht, was sind euch denn verblieben,
 Außer uns, für wackre Stützen?
 Wer soll eure Töchter lieben?
 Wer soll eure Häuser schützen?

Schmäht mir nicht die blonden Locken,
 Nicht die stürmische Gebärde!
 Schön sind eure Silberflocken,
 Doch dem *Gold* gehört die Erde.

Schmähet, schmäht mir nicht die Jugend,
 Wie sie auch sich laut verkündigt!
 O wie oft hat eure Tugend
 An der Menschheit still gesündigt!

Agathe seeks refuge in the garden, in an endeavour to regain her composure and tranquillity and to try and dispel the doubts which have cast a shadow over her earlier happiness; surprisingly, but perhaps typically for a girl of her time, she accepts the blame for her 'shortcomings':

Agathe [...] bat den lieben Gott, er möge ihr doch nur den Ärger aus dem Herzen nehmen. Es war doch zu schrecklich, daß sie heut, am Konfirmationstage, ihrem Pastor und ihrem Vater böse war! Hier fing gewiß die Selbstüberwindung und die Entschuldigung an. Sie war doch noch recht dumm! Ein so gefährliches Gift für schön zu halten.(p.22)

Nature, by contrast, appears untroubled, like youth which is deemed to be inhabiting a virtual Garden of Eden, oblivious to the world's problems.

Sie blickte fragend und zweifelnd gerade in den hellblauen Frühlingshimmel hinauf. Kein Wölkchen zeigte sich daran, er war unendlich heiter und die Sonne schien warm. Es gab noch fast keinen Schatten im Garten, die goldenen Strahlen konnten überall durch die Baumzweige auf die Erde niedertanzen(p.23).

The prospect of having to return to the city fills Agathe with anxiety and with envy when contemplating the contrast between the laws of nature and those of human society.¹⁶

Die Pflanzen hatten es doch viel, viel besser als die Menschen, dachte Agathe seufzend. Niemand schalt sie - niemand war mit ihnen unzufrieden und gab ihnen gute Ratschläge. Die alten Stämme sahen dem Wachsen ihrer braunen, roten und grünen Knospenkinderchen ganz unbewegt und ruhig zu. Ob es ihnen wohl weh that, wenn die Schnecken, die Raupen und die Insekten eine Menge von ihnen zerfraßen?(p.23/4).

In these moments of contemplation and uncomfortable reflection, Agathe is sitting on a small and rickety bench by the pond:

Ihre junge Mädchenphantasie wurde bewegt von unbestimmten Wünschen nach Größe und Erhabenheit. Sie dachte gern an die Ferne - die Weite - die grenzenlose Freiheit, während sie an dem kleinen Teich auf dem winzigen Bänkchen saß und sich ganz ruhig verhalten mußte, damit sie nicht umschlug und damit die Bank nicht zerbrach, denn sie war auch schon recht morsch [...] bekümmert starre sie in das Wasser, das auf der Oberfläche so klar und mit fröhlichen, kleinen goldenen Sonnenblitzen geschmückt erschien und tief unten angefüllt war mit den faulenden Überresten der Vegetation vergangener Jahre(p.25/6).

The scene is richly symbolic. The derelict condition of the bench obliges Agathe to sit completely still. The desires and dreams of her inner life are held firmly in check; and that denial of selfhood will persist throughout her life – and will ultimately destroy her. Agathe, then, is and remains the entrapped creature. Yet perhaps the symbol of the rotten bench, of the decaying vegetation beneath the sparkling surface of the water, suggests that others will be able to make the break that is beyond Agathe's capacity, the break with a world that is doomed to be swept away. Agathe sits still; but others will not. The final image of the confirmation scene, then, is one of powerfully implied social diagnosis.

The *mea culpa* attitude which manifests itself in Agathe's response to her troubled soul and its (to her) unreasonable desires is, however, a strong indication that she has internalized the teachings of family, church, and state, however flawed and hollow they may have become¹⁷. Just as the remains under the water's surface continue to exist in their vegetative state, so the reader is alerted to the sad fate in store for this *höhere Tochter* who, although seemingly privileged, will only be allowed to vegetate later – the term 'Entlebendigung'¹⁸ has been coined to describe such a pitiful state - instead of being given the opportunity to develop fully, freely, and independently, an impossibility in the claustrophobic world of the Prussia of the late-nineteenth century and the constraints it imposes on the individual, particularly those who inhabit this world as women. The degree of freedom afforded them is practically non-existent. The celebration, of which Agathe is made the touchingly promising focus, will in the course of the novel be revealed as the zenith of her personal blossoming. Never again will she be allowed to be at one with nature and her own inclinations as she is on this day.

Hitherto all our texts have seen the (re-)integration of the individual into the family as a moment of blessing and fulfilment. Yet here, with Reuter, the opposite is the case; that very integration spells Agathe's doom. Time and time again *Aus guter Familie* chronicles the processes of her destruction; and at its finest, it indicts not just the characters but the value structures that they represent and serve. Agathe does not come from the aristocracy; she belongs to a *Beamtenfamilie*. Yet those upper middle class circles were not, in Wilhelmine Germany, able to develop a culture different from that enshrined in the dominant Junker mentality. The nemesis of Agathe - and of what her class might have achieved - is, by implication, the nemesis of Prussia.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 5

1. Erich Fromm, a neo-Freudian, expands on this theme to cover the internalisation also of the societal ethos: 'Die äußere in der Gesellschaft wirksame Gewalt tritt dem in der Familie aufwachsenden Kind in der Person der Eltern und in der patriarchalischen Kleinfamilie speziell in der des Vaters gegenüber. Durch Identifizierung mit dem Vater und Verinnerlichung seiner Ge- und Verbote wird das Über-Ich als eine Instanz mit den Attributen der Moral und Macht bekleidet. Ist aber diese Instanz einmal aufgerichtet, so vollzieht sich mit dem Prozeß der Identifizierung gleichzeitig ein umgekehrter Vorgang. Das Über-Ich wird immer wieder von neuem auf die in der Gesellschaft herrschenden Autoritätsträger projiziert, mit andern Worten, das Individuum bekleidet die faktischen Autoritäten mit den Eigenschaften seines eigenen Über-Ichs. Durch diesen Akt der Projektion des Über-Ichs auf die Autoritäten werden diese weitgehend der rationalen Kritik entzogen. Es wird an ihre Moral, Weisheit, Stärke in einem von ihrer realen Erscheinung bis zu einem hohen Grade unabhängigen Maße geglaubt. Dadurch aber werden diese Autoritäten umgekehrt wiederum geeignet, immer von neuem verinnerlicht und zu Trägern des Über-Ichs zu werden.' See: Erich Fromm in *Studien über Autorität und Familie*, ed. by Max Horkheimer, (1936), p.84.
2. Gabriele Reuter, *Vom Kinde zur Menschheit: Die Geschichte meiner Jugend* (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1921), p.474.
The following assessments may stand as examples of positive criticism. Karin Tebben says: 'Vor allem besticht das Lesepublikum immer wieder ihre Ironie, die, "ist man gerade bei Laune, unwiderstehlich die Lachlust reizt" [Thomas Mann, commenting on Reuter's work in 1904; he also, in 1905, called her "die souveränste Frau, die heute in Deutschland lebt", compliments later repaid by Reuter when reviewing *Königliche Hoheit*]. Sie wird immer dann eingesetzt, wenn es gilt, eine aus männlicher Sicht formulierte Codierung des Weiblichen zu konterkarieren, ein Vorgehen, bei dem der Leserin die aktive Rolle der Demaskierung zugespielt wird.' See: Karin Tebben, "Gott im Himmel! Welche Aufgabe!" *Vom Glück der Berufung und der Mühsal des Berufs* in *Beruf: Schriftstellerin, Schreibende Frau im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. by Karin Tebben (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), p.301.
3. Georg Herwegh (1817-1875) was described by Heine as the 'eiserne Lerde der Revolution'. He was a key force involved in the democratic revolution of 1848/9, achieving literary breakthrough with his *Gedichte eines Lebendigen*, which proclaimed the rights 'des Sklaven gegen die Freien, des Armen gegen die Reichen'. Karl Marx and Michail Bakunin were among his friends. He emigrated to Switzerland. In 1863 he wrote the famous, and notorious, *Erste Hymne des deutschen Proletariats*: 'Mann der Arbeit aufgewacht / Und erkenne deine Macht! / Alle Räder stehen still, / Wenn dein starker Arm es will'.
4. The main objection voiced by men, in fact the 'Haupttrumpf', was that 'die Frau sei an geistiger Befähigung dem Mann inferior, es sei ein Unsinn zu glauben, daß sie auf geistigem Gebiete etwas Bemerkenswertes leiste. Diese von "Gelehrten" erhobenen Einwände entsprechen so sehr dem allgemeinen Vorurteil der Männer über Beruf und Fähigkeiten der Frau, daß, wer sie erhebt, auf den Beifall der Mehrheit rechnen kann' See: August Bebel, *Die Frau und der Sozialismus* (Stuttgart: Dietz, 1918), p.221. Weber-Kellermann feels justified in claiming that August Bebel's assessment of male views regarding the abilities of women, as perceived in 1879, has not lost its validity at the time of the publication of her book in 1974. See: Ingeborg Weber-Kellermann, *Die deutsche Familie. Versuch einer Sozialgeschichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch, 1974), p.161.
5. An example of female indoctrination along these lines is found in the following letter: Christine du Mont, daughter of the proprietor of the *Kölnische Zeitung*, kept the letters her parents sent to her during the two years she spent at a convent school in Belgium. In one of the letters (10.10.1851) her mother exhorts her not to neglect, alongside the more academic subjects, domestic science, knowledge without which a girl would not be able to master life. She goes on to say 'Es ist dies von Gott unsere Bestimmung, der wir nicht ausweichen dürfen. Ein weibliches Wesen, was dies tut, ist ein Unding und handelt aller Natur zuwider. Das merke Dir, mein Kind.' See: Karl Buchheim, *Deutsche Kultur zwischen 1830 und 1870* (Frankfurt am Main: Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft Athenaion, 1966).
6. Weber-Kellermann refers to 'die zunehmende Bildungslosigkeit der bürgerlichen Hausfrau' and says that 'sich ein Frauentyp hervorkehrte, der nur durch den Mann eine ausgewählte Vermittlung von Wissen und Kenntnissen erfuhr.', wonderfully highlighted in a short poem:

'Bei eines Strumpfes Bereitung
sitzt sie im Morgenhabit,
er liest in der Kölnischen Zeitung
und teilt ihr das Nötige mit.'

(Wilhelm Busch: *Kritik des Herzens*).
7. See: Ingeborg Weber- Kellermann, as above. p.11.
Christine Brückner puts her own critical words into the mouth of the hapless Effi Briest: 'Du hast dich immer nach oben gerichtet, Innstetten. Wenn Bismarck pfiff, war Innstetten zur Stelle. Das kannte ich nicht von Hohen-Cremmen. Mein Vater hatte bei allem doch etwas Freies, nicht das Beamtische. Er wollte nicht höher hinaus und mußte darum auch keine Angst haben, daß er stürzen könnte' See: Christine Brückner, 'Trifft du nur das Zauberwort. Effi Briest an den tauben Hund Rollo' in *Wenn du geredet hättest, Desdemona: Ungeholtene Reden ungeholter Frauen* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1983), p.75.
8. The Biedermeier and later family lifestyle involved, for the first time, separate living and sleeping areas, including the *Kinderstube*, 'ein Begriff, der in seiner vielfältigen Bedeutung aus dem 19. Jahrhundert stammt: "gute Kinderstube" als Synonym für klassenspezifische gute Erziehung – aber auch für das Kinderzimmer als Reich des Kindes mit seinen Spielen und seinen typisch kindlichen Beschäftigungen' See: Ingeborg Weber Kellermann, as above, p.108.

9. Again Brückner speaks for Effi Briest: 'Ein Leben lang die Baronin Innstetten und eines Tages vielleicht die Ministerin und Bälle und Einladungen und vier Wochen Kur im Jahr. Dann werden Ablenkungen ja auch langweilig. Du hattest deine Karriere, und ich hatte die Langeweile, und wenn du vom Bedeutendsein zurückkamst, hätte ich dir entgegenfliegen müssen und dich bewundern. Dafür genügte doch Rollo' See: Christine Brückner, as above, p.85.

10. But, as Weber-Kellermann elucidates: '...das gesamte Sexualleben galt als tabuiert; keine "anständige" Hausfrau und Mutter berührte dieses Thema; sie las die Gartenlaube und die Romane der Marlitt. Denn es entstand als Nachfolger der Moralischen Wochenschriften eine Fülle von Familienblättern bis hin zur "Gartenlaube", die 1853 von E. Keil in Leipzig als liberales Unterhaltungsblatt für die Familie begründet wurde und 1878 eine Auflage von 375 000 erreichte. Hier wurden Harmonie und Gemüt gepredigt, ja, mit den Romanen der Marlitt so etwas wie soziales Gewissen und Edelmut vom Sofa aus erzogen. Eine vernünftige Aufklärung dagegen hatte in der Kinderstube des Bürgers keinen Platz, wo man stattdessen das Märchen vom Klapperstorch erzählte.' See: Ingeborg Weber-Kellermann, as above, pp. 114/115.

11. 'Als die Frauen noch sanft und engelsgleich waren' was the title of an exhibition at the Westfälische Landesmuseum, Münster, 1995/96. The housewife, wife, and mother of the nineteenth century was to be virtuous, domesticated, and industrious, her own identity and interests of no consequence, solely concerned with, and for, the well-being of her husband and children. The portraits of the time depict the 'Dame der Gesellschaft' as a 'bourgeois angel', the bible in one hand and next to her a dove or a lamb, denoting peace, innocence, and purity. One such painting shown at the exhibition, epitomising the ideal of Biedermeier womanhood, was of Wilhelmine Begas, painted in 1828 by her husband Carl Begas, well-known at the time.

12. Similarly ironic rhetoric can be found in Rosa Mayreder's writings: 'Herrliche Blüthe des deutschen Wesens, die strahlende Sonne des deutschen Hauses, die reine Hüterin des heiligen Herdfeuers, auf die deutsche Frau'.
 '...die Reinheit des Denkens bei den heranblühenden Mädchen um jeden Preis gewahrt bleiben müsse.'
 'Sollte es am Ende möglich sein, daß seine Frau, als er sie heirathete, auch ihre heimlichen Ideale von der Männlichkeit gehabt, und daß er sie darin eben so sicher enttäuscht hatte, wie sie ihn in seinen Idealen von der Weiblichkeit - ? Pah, das müssen sonderbare Ideale gewesen sein, denen er, er nicht entsprechen konnte!'. See: Rosa Mayreder, *Übergänge: Novellen* (Wien: Heller, 1908).

13. One Amalia Schoppe in her *Briefsteller für Damen* (1837) recommended that her women readers, even in their most intimate love letters, avoid 'die Sprache der Leidenschaft', unseemly when employed by a girl and guaranteed to make 'stets einen unangenehmen abstoßenden Eindruck auf den gesitteten zartfühlenden Mann'.

14. Marianne Krüll says: 'Hedwig Dohm [the grandmother of Katia Mann, 1831-1919, author and early feminist] war die erste Frau, die mit derartiger Vehemenz und so bissigem Humor, gepaart mit intellektueller Schärfe, die Unterdrückung der Frau anprangerte [...] 1872 – nach zwanzigjähriger Ehe – veröffentlichte Hedwig Dohm ihre erste Streitschrift: *Was die Pastoren denken*, eine Generalabrechnung mit den Vorstellungen über die angebliche Minderwertigkeit der Frau, über die verlogene Doppelmoral der Gesellschaft, über die Ausbeutung weiblicher "Natur" für männliche Interessen. 1874 forderte sie die *Wissenschaftliche Emancipation der Frau*, so der Titel einer Schrift, in der sie sich mit Argumenten gegen das Frauenstudium auseinandersetzt: "Ich glaube beweisen zu können, daß der maßgebende Gesichtspunkt für die Teilung der Arbeit nicht das Recht der Frau, sondern der Vorteil der Männer ist."

'Deutsche Männer bekümmern sich in der Regel um das, was Frauen thun und denken, nur einmal in ihrem Leben, in ihrer Jugend nämlich, wenn sie verliebt sind...' See: Marianne Krüll, *Im Netz der Zauberer. Eine andere Geschichte der Familie Mann* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1993), pp.196/197.

15. See: Hermann Tardel, ed., *Herweghs Werke* (Berlin: Deutsches Verlagshaus Bong, 1909).

16. Early feminists, such as George Sand, real name Aurore de Dudevant, (1804-1876) and Fanny Lewald (1811-1889) tended to see themselves as pupils, or disciples, of Rousseau. Love of nature, rejection of rigid rules of society and a yearning for simple country life were part of their *Weltanschauung*. They overlooked the fact that Rousseau in his pedagogical writings paid no attention to the education of women. Not until Pestalozzi (1746-1827) was educational equality for men and women made a serious issue.

17. '...die Bildung zu den ansponnenden Idealen ebenso wie zu den trieb einschränkenden Verboten erfolgt in der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft durch das Medium der Familie' See: Erich Fromm, in *Studien über Autorität und Familie*, ed. by Max Horkheimer (1936), p.109.

18. The concept of 'Entlebendigung' was memorably developed by Klaus Theweleit in *Männerphantasien: Frauen, Flüten, Körper, Geschichte* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1980).

CHAPTER 6

A Junker funeral in Broch's trilogy *Die Schlafwandler I : 1888: Pasenow oder die Romantik*

Hermann Broch's *Die Schlafwandler* is a novel trilogy¹, written between 1928 and 1932, that seeks to chart the shifting forms of German culture from the late-nineteenth century to the time immediately following the end of World War One. Broch offers us, then, the novel as a social history². And the history is expressed both thematically and stylistically. That is to say: his three novels adopt the style and mode of novel writing of the periods in question. *Pasenow* is set in 1888; and it reminds us of the world explored by Gabriele Reuter or Theodor Fontane.

* * * * *

Like Theodor Fontane, Broch takes the reader into the world of the minor Prussian aristocracy at the time of the Second Reich established by Bismarck and presided over by the Kaiser. It is a carefully, not to say ruthlessly, controlled environment for all those whose lives are conducted within its boundaries which extend beyond Germany to include much eastern European territory. At one level, Broch's text pays abundant attention, as we shall see, to the fierce discipline of Prussian ritual. There are certain forms of outward observance which must be respected. And the narrative account chronicles that respectful fulfilment of prescribed behaviour. Yet this is only part of the truth which Broch puts before us. Behind the impeccably conducted outward observances there is - in Joachim - a

fluid and untidy emotional life to the discussion of which I want to turn at the end of this chapter.

Joachim von Pasenow receives the news of his elder brother's death 'unvermutet'(p.45)*. Clearly something disastrous has occurred which necessitates an abrupt break in the routine of this young army officer's Berlin life. The reader is told the reason for the unexpected death: 'Er war im Duell mit einem polnischen Gutsbesitzer in Posen gefallen'(p.45). Although illegal by this time, a duel carries no social stigma since it is still seen as an honourable means of settling disputes among gentlemen of equal rank or status³. Joachim immediately prepares to leave Berlin for the family estate in one of the eastern Prussian provinces in order to attend Helmuth's funeral and, ostensibly, to give support to the grieving parents.

Joachim initially visualizes his brother lying in a 'Kindersarg'(p.45), thereby indicating a prolonged absence from home and family life. As a boy he had been sent to a *Kadettenanstalt*⁴ in order later on to be able to enter the Army proper, this being traditionally the chosen career of the second son who does not inherit the Junker family estate. Joachim, a reluctant recruit to the ranks of the Prussian military, had blamed Helmuth for his enforced martial training and for obliging him to lead a life for which he had not felt any natural inclination. In due course Joachim, like many before him, becomes more and more absorbed by the relentless machinery of *Preußentum*, but at the same time that order will sustain his life.

On his arrival at the family mansion, a letter written by his doomed brother in anticipation of the fateful duel awaits him. The nature of the offence which forced Helmuth to defend the honour of his good name is never made known to the reader, nor probably to anyone else. One concludes from this omission that the actual cause is immaterial, since

* Page numbers in this chapter refer to: *Hermann Broch, Kommentierte Werkausgabe I* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1978).

any slur on a man's honour, be it substantiated or merely hinted at, would be sufficient reason for a challenge which could entail a fatal outcome⁵. Human life is sacrificed easily in circumstances which cast aspersions upon the sacred concept of honour, an essential component of the *Ehrenkodex*, one of the key concepts of the ideology of Prussia. The individuated, specific occasion clearly matters less than does the machinery of dealing with it.

Helmuth's letter conveys his awareness, almost his certainty, of the possibility of death resulting from the duel to which he has elected to submit himself.⁶ There is an air of fatalistic acceptance in his attitude. Although he voices the hope of surviving this armed confrontation, he appears to be quite indifferent to its outcome. Between the lines the reader detects a good deal of dissatisfaction with life. 'Ich begrüße das Faktum, daß es so etwas wie einen Ehrenkodex gibt, der in diesem so gleichgültigen Leben eine Spur höherer Idee darstellt, der man sich unterordnen darf' (p.46). It is interesting to note the use of the word 'darf' in this context, since Helmuth might have chosen the probably more obvious 'muß'. He thus appears to see it as a privilege, rather than an uncomfortable necessity, to be allowed to become part of the greater edifice of his country. The word honour will subsequently be repeated by the main representative of this established order, namely Joachim's and Helmuth's father. *Ehre* is the central theme of the Junker creed; allied to this are duty, discipline, conformity, and strong patriotism, all of which constitute the fundamental principles of Prussian society.

Through his letter, Helmuth posthumously communicates to his brother the admission that he is envious of the latter's military career. The reader realizes with sadness that round pegs have been forced into square holes, parental decisions and tradition not having taken into account any natural inclination. Individual choice clearly is not considered an option. Helmuth sees Joachim's career as an army officer as '...Dienst an

etwas Größerem als man selber ist'(p.46). He assesses as inconsequential and unsatisfactory the life of a private citizen, a conviction often also felt, and given expression to, in the inner monologues of Joachim elsewhere in the novel. The status of the civilian is seen as lacking entirely in substance and serious purpose, devoid of the grandeur of serving the national interest. A shift in values appears to express itself in an unease within the established mentality of class and historical period. Helmuth, having felt lonely and unfulfilled running the estate, therefore recommends that Joachim should stay in the army for as long as possible, because within that context no questions are asked, and thus the inner life is contained.

There is virtual interchangeability among the brothers and other members of their privileged class. In childhood the two blond brothers were '...stets gleich gekleidet...' (p.45), making them, even externally, fit specimens to inhabit the rigidly drawn social landscape of structured *Preußentum*. Helmuth twice employs the word 'gleichgültig' to sum up his own insignificance and his reaction to this realisation and juxtaposes it with 'höherer' and 'Größerem' to denote the superior status of organised structures benefiting all. The triviality of the individual's existence needs to be subsumed in the ennobling parameters of the broader political and institutional construct.

...und die Gesellschaft mußte sich in irdische Hierarchien und Uniformen scheiden und diese an der Stelle des Glaubens ins Absolute erheben. Und weil es immer Romantik ist, wenn Irdisches zu Absolutem erhoben wird, so ist die strenge und eigentliche Romantik dieses Zeitalters die der Uniform, gleichsam als gäbe es eine überweltliche und überzeitliche Idee der Uniform, eine Idee, die es nicht gibt und die dennoch so heftig ist, daß sie den Menschen viel stärker ergreift, als irgendein irdischer Beruf es vermöchte, nicht vorhandene und dennoch so heftige Idee, die den Uniformierten wohl zum Besessenen der Uniform macht, niemals aber zum Berufsmenschen im Sinne des Zivilistischen, vielleicht eben weil der Mensch, der die Uniform trägt, von dem Bewußtsein gesättigt ist, die eigentliche Lebensform seiner Zeit und damit auch die Sicherheit seines eigenen Lebens zu erfüllen(pp.23/4).

This is a crucial comment, suggesting as it does the link between mental processes (the need for certainty) and outward forms (the uniform that betokens the conditioned way of life). The older brother is clearly seeking *mehr Werte*, thus reflecting the decline of the old value system and the ensuing void at the heart of late-nineteenth century society which is central to Broch's novel.⁷ Helmuth's need appears to arise from his disillusion with the life of a country gentleman despite the obvious and varied advantages bestowed on him by birth, wealth, opportunity, and comfort. This jaded assessment of an outwardly enviable life style suggests a degree of spiritual emptiness and an awareness of the fact. But Broch does not set out to portray rebels or martyrs but figures who have largely internalized the values and expectations of their social world and have learned to live with that 'achievement'. In this endeavour Broch finds himself demonstrably in the same world as Fontane. The older brother acknowledges the gulf between Joachim and himself which has developed as a result of their long separation and the fact that for years they have been subjected to diverse influences and ideas in their different worlds. He states, perhaps regrettfully, that 'ich weiß ja nicht, wie du darüber denkst...' (p.46) and signs off with good wishes for his younger brother and with the rather startling advice to avoid coming home if at all possible and not to be taken out of his accustomed world by the demands made by parents who clamour for successive generations of sons to safeguard the cultivation and continuation of the agricultural and social requirements of their noble family. The lonely life obviously experienced by Helmuth, with its overtones of almost cruelly imposed incarceration by tradition, despite living at the heart of the family, can be seen as an indictment of the emotional aridity among the members of such aristocratic families. Perfect external order co-exists with, and is related to, a condition of spiritual emptiness⁸. In an involuntary flashback, Joachim recalls the emotionally infinitely more fulfilling and rewarding relationship he has had with his mistress Ruzena, who is not of his class but

who grants him pleasure and love, warmth, and sexual happiness. This highlights further his brother's tragic deprivation.

Members of Joachim's social class behave according to a strictly observed code, even when faced with a son's death. 'Die Eltern waren sonderbar gefaßt...' (p.47), a reaction noticed by the returning son in the narrator's words. 'Sonderbar' makes this parental behaviour appear unnaturally composed and almost inhuman. It is, of course, in keeping with the prevailing ethos of maintaining a stiff upper lip at all times. Appearances are all-important; appropriate packaging of inner turmoil to conceal any emotional trauma or joy is valued above all. *Das Gesellschafts-Etwas*, to quote Fontane's expression, imposes not only moral but also behavioural rules of conduct. In the space of one paragraph, Father repeats three times that Helmuth died for the honour of his good name. What he actually says is: 'Er fiel für die Ehre...' (p.47), a phrase normally chosen when a soldier is killed on active service. This theme will be taken up again later in the military style of Helmuth's funeral. Perhaps Pasenow *père* needs to dignify the stark reality of his son's senseless and untimely death with the whole rhetoric of celebration which can be brought to bear on the hero who dies on a military battlefield in pursuit of a noble cause. This almost chanted refrain, the obsessive intensity of his constant reference to *Ehre* suggest that, by some kind of incantatory magic, comfort will be found, loss will be transmuted into glory, lament into litany. His inner state is tellingly illustrated by his own military demeanour: '...ging dann mit harten, geradlinigen Schritten im Zimmer hin und her' (p.47). Unable to express his feelings in any real and humanly comprehensible way, he resembles a wooden figure. All his emotions appear to have atrophied, all human warmth seemingly drained from, or bred out of him. Any feelings which do exist – and one is prepared to credit even this 'control freak' of a bereaved father with a real and painful sense of loss – are only permissible when institutionally contained.

Prior to Helmuth's funeral, there is much pomp and majestic procedure surrounding the formal laying-out of his body. Tradition patently dictates the style of these aristocratic obsequies. 'Man hatte Helmuth im großen Salon aufgebahrt' (p.47). A person of such illustrious lineage is accorded solemn and dignified splendour in death as in life. The word *man* sets up complex implications. One concerns matters of social class; the suggestion is that such tasks are traditionally undertaken by servants who are employed to care for all the members of the large household at all times. One senses a heartless atmosphere in which instructions laid down many generations earlier and followed meticulously on such occasions are carried out as a matter of course, be it in this civilian family setting or in a military context. The second, more charitable implication of the word *man* is that it highlights something ritualized and, by that token, utterly impersonal about the proceedings, and in that a measure of comfort may be found, precisely because direct exposure to raw detail might be too onerous to bear for those most closely affected. Helmuth's body in his coffin rests atop a 'Katafalk' (p.47), which suggests the grandeur of a state funeral, giving partly the impression that the Junkers' mentality requires frequent reassurance as to their exalted position in the scheme of things. All the details of the *Aufbahrung*, as indeed at the subsequent funeral, are perfectly attended to and with great precision, at the same time underpinning the formality commensurate with public rank or public office.

Joachim at first experiences feelings of inadequacy when faced with the dead and the final silence of death. This is accompanied by an awareness that he and everything around him is removed from everyday reality; all habits, traditions, and certainties dissolve and become obliterated or are rendered irrelevant, a situation in which '...alles Gegebene sich weitet und zerfällt, das Altgewohnte zerbricht und zerfallend erstarrt, die Luft dünn wird und untragfähig...' (p.47). Once the normal framework of life has been removed, the air is felt to be too thin to sustain life; this has

a debilitating effect on man's innermost substance by denying it the required spiritual and psychological nourishment and by rendering the familiar alien. This moment of existential despair is vividly articulated by Broch, and the only answer to such desolation is deemed to lie in ritual and tradition; one thinks of Fontane's *Hilfskonstruktionen*.

Some attempt has been made to blot out all ornaments in the salon which plays host to Helmuth's body before he is taken to his final resting place. Everything is draped in the traditional black crepe of mourning. The military philosophy which underpins and supports the reality of the Junker family's life and death is hidden beneath the black-shrouded walls of this aristocratic house; on the '...schwarzverhängte Wand...' the '...Rahmen des Eisernen Kreuzes...' (p.48) is, however, a tangible presence reminiscent of the Christian symbol found on the walls of religious households. Joachim moves through an area of the familiar salon he has not hitherto set foot in. A new experience is clearly hinted at. In a way he does not consciously understand, Joachim appears to be seeing through his dead brother's eyes, and with that gift his powers of perception are enhanced to grant him greater insight, a deeply unsettling and frightening experience which threatens him with the potential loss of all his life's certainties. But the brief moment fades. The coffin has been placed on floor space normally occupied by the piano, and thus death virtually becomes a new type of decor or even entertainment. 'Mit großer Anstrengung' (p.47) Joachim succeeds in readmitting reality into his reveries '...und das wiedererlangte Stück Wirklichkeit verwandelte den Tod auf eine neuartige und fast spannende Weise in eine Art Tapeziererangelegenheit...'. He sees the coffin '...dekoriert mit all seinen Blumen, wie ein neues Möbelstück in dieses Zimmer geschoben...' (p.48). Death has become part of the furniture and the unknowable loss has been transformed into comprehensible reality. Joachim perceives with new certainty that death can be encompassed and assimilated by life and the living '...so sehr, daß das Erlebnis dieser

Minuten [...] in einem guten Gefühl ruhiger Zuversicht mündete'(p.48). The sting carried by death has been extracted and rendered harmless. Tangible objects have vanquished metaphysical irreality.

The senior von Pasenow now enters the solemnity of the room and three times utters the words 'Er starb für die Ehre'. By choosing 'starb' rather than the earlier 'fiel' the bereaved and stricken father makes Helmuth's death sound more like an active decision on the part of his son and less as though ordained by a cruel fate. The loss of control which is anathema to the true Prussian soul has thus been cancelled out in his mind. 'Ehre' is strongly emphasized again, '...als wollte er es auswendig lernen und als wünschte er, daß auch Joachim es täte'(p.48), the intention being that it may become the new catechistic litany which, by repetition, can be internalized in order to restore mental balance and faith in the familiar doctrine. The subjunctives and the insertion of several *als* draw attention to the process whereby the comforting ideology is asserted and sustained. Even so, the reader may doubt whether the concept of the sacrosanct *Ehrenkodex* has been sufficiently absorbed by this grieving father to afford him the strength required to deal adequately with his loss. One fears that his mental and spiritual recovery may be an impossibility at this stage, or even in the long term, a suspicion confirmed subsequently.

In due course, many official mourners arrive, as befits the son of the noble von Pasenow family. Local organisations, 'Feuerwehr' and 'Kriegervereine', '...bildeten eine ausgerichtete Kompanie von Zylindern und schwarzen Gehröcken, auf denen nicht selten das Abzeichen des Eisernen Kreuzes zu sehen war'(p.48). It is the second reference to the Iron Cross, the symbol of military achievement and pride and one of Prussia's highest honours. It may be seen as both the hard metal which gives backbone and strength to a militaristically orientated society and also as a reminder that this is, despite evidence to the contrary, a country which professes to adhere to the Christian faith, the Iron Cross, however, having replaced the wooden crucifix.

Das Volk is seen to be on foot, in keeping with their function in times of war of supplying the infantry regiments with manpower. The atmosphere is that of a military parade. There is in the air an obsession with doing one's duty at all times. For the staff and the representatives of the local community their first duty is traditionally to the squire and his family who assume priority over the duty owed to the state. Strict order and hierarchical considerations are observed, as decreed by the ethos of Wilhelminian society in late-nineteenth century Prussia⁹.

Somewhat later, other neighbours, presumably aristocrats, arrive in their carriages. Despite the fact that Helmuth's death resulted from an illegal duel, his funeral is conducted as if he had been a victim of war, reflecting the traditions of his family and class. It is Joachim's task '...vor des Bruders Sarg die Honneurs zu machen' (p.48). *Honneur* or *Ehre* is to be upheld on the field of battle or in response to the demands of contemporary *Preußentum* and will inspire the dutiful actions of all members of this select stratum of society. Joachim, the young officer and the embodiment of the Junker stereotype, can be relied upon to acquit himself perfectly and to do justice to the customary requirements of this special day¹⁰. The narrative suggests a fine social occasion until one reads '...vom Giebel hing still eine schwarze Fahne und reichte beinahe bis zur Terrasse' (p.48). The lifeless and soundless flag conveys the terrible finality and silence of death which does not, however, quite reach the terrace of the living, and therefore its stark symbolism does not succeed in denying the assembled mourners their sense of normality or even impinge on it. Or does the length of the black flag simply indicate, yet again, that Prussian efficiency and correct measurements have ensured that this potentially intrusive 'decoration', stripped of the rest of the national emblem's colours, does not interfere with the smooth and carefully orchestrated solemnity of the occasion by becoming an obstacle in the path of those present?

As at other festive or ceremonial times, the perfect manners of good breeding and upbringing are manifest when the reader is told that 'Die Mutter schritt am Arm des Vaters die Treppe herab. Man wunderte sich über ihre Standhaftigkeit, ja bewunderte sie' (p.48). She is undoubtedly fully aware of the adage *noblesse oblige*. Does the reader sense implied criticism here, perhaps even condemnation, of this mother's astounding composure in grief, or does it evince in the narrator, as well as in those who observe this impressive display of unshakeable aristocratic hauteur, a measure of admiration? The reader is inclined to perceive this 'Standhaftigkeit', at least in part, not so much as laudable steadfastness but as a lack of maternal warmth and as evidence of a high degree of emotional detachment. It may also be the result of Frau von Pasenow's '...Trägheit des Gefühls, die ihr eigentümlich war' (p.49). Perhaps emotions have been bred out of such aristocrats and manners have been cultivated to fill the void. This would make her 'Trägheit des Gefühls' anything but 'eigentümlich' to her but pertaining to the whole stratum of society she belongs to. The essential humanity has been allowed to drain out of these individuals and also out of the system which spawned them. The reader is alerted to the historical parallel of a powerful nation moving towards its demise, this being a period of transition from a solidly based country to one which is becoming suffused with delusions of grandeur and collective megalomania. The foundations are after all built on Brandenburg sand, known for its shifting, unstable properties.

Joachim's status is instantly changed to that of *Alleinerben*, making him considerably more eligible as a potential husband for prospective wives drawn from his circle. This development is not lost on Herr von Baddensen whose daughter is the putative bride for Joachim. Joachim reflects (and clearly the narrative reflects his awareness) that this marriage would be in keeping with family wishes and with the long tradition of marrying within one's 'set'. These thoroughbreds will continue the blood line of the Junker families. Individuals can, it appears, be replaced seamlessly should death intervene.

The cortege now forms and proceeds to the village church. The impression clearly given is that it is not spiritual solace which the stream of mourners seek inside the building but physical comfort, 'als [...] das Gotteshaus vor ihnen lag, freuten sich alle herzlich, daß sie aus der heißen Nachmittagssonne, die sich in das schwere Tuch der Trauergewänder und der Uniformen scharf und staubig eingebrannt hatte, in die kühle weiße Kirche eintreten durften' (p.49). The intended irony is not lost on the reader and brings with it the realisation that this funeral is short on religion but well-endowed with all the worldly decorum the Junker fraternity can muster. The afternoon sun casting its light over this scene appears to suggest strongly that an era is about to end just as the sun sets and slips below the dark horizon.

There are many other 'Militärs' present who stand '...stramm und die Hand am Helmesrand' (p.50) thus evoking the image of a military parade ground. Emotion appears to be missing. Everyone's behaviour is dictated by faultless adherence to the tenets of the contemporary Prussia of Iron Chancellors, Iron Crosses, iron determination, iron wills and iron-clad souls. The armour found around such blighted spirits is provided by the uniforms without which their wearers feel themselves to be naked, almost non-existent and extremely vulnerable to the vagaries of life.¹¹

...und wenn einer seit seinem zehnten Lebensjahr daran gewöhnt ist, eine Uniform zu tragen, dem ist das Kleid schon wie ein Nessushemd eingewachsen, und keiner, am allerwenigsten Joachim v. Pasenow, vermag dann noch anzugeben, wo die Grenze zwischen seinem Ich und der Uniform liegt. Und doch war es mehr als Gewohnheit. Denn wenn es auch nicht sein militärischer Beruf gewesen ist, der in ihn hineingewachsen war oder er in ihn, so war ihm die Uniform Symbol für mancherlei geworden; und er hatte sie im Laufe der Jahre mit so vielen Vorstellungen ausgefüttert und ausgepolstert, daß er, in ihr geborgen und abgeschlossen, sie nicht mehr hätte missen können, abgeschlossen gegen die Welt und gegen das Vaterhaus, in solcher Sicherheit und Geborgenheit sich bescheidend oder kaum mehr bemerkend, daß die Uniform ihm nur einen schmalen Streifen persönlicher und menschlicher Freiheit ließ, nicht breiter als der schmale Streifen der Stärkmanschette, den die Uniform den Offizieren gestattet (pp.27/8).

The reference to honour, invoked so frequently by father Pasenow in mantra-like fashion, is now appropriated by the pastor who conducts Helmuth's funeral service; he, however, links this all-important concept with the greater honour given to God, a very necessary reminder in view of the many preoccupations of this particular congregation. The lengthy, descriptive, and detailed narrative which limned the scene before the actual funerary rites began is not matched by any elaborate account of the rest of the service or sermon. It is patently of little interest to the participants and does not have any truly significant function in the portrayal of this Junker funeral. One suspects that religious succour is not sought by those personally affected by Helmuth's untimely death or by those simply paying him their last respects.

The narrative almost immediately leads the assembled company towards the cemetery, this time on foot, thus providing the only egalitarian touch and giving a brief feeling of conscious humility on the part of the living, however highborn they may be. The words 'Ruhe sanft' (p.49) above the cemetery gate, like the *Ruhe in Frieden* or *Requiescat in pace* normally used as the hopeful wish accompanying the dead to their graves, are in stark contrast to the military air of the funeral and of those attending it. These letters are not made of iron, as are so many of the customary trimmings of Prussian society, but spell out the gentle call in '...goldenene Blechlettern...' (p.49). The metal *Blech* may be worthless but it is also soft, inappropriate for martial application, unless used in a musical capacity. The elegant carriages '...folgten langsam in einer langgestreckten Staubwolke' (p.49), thereby anticipating the words of the funerary liturgy spoken at the graveside 'ashes to ashes, dust to dust...'.

There follows a startlingly original description of the sky: 'Mit purpurnem Blau wölbte sich der durchsonnte Himmel über der trockenen, brüchigen Erde...' (p.49), strikingly apt in its suggestion of blood mingling with the friendly blue. Surely the 'Erde' referred to in the text is not only that of the small area of soil inside the cemetery but must

cover the wider boundaries of the planet Earth which likewise may be termed dry and brittle and lacking the solidity and welcoming moisture needed if confident human aspirations are to flourish and succeed. It draws the attention of the reader to the uncomfortable knowledge that all human beings are subject to the same ultimate fate. All will be received back into the earth from which the biblical figure of Adam is said to have been shaped by God. Life thus becomes merely a transitional stage on man's journey towards death.

Even in societies with the rigid class structure seen in the Prussia of the 1880s, death can be said to be the great equalizer, but nevertheless the son of this Junker family is not received into the common soil but into the '...Familiengruft, die, ein kleiner geöffneter Keller, gelangweilt dem Ankömmling entgegengähnte'(p.49). The family tomb thus becomes a metaphorical participant in these funeral proceedings and appears to share the ennui other members of this society are prone to. The tomb has evidently been subjected to having to fulfil the tediously repetitive task of welcoming and absorbing a long line of Pasenow dead, of whom Helmuth is but one, into its dark and gloomy vault. 'Die Enden der großelterlichen und der Onkelsärge...' (p.49) are visible to those who are engaged in staring down into the dark realm of Hades from the vantage point of the world of the living. A space is reserved for Pasenow *père*. This emphasises the continuity and strength of such old families but also highlights that the individual can only hope to attain significance by being a link in an illustrious chain.

Joachim reflects on the dryness of this sunny day and regrets the fact, since the sky is not close enough, as it would be on a day of lowering rain clouds, to be able to transport the soul of his dead brother directly to heaven. The German word *Himmel* lends itself particularly well to that kind of ambiguity. For himself, Joachim wishes for '...einen weichen Regentag, an dem der Himmel selbst sich herabsenkt, um die Seele aufzunehmen...' (p.49). He even links this notion with the blissful sexual union he

experiences with his mistress Ruzena. The soul could abandon itself to the embrace of the celestial forces as he does so joyously and uninhibitedly ‘...in den Armen Ruzenas’(p.49).

He is, however, duly ashamed of such thoughts:

Das waren unzüchtige Gedanken, unpassend an diesem Orte, doch nicht er allein hatte die Verantwortung dafür zu tragen, sondern auch alle anderen, denen er jetzt den Platz an der Gruftöffnung freigab, und auch der Vater hatte teil an dieser Verantwortung...(p.49)

He has not forgotten his father’s enthusiastic dalliance with the young women of a certain establishment in Berlin when they were guests there and potential customers, eager to buy these sirens’ favours. At the time, the older man’s lack of moral fibre and lascivious proclivities had disgusted the son and greatly diminished his respect for the hitherto righteous father.

The underlying godless nature of the society he lives in, the society which gives him his identity and status, the society which demands obedience, rigid adherence to its moral code and social standards, is now seen by this Junker as intrinsically empty and hypocritical, its religion ‘...brüchig und staubig und war abhängig vom Sonnenschein und Regen’(p.49). Joachim realises that religious faith which is not based on genuine Christian belief, but which is simply an adjunct to the all-pervasive Prussian societal ethos, is meaningless. He is led to reflect on his friend von Bertrand’s assessment of the religious ‘State of the Nation’ and the possible remedy he offered: ‘Sollte man nicht die Armeen der Neger herbeiwünschen, damit dies alles weggefegt werde und der Heiland zu neuer Gloria aufsteige und die Menschen in sein Reich zurückföhre?’(pp.49/50). This is an eloquent and touching moment. Clearly, at one level, von Bertrand’s reference to the ‘Armeen der Neger’ has everything to do with the ideological certainties of a colonial power, aware of its mission to civilize and redeem those stretches of the world not yet touched by European culture. Yet somewhere in von Bertrand’s remark one can hear a sense of unease in their Eurocentric thinking, a sense that the primitive world may have more relationship to

spiritual experience than does its European counterpart.¹² Similarly Joachim has something like a glimpse of religious revelation when he is suddenly moved by the image of Christ's agony. The '...Dornenkrone, von der bronzenen Tropfen herabbluteten...' appears to become instrumental in causing his own tears at last and '...auch Joachim fühlte Tropfen auf seiner Wange...' (p.50) which he may be shedding both for his brother and for the suffering Christ who has ceased to be a truly motivating force in Joachim's world. The reader cannot be sure, however, of the nature of these 'Tropfen'. He is asked to share the obvious ambivalence felt by Joachim and to experience the same aporetic consciousness. 'Vielleicht waren es Tränen, die er nicht gemerkt hatte, vielleicht aber kam es bloß von der lastenden Hitze, er wußte es nicht...' (p.50) - nor is the reader able to decide. The feeling of apostasy is conveyed strongly; and yet the reader senses in Joachim, an otherwise staunch member of Prussian society and imbued with its rules and thinking, an 'otherness', an awareness of loss, of guilt engendered by his lack of faith and his unseemly thoughts accompanying the seemingly devout religious practice at the solemn funeral service.

The sepulchral gloom now changes to a setting reminiscent of a military parade once more. The serried ranks of staff, local organizers and assorted dignitaries have

dem Toten mit militärischem Parademarsch und scharf links gewandten Köpfen die letzte Ehre erwiesen, scharf klappten die Stiefel auf dem Friedhofkies, stramm marschierten ihre Viererreihen zur Friedhofspforte hinaus, begleitet von den kurzen abgehackten Befehlen der Führer (p.50).

Family and '...die anderen anwesenden Militärs...' (p.50) take the salute. By their repetitive use, the words 'scharf' and 'stramm' in this passage echo the parade-ground mentality in which they play so crucial a role. The reader is fascinated by the almost audible clicking of heels and the clipped delivery of verbal orders. An attempt appears to be made at camouflaging the military overtones of this setting by wrapping all metal parts of the family carriage in black crepe. The text tells the reader that they '...vom

Kutscher sorglich in Flor verpackt worden waren...' and that '...an der Peitsche gleichfalls eine Florrosette sich befand'(p.50). Ritual is impeccably observed; carriages, too, are part of the mourning process.

The official show at an end, Frau von Pasenow relaxes the iron grip she has maintained over her emotions throughout the ceremony and allows herself to weep. She is afflicted by the unseemliness of what happened; it is not the soldier son who has been killed by the deadly bullet but his civilian sibling, who had devoted his life (figuratively speaking) to the plough rather than to the sword. Joachim muses on this when he realises that he is unable to comfort his grieving mother. The father's reaction is more predictable: 'Der Vater aber saß steif auf dem schwarzen Leder des Kissens...', engrossed in '...einer Gedankenreihe, die ihn offenbar beschäftigte und völlig gefangenhielt...'. He is incapable of venting his grief by articulating it in his own words. Instead, he seeks refuge in the time-honoured phrase: 'Sie haben ihm die letzte Ehre erwiesen...', yet again homing in on the all-important concept of *Ehre* which underpins his life and has become his *raison d'être*. It is others who have rendered his son this service; his own 'Starrheit' is broken only by his lips attempting unsuccessfully to speak and by the raising of a finger, thereby giving the reader the impression '...als ob er noch auf etwas wartete oder etwas hinzufügen wollte...'(p.50). There is clearly unfinished emotional business in this apparently involuntary gesture, an awareness perhaps that something needs to be explained to this upright Prussian father who is held captive by the cruel constraints of convention and rigid discipline, encapsulated in the word 'gefangenhielt'. There is a hint of rebellion, a sense that he knows he and his elder son have been cheated, short-changed by life, as Helmuth had already indicated in his prophetic letter to Joachim, possibly even of the futility of all he has been so strongly upholding and praising. He is ultimately unequal to the task of voicing these uncomfortable feelings to himself and to those around him. The air of

resignation with which he '...legte dann schließlich die Hand wieder flach auf den Schenkel' (p.50) is both painful to see and pathetic in its acceptance.

The narrative makes it clear that finally the epitome of the Prussian Junker, a man steeped in the traditions of that powerful class, has reached crisis point. The embers of his humanity are fanned by the tragedy of his son's death, as suggested by the last sentence of this important passage: 'Zwischen dem Rand des schwarzen Handschuhs und der Manschette mit dem großen schwarzen Knopf war ein Stück Haut, mit rötlichen Haaren sichtbar' (pp.50/51). The seemingly impenetrable armour of upbringing and emotional self-denial, the internalized code governing those of noble lineage and anyone else aspiring to a position of social consequence, is seen to display a chink, almost literally manifest in the narrow strip of bare, hairy skin - man in his raw state - which, one feels, escapes from the sartorially impeccably covered figure of a being in extremis. *Rötlich*, the colour of his hair, perhaps attests to the remaining fire in his nature, a small but defiantly unfettered remnant of emotional vitality. The reddish hair, which implies a link back to wild Germanic tribal societies and man's primitive and as yet uncivilised condition, provides an incongruous counterpoint to the closely regulated manners and beliefs of Bismarck's united Germany of the time.

After the funeral, Pasenow *père* is occupied with reading the many letters of condolence which now present him with the volume of mail which he had earlier craved. The sacred ritual of receiving and perusing the mail as one of old Pasenow's obsessions now assumes a new importance in his daily life. His excessively impatient behaviour surrounding the daily postal delivery has clearly been caused by the shock of his son's death, but the fact that his '...Leidenschaft für die Post...' and that '...sie sich vielleicht sogar noch etwas verschärft hatte' was '...nicht auffallend...' (p.74). The perusal of the letters does not appear to provide any real emotional help, nor do the visits by the concerned pastor produce any real comfort, his words of solace being regarded merely as

‘...eine Art Fachsimpelei...’, and thus of little consequence. As before, the father in his mourning is unable to communicate his profound grief, except by repeating the pastor’s words referring to the ‘...schwergeprüfte Eltern’(p.51). There is no suggestion anywhere in the text that Helmuth’s parents attempt to or succeed in alleviating each other’s grief. One is inclined to assume that their marriage was carefully arranged by their own parents, according to the unwritten rules of the game of aristocratic matchmaking, and it is not expected, or able, to rise above its loveless and unemotional correctness, even at a time of crisis. They lead separate lives, meeting only at table and at other times when convention demands the display of a united front and familial and matrimonial harmony.

A change appears to have taken place in old Pasenow’s inclinations as evidenced by the fact that the many hunting journals regularly delivered to him remain ‘...zumeist nicht aufgeschnitten...’(p.51). The aggressive side of his character, the unbending correctness, the utter predictability of his pronouncements or farewell greetings appear to have followed his son to the grave, leaving behind a defeated old man who states ‘es ist leer geworden, ja leer geworden [...] aber das begreift nicht jeder [...] natürlich muß man die Ehre hochhalten...’(pp.51/2), the last words reiterating his now hollow belief, in a vain attempt to hold despair at bay. The reader finds himself drawing the parallel with the society around this stricken figure and sees a similar emphasis regarding the values which had hitherto sustained this proud people. Sadly, there is no hint either of any warmth between father Pasenow and his surviving son and heir. Each is caught up in his own internal struggle and his endeavour to fashion some degree of spiritual sustenance for their tortured souls.

It is Joachim who feels the need to revisit the church which had earlier been the scene of his brother’s funeral service. He alone can be said to be aware of the need for religious revitalization and atonement for the lack of true and unsullied devotion earlier.

‘Schuld’ is used three times, a word not often found in the vocabulary of someone of the Junker class.

Es galt, eine Schuld abzutragen, eine Schuld gegen die Kirche, die ihm bloß angenehme Kühle gewesen war, gegen den Pastor, dessen gute Rede er nicht gehört, gegen Helmuth, dessen Begräbnis er durch profane Gedanken verunehrt hatte, mit einem Wort eine Schuld gegen Gott (p.52)

Yet his newly heightened perception of the benefits of faith is shown to be generated by nostalgia. Joachim’s thoughts hark back to the days of his untroubled childhood: ‘Er [...] suchte nach der Stimmung seiner Kindheit, und ihrer Kirchenbesuche...’, when he ‘...stets aufs neue überwältigt, jeden Sonntag vor Gottes eigenem Antlitz hier gestanden hatte’. What he remembers is not the substance of his faith but ‘...viele Kirchenlieder...’ which he had sung ‘...mit Inbrust...’(p.52). Then, as now, he had only been able to partake of the Christianity he grew up with as a member of a congregation, incapable of independent thought, simply repeating the set liturgy and drawing comfort from lines learnt by heart as expected of him as a duty, thus neatly mirroring his secular life. Despite his efforts at attempting a dialogue with God, ‘...seine Gedanken wollten Gott nicht finden’. The words of the prophet Isaiah ‘...und mein Volk vernimmt’s nicht’ occur to him and he realizes that, as his friend Bertrand had asserted; ‘...sie hatten die Christlichkeit verloren...’(p.52). The confrontation with this truth engenders in him the wish to say the Lord’s Prayer, perhaps in one last desperate attempt to stop the tiny flickering of belief from being snuffed out by seeing the general apostasy revealed so starkly.

In the process of reciting the familiar *Vaterunser*, and in particular the line ‘...wie auch wir vergeben unsren Schuldigern...’, the trusting feelings experienced by the young boy Joachim in relation to his father (the meaning having been transferred from God the Father to father Pasenow) now once again fill his mind and heart. Having striven to imbue the words of the all-too-familiar prayer with real significance ‘...achthabend, keine leeren Worte aufzusagen, sondern in jedem Wort den Sinn zu erfassen...’, Joachim yet again

allows his thoughts to wander away from God towards the stricken figure of his own father who will be forgiven for coercing his offspring into fitting themselves into the age-old mould of the *Junkertum*. He will strive ‘...ihm all das Gute noch zu tun, zu dem ein Kind verpflichtet ist...’(p.52).

The other great pillar of Wilhelminian society’s creed, along with honour and discipline, namely duty, now affords Joachim the longed-for comfort. He feels strengthened, ‘...erhoben und gestärkt...’, his shibboleths intact, a new vigour felt since ‘...das Wort [...] hatte einen guten jugendlichen Sinn’(pp.52/3). This is far removed from the succour he had sought earlier, both during the funeral oration and on his private visit to the village church. The reinforced conviction that as ‘ein Ochse kennt seine Herrn’, in the words of Isaiah, so he, Joachim von Pasenow, is once again firmly and reliably anchored within the bounds of his world. ‘Erhoben und gestärkt’ rise up in him time and again to reassure him, ‘...aber das Wort war ihm nicht leer [...] aber es verband sich nun mit dem Bilde einer gestärkten Hemdbrust und mit einer beglückenden Sehnsucht nach Ruzena’(pp.52/3).

Although Joachim is able to control renegade emotion, that emotion is present nonetheless. And it is not the only time that inadmissible responses surface. One occurs at the beginning of the section we have been considering. When Joachim hears of Helmuth’s death, the initial memories that flood into his mind have a strangely sexual charge:

Doch umvermittelt erhob sich daneben Helmuths Bild, blondbärtig und männlich, das gleiche Bild, wie es ihm an jenem Abend in der Jägerstraße aufgetaucht war, als er fürchtete, das Antlitz eines Mädchens nicht mehr als das, was es ist, zu erkennen: ach, damals retteten die klareren Augen des Weidmanns ihn aus den Hirngespinsten, in die ein anderer ihn hatte ziehen und verstricken wollen, und diese Augen, die er ihm damals geliehen, die hatte Helmuth nun für immer geschlossen, vielleicht um sie ihm für immer zu schenken!(pp.45/46)

Similarly, later on in the scene he associates sinking into the grave with sinking into Ruzena’s arms. And the near naked figure of the crucified Christ moves him to tears. I

have no wish to suggest the presence of a crudely Freudian subtext here, but Broch's narrative does convey both the repressive force of ritual and observance and a vivid sense of the swirling emotions that are being repressed. The narrative perspective moves constantly from strenuously chronicled details of outward behaviour on the one hand to moments of *erlebte Rede* on the other where the inner life discloses itself. Ultimately, outwardness and outward narrative win the day, but one cannot help feeling that it is an empty victory.

* * * * *

Pasenow ends with a wedding, that of Joachim and Elisabeth. Yet it is a wedding that is, we feel, doomed¹³; and this is part of the historical analysis offered by Broch's text. That wedding represents the vain attempt on the part of the Prussian culture of *Junkertum* to sustain itself into the twentieth century. The status of the Junker, hitherto based on tradition, underpinned by the solidity of substantial and reliable income from the produce of their vast estates in the eastern provinces of the Prussian empire, has been gradually eroded. The Junkers, never having had to acquaint themselves with the intricacies and methods of agricultural production and distribution, are poorly placed to confront economic competition from countries like Russia which, due to technological advances in the means of transport, now have the ability to distribute their produce more speedily and, of course, cheaply, thus supplanting the erstwhile purveyors of cheap staple foods, notably cereals, potatoes, and cabbage. Broch uses the metaphor of the limping gait of, for example, *Pasenow père* to characterize those lagging behind historical developments in terms of awareness and acknowledgment. A new consciousness will need to be engendered in the arrogant Junker figures who at this point in history still bestride the

Prussian social landscape, oblivious of the pace of change and their approaching dinosaur status.

In the depiction of the wedding scene we will be reminded of the funeral; once again the mystique of the uniform plays an all-important role. Yet by now that uniform has become a mere sham, the outward expression that, far from embodying inner values, in fact seeks to mask a spiritual void. Pasenow is afraid to undress on his wedding night in case, once the uniform is unbuttoned and discarded, his body will no longer be viable and, denied its support, crumble. Neither of the moments of family ritual – neither the funeral nor the wedding – can hold together the world of the Pasenows. Family ritual now inhabits a territory that is all sham and no substance. We have moved a long way away from Gotthelf's world.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 6

1. Lützeler offers the following explanation for the success of *Die Schlafwandler*: 'Vielleicht sind die *Schlafwandler* [...] deshalb das gelungenste dichterische Werk Brochs geworden, weil während der Entstehung dieser Trilogie seine philosophische Hochschätzung des Mediums Roman noch von keinen Zweifeln unterminiert war, weil hinter ihrer Produktion die ganze, ungeteilte Persönlichkeit des Autors stand, wohingegen er sich später stets von Skrupeln geplagt und mit zwiespältigen Empfindungen an seine dichterischen Arbeiten mache.' See: Paul Michael Lützeler, 'Hermann Broch: *Die Schlafwandler* (1930-1932)', in *Deutsche Romane des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. by Paul Michael Lützeler (Königstein: Athenäum, 1983), p. 203.
2. Martin Swales, speaking of realism and comparing novels by European authors, says: '...the German texts that interest me are committed to exploring what might be called the mental furniture of the age – the conventions and assumptions, the signs and symbols that make up the corporate, shared inwardness of a given historical period. In the process, that inwardness emerges not as a bastion against the world of social facticity, not as an escape from nor a transcendence of it; rather, the inner life is shown to be profoundly imprinted with the discourse of a particular age. [...] The German realistic tradition with which I am concerned is wonderfully and painfully perceptive about the acquiescence of human inwardness in the socialization process...' See: Martin Swales, 'Story, History, Discursiveness: On Hermann Broch's *Die Schlafwandler*', in *Hermann Broch: Modernismus, Kulturkrisis und Hitlerzeit: Londoner Symposium, 1991* (Innsbruck: Institut für Germanistik, 1991), p.46.
3. A distinction has to be made between military and civil duels. The Encyclopedia Britannica states that 'duels of honour were authorised under the military code [in Germany] up to World War I'. On the creation of the new Reich, in the *Reichstrafgesetzbuch* of 15. 5.1871, duelling was forbidden but this applied predominantly to civilians, with the military code still authorising 'duels of honour'. In Prussia, civil duels were declared illegal under the *Allgemeine Landrecht* in 1794 – 'Duellant, die ihren Gegner getötet hatten, sollten zum Tode verurteilt werden; war das Duell ohne Blutvergießen ausgegangen, drohten ihnen der Verlust des Adels und ein mindestens zehnjähriger Freiheitsentzug. Hatte das Duell gar nicht stattgefunden, mußte der Herausforderer trotzdem mit drei bis sechs Jahren Haft rechnen' – and remained illegal up to the 1880s and beyond. See: Ute Frevert, 'Das Duell in der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft'; in [in translation] *The German Bourgeoisie*, ed. by David Blackbourn and Richard Evans, (London: Routledge, 1991), Chapter 9. Nevertheless, from the beginning of the nineteenth century a resurgence of duelling to settle 'affairs of honour' was witnessed throughout the German states in defiance of the authorities, and, as is indicated by the punishment for the Innstetten/Crampas duel in *Effi Briest*, the official attitude could be lenient.
4. The historian E. N. Williams summarised the militarisation of Prussian society thus: 'Prussia had been created as a state by the army. The bureaucracy had been created to serve the needs of the army. The upper classes now dominated both; and their soldierly code of conduct became the value system of the whole society, and ultimately of all Germany. How could it be otherwise when such a large proportion of the nobles were brought up from boyhood in the "Kadettenhaus", rose to the rank of captain, major or colonel by the age of fifty and in retirement officered the militia in time of war? Even off duty, or on leave, or in retirement, the regimental style of life went on, for the Junkers had long been accustomed to exacting obedience from their serfs.' See: Thomas E. Bourke, 'Jenes uns tyrannisierende Gesellschafts-Etwas: die literarische Thematisierung der Duellfrage am Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts' in *Deutsche Literatur in sozialgeschichtlicher Perspektive: Ein Dubliner Symposium*, ed. by Eda Sagarra, (Dublin: Trinity College Dublin, 1989), p.134.
5. Generalleutnant von Boguslawski punchily summed up class differences when dealing with insult: 'Der Ungebildete greift zum Stuhlbein, der Mann der höheren Stände stellt sich im geregelten Kampfe.' See: Thomas E. Bourke, as above, p.134.
6. It should be noted that Generalleutnant von Pape stipulated: 'Der Offizier sollte dem Duellzwang unterworfen sein, jedem anderen Staatsbürger jedoch müsse das Duellieren verboten werden.' See Thomas E. Bourke, as above, p.134
7. This is identified by Joachim's friend Eduard von Bertrand who, unlike the other protagonists in the first part of *Die Schlafwandler*, is much given to reflectivity; he is '...forthright in suggesting that these are outmoded values, and that it is characteristic of all human beings that their inner life, their cast of mind lags behind the flux and change of the historical world which they inhabit.' See Swales, as above, p.56.
8. The full-scale crisis of a spiritual vacuum, with its ramifications, will be present in, for example, Thomas Buddenbrook.
9. See: Wolfgang Mommsen, *Imperial Germany 1867-1918* (London: Arnold/Hodder Headline Group, 1995). Published in German as *Der autoritäre Nationalstaat*.
10. Lützeler analyses the multi-faceted Junker ideology thus: 'Militärisches Stände-Ethos und gutsherrliche Christlichkeit sind im Wilhelminismus gleich offizielle und gleich konservative Ideologien, bei Joachim zusätzlich verbrämt mit romantischen Vorstellungen. In dieser Ideologie gefangen, ist er unbewußter Mitvollzieher einer geschichtlichen Entwicklung, die auf das Chaos des Ersten Weltkrieges hinausläuft.' See: Paul Michael Lützeler, *Hermann Broch: Ethik und Politik: Studien zum Frühwerk und zur Romantrilogie 'Die Schlafwandler'* (Munich: Winkler, 1973), p.116.
11. Lützeler comments on Pasenow's *Heimatgefühle* and feelings of security thus: 'Der Abschied von der Sicherheit, die ihm die "herrschende Fiktion" der militärischen Konvention vermittelt hat, fällt ihm

offensichtlich schwer. [...] Erst nach Eduards Zynismen über die Uniform-Romantik der Zeit erscheint es ihm ungewiß, ob denn das Militär wirklich "Sicherheit" und "Heimat" bieten könne. Allmählich geht ihm "das Zirkusmäßige des Dienstes" auf, "er mußte an Clowns denken und verstand plötzlich, daß Bertrand einst sagen konnte: das Vaterland wird durch einen Zirkus verteidigt". Derart verunsichert, fällt es ihm nicht schwer, die "Heimat" Militär gegen die "Heimat" Grundbesitz auszutauschen, zumal beide Konventionsbereiche in konfliktlosem Nebeneinander zu den "herrschenden Fiktionen" des Wilhelminismus zählen' See: Paul Michael Lützeler, *Hermann Broch: Ethik und Politik etc*, as above, p.114.

12. Lützeler sums up Broch's perception of cultural disintegration: 'Seine Erklärung für den Zusammenbruch der christlich-europäischen Werte ist erkenntnistheoretischer Art und lautet – vereinfacht und zusammenfassend gesagt – dahingehend, daß eine Kultur dann zerfalle, wenn das sie bestimmende Denken seine Plausibilität einbüße.' See: Paul Michael Lützeler, 'Hermann Broch: *Die Schlafwandler* (1930-1932)', in *Deutsche Romane des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. by Paul Michael Lützeler (Königstein: Athenäum, 1983), p. 204.

13. David Horrocks agrees: Having paid off his former mistress and 'having thus patched up his leaking ship, Joachim eventually lands, as Bertrand ironically points out, "in the harbour of marriage". But the terms in which his wedding night is described – more like a funeral than a honeymoon – suggest that he has opted for a living death. It is at this point that Broch abruptly breaks off the narrative with a laconic five-line final chapter, indicating that Joachim has served his purpose as a model figure within the historical scheme of the novel and that his subsequent story is of little significance.' See: David Horrocks, 'The Novel as History: Hermann Broch's Trilogy—*Die Schlafwandler*', in *Weimar Germany: Writers and Politics* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1982), ed. by Alan Bance, p. 43/44.

CHAPTER 7

Dynastic baptism - the infant public persona in Mann's *Königliche Hoheit*

Thomas Mann's *Königliche Hoheit* (published in 1909) is a lightweight work. Yet, in my view, it has a warmth and charm that are anything but facile. Like Broch's *Pasenow*, *Königliche Hoheit* deals with the appeal – and the dangers – of anachronism. We find ourselves in a small Ruritanian principality that is rescued from financial and political ruin by the arrival of a delightful and exceedingly wealthy young woman, an American, who marries the Prince and makes sure that all ends happily. And if we ask why she should bother, why she should not have better things to do with her money and her energy, the answer is that the obsolete world has registers of charm and decorum that are anything but worthless. Thomas Mann reconciles the fairy-tale world with the modern world and, thereby, exhausted and obsolete ritual can be made to live again.

* * * * *

The well-known ingredients of the fairy-tale are present at the beginning of Mann's story, the castle, the beautiful princess, the birth of another prince, ancient tradition as practised for many generations and joy among the people who celebrate the happy event by '...zweiundsiebzig Schüsse, die über Stadt und Land hinrollten...' (p.12)*.

This world into which Klaus Heinrich is born, as the second son, is depicted as seemingly impressive and solid. However, it soon becomes clear to the reader that Mann is about to draw a picture which contradicts such expectations. Although everyone

* Page numbers in this chapter refer to: Thomas Mann, *Gesammelte Werke, Königliche Hoheit* (Frankfurt am Main: S.Fischer Verlag, 1974).

endeavours to remain ‘...in bester Haltung...’ in order not to diminish ‘...die Würde des Ortes im mindesten...’(p.17), with dignified ministers and lackeys in attendance at all times, the watchful eyes of the *Oberhofmarschall* ensuring strict adherence to the rules of courtly behaviour, the real situation, the parlous financial state of the principality, is swiftly established in the reader’s mind.

The picture painted suggests that the country is on the brink of monetary ruin, that the old order has been allowed to descend into administrative ineptitude, ignorance, and short-sighted remedial practices and that profligate court spending in earlier generations has contributed to this sorry state; even the *Großherzog*, by his choice of a bride for her outstanding beauty rather than her financial potential, disappointed the more sober members of the government. Blame, naturally, cannot be laid at the feet of the illustrious ruler: ‘...die höchste Person ist über jeden Vorwurf erhaben’(p.20). Thus *Schuld* cannot be apportioned satisfactorily and conclusively but the fact that the country’s fate is threatened by mounting debts and an obvious inability on the part of those charged with the management of its affairs is the constant undercurrent sensed and, indeed, evidenced in Mann’s novel. Such concerns soon dispel any notion the reader may have entertained of embarking on the perusal of a traditional fairy-tale. Unlike earlier depictions of such countries where officials ‘...ihre Souveräne über die materielle Lage des Hofes hinwiegtauschten’, it will no longer be ‘...im Geiste der Zeiten...’(p.20) to do so. Through the open windows of the Grimmburg, the ancestral castle of this dynasty, on the day of Klaus Heinrich’s birth, ‘...wehte der starke Wind der Höhe’(p.16), suggesting the elevated status of the family, aloof from the ‘lowlands’ inhabited by the common people, the *Hoheit* reflected in the title by which its members are addressed, their perceived superiority, yet at the same time that fierce wind hints at the overall dire situation; perhaps it is the chill wind of a new, more starkly and honestly assessed commercial reality,

although pennilessness and lack of means are, of course, recurring themes in fairy tales, albeit not usually among those inhabiting the fairy-tale castles.

The succession to the throne of this country may have been amply guaranteed by the birth of the second son, a child clearly endowed with robust health and displaying the facial characteristics of the native population, with its non-aristocratic features, the ‘...breite Wangenknochen, wie viele Leute hierzulande sie haben...’(p.9), but this noisily and joyously celebrated infant, too, is manifestly far from perfect, his left hand clearly defective, somewhat shrivelled, atrophied¹. The noble father is mortified to discover the flaw in his new son and has great difficulty in accepting that ‘ein [...] krüppelhaftes Kind ins Leben tritt...’(p.27). The hand is evidence of ‘Mißbildungen’, of ‘Abschnürung’ and ‘Verkümmern’(p.29), causing the disappointed father to ask the young Jewish doctor in attendance: ‘Wird es die Gesamterscheinung sehr beeinträchtigen, meinen Sie?’(p.31). The mere fact of this doctor’s presence at court after the birth is somewhat surprising, given that he was only consulted in the first place because the *Großherzog* wanted to deliver a pointed snub in the direction of the official court physician.

The *Großherzog* does make a point, though, of stressing that he is speaking to Dr. Sammet as one ‘...dem die bedingungslose und private, nicht nur amtliche, Geltung des paritätischen Prinzips besonders am Herzen liegt’(p.31). The doctor replies diplomatically but nevertheless candidly; the implications are clearly acknowledged: ‘Man ist gegen die regelrechte und darum bequeme Mehrzahl nicht im Nachteil, sondern im Vorteil, wenn man eine Veranlassung mehr als sie zu ungewöhnlichen Leistungen hat’(p.32). The doctor speaks plainly and without the stiff conduct seen in the conventional courtiers. Even his attire speaks of ‘Redlichkeit und Sachlichkeit...’, ‘...seine gewichsten Stiefel waren von ländlichem Zuschnitt’ and, shocking no doubt to those who live and breathe sartorial etiquette, ‘er hatte zum Frack eine schwarze Halsbinde angelegt...’. It puts on him the stamp of the outsider, especially as ‘seine Nase, zu flach auf den Schnurrbart

abfallend, deutete auf seine Herkunft hin'(p.28). The emphasis having been on that which is other, different, inferior, *beeinträchtigt*, atrophied, the tolerant acceptance of this outsider, manifest in the fact of Dr. Sammet's influential position at court, is gratifying and reminds us of the role of the *Hofjuden* at many courts.

Much is made in this chapter of atrophy and imperfection. One cannot but extend this image to include the spiritual state of the *Großherzog*'s country, which has the stamp of airless conformity and withered sensibilities upon it. The infant prince's deformed and useless hand allows Mann to create a strikingly visible metaphor for the ills of the nation. An end to an old desiccated system of lack-lustre performance, of rigidly adhered-to conventionality, of ignorance of ways to bring about much-needed renewal, of the need to present more *Schein* than *Sein*, of dwindling energy and insufficient know-how and ingenuity, such an end appears to be hinted at between the lines of Mann's novel, even in the earliest chapters of this work. The many words employed to suggest this atrophication process within an old dynasty, and by extension in the country as a whole, are in direct contrast to that which is required by the people. The populace expect their princes, their rulers, those who are placed above them by birth or, as will be seen magnificently later in the novel, by economic success, to be perfect in appearance, to dazzle by their outstanding beauty and flawless manners. The Princess Dorothea, obviously God's gift to the all but bankrupt principality, is described glowingly by Herr von Knobelsdorff as '...eine der schönsten Frauen, die ich je gesehen habe'(p.22). Although poor, as eligible princesses go, her tiny financial contribution to the happiness of the country, despite the prevailing economic malaise, needs to be assessed in a totally different and far more charitable light. Any attempt at voicing regret at the absence of a large dowry is nipped in the bud. The critical finance minister stands corrected and is made aware of the people's corporate need for fictions which transcend everyday concerns:

Sie erwähnten nicht des Jubels, der gleichwohl herrschte. Eine arme Prinzessin, allerdings. Aber ist die Schönheit, solche Schönheit, eine beglückende Macht oder nicht? Unvergeßlich ihr Einzug! Sie war geliebt, als ihr erstes Lächeln über das schauende Volk hinflog. Exzellenz müssen mir gestatten, mich wieder einmal zu dem Glauben an den Idealismus des Volkes zu bekennen. Das Volk will sein Bestes, sein Höheres, seinen Traum, will irgend etwas wie seine Seele in seinen Fürsten dargestellt sehen - nicht seinen Geldbeutel. Den zu repräsentieren sind andere Leute da... (pp.22/3).

Unfortunately these 'andere Leute' appear, for the moment at least, to be absent, a fact made abundantly clear by the narrator, and with nice irony, in his choice of name for the *Hoffinanzdirektor*, one Graf Trümmerhauff. The fairy-tale mood appears to be waning as circumstances become exposed to a more realistic appraisal.

Towards the end of the novel it will be Klaus Heinrich, contrary to previous practice, who regards it as his mission and duty to penetrate these matters hitherto regarded as too tedious, undignified, and plebeian for kings, dukes, and their heirs. It will be the destiny of this studious young prince, born with the imperfection of a shrivelled left hand and thought to be seen as an object of pity among the people, when the prevailing wisdom decrees that '...der Anblick des Fürsten soll seinem Volke andere Empfindungen erwecken als Mitleid' (p.33). Although Klaus Heinrich is not the first-born, an old gipsy prophecy predicted that 'ein Prinz mit einer Hand...' (p.34) would bring great promise and improvement to his country². The circumstances permitting him to fulfil the clairvoyant's words will need to be created, or indeed merely manipulated '...einigen guten Willen vorausgesetzt...' (p.34) and

...das Volk wird es tun, und zwar spätestens dann, wenn auch das Weitere, die eigentliche Verheißung sich irgend bewahrheiten sollte, es wird reimen und deuten, wie es das immer getan hat, um erfüllt zu sehen, was geschrieben steht [...] der einhändige Prinz ist da, - und so möge er uns denn geben, so viel er vermag (p.35).

The great joy manifest among the citizens of this impoverished state at the news of the birth of this second prince, as joyful and exuberant as only vicarious living can produce,

the common people ever eager to indulge their infatuation with ritual, which it is Mann's purpose to show, this undiminished rejoicing, does not conceal the pitiful reality from those charged with the administration of the dukedom. In page after page Mann paints a grim picture of a country run by incompetent, inadequate, ignorant, arrogant, wasteful, even deceitful men. The financial mismanagement, based on ill-considered borrowing tactics, has ensured that '...das Land [...] stand an der Grenze seiner Leistungsfähigkeit...' (p.41). This appears to spell the end of an era, the old world, as represented by this country, at such a low ebb that only fresh New World expertise, know-how and, most importantly, a huge injection of new wealth and vigour, free from the constraints of ossified social systems, of class divisions and prejudice, introduced later in the narrative in the form of Samuel Spoelmann and his beautiful and accomplished daughter (both of them the products of an invigorating blood mixture), can generate a new lease of life for a country which has *abgewirtschaftet*³. The contempt hitherto displayed regarding money will have to be superseded by a realistic grasp of the need for financial management.

The terrible and sad decay cannot be concealed any longer and, although the profligate spending by earlier generations of the ruling family is no longer a secret, the loyalty and affection of the people are not in question. 'Das Volk war fromm und treu, es liebte seine Fürsten wie sich selbst, es war von der Erhabenheit der monarchischen Idee durchdrungen, es sah einen Gottesgedanken darin' (p.41). In this fairly secularized world the reader is struck by the use of the word 'fromm' and the 'Erhabenheit' and 'Gottesgedanken' inherent in the social ritual which attaches to royalty and the lives and public activities of those born to rule. Their roles have clearly become theologized in the minds of their subjects.

The perfect manners and the astonishingly impressive conduct and impeccable attire of the royals and their retinue can no longer hide the fact that *Veränderungen* and

Einschränkungen must be implemented, even if the people in whose interests they are instituted react ‘...in einem ergriffenen und schmerzlichen Sinne, denn im Grunde wünschte das Volk, sich stolz und herrlich dargestellt zu sehen’(p.43). Since the everyday lives of ordinary people are usually not noted for their outward splendour, they project their dreams and aspirations, their desire to behold beauty and perfection, onto those in the public eye. Some of this ‘glory’ may thereby rub off and reflect well on those less fortunate than the prominent figures, thus producing enhancement for a humdrum existence and a necessary element of popular cohesion.

Conditions, however, make it necessary to confront the extent of the situation. Not only is the country’s economy in dire straits but there is decay to be seen everywhere. Whilst the names of the dynasty’s palaces and castles suggest an age of plenty and of a carefree lifestyle, pointing to *Sorglosigkeit*, which reminds the reader of the splendid Potsdam residence of *Sanssouci*, the air of neglect is unmistakable. The old splendour can only be guessed at, whilst signs of neglect are much in evidence. A castle stands ‘...inmitten seines wuchernden Parkes...’, looking across to a ‘...von Schlamm starrenden Teich...’. The scene is truly ‘...bejammernswert...’(p.44). The metaphor of the old ‘Rosenstock’ is used to indicate the reality of the present and also the hope that the future has better things in store. This rose bush, which is

ein Rosenstock wie andere mehr, ein Kastellan wartete ihn, er ruhte im Schnee, er empfing Regen und Sonnenschein, und kam die Zeit, so trieb er Rosen. Es waren außerordentlich herrliche Rosen, edel geformt, mit dunkelrotsamtenen Blättern, eine Lust zu sehen und wahre Kunstwerke der Natur (p.46).

The words ‘Kunstwerke der Natur’ raise the theme of artifice, which in social contexts is deemed to be part of nature, its manifestations, such as gardens and conservatories, becoming man-made constructs designed to tame and enhance unfettered nature. Superficially these roses display the same external gloss manifest among the members of

the illustrious family and their courtiers, a perfection not based on solid achievement but on society's need for myths and lacking substance and purpose. Such insubstantiality is mirrored by the special rose bush to which Mann ascribes similar characteristics:

diese Rosen besaßen eine seltsame und schauerliche Eigentümlichkeit: sie dufteten nicht! Sie dufteten dennoch, aber aus unbekannten Gründen war es nicht Rosenduft, was sie ausströmten, sondern Moderduft, - ein leiser aber vollkommen deutlicher Duft nach Moder(p.46).

This smell of decay prevails in the country too. A prediction, however, had been made and there was '...ein populäres Gerede...' that '...irgendwann einmal, an einem Tage der Freude und der öffentlichen Glückseligkeit, die Blüten des Rosenstocks auf die natürlichste und lieblichste Art zu duften beginnen würden'(p.46). The reader confidently expects this prediction to be realized.

The narrator, having painted a pitiful picture of this small country, its *Altes Schloß*, its *Altstadt* and *Neustadt*, its university, its court theatre and the many other aspects of the principality and its people, concludes this chapter succinctly and soberly: 'Das war die Stadt; das war das Land. Das war die Lage'(p.47). The weighty ending is, of course, ironic; we sense that help is at hand.

The narrative spotlight is now turned on the baptism of the new little prince. The sphere in which his later life will be conducted is clearly mapped out when the reader is informed that 'des Großherzogs zweiter Sohn trat öffentlich zum ersten Male hervor, als er getauft wurde'(p.48). The nexus of private and public event is once again established as 'diese Feierlichkeit erregte im Lande die ganze Teilnahme, die man allen Geschehnissen innerhalb der hohen Familie entgegenzubringen pflegte'(p.48). The expectation forming one strand of the social mythology is that public figures also have charmed private lives. There is a degree of liberal thought pervading the air around the aristocratic infant whose baptism will be used as a vehicle for opening up the stuffy rigidity of the court procedure,

almost as if the *Zeitgeist* decreed that the stultified system be opened up to allow the people access to a hitherto closed world. We are informed that ‘...das Oberhofmarschallamt Einladungen dazu auf höchsten Befehl in alle Gesellschaftsklassen hatte ergehen lassen’ (p.48). Whereas earlier, after the initial announcement of the birth, the ‘Grimmburger Publikum [...] sich schwärzlich an der Station hinter dem Kordon [staute]’ (p.35) when waiting to greet the ‘happy’ father, their representatives from all walks of life will be admitted beyond the accustomed barrier to mingle with their betters. It comes as no surprise, though, to hear that Herr von Bühl zu Bühl (a title of this nature conveys a sense of a slightly ridiculous gilding of the lily) ‘...ein höfischer Ritualist von höchster Umsicht und Akribie...’ supervises ‘...mit Hilfe von zwei Zeremonienmeistern den ganzen verwickelten Vorgang’ (p.48). Naturally a dynastic baptism cannot be conducted as if this Klaus Heinrich (despite the ordinariness of his name, often found among the lesser mortals) were the offspring of lowly parents. His credentials as a scion of an old and illustrious family demand that his special day, the day on which he is to be introduced to the world at large and be shown in his expected role for the very first time, be marked by pomp, splendour (however faded, threadbare and even shabby) and due observance ‘...aller äußerer Gebräuche während der religiösen Handlung selbst...’ and, of course, strict adherence to the ‘...Reihenfolge und Rangordnung bei der Gratulation...’. The departure of this model of etiquette is richly comic: he ‘...lächelte leidenschaftlich und verbeugte sich, indem er rückwärts ging’ (p.48)⁴. The notion of a man, who perfectly fits the description of a stuffed shirt, smiling passionately – a normally incompatible lexical combination – whilst making his exit backwards is an inspired formulation and encapsulates both the character of the official and that of his class, people inhabiting a world in which genuine emotion and spontaneity have no place.

The fact that all social classes, through their representatives, are participating in this baptism does not, however, mean that hierarchical thinking has been suspended.

Seating arrangements inside the church are made according to rank. 'Neben den Vertretern des Hof- und Landadels und des hohen und niederen Beamtentums füllten Handeltreibende, Landleute und schlichte Handwerker erhobenen Herzens das Gestühl'(p.48), but the choice of godparents makes it plain that merely being there does not entitle 'the people' to a role other than that of spectators. But, even so, the narrator emphasizes the ordinary hearts and souls which feel elevated and exhilarated at having been singled out on this occasion.

The *Schriftwort* which the *Großherzog* himself has chosen from the '...mit Metallspangen verschlossene Hausbibel...' taken '...aus dem selten betretenen Büchersaal...' (p.49) is the father's contribution to the ceremony. The reader is made aware, with almost malicious delight on the part of the narrator, that this high and mighty family derives its certainties and its great conviction of superiority, its *Hoheit*, not from the study of books but from an ossified system which dictates their conduct. There is clearly little wisdom and soundly acquired knowledge to aid the recovery of this rundown principality. Change will occur when the physically less than perfect *Täufling* undertakes serious study, thereby turning into a knowledgeable and able young man who can work for the good of his country instead of siphoning off its meagre resources to please himself, as was the wont of earlier princes; he will, however, also continue to fulfil the fictional-cum-mythical role allocated to him by the people who help to fund his life style⁵. Even the theme, chosen by the *Großherzog* to form the core of the baptismal service, is '...nur ein dünnes, fast körperloses Thema...' until the skill and quasi-musical treatment of the words by the *Hofprediger* transform it into something which appears to the assembled company as '...reich instrumentiert, voll ausgedeutet und tief belebt' (p.49)⁶. The illusion of greater substance has been added by a participant who is not normally deemed to be of equal status. The novel is studded with such worthy figures who have had to work for a place in society, through intellectual prowess and determined effort. Whereas one might

regard their starting position as less than favourable, not having been blessed with an aristocratic background or even a pleasing appearance, it is made plain to the reader that

...solche Bedingungen, das waren die guten Bedingungen [...] ein ausschließliches und strenges Auf-die-Leistung-Gestelltsein [...] man ward innerlich sehnig, man kannte kein Behagen und überflügelte diesen und jenen [...] Welch Vorteil vor denen, die "es nicht nötig" in dem Grade "nicht nötig hatten" (p.82).

The predicament of an unpromising start in life is shared by Klaus Heinrich's later tutor and friend, Raoul Überbein, '...etliche Jahre älter als er, aber in ähnlicher Lage und ebenfalls ein Malheur von Geburt, insofern er ein Jude war'(p.83), a stark reality plainly stated.

Klaus Heinrich, on the other hand, is superficially one of the chosen few born into a world which, hitherto at least, could be expected to grant its members a gracious and easy life with little directly demanded in return. Figuratively speaking, anyone thus favoured will be handed from arm to arm (the pecking order strictly observed at all times) in order to be ministered to. On the occasion of the prince's baptism each guest has a space correctly allocated to them and the old order appears to be unthreatened. Yet the reader cannot overlook the reference to Aunt Katherina's '...neuerlich umgearbeitetes lila gefärbtes Seidenkleid...' even if she is at the same time '...mit Kronjuwelen frisiert...' (p.50). All this is a clear sign of reduced circumstances being experienced even at such a high level. It is obviously a reflection of what the country as a whole is enduring, a tightening of belts, in an atmosphere of making-do.

At this stage Klaus Heinrich's '...kleines Dasein war ein verantwortungsloser, von außen sorgfältig geleiteter Traum...' (p.51). Nothing is required of him, he is a passive participant at the ceremony. Everything is enacted '...während er schlief...', even '...während ihm zu Ehren im Marmorsaale Familientafel und im "Rittersaale" Tafel für die übrigen Taufgäste stattfand'(p.50). The interplay of active and passive is intriguing,

because, in part, the representative identity is given by the people, whereas the incumbent is passive. He represents by being rather than by doing. Nevertheless, this occasion is the first of many the prince will be expected to attend, later on in a rather more active capacity. By then he, too, will have been fitted into the age-old mould whose restrictions and constraints he will have absorbed and made his own; in the case of Klaus Heinrich, though, there is enough of the indigenous popular character and appearance in him to allow him to transcend these narrow confines of dynastic destiny with its public duties. At the baptism it could be said:

An diesem Tage also repräsentierte der Prinz zum erstenmal, und daß er im Vordergrunde der Handlung stand, fand Ausdruck schon darin, daß er zuletzt und in Abstand von aller Welt auf dem Schauplatze eintraf [...] und aller Augen waren auf ihn gerichtet (p.49).

He is the object of everyone's pleasure and emotion. Even at this early stage in his life, he displays an innate sense of decorum. His very passivity ensures that his entry into his life as a public persona meets with general approval. 'Sein Verdienst war, daß er nicht störte, nicht eingriff, nicht widerstand, sondern, zweifellos aus eingeborener Vertrautheit, sich still der Form überließ, die um ihn waltete, ihn trug, ihn heute noch jeder eigenen Anspannung überhob...' (p.50). The triple full stop is Mann's. It alerts us to a two-fold ironic dimension. At one level, the sentence ironically mimics the comic forms that popular adulation can take (any baby would be expected to play only a modest role in its own christening). At another level, the sentence prefigures a life that will be anything but effortless.⁷

The infant prince's exemplary conduct at his baptism is noted with much satisfaction not only by those privileged to witness it in person. 'Die Zeitungen besprachen sein erstes Auftreten; sie schilderten sein Äußeres und seine Toilette, sie stellten fest, daß er sich wahrhaft prinzlich benommen habe, und kleideten die rührende und erhebende Wirkung in Worte, die seine Erscheinung ausgeübt hatte'. He has behaved

in princely fashion by doing nothing, a theme dealt with in many a literary work portraying the role of the aristocrat. This blissful state of ignorance, for ‘er wußte noch nichts, begriff noch nichts, nichts ahnte ihm von der Schwierigkeit, Gefährlichkeit und Strenge des Lebens, das ihm vorgeschrieben war...’, will not last beyond the very early part of his life, even if at this point he is likely to feel like any other infant, as yet unaware ‘...daß er sich in irgendeinem Gegensatz zur großen Menge fühle’(p.51).

What is, however, clear from the outset is the fact that he will be pitifully deprived of tenderness and love. His physical needs will be taken care of, in a way ordinary babies cannot hope to aspire to, but there will be little warmth, particularly as from the exalted parents he rates no more than ‘...einen Augenblick Zärtlichkeit...’(p.51). The baptismal ritual gives him access to public fawning and jubilation and later obedient service from court lackeys and respectful deference from civic and military dignitaries. It will be poor recompense for the emotional deprivation which is an integral part of such a life of material privilege and superior social status.

Thomas Mann successfully uses the vehicle of comedy, irony, and even satire to focus on the excessive demands made of a sensitive and naturally caring human being. Because Klaus Heinrich is not able to adjust fully to his ritual role, he is able later to make a different contribution, while still fulfilling the ritualistic function to everyone’s satisfaction. Whereas the first-born son is physically fragile and emotionally alienated from the world around him, Klaus Heinrich, the *Prinz mit einer Hand*, is blessed, or cursed, with what would be deemed to be un-kingly characteristics. ‘Er selbst war weichmütig und zu Tränen geneigt, das war seine Natur’, whereas ‘...Albrecht [...] weinte doch unter keiner Bedingung’ and *Madame aus der Schweiz*, the children’s strict and calvinistically straitlaced chief nanny, ‘...wies in Fragen des comme il faut ausdrücklich auf ihn als Muster hin’ and ‘nie hätte er sich mit den prächtig aufgeschrirten Zierleuten, die zum Schlosse gehörten und nicht eigentlich Männer und Menschen,

sonder Lakaien waren, in ein Gespräch eingelassen...' (p.54). In Klaus Heinrich, on the other hand, there is from a surprisingly early age some natural instinct to break out of the rigid convention surrounding him and his family, an unseemly desire '...sein Herz berühren zu lassen von dem, was etwa jenseits der Grenzen war' (p.54). His need and interest are genuine, but he fails spectacularly in his attempts to overcome the social gulf dividing him from ordinary mortals, since they (the ordinary mortals) will not allow him to become ordinary. It is his *raison d'être* within their *Weltanschauung* that he remain confined to his exalted position. He receives, in reply to his questions asked of servants '...leere, geziemende Antworten, an denen die Anrede "Großherzogliche Hoheit" das Gewichtigste war und zu denen sie lächelten, mit einem mitleidig behutsamen Ausdruck....' (p.54). He is destined for a life of isolation, set apart, and he is forced to inhabit a cold world of etiquette and beauty, devoid of emotion and human warmth, of decaying splendour, sheltering people who are unable to act spontaneously, to react instinctively to unaccustomed behaviour. Nature has largely been bred out of them, an atrophy of the soul symbolized by the prince's deformed and shrivelled hand. And yet the one person who is forced to live with the outward sign of inadequacy is, unlike the rest of the court, in possession of much feeling and natural instinct. It is, sadly, only the external manifestation of flawed development, an aesthetic blemish, which causes consternation and needs to be concealed from the world lest such an imperfection be deemed to deny the possessor of such a hand his natural claim to superiority.

Contact with the outside world is to be made only '...über den Abstand hinweg...', '...in einer bestimmten Richtung...', '...auf einer bestimmten Bahn...', '...aus der Sicherheit sorgfältiger Vorschriften' (p.58). Should any of the rules of etiquette be contravened, the resulting *Ratlosigkeit* would fill these virtual automata with anxiety and a sense of dangerous helplessness. This air of an ossified old order being threatened by the passage of time is hinted at at every turn of the narrative, particularly in the

descriptions of erstwhile court splendour. The narrator depicts walls clad in white, yet fading and torn, silk and also armchairs covered ‘...mit weißer, verschlissener Seide..’(p.56), mirrors ‘...deren Glas blinde Flecken zeigte...’, ‘...weißseidene Vorhänge, gelbfleckig...’(p.57). This is the setting only for past events, no longer truly relevant to real lives, a room and a scene ‘...von dessen Höhe das Bildnis einer toten gepuderten Vorfahrin [...] herniederblickte...’. And, of course, there is a ‘...kalte Feuerstelle’(p.56). Klaus Heinrich experiences this world as ‘fremd und kalt’ and is reminded, as indeed is the sympathetic reader, of the realm of the fairy-tale, in a ‘...Kerzenaal, wie in dem der Schneekönigin, wo die Herzen der Kinder erstarren’(p.57). The young prince’s own mother Dorothea, blessed with perfect beauty and a perfectly cold heart, is conjured up in the boy’s inner eye and he is aware of the fake feelings displayed by her in public. She is, in fact, no more human than the dead ancestor ‘...auf dem Bilde im Marmorsaal...’. Her face, though wonderfully formed, appears severe and it is clear ‘...daß auch ihr Herz streng war und auf nichts als ihre Schönheit bedacht’(p.59). She, too, conducts her life ‘...auf der vorgeschriebenen Bahn...’(p.60), and her smile ‘...war ein Lachen voll Kunst und Gnade, und sie sah in den Spiegel dabei, als übte sie sich’(p.59). Once again there is artifice in place of natural beauty and of a genuine display of reactions in varying life situations. Any *blinde Flecken* in her mirror would be of no consequence since there is no real soul to reflect, if one alludes to folk belief. She assumes the function of a religious icon for the people, who stand in awe of her beautiful exterior. No doubt she worships at this shrine herself ‘...vor ihrem großen, von Kerzen erhellten Spiegel...’(p.59). In her firmament other gods do not exist. Like a religious figure, she delights all others by her mere presence.

Ja, sie wirkte Glück, indem sie sich zeigte, bei Hofe sowohl wie draußen in den Straßen oder nachmittags im Stadtgarten, zu Pferd oder zu Wagen, - und die Wangen der Leute färbten sich höher [...] und alle Herzen flogen ihr zu, und die “Hoch” riefen meinten sich selbst damit

[...] und riefen freudig aus, daß sie selbst hoch lebten und an hohe Dinge glaubten in diesem Augenblick (p.60)

The British reader cannot but recall the adulation and almost idolatrous worship extended to the late Princess of Wales⁸. She, too, had this uplifting effect on the adoring public, affording them the reflected glory of her beauty and charisma. The female idol of Mann's story experiences only the satisfaction of noting the effect her person has on others. She does not, however, reciprocate their feelings as '...ihr eigenes Herz nicht hochschlug, keineswegs, für nichts und für niemanden'. There appears to be little difference between her and a perfectly executed marble statue. Any apparent display of tender affection for her children is saved '...für solche Gelegenheiten [...] wo Zuschauer zugegen waren, die sich daran erbauen konnten'(p.60). When exposed to her children in her private quarters it becomes a '...Beisammensein ohne Gefühlswallungen...', but on the "Donnerstag der Großherzogin" im Marmorsaal..., in full view of the assembled *Hofgesellschaft*, '...dann zeigte Mama, daß sie sie lieb habe, zeigte es ihnen und allen so innig und ausdrucksvoll, daß kein Zweifel bleib'(p.61). The children, deprived of real affection, naturally respond gratefully to such a display and '...fühlten sich beteiligt an dieser Wirkung...'. It is clear to Klaus Heinrich, who has learnt over the years to internalize the strict code by which public figures are expected to live, that '...es uns dem Wesen der Dinge gemäß nicht anstand, einfach zu fühlen und damit glücklich zu sein, sondern daß es uns zukam, unsere Zärtlichkeit im Saale anschaulich zu machen und auszustellen, damit die Herzen der Gäste schwöllen'(p.61)⁹. The duchess evidently sees it as her duty to demonstrate love for her offspring, both at court and for '...die Leute draußen in Stadt und Park...' (p.61). It becomes an essential part of the theatrical construct that is her life. She defines herself solely through public acclaim. Mann cruelly takes away her beauty with the passing of the years until she is reduced to being an empty vessel without inner resources, herself a thing of the past, withdrawn from her once all-important stage of self-display and steeped in

self-pity. The adulation which nourishes her in her younger years has rather a mortifying effect on the young and sensitive prince; public outings in his childhood produce no joy for him, but are associated with 'viel Mühe und Anstrengung'. There is

viel Volks dort versammelt [...] Männer, Frauen und Kinder, die riefen und gierig schauten; und es galt, sich zusammenzunehmen und anmutig standzuhalten, zu lächeln, die linke Hand zu verbergen und so mit dem Hute zu grüßen, daß es Freude im Volke hervorrief', everyone staring '...mit Augen voll Andacht und dringlicher Neugier... (p.62).

Young Klaus Heinrich is made aware, felicitously accentuated by Mann's use of the active and passive grammatical forms, '...daß alle da waren, um eben da zu sein und zu schauen, indes er da war, um sich zu zeigen und geschaut zu werden...', suggesting reciprocity between ruler and ruled. He alone knows the embarrassment this public spectacle causes him so that '...seine Wangen in Hitze standen...'. The press choose to misrepresent this reality by stating that '...die Wangen unseres kleinen Herzogs wie Rosen gewesen seien vor Wohlbefinden'(p.62). How better to highlight the gulf between *Schein* und *Sein*, but at the same time the interrelationship. The prince realizes that he and the other members of his family are required, in return for the privileges they enjoy, to live a fairy-tale existence so that others may use the escape mechanism of identifying with these favoured few, thereby being, briefly, in a position to transcend their own humdrum lives. Klaus Heinrich can directly identify with the castle-dwelling princes who roam through the well-known tales, since his life's circumstances are comparable. Mann gives evidence of great psychological insight when he allows the little prince to muse on this theme.

Wenn andere Kinder die Märchen hörten, so blickten sie auf die Prinzen, von denen sie handelten, notwendig aus großem Abstand und wie auf festliche Wesen, deren Rang eine Verherrlichung der Wirklichkeit war und mit denen sich zu beschäftigen ihnen zweifellos eine Verschönerung der Gedanken und Erhebung über den Wochentag bedeutete (p.52).

Klaus Heinrich and his siblings dwell in the reality of such a realm, thus acquiring *Ebenbürtigkeit* with the protagonists of the stories. Does it follow, therefore, that they lived ‘…also beständig und immerdar auf jener Höhe, zu welcher andere nur aufstiegen, wenn sie Märchen hörten’(p.52)? He recognises with fear, dread even, that what fate has decreed for him is ‘…ein hoher, gespannter Dienst’ requiring ‘…eine beherrschte Entzagung…’(p.62) and ‘…da ergriff ihn eine Ahnung, eine ungefährre und wortlose Erkenntnis dessen, was seine Angelegenheit war’. The realization fills his soul with terror, he has ‘…Angst vor seinem “hohen Beruf”’. He cries with self-pity and when discovered in this pitiful state, deemed to be undignified for one of his breeding, he is strikingly honest and admits to his fear: ‘…und das war die Wahrheit’(p.63). Naturally, a truth being told so unconcernedly and readily is likely to shock those more accustomed to stiff upper lips and an altogether unruffled facade being maintained. The happy state of ignorance Klaus Heinrich found himself in at his baptism at the beginning of the novel has been dispelled, he is now faced with the life ‘…das ihm vorgeschrieben war…’. Once a street has been named after him, he can no longer ‘sich der wahren Sachlage [...] verschließen’. His photograph is displayed next to those ‘von Künstlern und großen Männern [...] deren Augen aus einer berühmten Einsamkeit blickten’¹⁰. ‘Unter dem Druck seiner Berufenheit’(p.63) and as a result of the constant battering of exhortations uttered by those charged with shaping him for his role of public persona, reminded unmercifully that ‘Ihr hoher Beruf verpflichtet Sie…’ (p.56), he is driven to accept that he occupies a place in society in which he is ‘…einzelnd und herausgehoben…’, prevented from knowing the real world of mundane concerns, a world ‘…unverschönt und unerhoben am Wochentage…’, a world in which real people live, love and suffer real emotion and tragedy. His ‘hoher Beruf’ denies him such experiences, they are matters ‘…die seine Hoheit ihm vorenthielt’. People who greet the prince and others like him ‘…mit frommen Augen…’(p.64) need to maintain the fiction that such elevated beings are naturally, and in

perpetuity, above the fray of common existence. They require such idols to be available for quasi-worship, as unassailable role models, as paragons of conduct, beings who can serve as icons for their contemporaries. The distinction German makes between *Beruf* and *Berufung* is of great significance in this context. Klaus Heinrich is predestined to serve his people as a representative of the ruling dynasty. Circumstances compel the prince to be ‘...ein Inbegriff, eine Art Ideal. Ein Gefäß. Eine sinnbildliche Existenz [...] und damit eine formale Existenz’ denying him the right to ‘...unmittelbare Vertraulichkeit...’(p.84). What he does gain, though, is popularity, a poor substitute for warm and nourishing exchange and familiarity. But as Dr. Überbein, the guiding light of the young prince’s education, assures him: ‘Die Popularität ist keine sehr gründliche, aber eine großartige und umfassende Art der Vertraulichkeit’(p.85). This same teacher is appalled to hear ‘common’ children sing, in honour of a princely visit, a folk song by the title of *Menschen, Menschen sind wir alle*, a truth not to be denied at a superficial level but deemed, nevertheless, by the tutor, to be ‘schlampig’ and ‘ein ordinäres Lied’(p.85), since ‘...ein Mann von etwelchem geistigen Bedürfnis wird sich nicht enthalten können, in dieser platten Welt das Außerordentliche zu suchen und es zu lieben [...] - er muß sich ärgern an solchem schlampigen Lied, an solcher schafsgemütlichen Wegleugnung des Sonderfalles...’. This man with his high-flown rhetoric loves ‘...die mit der Würde der Ausnahme im Herzen, die Gezeichneten, die als Fremdlinge Kenntlichen, all die, bei deren Anblick das Volk dumme Gesichter macht...’. He sees in Klaus Heinrich’s ‘...Daseinsform [...] die sichtbarste, ausdrücklichste, bestgehütete Form des Außerordentlichen auf Erden...’. Because of his status as one who conducts his life in the rarefied air of aristocratic isolation and privilege, he is entitled, in Dr. Überbein’s view, to feel contempt for the lower orders, given that he faces the constraints of ‘Abgeschlossenheit, Etikette, Verpflichtung, Strammheit, Haltung, Form’ (p.86). It

behoves others to stand in awe and approach such *Hoheit* with affectionate sympathy and to be deeply touched by it¹¹.

Figures who intend to inhabit such a world of officially granted superiority by definition must be above, or at least be deemed or seen to be above, the foibles and aberrations indulged in by the common herd. Their *raison d'être* is contained in such apartness and depends on them remaining high up in the cold air blowing around the pedestal on which they have been placed. They are not to be human in the normal sense of the word. Klaus Heinrich has learned that '...Repräsentieren ist selbstverständlich mehr, und höher als einfach sein' (p.88), having had it explained to him that he '...auf der Menschheit Höhen wandle...' (p.89). The insightful teacher says speaking of the chosen few: '...ich wünsche ihnen die Liebe zu ihrem Schicksal...' (p.86). The special role into which they have been born, or others who have lifted themselves out of commonplace humanity, is to be seen as a gift and a blessing, rather than as a cruel fate to be railed against. When Überbein describes *Hoheit* as '...rührend...', even as '...das Rührendste, was es auf Erden gibt', he himself appears to be embarrassed by his sentimental choice of words. Mann lets him defuse the cloying mode of the utterance, juxtaposing '...hol' mich der Teufel...' (p.87) with the soft words, a device reminiscent of Heine.

The 'Liebe zum Schicksal' for Klaus Heinrich becomes overlaid in his life as a young man by love for the daughter of an American multi-millionaire. Despite the lure of an old title, the attraction of old castles and the kudos of a marriage at the level which Klaus Heinrich can offer, he only succeeds in winning young Imma's heart when he casts aside the traditionally hollow formality of his accustomed world and immerses himself in the study of economic and financial matters pertaining to the ills of his country and the possible remedies. He thus achieves *Ebenbürtigkeit* with Imma who, like a bee or *Imme*, has feasted on nectar, in the case of the young woman from the New World, knowledge, modern thought, science, and mathematics being the equivalents.

The decaying Old World of the principality featured in this novel, still based on rigid class divisions and with an inability to inject new vigour and wealth into its crumbling foundations, is transformed through the new sensibility manifest in the second-born prince, chosen to be Regent in place of his ailing elder brother, and the welcome union with the immensely rich young woman, her vast dowry a poignant reminder of the pitifully inadequate *Mitgift* brought in by Klaus Heinrich's mother Dorothea at her own marriage, and a new era of personal happiness begins. Imma and her life do not need to be '...verschönt und erhoben...' since she is secure in herself, in her self-esteem and own accomplishments, allowing her prince to '...schauen und forschen für sein eigenes Herz'(p.66). He can finally be himself, a state of consciousness not experienced by him since his baptism and the early childhood years spent in the company of his sister.

The real discipline now required is of a mental and spiritual nature. Although the prince is granted the joy of an equal and loving marriage, he assures an uncle that he has not acted deliberately and selfishly when choosing Imma as his bride. The code of conduct which is second nature to him now makes him declare with pride: '...auch habe ich nicht unbedeutender Weise nur auf mein eigenes Glück Bedacht genommen, sondern alles aus dem Gesichtspunkt des Großen, Ganzen betrachtet.'(p.356). Imma may be a commoner and would not have been eligible in an earlier age but her contribution to the well-being of the prince and his entire country is utterly beneficial and joyously acknowledged on their wedding day.

The crumbling decay of the *Altes Schloß* will be replaced by '...ein neues Schloß [...] geräumig und hell [...] ausgestattet nach Klaus Heinrichs Wunsch, in einer gemischten Stilart aus Empire und Neuzeit, aus kühler Strenge und wohnlichem Behagen'(p.356/7), but a *Schloß* all the same. One can assume that the notion of noblesse oblige, which Klaus Heinrich has had drummed into him from a very young age, and Imma's appreciation of the grandeur of such an aristocratic appellation for her domicile,

are satisfied in equal measure. Here in a nutshell is the old world mixed with the improvements of a new era, a new lifestyle, new attitudes, a new age of enlightenment.¹² Old Spoelmann disdainfully dismisses Klaus Heinrich's possessions as '...Klapperwerk...', '...nichts damit anzufangen'. He graciously allows house, or rather castle, room to '...drei Armstühle...' from the '...kleinen gelben Salon...' (p.357). The impoverished, but emotionally much enriched, prince is grateful for this concession; he '...legte Wert darauf, daß von Grimburger Seite drei Armstühle würden zur Einrichtung beigesteuert werden; denn natürlich wäre es ihm ein wenig peinlich gewesen, wenn Herr Spoelmann für alles und jedes hätte aufkommen müssen' (p.357).

The old order has truly *abgewirtschaftet*, most noticeably in material terms. New vigour is about to be injected through American vitality, unbounded wealth, and a free spirit. Imma finally has no qualms about accepting the prince's proposal of marriage as she feels secure not only in his affection but more importantly in the knowledge that her independence of mind and income will survive. She occupies the stronger position on a personal basis, the prince can merely offer high social status, '...die Verkündigung einer umfassenden Amnestie...' for some of the inmates of the country's jails, a general '...Volksbelustigung, mit Schmalzgebackenem und Sultansbrot, mit Festmarkt...' (p.358) and other circuses for the people, a bridal procession '...umbrandet von Jubel...' (p.359) on her wedding day. Together they will be buoyed up by the admiration and affection extended to them by the *Großherzog's* subjects, living in a new palace where '...auch der verwilderte Park und der Blumengarten [...] sollten ausgelichtet und neu bestellt werden...' (p.357). The words 'neu' and 'hell' are much in evidence in the narrative around the young couple's nuptials, as befits the optimism of the new beginning.

The special wedding gift requested by Klaus Heinrich from his elder brother will have twofold significance. The rose bush from the Old Castle, producing roses scented

only by the smell of decay and decomposition, is to be 'verpflanzt' to its new position in the centre of the '...große Mittelbeet...' and there '...nicht mehr von modrigen Mauern umgeben, sondern in Luft und Sonne und dem fettesten Mergel, der beizubringen wäre, sollte er zusehen, was für Rosen er fortan trieb...' (p.357). The rose bush will no longer have a merely decorative function because symbolically it will indicate (if it can be made to produce sweet smelling flowers) the dawning of a new era in the life of the principality and a new beginning in terms of the private fulfilment for the newly united couple.¹³ All the signs are auspicious, in fact the reader is tempted to draw the conclusion at this stage that the people's *Jubel* reaching the ears of the couple is directed in equal measure towards Imma, in her own right, not simply as an adjunct to her husband.

Just as had been the case at Klaus Heinrich's baptism 'die Fahnen flatterten im Frühlingswind [...] schwarz staute sich auf den Tribünen, den Dächern, den Bürgersteigen die Menge...' (p.359), happy to share the illustrious young couple's perceived happiness and glad to envelop them with surging enthusiasm once again. The narrator announces the bride's arrival thus: 'Doch hinter Glas und vergoldetem Rahmen saß Imma Spoelmann...' (p.359) making her stately procession inside her carriage, aloof from the warm humanity outside. She, too, now appears to resemble the snow queen from the fairy-tale mentioned earlier when the boy Klaus Heinrich was emotionally at a low ebb. Surely, history is not going to be repeated? Alarm is soon dispelled when her gown is shown to be made of '...geflammtem Seidengewebe...' (p.359/60), a reassuring sign that unfeeling coldness will be banished from this dynasty from now on. Furthermore, Mann uses the leitmotif which has accompanied all references to Imma throughout the novel; the reader learns that, despite the formality of this dynastic wedding and the young bride's exquisitely maintained composure, '...unter dem Schleier hervor fiel eine glatte Strähne blauschwarzen Haares in ihre Stirn...' (p.360), signalling that her spirit has not been

subdued by the grandeur of the occasion or the prospect of the elevated position she will occupy in future.

Thus ‘...zog Imma Spoelmann ins Alte Schloß, und das Summen und Dröhnen der Glocken vermischt sich mit den Hochrufen des Volks...’(p.360). A wonderful contrast to the majestic procession and its weighty significance is provided by Herr von Bühl zu Bühl, once again a figure of fun for the narrator and his mischievous description. The mockery knows no bounds. ‘Gebückt nachgerade von der Last der Jahre, aber in braunem Toupet und jugendlich schwänzelnd, schritt er, mit Orden bedeckt bis zu den Lenden und seinen hohen Stab vor sich hinsetzend, den Kammerherren voran...’ and ‘...vier Fräulein aus dem Landadel trugen mit verdutzten Mienen Imma Spoelmanns Schleppen...’(p.361). *Verdutzt* conjures up their surprise that such a formerly ineligible bride could be chosen behind their backs, in preference to their own perceived claims. Yet they, too, comply with duty and fulfil their roles as expected, irrespective of the degree of their flabbergasted, if not actually startled, first reaction to previously unheard of social upheaval. Mann’s masterly emphasis of comic aspects within an otherwise solemn celebration makes the tableau before our eyes both impressive and ridiculous. Solemnity has to hold sway, though, when the moment finally arrives which sees the prince marry his beloved, the Old World injected with all the vigour of the New. The palace chapel is the setting for this union.

Again, as was the case at the bridegroom’s christening, the *Oberhofmarschallamt* had sent ‘...Einladungen in alle Gesellschaftsklassen...’ so that ‘...auch Handeltreibende, Landleute und schlichte Handwerker...’ filled the pews ‘...erhobenen Herzens...’. And, once again, ‘...vorn am Altar...’(p.361) the family has its seats. A heartfelt ‘Loblied’ rings out, the *Hofprediger* conducts the service ‘...kunstreich...’ and ‘...motivisch [...] sozusagen auf musikalische Art’(p.362); readers blessed with a good memory instantly recognize the words, as they were used also at Klaus Heinrich’s baptism. The effect of

this carefully orchestrated wedding ceremony is predictable and satisfying for all those involved. ‘...Da war kein Auge, das trocken blieb’. The subsequent ‘Sprechcour’, potentially a great trial for the young couple, is accomplished ‘...lächelnd über einen Abstand von blankem Parkett hinweg...’(p.362). The newly-weds have clearly adopted traditional practice, effective and in keeping with their apartness. Outwardly little appears to have changed but the reader is relieved to be informed that at the ‘...Zeremonientafel im Marmorsaal...’ and at the ‘...Marschalltafel in dem der Zwölf Monate’ no expense has been spared ‘...aus Rücksicht auf die Gewohnheiten von Klaus Heinrichs Gemahlin’(p.362). The coffers of state have been filled to the brim and everyone will benefit from this day on.

All that remains for the princely couple to do after the *Festmahl* is to appear at an open window to show themselves to the people, to commune with them ‘...schauend zugleich und sich darstellend’(p.363), once more highlighting the interplay of active and passive in the obvious link between rulers and ruled. The language at this point employs the gently active form of the present participle, underlining the change which has occurred, not only in Klaus Heinrich’s life, in which he had mostly felt himself to be merely the object of such encounters with the populace, to be stared at with affection but simultaneously with critical appraisal, but also in the attitudes which will govern future conduct. ‘Das Volk sah aber von unten...’, grateful to have been included in this celebration and ‘...dankbar...’ because they in their ‘...Not und Bedrängnis...’ have not been forgotten. One can be sure that many of them ‘...führen einander auf den Leim und bedürfen dringlich der Erhebung über den Wochentag und seine Sachlichkeit’(p.363). Klaus Heinrich and his exotic bride have recognised their mission in life: to combine a concern for ‘...die öffentliche Wohlfahrt...’(p.363), to provide an avenue of escape for the people by their impeccable conduct and glamour and to adhere to ‘Hoheit und Liebe’.

It will be ‘ein strenges Glück’, but happiness all the same, with duty and dignity among their guiding lights.

In my discussion of *Königliche Hoheit* I have ranged well beyond the baptism scene at the beginning of the novel. I have done so because that scene is only one of many in which the forms and meanings of ritual are explored. Critical discussion has tended to see *Königliche Hoheit* as a re-writing of Thomas Mann’s perennial concern with the artistic sensibility.¹⁴ I have no wish to dispute the relevance of this approach. All I would say is that, in my view, the artistic theme is subordinate to a discussion of the role of aesthetic representation in public life. On this account, the novel abounds in scenes of ritual; indeed, it is, in a sense, its chief preoccupation. It is a theme which Mann handles with all his customary ironic sophistication; at one level, ritual stands in contrast to reality – it is all show, all semblance, whereas reality obeys other laws; but at another level, we are constantly reminded that all societies need, as part of the reality of their effective functioning, some dimension of pomp and circumstance. An under-ritualized society is an impoverished society. The society portrayed in *Königliche Hoheit* does not suffer from that kind of impoverishment. And Imma’s money, mercifully, is available to cope with the other kind.

* * * * *

In many ways, *Königliche Hoheit* is simply a charming piece of escapism.¹⁵ But there are also intimations of more weighty concerns. One crucial implication may have to do with the coming form of politics (represented by American culture), politics that dispense with feudalism and monarchy, politics that derive from the people’s consent.¹⁶ And, in such a culture, all the trappings of power are merely vested in the leader for as long as he or she enjoys the support of the people. In this sense they are all temporary; they are borrowed, because true power comes from and through the ballot box. At this

level, in a modern world, there is a link between representation as an aesthetic category (the cultivation of semblance) and representation as a political category (representation of the people). To that nexus of representations *Königliche Hoheit* bears witness and in the process, ancient (feudal, aristocratic) and modern (capitalist, democratic) worlds achieve a happy fusion.¹⁷ Family and court ritual may appear to be mere show, but, paradoxically, to say this is not entirely to devalue them. Rather, in Mann's highly knowing world, it is actually to validate them. The process that we have traced from Gotthelf to Broch, whereby ritual becomes hollowed out, is now justified; in a post-Nietzschean universe the aesthetic phenomenon may be the only justification there is, and Mann's glittering narrative skill is central to that aesthetic-cum-philosophical project.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 7

1. Hellmuth Karasek points to the then Kaiser's similar physical affliction: '...für die Zeitgenossen war das angeborene Leiden, das der spätere Stellvertreter- und Repräsentationsherrscher zu verbergen und zu meistern trachtete, eine gar nicht so feine oder zarte Anspielung auf ein ähnliches Leiden des damals regierenden Kaisers: Wilhelm II. hatte einen verkürzten Arm, hatte eine ähnliche angeborene Verkümmерung wie der schüchterne Held Thomas Manns, der sie als kühner Reiter so überspielte, wie es der Kaiser versuchte.' He also refers to the *Schlüssellochneugier* of the people who may be searching, beyond the glamour and happiness seen in the lives of royalty, for '...ein Stückchen eines Gebrechens, eines Leides, einer tragischen Krankheit....' He sees such dual fascination as belonging 'zum Geschmack des Illustrierten-Leserpublikums', its love of *Kitsch* described ironically as 'Idealismus des Volkes' by Mann. See: Hellmuth Karasek, 'Königliche Hoheit', *Thomas Mann Jahrbuch*, 4 (1991), 33/34.
2. Hermann Weigand in *Thomas Mann's Novel Der Zauberberg* (New York: D Appleton-Century Co., 1933), p.148, says that this reference prefigures 'an idea to be experimented with', namely the 'intimation of supernatural agencies' which 'confronts the reader in *Königliche Hoheit*' and which 'foreshadows one of the major features of *Der Zauberberg*'
3. Fontane in a charming little story *Im Coupé* reflects on the relationship between America and Europe: 'Deutschland, Italien, das alles ist den Leuten drüben ein bloßer Ausstellungspark geworden, eine Kunstkammer, ein archäologisches Museum, und ich würde, wenn sich's für Amerika um eine symbolische Darstellung unseres alten Europa handelte, Schliemann und Frau, mit dem Ausgrabungsspaten in der Hand, in Vorschlag bringen. [...] Alles alt, alt. Auch das noch Unverschüttete wirkt schon wie ausgegraben. Zum Studium interessant, aber was frommt es dem lebendigen Leben? Und nun vergleichen Sie damit den Einfluß Amerikas auf uns. Unsere Daseinslust hat es auf der einen Seite gesteigert, und das Elend, das aller Menschen Erbteil ist, hat es auf der anderen Seite, wenn nicht zum Schweigen gebracht, so doch eingelullt. Es bedeutet etwas und ist mindestens ein sinnreicher Zufall, daß wir der neuen Welt alle Mittel verdanken (oder doch die besten und wirkungsvollsten unter ihnen), unseren physischen Schmerz zu stillen.' See: Theodor Fontane, 'Von, vor und nach der Reise: Plaudereien und kleine Geschichten', in *Wenn einer eine Reise tut*, ed. by Magdalena Frank (Berlin: Aufbau Taschenbuch Verlag, 1999), pp. 30/31.
4. Thomas Mann himself called this novel 'Dieser Versuch eines Lustspiels in Romanform...'. See: *Lebensabriß*, (first published 1930) in *Thomas Mann Essays III: Ein Appell an die Zukunft* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1994). In this essay Mann describes his novel as 'Die erste künstlerische Frucht meines jungen Ehestandes...' and '...den Versuch eines Paktes mit dem "Glücke" bedeutete...'. He completed his reference to *Königliche Hoheit* '...aber das Spiel seinen Ernst hatte und gewisse fast schon politische Suggestionen davon in die deutsche Welt von 1905 ausgingen, möchte ich wahr haben'.
5. T.J. Reed comments on the *hohe Beruf* of the prince and the illusion that needs to be created to satisfy the people: 'His daily life, itself "without proper reality", consists in adding the final ceremonial touch to the real and useful activities of ordinary people. To do this, whether it is laying a foundation-stone, visiting a festival, or inspecting an exhibition, his role requires that he show an easy familiarity with the substance of what is going on. He creates this illusion by the apt display of what in fact is a mere smattering of knowledge.' See: T.J. Reed, *Thomas Mann: The Uses of Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.100.
6. Friedhelm Marx reflects on Mann's self-referential method of thematizing the creative process, quoting from *Königliche Hoheit*: '...die Beschreibung der Predigt anlässlich der Taufe Klaus Heinrichs bietet eine Reflexion des eigenen Tuns: "D. Wislizenus behandelte es [das Schriftwort] motivisch und sozusagen auf musikalische Art. Er wandte es hin und her, wies es in verschiedener Bedeutung auf und erschöpfte es in allen Beziehungen..."' See: Friedhelm Marx, 'Thomas Mann und Nietzsche: Eine Auseinandersetzung in *Königliche Hoheit*', *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 62 (1988), p.332.
7. Hermann Weigand says that in *Königliche Hoheit* it is Thomas Mann's concern '...to develop the problems confronting a grave little prince who has to take life very seriously, whereas the accompanying shadow play reveals corresponding problems, dangers, temptations, and compensations as typical features of the literary artist's life pattern. There are moments when the characters, together with the stage on which their lives are unfolding, become transparent, as it were, allowing us to glimpse the archetypes of which they are but variations.' See: Hermann Weigand, as above, p.10.
8. This view is developed by Weigand in detail in: 'Der Symbolisch-Autobiographische Gehalt von Thomas Manns Romandichtung *Königliche Hoheit*', *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, (1931), pp. 867-79.
- Ülker Gökberk quotes Thomas Mann as referring to Klaus Heinrich in the same terms as to Thomas Buddenbrook, Gustav Aschenbach, Frederick the Great, Kant and Nietzsche, all representing a soldierly mode of life with the common ground of their existence resting in discipline and austerity.
- See: Ülker Gökberk, 'War as mentor: Thomas Mann and Germanness', in *A Companion to Thomas Mann's Magic Mountain*, ed. by Stephen D. Dowden (Columbia: Camden House, 1999), pp.53-79.
8. Diana, Princess of Wales (1961-1997): As the wife of a future King of England and as a beautiful woman, she became the idol of millions. Her death in a car accident was the occasion for widespread national and international grief and mourning.

9. There is a link here with the artist theme in Thomas Mann's work; it is not feeling itself but the representation of feeling which is of interest. Hermann Weigand, as above, p.140, says: 'The psychological analysis of the artistic impulse, especially in its literary manifestation, and the portrayal of the tension between art and life, between the aesthetic and the ethical imperative [...] endow the [...] novel 'Königliche Hoheit' with its inner meaning.'

10. In a letter to Walter Opitz (5.12.1903) Thomas Mann draws attention to the parallel – drawn in the 'Lisaweta-Gespräch' in *Tonio Kröger* – of artist and royalty regarding their isolation and loneliness. He shows himself to be aware here of this concept as 'Keim zu einer ganz wunderlichen Sache, die ich einmal zu schreiben gedenke.' See: Albert von Schirnding, in the Nachwort to *Thomas Mann, Königliche Hoheit* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1984), p.374.

11. Klaus Heinrich's tutor here echoes Nietzsche, who says in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*: 'Es gibt einen Instinkt für den Rang, welcher mehr als Alles, schon das Anzeichen eines hohen Ranges ist; es gibt eine Lust an den Nuancen der Ehrfurcht, die auf vornehme Abkunft und Gewohnheiten ratthen lässt.' See: Friedhelm Marx, as above, p.334.

12. It is worth noting that Goethe, too, had a lively interest in America, which represented the future, and saw the advantages of the New World:
 'Amerika, du hast es besser/ als unser Kontinent der alte./ Hast keine verfallenen Schlösser/ und keine Basalte'.
 This indicated an awareness that there were no anachronistic feudal systems in place nor, and this was of equal importance, were there revolutionary eruptions.
 See: J.W. von Goethe, *Zahme Xenien VI*, ed by Gisela Henckmann and Irmela Schneider, Vol. 13.1, (Munich: Carl Hauser Verlag, 1992).

13. Helmut Koopmann states in this connection: 'In *Königliche Hoheit* wird die Position des Künstlers nun offensichtlich neu fundiert. Der Künstler ist fortan nicht mehr außerhalb der Gesellschaft angesiedelt'. See: Helmut Koopman, *Die Entwicklung des 'intellektuellen Romans' bei Thomas Mann* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1962), p.136.

14. Stephen D. Dowden relates the figure of the Prince, 'representing the artist's regal essence' and who marries a rich man's daughter, to Mann himself:
 'The resonances are biographical. In 1905 Mann himself had married Katia Pringsheim, daughter of a highly prosperous and well-to-do Munich family. Since the Mann clan had fallen on hard times, hard at least relative to their former wealth in Lübeck, her money came to him at an opportune moment'. See: Introduction to *A Companion to Thomas Mann's Magic Mountain*, as above, p.ix.
 Katia Mann does say, however, in *Meine ungeschriebenen Memoiren*, eds. Elisabeth Plessen and Michael Mann (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1974), referring to an encounter with the Bavarian Prince Luitpold (who addressed her by name since her parents were well known in Munich society) when she was reprimanded by others for her failure to curtsey to him: 'Aber ich hatte keine Ahnung, wie man einen Hofknicks macht. Ich sprach auch sehr selten mit Prinzen'. Imma Spoelmann, of course, had to learn such niceties.
 Family relationships in the Pringsheim/Mann families were, according to Elisabeth Mann, used as a basis for characters in *Königliche Hoheit*, e.g. Spoelmann is based on Katia's own father; Klaus Heinrich's relationship with Albrecht mirrors that of Thomas Mann and his very formal brother Heinrich; Imma is a stylized version of Katia herself, although, in Katia Mann's own words, more *outriert* and *schnippisch*.
 Katia Mann also says in *Meine ungeschriebenen Memoiren* (ibid), that her husband always saw the function of the writer as representative and symbolic, and that in various letters he had repeatedly stated 'es sei eigentlich etwas Fürstliches daran', both princes and writers being governed by duty and discipline.
 Marianne Krüll offers an interesting, and rather different, reading of family reality as it influences a writer's work: 'Mit meiner anderen Geschichte der Familie Mann wollte ich den Blick ein wenig verändern: Zum einen lenkte ich zurück auf die "Geschichte" der Geschichten produzierenden Dichter, zum anderen auf die Personen, die von ihren Geschichten existentiell betroffen waren und sind. Die erdachten Geschichten erscheinen in diesem Licht dann nicht mehr nur als "hehre Kunst", sondern auch als mächtvolle Instrumente zur Definition und Kontrolle von Realität, ja zur Schaffung von Wirklichkeit.' See: Marianne Krüll, *Im Netz der Zauberer: Eine andere Geschichte der Familie Mann* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1993) p.445.

15. Referring to the mixed reception given to the novel in German literary circles, v. Schirnding, quoting from a letter (Thomas Mann to Paul Amann, 1.10.1915) acknowledges that overall the book had been received 'mit der tiefsten Mißbilligung'. He goes on to elaborate: 'Diese Mißbilligung galt vor allem der zweiten Hälfte, ihrem lustspielhaften Schluß. Vom Autor der *Buddenbrooks* und des *Tonio Kröger* hatte man mehr Tiefgang, mehr Strenge, weniger Glück erwartet. Man sah in dem happy end, der Erlösung der Hoheit durch die Liebe, eine Konzession des Erzählers an den Publikumsgeschmack, auch an volkstümliche Tendenzen der Zeit, beinahe so etwas wie einen Verrat am eigenen Dichtertum. Kurt Martens sprach in seinem Buch *Literatur in Deutschland. Studien und Eindrücke* von einem "Abstieg ins Flachland des Optimismus".' See: Albert von Schirnding, as above, pp. 386/387.

16. In the *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* Thomas Mann later self-critically plays down the significance given to the democratic concept in the novel: 'Zwar wird Klaus Heinrich "glücklich", und Raoul Überbein, der romantisches Individualist, geht auf die tendenziöseste Weise elendiglich zugrunde. Aber für so gemein, für so politisch darf man mich nicht halten, daß ich im "Glück" ein Argument, und im Zugrundegehen eine Widerlegung erblickte...Umgekehrt lieben die Erfinder von Geschichten es sehr, gewissen Figuren ihre persönliche Sympathie, anderen dagegen ihre heitere Geringschätzung auszudrücken, indem sie jene zugrunde

gehen, diese aber glücklich werden lassen...' See: Thomas Mann, *Gesammelte Werke in Einzelbänden*, ed. by Peter de Mendelssohn (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag), *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* (1983), p.97.

17. v. Schirnding sees Thomas Mann as a Janus figure: 'Er steht an der Grenze von Altem und Neuem, blickt janushaft zugleich in die Vergangenheit und in die Zukunft.' See: Albert von Schirnding, as above, p.390.

CHAPTER 8

Potatoes and politics - a proletarian engagement in Fallada's *Kleiner Mann - was nun?*

The title of Fallada's *Kleiner Mann-was nun?* (published in 1932)¹ speaks volumes. Its main character, Pinneberg, is the 'little man' in two senses. He is the little man within a ferociously realistic novel about the instability of Weimar Germany. He is also the little man understood within a kind of morality play scenario. He is modest humanity taking its chances in the world. The confluence of moral fable and realistic study of social decline accounts for the characteristic rhetoric of Fallada's novel.² Having said this, I have to concede that not all readers nowadays are happy with that rhetoric. Lämmchen particularly can provoke the ire of feminist critics and students. Perhaps she is simply the cloyingly sweet version of femininity as conceived by the male imagination, but in her defence I would say that Fallada's creative imagination, like Dickens's, works both with a ferociously detailed sense of how a rapacious society functions on the one hand, and on the other, with a well-nigh fairytale belief in uncontaminated beauty and purity. Pinneberg and Lämmchen do not belong in the cut-and-thrust of Weimar Germany. And that, in Fallada's eyes, is a judgment not on them but on the society that has so little room for them.

* * * * *

The private engagement between Pinneberg and Emma Mörschel, otherwise known as 'Lämmchen', takes place on the steps leading up to the tenement building which she and her family, along with '..den zwanzig Parteien, die über diese Treppe aus-

und eingingen...' (p.16)*, call home.³ Her reaction to the proposal of marriage is ' wie wenn alle Weihnachtsbäume ihres Lebens auf einmal in ihr brennten...' (p.15). This engagement follows the discovery of Lämmchen's pregnancy which initially leaves the very young and very impecunious couple aghast and frightened and gives evidence of Pinneberg's impulsive nature.⁴ The motives behind his sudden breathless question 'Wie wär's, wenn wir uns heiraten würden -...?' (p.15) are various, such as his desire to see more of his girlfriend (the fact of their living in different towns making this difficult), his delight in her appearance and company which pushes his '...Appetit über alles Begreifen' (p.11), his conviction that she is '..das beste Mädchen von der Welt, das einzige überhaupt' (p.10/11), but perhaps also his wish to 'make an honest woman of her'. The morality of the 1930s decreed this and surely Pinneberg's inherent decency dictates this course of action, despite the narrator's assertion that

...er kämpfte mit sich, ob er Lämmchen nicht sagen sollte, daß er bei seinem Heiratsantrag gar nicht an diesen Murkel gedacht hatte, sondern nur daran, daß es sehr gemein war, an diesem Sommerabend drei Stunden auf sein Mädchen in der Straße zu warten. Aber er sagte es nicht. (p.15)

The '...nett aussehender, blonder junger Mann...' (p.7) exudes integrity, warmth and charm, the perfect other half for young Emma '...im plissierten weißen Rock, der Rohseidenbluse, ohne Hut, die blonden Haare verweht' (p.7). Pinneberg and Lämmchen are innocent and good, like figures from a morality play or a fairy-tale; they are the 'little people' who, in any society, represent the test case of how humanity is treated. Their experiences are the moral barometer of their world; and in the final analysis they – and not their world – are justified. But that world is both omnipresent and omnipotent.

The labour market of the 1930s, particularly for the working class to which Lämmchen belongs, but equally for a young white collar worker like Pinneberg who has

* Page numbers in this chapter refer to: *Hans Fallada, Kleiner Mann-was nun?* (Berlin: Rowohlt Verlag, 1932).

aspirations to a higher management position in due course, is stony soil in terms of job security, financial reward, and a reasonable standard of living. Many workers during and after the Great Depression were doomed to arduous struggle, anxiety, and often hopelessness and a sense of helpless misery.⁵ In due course Pinneberg, too, is inexorably pulled down and faced with unemployment and the realisation that he is of no consequence, that he only has an identity as a voter for those who need to be voted in, asked by politicians to tighten his belt, to make sacrifices and ‘...deutsch zu fühlen...’ (p.138), but that his own needs are of no interest to anyone, other than as an experience shared by millions of other *kleine Leute* in the same predicament. ‘Ob ich verrecke oder nicht, das ist ihnen ja so egal, ob ich ins Kino kann oder nicht, daß ist ihnen so schnuppe, ob Lämmchen sich jetzt anständig ernähren kann oder zu viel Aufregungen hat, ob der Murkel glücklich wird oder elend - wen kümmert das was?’ (p.138). He is not alone since ‘Massen von Menschen sind da, grau in der Kleidung, fahl in den Gesichtern, Arbeitslose, die warten, sie wissen selbst nicht mehr auf was, denn wer wartet noch auf Arbeit?’ (p.137).

Fallada’s story of decent and loving young people draws the reader into this fight for survival. The author also subtly suggests, by means of the careful phrasing of Pinneberg’s proposal, that this young man and his chosen wife, despite their slight social differences, are equals, a modern couple with an equal stake in the emotional and economic circumstances of their marriage. Pinneberg does not pose the question in the traditional form of ‘Will you marry me?’ with its overtones of inequality but: ‘...Wie wär’s, wenn wir uns heiraten würden?’ (p.15). This choice of words, by its implied mutuality, informs the reader that one is witnessing the beginning of a union of two equals. Sadly at a later stage Pinneberg, already fearful of dismissal from his job, feeling no longer secure in his marriage, believes that he will not be able to share his worries with Lämmchen, the reason being that she does not think for herself, has simply espoused her

father's and brother's socialist beliefs and ' ...hat Sympathien für die Kommunisten.' (p.139). He realises 'das versteht sie nicht.' (p.138). This realisation detracts from the notion of equality between them; it will not, however, be allowed to sunder man and wife. Lämmchen, too, will experience moments of exasperation, such as when her young husband behaves foolishly and acquires a useless but elegant dressing table, unaffordable for people of such slender means but coveted by Lämmchen, in order to please her. He cannot but notice, despite the delight voiced by her superficially, that she is in despair. Her usually loving tone changes as she reminds him of the financial implications of the arrival of their child. Pinneberg needs to stand up for himself now, his only solid identity resting in his being the object of her love, which lifts him out of the anonymity of being one of the many inconsequential and interchangeable millions;⁶ fear of losing such an essential, and sustaining, sense of self makes him reflect on the precariousness of his being, and so he vows to fight to preserve the emotional core of his life, since

...er hat Lämmchens Stimme so anders gehört, sie redet so, als gäbe es ihn, den Jungen, überhaupt nicht mehr, als sei er ein irgendwer, ein beliebiger. Und wenn er sonst nur ein kleiner Verkäufer ist, bei dem sie früh genug gesorgt haben, daß er weiß, er ist nichts Besonderes, irgend so ein Tierlein, das man leben lassen kann oder krepieren lassen, es ist wirklich nicht so wichtig [...] Er weiß, jetzt geht es nur um das einzige, was in diesem seinem Leben Wert und Sinn hat. Das muß er festhalten, darum muß er kämpfen, darin sollen sie ihn nicht auch auspowern (p.170)

The force of this impassioned narrative commentary is clear: in the totality of his social existence Pinneberg is merely one small cog in a brutal machine, whereas in his love for Lämmchen he is utterly and perfectly unique. The moral scheme behind Fallada's novel is, then, not subtle, but it does produce a statement of undeniable anger and courage.

The two young people have their origins in the class of the *kleine Leute*, the millions who have little or no control over their lives, whose prospects are blighted by historical factors set in motion by those in positions of power, but as individuals their status is validated by the love they inspire in each other and by their endeavour to acquit

themselves with dignity, decency, and honest work. It is shown to be the vagaries of history and the political climate of the time which cast deep shadows over their dreams and aspirations and force them to descend to the level of a barely human and barely endurable existence. One of Berlin's parks, the *Tiergarten*, affords the narrator the chance to draw a parallel between the inhuman conditions forced on the working class and other unexceptional toilers and the animals whose presence is suggested by the name of the park. 'Und die, die hier alle stehen im Kleinen Tiergarten, ein richtiger kleiner Tiergarten, die ungefährlichen, ausgehungerten, hoffnungslos gemachten Bestien des Proletariats, denen geht's wenigstens nicht anders [...] Das sind die einzigen Gefährten...' (p.138). The 'einzigen Gefährten' are, in reality, illusory ones since Pinneberg is not truly one of them. He, a *Kleinbürger*, is not like a blue-collar worker who may find a degree of comfort in political activism and the efforts of trades unions. The class-specific plight of one who is bereft of the solidarity of organised support structures, such as were available to the lower orders of the proletariat, increases the vulnerability of a 'kleiner Mann' such as Pinneberg.

Let us now consider the actual engagement, or, as Fallada memorably puts it: 'Pinneberg gerät in die Mörschelei' (p.15). On entering the small flat occupied by the Mörschel family, the young man is struck by the drabness of the environment but more particularly by the appearance of Lämmchen's mother and her unwillingness to greet daughter and future son-in-law. Pinneberg is uneasy, as many a newly affianced man has been before him, faced with the need to make a good impression on the beloved's family, and any young woman presenting her chosen husband to potentially hostile parents will recognise the symptoms of a fast beating heart and the wish to comb and tidy her fiancé's hair. Fallada, too, is aware of this and supplies the details in his narrative.⁷

The colours which greet the visitor to the Mörschel's humble abode are brown and dark blue, in contrast with the light airiness of Emma's attire. What the narrator conjures up before the reader, in the description of Emma's mother, is a woman who has been

defeated by life, who has been turned bitter and resentful, suspicious, with an overwhelming fear of disgrace. Her body is worn out before its time (she is presumably no more than 45 or 50 years old) through much hard work and a life spent in unhealthy conditions: ‘Am Herde stand mit rundem, krummem Rücken eine Frau und briet etwas in einer Pfanne. Pinneberg sah ein braunes Kleid und eine große blaue Schürze.’ (p.16). The news of the forthcoming marriage does not evoke any kind of joy in her but does at least compel her to look up from her cooking task. Her pitiful existence has clearly left its mark on what may have been an attractive and appealing woman in her youth. ‘Es war ein braunes Gesicht mit einem starken Mund, einem scharfen gefährlichen Mund, ein Gesicht mit sehr hellen, scharfen Augen und mit zehntausend Falten. Eine alte Arbeiterfrau.’ (p.17). Pinneberg, and the reader, are explicitly made aware here of the class issue which is one of the two strands behind Fallada’s canvas of helpless humanity. This sketched portrait of Lämmchen’s hapless mother, shown in her poverty stricken environment, tells Pinneberg, and the reader, that he is not welcome here, contrary to the reception most decent young men are granted when offering marriage to a young woman who is not only from a more disadvantaged social class but is also already pregnant. The parental delight one might have expected is entirely absent; in fact, Pinneberg’s shyly polite words trigger a torrent of abuse. The ‘alte Arbeiterfrau’ clearly cannot look beyond the certainty of *Schande* brought into the life of her daughter and, by extension, into that of the entire family. Emma, ‘ein gutes Mädchen’ (p.18), needs to be seen as blameless; clearly it must have been young Pinneberg who seduced her into losing her honour. We find here yet another example of class tension, and the ‘upper class’ seducer must be seen as the villain. In between venomous accusations and angry glances ‘...wandte sie sich wieder zu ihren Kartoffelpuffern’ (p.17). This greasy and cheap, but labour intensive food, brown too in parallel with the drabness of this proletarian household, continues to be fried while Pinneberg is being assessed and berated, overtly found wanting but perhaps secretly

accepted since the forbiddingly grumpy mother does after all undertake to mediate between daughter and father.

Pinneberg, briefly left alone with the mother, is subjected to a relentless grilling.

Er hätte nichts sagen sollen, denn wie ein Geier schoß die Frau auf ihn nieder. In der einen Hand hielt sie den Haken, in der andern noch die Gabel vom Pufferwenden, aber das war nicht so schlimm, trotzdem sie damit fuchtelte. Schlimm war ihr Gesicht, in dem alle Falten zuckten und sprangen, schlimmer waren ihre grausamen und bösen Augen. (p.17)

At one level she is clearly a ferocious mother-in-law; at another level, she is a mother, proud of her girl and deeply resentful of the seducer, and, one suspects, of men generally; and at yet another level she may be seen as the businesswoman trying to ascertain Pinneberg's prospects. The various levels at work in the portrait of the mother bear witness to Fallada's skill at social diagnosis. Pinneberg, naturally, is reduced to whispering his answers 'angstvoll' (p.18). His careful *Hochdeutsch* highlights the social gap between their respective milieux by the contrast with the dialect of her speech. Our 'nett aussehender, blonder junger Mann', full of normally lauded professional aspirations and with his status as *Angestellter*, is contemptuously dismissed by this spiteful working class virago. The proud statements that 'Wir sind Proletarier.', 'Mein Mädchen soll einfach bleiben.' and '...Arbeiter wäre mir lieber' (p.18) virtually relegate Pinneberg to the ranks of a *Klassenfeind*. He is not to be trusted, he is an alien being and he must be equally impecunious, since his wish to impress by wearing a suit can only bring about penury.

Lämmchen's high spirited intervention, after having carried out menial tasks herself, gives Pinneberg the official label of fiancé. She has sensed that behind the bluster of her careworn mother's tirade there is grudging acceptance, even if the woman needs to be reminded that '...heute ist unser Verlobungstag' (p.19) and that obviously the *Bräutigam* will join the family at supper, however humble it may be. Young Emma tries

in vain to elicit a polite enquiry from her hard-bitten mother as to '...ob er Kartoffelpuffer mag?' (p.19). The humdrum food being prepared vividly illustrates that this is no joyous engagement, welcomed by two delighted and courteous families. The *Verlobungstag* of Lämmchen and her beloved Pinneberg could not be more pedestrian and austere in atmosphere and in terms of family participation or shared happiness. The fact that the new son-in-law is greeted with abuse is an indication that people from the world of Zille⁸, chronicler of an earlier age and the dismal lives of the Proletariat, are ground down by the hardships inherent in their fate to become foul-mouthed, coarse and insensitive. The statements made by young Emma about her mother serve to explain and, perhaps, to offer a certain exculpation: 'Mutter ist ne einfache Arbeiterin [...] Die ist so derb, sie denkt sich nichts dabei [...] Mutter weiß immer alles.' and 'Mutter ist so. Mutter muß immer schimpfen.' (p.19).

The two young people, left alone together for a short while, turn to the question of engagement rings.⁹ The mention of rings neatly parallels the earlier activity of Lämmchen's mother at the stove, old-fashioned rings having to be lifted from, and replaced over, the fire burning inside the iron cooking range. Shapes which were handled with sullen anger and resignation by the older woman are now the subject of loving conversation, of closer bonding, of the discovery of matching tastes and a heartwarming exchange about a popular superstition which warns of ensuing strife if hands are scrutinised too closely. In this milieu of manual workers, hands take on a special meaning beyond that of being home to engagement, and later, wedding rings. Talk of rings and the thread used to establish the required size produces the eloquent line 'Laß sehen, wir wollen Maß nehmen.' (p.20). The two young people who are so very much in love are still trying to measure themselves against each other, to get the measure of the chosen partner as well as measuring the circumference of the finger to be encircled with gold.

The reader assumes that Emma's father would be even more antagonistic to the 'misalliance', as he would see it, of his daughter and more intractable in his opposition than the hard-bitten mother, as the narrator has her say 'Ich will mit Vater zuerst allein reden.' (p.19), thereby suggesting that, despite the outwardly unequal position of these two partners in the marriage battle, the wife may have in her grasp certain powers of persuasion designed to facilitate family life in the face of much internal strife and external threat. Clearly, the 'Verlobungstag' is not going to be enhanced by the father's reception. In fact the command, barked in parade ground tone and volume by the mother, employing the military style imperative infinitive 'Rüberkommen! Vater ist da!' indicates a relationship and family cohesion based on fear. Not only is Mörschel senior depicted as an ogre who also '...flaxt ewig', the picture which greets young Pinneberg in the kitchen, on following the harsh summons, is of a man of little outward charm.

Am Küchentisch sitzt ein langer Mann in grauen Hosen, grauer Weste und einem weißen Trikothemd, ohne Jacke, ohne Kragen. An den Füßen hat er Pantoffeln. Ein gelbes faltiges Gesicht, kleine scharfe Augen hinter einem hängenden Zwicker, ein grauer Schnurrbart, ein fast weißer Kinnbart. (p.20)

This unprepossessing member of the proletariat only reluctantly interrupts his reading of the *Volksstimme*¹⁰ newspaper and sarcastically greets the newly acquired son-in-law, a fact which appears to be taken as read, with the hackneyed phrase 'Sehr erfreut, setzen Sie sich hin.' , at the same time predicting that Pinneberg will in any case change his mind in due course. There is no doubt in the older man's mind since clearly his faith in mankind has long been shattered and experience has taught him that fellow beings cannot be relied upon to be true to their word. The phrase 'Übrigens werden Sie es sich noch überlegen.' (p.20) explicitly informs the reader of this.

While the prospective new member of the family is being interviewed by the tough and uncompromising head of the household, the women busy themselves with

producing a quantity of 'Kartoffelpuffer' for the shared meal. Emma's brother has not returned yet from work, and, in consequence 'die ganzen Puffer werden zäh.' (p.20). What else could they be in this harsh environment but 'zäh', like those whose lives have to accommodate hardship, stress, hopelessness, and fear. In such an environment it comes as no surprise to the reader to find that the ensuing dialogue between Pinneberg, the erstwhile happy bridegroom, his future father-in-law and the returning brother of the newly engaged, potato cake-frying, young woman at the stove turns on financial and political issues. There is no room for romance in the minds of those for whom the class struggle, beloved of the political left, is the life blood in their veins. Its essence is the conviction that 'they', the employers, are the enemy, that the proletariat is exploited and that only by organised cohesion and solidarity can their lives be improved. The battle lines have been drawn very clearly and young Pinneberg, despite the fact that he does belong to the 'Deutsche Angestellten-Gewerkschaft'¹¹, is deemed to be a traitor to the cause of organised militant labour and to be caught between two stools, working hand in hand with the '...gelben Bonzen'. All DAG members are despised '...weil Sie nie 'nen Streik machen, weil Sie immer die Streikbrecher sind...' (p.22).

Old Mörschel has the measure of this particular breed of worker, low-paid *Angestellte*¹², who allow themselves to be equally exploited by even agreeing to do unpaid overtime work. 'Ihr denkt, ihr seid was Besseres als wir Arbeiter.' (p.22). The fact that Pinneberg claims to have needs and aspirations beyond purely financial considerations cuts little ice with the class warrior and he assures him that '...darum wär mir ein Arbeiter für meine Tochter lieber...', instead of this alien being who is 'so schnieke...' (p.21) but obviously gullible and ineffectual in his perception of society.¹³ Old Mörschel mischievously fires a last salvo against the hapless and outgunned young hopeful by accusing him of a 'mächtig proletarische Angewohnheit...', namely that he has '...doch Vorschuß genommen' (p.22) with Emma, the pregnancy clearly having been

discussed between the girl's parents. The tension perceived in this parental outburst exists even before the meeting with Lämmchen's parents – after all the young couple go to see the gynaecologist as private patients. This would have been unaffordable (as it is, of course, for Pinneberg as well) for the class-struggle-conscious father; and worse still, it would have been anathema to him.

The Mörschel parents have gone through the motions of opposition to their daughter's planned marriage so that the food¹⁴, the production of which has been the sizzling accompaniment to this utterly unromantic engagement, can move into the foreground of the proceedings. This, together with the important issue of political preoccupation and aggressively voiced antagonism to the existing societal order, appears to be the focus of this underprivileged family. Even Lämmchen, at this point simply happy in the warm glow of her understanding with her young man, will later be driven by the deteriorating circumstances to ponder the effect on their lives of the lack of money and prospects.

The joyous anticipation of the birth of their baby is tempered by their impecunious position.

“O warum”, denkt Lämmchen, “o warum haben wir nicht ein ganz klein bißchen mehr Geld! Daß man nur nicht so furchtbar mit dem Pfennig zu rechnen brauchte! Es wäre alles so einfach, das ganze Leben sähe anders aus, und man könnte sich restlos auf den Murkel freuen...”
(p.183)

The dialectic inherent in her thinking is evident in the antithesis offered immediately by the narrator, and equally inconclusively.

O warum nicht! Und die dicken Autos brausen an ihr vorbei und es gibt Delikatessengeschäfte und Menschen gibt es, die verdienen so viel, daß sie gar nicht ihr Geld ausgeben können. Nein, Lämmchen versteht es nicht... (p.183)

The social contrast shown here so starkly exercises not only the helpless Lämmchen but likewise the reader.¹⁵ Later in the novel another unfortunate woman provides a reminder that some human life does appear to be held cheaply in these times of economic turmoil. The 'Seifenfrau' who listens sympathetically to Emma's long litany of problems is '...lang und mager...' and has '...ein gelbes, faltiges Gesicht...', clearly careworn and unhealthy from a life of deprivation like Lämmchen's mother. Her husband offers the bitter reflection that '...die Vögeln füttern sie ja wohl im Winter, daß sie nicht umkommen, aber unsereins...' (p.185). The implicit questions are here, but all these statements peter out in helpless resignation, indicated by Fallada's use of the sequence of dots at the end of their grammatically unfinished sentences. This can only partly be explained by such people's lack of real education and resulting inability to articulate properly and fully; it is surely rather a sign that they have no answers, that society is throwing them on the scrap heap and that 'they', the powers that be, are not interested in the survival of the *kleiner Mann* let alone in offering any kind of attractive and worthwhile existence. The '...dicker, roter Kerl...' in the background of the soap shop sums up the status of people like Pinneberg: 'Angestellter. Ich muß immer lachen, Angeschissener sollte das heißen.' (p.185).

Before the *Kartoffelpuffer* can be consumed, the last member of this unattractive and uninviting family appears. Lämmchen's brother Karl, who is described as '...völlig unjung...' and looks '...noch gelber, noch galliger als der Alte', goes about his ablutions at the kitchen sink, stripped to the waist, and '...nimmt von dem Gast keinerlei Notiz...'. This boorish conduct, the total absence of any courtesy, of any even grudging acknowledgment of the stranger in their midst, appear to be '...wohl selbstverständlich' (p.23) to the other members of the family, but Pinneberg reacts as if he was increasingly aware of the social gulf that separates him from these uncouth specimens. He needs to hold on to Lämmchen's earlier reminder 'Du heiratest mich,

mich, mich, ohne Vater und Mutter.'(p.20); one notes the intensity of the repeated pronoun. Nevertheless: 'Pinneberg ist vieles nicht selbstverständlich. Die häßlichen Steingutteller mit den schwärzlichen Anschlagstellen, die halb kalten Kartoffelpuffer, die nach Zwiebeln schmecken, die saure Gurke, das laue Flaschenbier, das nur für die Männer dasteht, dazu diese trostlose Küche, der waschende Karl...' (p.23). The narrator paints a grimly forbidding and accurate picture of a world without frills, without beauty, without manners, and clearly without any awareness of the absence of qualities which could provide a modicum of comfort and dignity. One look at Pinneberg, his sister's besuited fiancé, tells Karl that she will be marrying '...einen Bourgeois, ein Prolet ist ihr nicht fein genug' (p.23). The class divide opens up more plainly with every word, despite the fact that the players in this 'kitchen sink drama' find themselves in similarly unenviable economic situations. Outward appearance merely hides this political fact. It is made clear to the reader in the subsequent dialogue, from which Pinneberg is excluded, ignored as someone of no consequence and not worthy of being allowed to participate in the political slanging match which develops between father and son, that here there is strife and political division even within the family. The accusation levelled at the old man is that he is a 'Sozialfaschist', someone to be despised even more fervently than a 'richtiger Bourgeois'. The label of 'Sowjetjünger' is firmly attached to Karl, who after the engagement 'feast' goes to attend 'eine KPD-Versammlung' (p.24), which comes as no surprise to the reader.¹⁶ Fallada's social portraiture here is nothing short of masterly. It was part of the disunity of the Left in the 1920s that communists and socialists regarded each other with particular enmity, and hence they were not able to make common cause against the Nazis. For hard-line communists, socialists were worse than fascists; hence 'Sozialfaschist' is a term of virulent abuse.

This political debate re-emerges later in the novel, the two protagonists being Lämmchen and Pinneberg. Life by then has meted out many disappointments and has

evoked in them both anger and fear. A situation in which shop assistants, Pinneberg's job at that point, are forced to fulfil a sales quota, in a climate of economic decline, inflation, and uncertainty among ordinary people, is seen as brutally inhuman and callously uncaring. The division seen here is again of 'them and us', a *kleiner Mann*, like Pinneberg, merely a pawn in a game he cannot control or influence.¹⁷ The sword of Damocles which is suspended above such insignificant figures sways dangerously in the dire economic wind of the age. As Pinneberg points out to Lämmchen, it becomes a question of the survival of the fittest, the Darwinian law applied now to sales technique and personality-based persuasive powers. The quota is imposed, however cruel it is deemed to be, and '...wenn du das nicht schaffst, fliegst du'(p.196). The psychological consequences are not far behind, since even any assistant fortunate enough still to have a job will find himself in the predicament that '...er immer Angst haben muß, ob er es auch schafft - dann verkauft er vor lauter Angst schon gar nichts!'(p.196/7).

Logically, Lämmchen, with her humanity still intact, asks herself 'Sollen die Schwächeren denn gar nichts mehr sein? Einen Menschen danach bewerten, wieviel Hosen er verkaufen kann!'(p.197).¹⁸ Inhuman practices will spawn a new breed of monsters, and the nightmare of German history as it will unfold in the years after the publication of Fallada's compassionate and prophetic novel is being created. Lämmchen by then is astute enough to realize that '...da ziehen sie lauter Raubtiere hoch und da werden sie was erleben, Junge, sage ich dir!'(p.197). This statement is in stark contrast to Pinneberg's earlier musings when in an inner monologue he reflects on the hopeless, hungry, but harmless '...Bestien des Proletariats...' (p.138). The reality is that, at that point, and in Pinneberg's words 'Die meisten bei uns sind ja auch schon Nazis.'(p.197). Lämmchen, due to her family history and her exposure to communist thinking and promises, clearly favours the communist party, expecting them to stand up for the common man, to fight for his dignity, his right to lead a reasonably secure life, free from

hunger and fear, persecution and threat, whereas the more naive but pragmatic Pinneberg reserves judgment for the time being: 'Das wollen wir uns noch mal überlegen [...] Ich möchte ja auch immer, aber dann bringe ich es doch nicht fertig'(p.197). The reason behind his indecision can be found in the all too prevalent self-centredness which he voices here: 'Vorläufig haben wir ja noch eine Stellung, da ist es ja noch nicht nötig.'(p.197). Seldom have self-interest versus the common good and personal need versus solidarity been more succinctly and unashamedly stated.¹⁹

Pinneberg has chosen an 'Aschenputtel', as Emma refers to herself in all her charming simplicity and humility, but on the day of their engagement they are happy in their love, looking up to the sky '...und seine Sterne in ihm'(p.25/6), conjuring up a picture of quiet delight and promise, and young Pinneberg, despite the uninspiring surroundings and pedestrian atmosphere the engagement has produced in Emma's family, is eager to maintain a state of mind which views the future with hope and images of a shared home for himself and his wife-to-be where '...wir es ein bißchen hübsch hätten [...] es müßte hell sein bei uns und weiße Gardinen und alles immer schrecklich sauber'(p.24). One registers the aspirations of the lower middle class boy whose dreams are still intact, whose Cinderella needs to be his beautiful princess even if Emma herself casts aspersions on her physical appeal. Their joint journey through adult life begins inauspiciously, Pinneberg '...hatte sich seine Verlobungsfeier anders gedacht'(p.23) but, despite the enforced frugality, of which the half-cold and greasy *Kartoffelpuffer* are a foretaste, and the need to resort to '...die kostenlosen Freuden...', having had to face up to the fact of extravagances like '...Kalbschnitzel und die Flasche Mosel zum Einzug...' (p.199) being no longer affordable, the loving spirit generated between them ensures their emotional survival, even when their physical existence becomes increasingly precarious. The vagaries of life, the Depression with its six million unemployed, the sabre rattling of those who have the *Wille zur Macht* and who control their fate, cannot obliterate, or even

diminish, what is best in the relationship of Lämmchen²⁰ (perhaps the lamb being led to the 1930s slaughter) and her erstwhile knight in shining armour who has lifted her from soul-destroying loveless drudgery, for

...draußen war ja die wilde weite Welt mit viel Radau und Feindschaft, die gar nichts Gutes von einem wußte und wollte - war es da nicht gut, wenn eines am anderen lag und sich fühlte wie eine kleine warme Insel? (p.167)

The helplessness here and the desperate irresolution of the rhetorical question are deeply characteristic of Fallada's novel. *Kleiner Mann-was nun?* ends when Pinneberg has been reduced to a being without dignity '...heruntergestoßen [...] vom Bürgersteig...weggejagt...' (p.364) like a rabid dog. Lämmchen feels the full burden of the isolation which is at the core of human existence. By literally and metaphorically lifting Pinneberg up from the dust of his latest humiliation she will rekindle their love. They will fly higher and higher. The memory of having once before glanced up at the stars on a blissful nocturnal excursion to a beach, which presumably resulted in the untimely pregnancy and later the birth of their much-loved child, will banish fear and cold distance and 'sie gleiten empor, die Sterne funkeln ganz nahe...' (p.364); the love which fills them on the day of the engagement will ultimately ensure their emotional survival by impressing upon these much put upon *kleine Leute* that what matters at the deepest human level is the fact that '...wir sind doch beisammen...' (p.364). It is that realization which enables them to go on.

* * * * *

Although at the end of the novel Pinneberg is, we feel, embarked on a descent into dereliction and despair, and neither he nor his creator appear to envisage any material solution, nevertheless, the closing sentences of the novel

Die Woge steigt und steigt. Es ist der nächtliche Strand zwischen Lensahn und Wiek, schon einmal waren die Sterne so nah. Es ist das alte Glück, es ist die alte Liebe. Höher und höher, von der befleckten Erde zu den Sternen.

Und dann gehen sie beide ins Haus, in dem der Murkel schläft.(p.364)

offer a gesture of hope that is moving in its sheer inadequacy, an inadequacy that is shared by both the main characters and the narrator. It would be good if love and decency could count for something and if the stars took note. But in Weimar Germany of the 1930s more vigorous, practical measures were needed. And when they came, they were, as we all know, unspeakable.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 8

1. Philip Brady explains the novel's success thus: 'To many of its most enthusiastic reviewers the novel's strength lay in its close-up characterization. But these were not characters in a vacuum: timing – that critical year 1932 – gave them a context and, with that context, urgent topicality. [...] Fallada's much-praised authenticity is inseparable from a major cultural shift in Germany in the late 1920s. No change during these admittedly changeable years was quite so far-reaching as that towards what came to be called "Neue Sachlichkeit", a term variously rendered as neo-realism, new objectivity, new sobriety. The term had gained currency in 1925 when G.F. Hartlaub, a gallery-director, opened an exhibition in Mannheim under that title. In that same year Expressionism, the polar opposite of realism, was pronounced dead in a famous essay by the art-critic Franz Roh. Cinema and photography were soon seeking to exploit the realistic rather than the visionary, the transcendent potential of the camera. Painting too exemplifies the move towards what the art-historian Wieland Schmied has called "a new attentiveness to the world of objects". In literature the change was equally marked through the cultivation of coolness of gesture, of undemonstrative language, in the foregrounding of fact and authenticity, in the cult of reportage.' See: Philip Brady, Introduction to *Hans Fallada: Little Man-What Now?* (London: Libris, 1996), pp.x, xvi.
2. In the introduction to *Kleiner Mann-was nun?* (London: Methuen, 1987), Roy Reardon says, speaking of Fallada's analysis of the world of the *Kleinbürger*, that 'Perhaps the most remarkable feature of his work was his ability to present this class and their fears, hopes, and prejudices so objectively, when at the same time he identified so closely with them.' The dialogue in the novel, which according to Fallada was difficult to write, is used as a major narrative element. Although the reader assumes an easy familiarity, on the part of the author, with the linguistic register of his characters, Fallada's own words attest to the fact that this apparent authorial ease was achieved only with great difficulty: 'Ach, diese klaglichen Stunden, die ich mit den Schwierigkeiten der Technik kämpfte, da ich nicht wußte, was zuerst zu erzählen, wie eine Handlung vorzubereiten, etwas schon früher Geschehenes dem Leser nachträglich beizubringen war. Diese endlosen Dialoge mit ihrem "sagte sie, sagte er, antwortete sie, widersprach er"....Wie da herauskommen?' See: Hans Fallada, *Wie ich Schriftsteller wurde* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1967).
3. August Bebel comments on the lack of living space and high rents thus: 'Da [...] die Wohnungsmieten im Vergleich zu den Löhnen und zu dem Einkommen des Arbeiters, des niederen Beamten und des kleinen Mannes viel zu hoch sind, so müssen sie sich aufs Äußerste einschränken. [...] Alte und Junge wohnen auf engstem Raume. [...] Die so vielfach erörterte Zunahme der Verrohung und Verwilderung der Jugend ist vorzugsweise den Zuständen in unserem Industriesystem geschuldet, mit dem die Wohnungsmisere in engster Beziehung steht.' See: August Bebel, *Die Frau und der Sozialismus* (Stuttgart: Dietz, 1918). Elements of this lifestyle are still in evidence in Fallada's novel.
4. In connection with marriage, Subiotto observes: 'Despite this initial "duress" in Pinneberg's relationship with his wife, Lämmchen represents, as many critics have observed, a stay and support for Pinneberg that is characteristic of Fallada's portrayal of marriage generally.' See: A.V. Subiotto, 'Kleiner Mann-was nun? and *Love on the Dole*: Two Novels of the Depression', in *Weimar Germany: Writers and Politics*, ed. by Alan Bance (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1982), p. 82.
5. 'In *Kleiner Mann-was nun?*, more than in any other of his tales of post-World War I demoralisation, Fallada recorded the atmosphere of complete disillusionment and hopelessness which engulfed millions of people during one of the most complicated periods of German economic and social history, a period that was witnessing the gradual dissolution of the Weimar Republic and the rising tide of National Socialism. Seldom has a writer presented such an accurate reflection of the state of mind engendered in the German people during this period of grave dislocations' See: Heinz J. Schueler, *Hans Fallada: Humanist and Social Critic* (The Hague: Mouton, 1970), p.14.
6. Pinneberg, far from being an heroic character, is shown to be a representative figure rather than a clearly defined individual. Feuchtwanger saw this as a feature of the contemporary novel: '...er [Fallada] gibt nicht einen Einzelmenschen, sondern eine ganze Schicht, eine ganze Epoche, er zeigt die Verknüpfung des einzelnen mit der Zeit um ihn und mit der Masse um ihn.' See: Lion Feuchtwanger, 'Der Roman von heute ist international' (1932), in *Ein Buch nur für meine Freunde* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1984), p.423.
7. Jennifer Williams acknowledges and praises Fallada's craftsmanship: 'Fallada's craftsmanship is in evidence from the first chapter. Extensive use of paratactical sentence construction, repetition and realistic dialogue produce a linguistically and stylistically accessible book. Furthermore, Fallada's characters often find themselves in everyday situations instantly recognisable to the reader.' See: Jennifer Williams 'Some Thoughts on the Success of Hans Fallada's *Kleiner Mann-was nun?*', *German Life and Letters* 40 (1987), pp.313/314.
8. Heinrich Zille (1858-1929), an artist who, with humour and satire, portrayed scenes of the proletarian quarters of Berlin, known as the *Miljö*. He was also a contributor to the magazine *Simplicissimus*.
9. These rings will later be transferred from the left to the right hand. The meaning of wedding bands underwent changes over time: '... der glatte Fingerring als Zeichen der ehelichen Bindung ist erst spät mit dem Christentum und der christlichen Einsegnung der Ehe zu uns gekommen, wohl aus römischer Überlieferung. Er war ein Treuering und konnte erst als Rechtssymbol für das Treueversprechen Geltung gewinnen, als sich die alte germanische Sippenverfassung aufgelöst hatte, als nicht mehr der Ehevertrag durch die im Ring stehenden Gesippen bekräftigt wurde, sondern sich die Ehe auf das persönliche Treuegelöbnis zweier Menschen gründete. Von der Kirche ist er vom Treue-Ring zum Trauring gewandelt worden, zum Zeichen des durch den Priester gesegneten Ehebundes.' See: Weber-Kellermann, *Die*

deutsche Familie: Versuch einer Sozialgeschichte (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch, 1974) , pp.172/173.

10. There were several newspapers of this name published at that time in different cities. Obviously this was a socialist newspaper , and Fallada no doubt chose the title because of its ubiquity and because it suited his purpose.

11. Fallada's fictitious organisation, not actually formed until 1945.

12. Jennifer Williams in *More Lives than One: A Biography of Hans Fallada* (London: Libris, 1998) draws attention (p.111) to the fact that Fallada's original conception for the novel was grounded in the notion of the white-collar worker as protagonist, and it significantly antedates the publication of Siegfried Kracauer's *Die Angestellten: Aus dem neuesten Deutschland* (Frankfurt am Main: Societäts-Verlag, 1930). Kracauer's book created an immediate stir; there was, for example, an influential review by Ernst Bloch (see Williams, p.121). It is unimaginable that Fallada did not know of Kracauer's study; but it must have struck him not so much as a revelation but more as confirmation of tendencies and issues that he had already perceived in the society around him. See also the discussion of *Angestelltenromane* in Deborah Smail, *White-Collar Workers, Mass Culture and 'Neue Sachlichkeit' in Weimar Berlin* (Berne: Lang, 1999), pp.52/53.

13. 'The shortcomings of the white-collar class, to which Mörschel points, are not merely to be sought in the absence of representative and unifying organisations such as Trade Unions, set up primarily for the purpose of achieving material ends. The lack of a *Zusammenhang* amongst the members of the *Kleinbürgertum* is above all a lack of a common spiritual bond, of a union of common purposes and aspirations and of that unity which obliges to mutual assistance and sympathy. And all this makes for the atmosphere which surrounds Fallada's *Kleinbürger* and makes his plight all the more acute. The 'little man' has nothing to fall back on in times of need except his own unstable self.' See: Heinz J. Schueler, as above, p.17.

Fallada shows this lack of solidarity in a scene later in the novel when Pinneberg collects a social payment: '...sie sind beide sauber gewaschen und rasiert...und beide sind sie Angestellte. Aber beide sind Feinde, Todfeinde, denn einer sitzt hinter der Barriere und der andere steht davor. Der eine will, was er für sein Recht hält, aber der andere hält es für eine Belästigung.' See: Hans Fallada, *Kleiner Mann-was nun?* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 1932), p.259.

14. The much-lauded ability of the average housewife to maintain local culinary tradition in her family, by cooking and baking according to age-old recipes, could not realistically be practised in proletarian households, whose staple food, the potato, was the basis of their nutrition. See: Weber-Kellermann, as above, p.136.

15. Fallada, in the short story *Familienfahrt*, in *Wenn einer eine Reise tut*, ed. by Magdalena Frank, (Berlin: Aufbau Taschenbuch Verlag, 2000), paints a contrasting picture of family life as experienced by the middle classes. The family in this story has several privileges compared to the existence of the Fourth Estate: they can afford to take a holiday away from home, there is help in the house to the extent that the mother, Frau Amtsgerichtsrat, does not need to do the packing or many of the other household chores, the picnic basket taken on the train contains *Brathühnchen* (in those days an expensive delicacy) and the adult hands lying in assorted laps are small and dainty, always clean and well-manicured.

16. Otto Rühle reflects on the toll exacted by hard physical, manual work: '...er selbst hat alle Verrichtungen nur mechanisch, ohne innere Anteilnahme und Freude vollbracht. [...] Zudem hat die öde und schwere Körperarbeit auch die Gedanken träge gemacht. Ist das schmale Abendbrot verzehrt, bringt vielleicht ein Pfeifchen noch Genuss. Der organisierte und aufgeklärte Arbeiter liest noch seine Zeitung, seltener ein Buch, vorausgesetzt, daß nicht Sitzungen oder Versammlungen seiner warten' See: Otto Rühle, *Illustrierte Kultur- und Sittengeschichte des Proletariats* (Berlin: Neuer Deutscher Verlag, 1930).

17. Fallada emphasises again and again that 'der kleine Mann' is dwarfed by the system and rendered insignificant: 'Hier kommt der kleine Mann Pinneberg, er will hundert Mark haben...er kommt in ein schönes helles Riesengebäude. Er steht so hübsch klein und schäbig in der Mammuthalle. Pinneberg, mein Lieber, hundert Mark, hier geht es um Millionen. Die hundert Mark sind dir wichtig? Für uns sind sie ganz unwichtig, für uns spielt das gar keine Rolle.' See: Hans Fallada, as above, p.258.

18. Jennifer Williams points out that 'in correspondence relating to *Kleiner Mann-was nun?* Fallada frequently makes a plea for decency and humanity in human relations, for the establishment of "die Front der Anständigen. Der Menschlichen."' (letter to Johannes Boysen, 7. 1. 1933). See: Jennifer Williams, 87), as above, p.310.

19. Pinneberg may threaten to vote for the Communists in the next election but '...this is nothing more than the helpless and indeed completely aimless gropings of someone who has never really possessed the anchorage of a social and a political identity of any kind. [...] In introducing the non-political figure of the "little man" as the central character of his works, Fallada always keeps his eyes firmly fixed on the plight of the individual soul as such, asserting the humanity of his characters and thus introducing a truly universal and timeless element into his works.' See: Heinz J. Schueler, as above, p. 18/19.

20. Heinz Schueler considers Lämmchen to be 'the classical personification of his [Fallada's] many loving and characterful women', 'an ageless ideal of womanly loyalty and conjugal love [...] No other female figure in Fallada's work measures up fully to the stature of Lämmchen, and no other woman performs more adequately the function of being the guardian of society's lasting values.' Schueler also emphasizes the deep significance of marriage for Fallada himself and for the 'little man' in general, since it provides refuge from a hostile world and a sense of security. See: Heinz J. Scheuler, as above.

CHAPTER 9

Weihnachts-Wirtschafts-Wunder-hollow miracles in Böll's *Nicht nur zur Weihnachtszeit*

At one level, Böll's *Nicht nur zur Weihnachtszeit* (published in 1952) is sustained by a central idea of splendid surrealism: in order to humour an elderly relative who has lost her wits, a family has to keep celebrating Christmas throughout the year. For obvious reasons, the family here is rendered utterly dysfunctional. As we shall see, the story also generates, beyond and in excess of its surreal humour, a vicious satirical thrust.

* * * * *

Heinrich Böll's story is a deeply comic tale about the disintegration of a family as a result of the terrible authority of an old woman (Tante Milla) who decides, after the war, that every day is going to be Christmas, and she forces her family to behave accordingly. There are wonderfully comic scenes depicting the lengths to which the family will go in order to obey the fantastic, and obsessive, demands of this old woman. As a result of these pressures, the family changes and disintegrates in various ways. Not only do they end up replacing themselves by effigies but they also modify their values.

The one exception to this appears to be the narrator. He, too, wriggles out of having to go to his aunt's house every day for the Christmas celebration, but he continues to express utterly conservative beliefs. The reader has ambivalent feelings as to the narrator's intentions and beliefs. He comes across as pompous, *gutbürgerlich*, suspicious of new ideas and lifestyles, resentful of the decline of the family which he is forced to

witness. At this level, he is a critical onlooker, often ready to assert a distance between himself and members of the family. Yet, as John Klapper acutely argues,¹ this ironizing narrator is in turn ironized for his tunnel vision, his seemingly relentless conformism. When we put the two figures together, Tante Milla who, because of her pathological state, cannot change, and the narrator who initially is reluctant to open his mind to change, then perhaps it becomes legitimate to hear the story as representative of a particular mode of clinging to the old that was characteristic of German culture and society in the immediate aftermath of war.

Central to the story is the obsessive repetitiveness of Christmas, the fixity of a particular kind of family ritual. This, too, sets up implications of wider import. We would do well to remember that Christmas is one of Germany's greatest exports, its festive traditions, decorations, music, and food envied, even copied, across the Western world, with an underlying spiritual substance virtually taken for granted - the 'acceptable face' of German culture, one might say. In Böll's tale the apparent imperviousness of the narrator interlocks with the imperiousness of Tante Milla, and the result is that the humour begins to acquire an unmistakably critical, even satirical, edge. At this point one should note that over time and in line with the developing story, and with the benefit of hindsight, the narrator allows himself to entertain doubts and gives evidence of having been affected, 'infected' even, by the changes occurring within the family. The suggestion that his erstwhile certainty has been eroded, as shown at several points in the text, can be deemed to represent the change of attitude required of the German nation as a whole. The narrator says, for example: 'Doch heute beginne ich manches zu ahnen.'(p.12) and later, significantly:

Wir hätten früher auf die Idee kommen können, es stimme etwas nicht. Tatsächlich, es stimmt etwas nicht, und wenn überhaupt jemals irgend etwas gestimmt hat - ich zweifle daran -, hier gehen Dinge vor sich, die mich mit Entsetzen erfüllen.(p.13)

The first person narrator, by way of introduction, tells the reader that in ‘...unserer Verwandtschaft machen sich Verfallserscheinungen bemerkbar...’(p.11)* almost dire enough to presage ‘Zusammenbruch’; there are ‘Schimmelpilze der Zersetzung...’, ‘....Kolonien tödlicher Schmarotzer, die das Ende der Unbescholtenheit einer ganzen Sippe ankündigen’(p.11). The *Weihnachtszeit* of the title will clearly not live up to its traditional image. An ‘...“an sich” harmloses Ereignis...’ will bring an ‘...Ausmaß der Folgen...’(p.11) in its train which will startle, alarm, frighten, and even drive family members to the psychiatrist’s couch. This family will, it seems, never be the same again. The ‘beunruhigenden Tatsachen’ and talk of ‘Dingen [...] die den Ohren der Zeitgenossen zwar befremdlich klingen werden, deren Realität aber niemand bestreiten kann’(p.11) cannot be kept from the world and the narrator’s contemporaries as they are deemed to be sufficiently threatening to endanger the existence of the family in question and, by implication, the society of which they are a representative part.

One of the realities that cannot be concealed by the narrator, despite the expectation that his blunt statement of a historical fact will incur much displeasure, is: ‘in den Jahren 1939 bis 1945 hatten wir Krieg’. The pronoun *wir* is, of course, to be taken in a wider sense than the familial inclusivity to cover ‘we, the Germans’. As everyone knows ‘im Krieg wird gesungen, geschossen, geredet, gekämpft, gehungert und gestorben- und es werden Bomben geschmissen...’, an inspired grammatical choice of passive construction by the author, apparently granting personal exculpation, and a narrator who is seemingly eager not to bore ‘...meine Zeitgenossen...’ by mentioning ‘...lauter unerfreuliche Dinge...’(p.13). They are clearly not to be burdened by having to remember traumatic events of the comparatively recent past, let alone be accused collectively of any complicity in the horrors of that time. The spectre of war needs to be

* Page numbers in this chapter refer to: Heinrich Böll, *Werke, Romane und Erzählungen 2, 1951-54* (Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1977).

conjured up, however, since that war did affect and propel the story the reader is about to be told. We are introduced to an outwardly fortunate family whose members were spared the rigours of warfare, of having to fulfil military service or even to face material or nutritional deprivation. Their safety is assured by their being in the kind of work deemed essential to the city's and nation's well-being. The narrator's cousin Lucie (an appropriate name at Christmas time and, in the form of Lucia, the symbol of light for all Scandinavians), apart from working in the family business, manages to sacrifice one whole afternoon a week '...im freiwilligen Kriegsdienst in einer Hakenkreuzstickerei'. Illness, too, exempts members of this family from service '...in seiner härtesten Form...' (p.15). Just as the narrator runs the risk of alienating his family as a *Nestbeschmutzer* by sharing with the reader a Christmas story like no other, so does Cousin Franz who is demonstrably not of that ilk; he is the warning voice, the one member of his family to label Christmas as '...Getue und Unfug...' refusing to participate '...an gewissen Feiern...' (p.12). The 'Stimme unseres Vetters Franz...' has been ignored consistently for issuing from someone who enjoys '...zu wenig Reputation'. He is seen as the alien cuckoo in their midst, not made to fit into their own comfortable nest, training to be a boxer, playing truant from school, preferring the company of '...fragwürdigen Kumpenan in abgelegenen Parks...', unperturbed by the fact that in his life and education, '...das humanistische Erbe vernachlässigt wurde'; 'die erregenden Geisteskämpfe früherer Jahrhunderte...', hold no interest for him and his like-minded friends. Despite the brutality of his chosen sport he is described as '...schwermüdig und von einer Frömmigkeit, die immer als "inbrünstiges Getue" bezeichnet wurde...' (p.11) within the family, and yet it is Franz who is most vehemently opposed to indulging his mother's most passionate interest, her '...Vorliebe für die Ausschmückung des Weihnachtsbaumes...'. This in the narrator's assessment, is '...eine harmlose, wenn auch spezielle Schwäche, die in unserem Vaterland ziemlich verbreitet ist' (p.13).

The light tone of Böll's story has serious implications which extend to the terrible war which has only recently ended in defeat for this nation, which had allowed itself to descend into barbarism despite the humanist teaching mentioned earlier and the high calibre of its philosophers and thinkers, points to Böll's other wartime story, namely *Wanderer, kommst du nach Spa...*, a stark indictment of a civilised people, proud of its cultural heritage and achievements, yet unable to ward off ideological excess and its ghastly consequences. Can Cousin Franz be blamed for his indifference towards any kind of sentimentality for traditions which are clung to and rigidly maintained regardless of events or external circumstances, in the face of Tante Milla's inability to allow war to be anything but '...eine Macht, die schon Weihnachten 1939 anfing, ihren Weihnachtsbaum zu gefährden.'(p.13)? It comes as no surprise to the reader to be told that, although Franz did become a soldier, it was not in a fighting capacity. Instead, he was entrusted with the '...Bewachung von Gefangenen [...] ein Posten, den er zur Gelegenheit nahm, sich auch bei seinen militärischen Vorgesetzten unbeliebt zu machen, indem er Russen und Polen wie Menschen behandelte'(p.15). This, in the eyes of the family and many of their compatriots, gives Franz the stamp of an ideologically unsound black sheep, given the thinking of the Nazi era, which dismissed all Slavs as *Untermenschen*. Despite his predilection for tough pursuits and seemingly uncivilised behaviour, he is, nevertheless, perceived to be in possession of greater insight and humanity than the conventional members of his family. Franz may have been '...immer Gegenstand heftigster Entrüstung...' and '...eine beunruhigende Erscheinung...' (p.13) but the narrator accords him a very much more positive image than Cousin Lucie, the '...normale Frau...' (p.12), Tante Milla, the '...reizende und liebenswürdige Frau...' (p.15), Cousin Johannes '...für den ich jederzeit meine Hand ins Feuer gelegt hätte...' (p.12) and Onkel Franz himself, '...dieser herzensgute Mensch...' (p.12). With wonderful irony Böll credits at least the

family Christmas tree with ‘...einer besonderen Sensibilität’(p.13) which clearly the members of this family lack. Franz is, nevertheless, a maverick.

Unpleasantness must be avoided and a sense of normality preserved so as not to imperil the delicate psyche of Tante Milla, to stop her screaming and to try and hold on to a small measure of the family’s equilibrium which, of course, has been ruined by her lunacy. A mere war cannot be permitted to interfere in the important matter of family ritual and the all-important tradition of Christmas celebrations, part of the cultural backbone of the nation, albeit not on a daily basis. The war, as fought by nice Tante Milla, concentrated on her strenuous efforts ‘...nach jedem Luftangriff den Baum komplett wiederherzustellen, ihn wenigstens während der Weihnachtstage zu erhalten’(p.14). In her eyes the prime victim of Allied bombing missions, if not actually their target, was this beloved tree. The narrator, who respects her obsession, informs us that ‘...von anderen Opfern zu sprechen, verbietet mir der rote Faden...’(p.14). History as such will not be allowed to intrude explicitly and shockingly into the yarn being spun here, any more than it encroaches on Tante Milla’s consciousness.

The tree, adorned with sweets, baubles, marzipan figures, and, of course, candles, sports as its crowning glory a number of glass dwarfs which are driven to frenzied activity by a hidden mechanism: ‘...sie schlügen wie irr mit ihren Korkhämmern auf die glockenförmigen Ambosse und riefen so, ein Dutzend an der Zahl, ein konzertantes, elfenhaftes feines Gebimmel hervor’. This frenetic work with the resultant unrest and a highly charged, work-ethic driven mood is balanced by the rosy-cheeked ‘...Engel, der in bestimmten Abständen seine Lippen voneinander hob und "Frieden" flüsterte...’(p.14). The brutality of war, with the associated culpability of the nation, appears to be cancelled out by the pacific angel – *Kitsch* of the highest order and targeted as such - uttering the message of peace. Is it a statement of fact or perhaps an urgent exhortation behind which the reader might find a hint of ‘never again’? Such hope elicited from the sensitive reader

is somewhat dashed when the secret of such felicitous verbal emissions from the silvery angelic figure is nothing more than 'das mechanische Geheimnis...' (p.14) behind such almost miraculous utterance, revealed to the narrator and the reader much later. However appropriate such emphasis on peace may seem shortly after the most barbaric war in history, it is expressed mechanically and not by human beings who, chastened by such dire events in their recent past, might have sought to reassure themselves, each other, and the rest of the world as to their reformed thinking and aspirations. The realisation leaves a bitter taste. The expected *Tränen und Szenen* do occur but only because Tante Milla has to prepare herself after 1940 '...für Kriegsdauer auf ihren Baum zu verzichten' (p.15), a sacrifice indeed, as it is asked of a woman who was inconsolable when '...in der Nähe fallende Bomben einen solch sensiblen Baum aufs höchste gefährdeten' (p.14). We are beginning to feel in the realm of the surreal. One stops to think at this point, in order to assess the path Tante Milla has clearly taken towards displaying such insanity. Should one assume that she was mentally of a normal disposition, leading a normal life, doing normal things – and at normal times – and doing those things with decorum and dignity? What has been instrumental in unhinging her and leaving her obsessive and insensitive in her insistence on a never-ending celebration which becomes meaningless in the eyes of all the members of the family except herself? It is not a very big step to take before one realises that Tante Milla, like millions of others, surely owes her insanity to the cataclysmic disruption of the war, to lengthy exposure to danger, to the loss of security, and even of identity, upon the realisation of the magnitude of events engineered, not merely endured, by her country. One is tempted to argue that an ordinary mind, perhaps even deep down a sensitive one, has no other way out than to embrace – ad nauseam – the one unsullied certainty which remains, the centuries-old tradition of (German) Christmas with all its required trappings. Having been deprived of those, too, in the later war years, Tante Milla and her extraordinary behaviour may, perhaps, be a little less startling. Deprivation is not

on the family agenda in other respects, because of Onkel Franz's business acumen. Throughout the war there were fruit and vegetables, albeit only the homegrown varieties, and in the post-war years citrus and other exotic fruits reappeared on the family's menu and that of their fellow citizens, indeed they became '...Gegenstand des schärfsten Interesses aller Käuferschichten'. It was this same uncle who offered '...den Genuß von Vitaminen...' whilst enjoying the fruits '...eines ansehnlichen Vermögens' (p.15) as a personal bonus, a direct result of his obvious business expertise. Here we are given, for the first time in Böll's story, a glimpse of the relentless energy which in the post-war period produced the *Wirtschaftswunder* in West Germany. This was, of course, not mirrored in the eastern part of the divided country whose Soviet style *Planwirtschaft* was not designed, nor equipped, to match the success, financially, materially or in terms of the comfort and wealth of its citizens of the western republic. We shall return to the economic miracle later.

The detail in Böll's text – of Onkel Franz's business – is extraordinarily suggestive. The modern reader recalls the 'banana issue' which came to play such an important part in the years before German reunification. It was the unavailability of just such fruit, obtainable only for the few (the party apparatchiks having been decidedly more equal in Orwellian terms) through privilege and possession of hard currency and access to the GDR's *Intershops*, which helped to fuel the fervently expressed desire for a political situation in which both east and west were able to purchase bananas and other imported produce and goods. The politics of this resentment were for many people epitomised by the humble banana. The term 'banana republic' was to take on a new meaning in the German context.

The narrator now urges us to accompany him to the first post-war Christmas celebration. The reader is informed that Tante Milla '..darauf bestand, daß alles so sein sollte wie früher...'. There might be those who would have given greater priority to other

more urgent matters, after all ‘...hatte der Krieg manches zerstört, das wiederherzustellen mehr Sorge bereitete...’ but who would ‘...einer charmanten alten Dame diese kleine Freude nehmen?’(p.16). This, on the part of Tante Milla and her saner family and, perhaps, many others across the country, is compelling evidence of heads being buried in Christmas sand. What was impossible in 1945, only just manageable in 1946, due to surviving sets of tree decorations, is about to be magnificently staged once more in 1947. The effect of this resumed family ritual, at which there is ‘...kein Mangel an Eßbarem’(p.16) nor any other discernible shortage, although the year 1947 had not seen the currency reform yet nor the ensuing material abundance, with many *Bundesbürger* officially classified as *unterernährt* (children included), causes the narrator, after all a member of this fortunate family, to bask in its glow, ‘...lebhaft zurückversetzt in eine Zeit, von der ich angenommen hatte, sie sei vorbei’(p.16)². The *Stunde Null* has evidently been left behind, relegated perhaps to the realm of nightmare or even of psychological denial. At this early stage, before anyone has realized that Tante Milla is obsessed, which will cause smug satisfaction to fade until, in the end, family members will be cynically replaced by actors and then mere effigies, the clock appears to have been turned back and normal family life can be resumed, as can be said for economic, cultural, educational, and international matters. The seismic shock of recent German and world history, virtually unchartable on any Richter-type scale as devised by historians, philosophers, religious and literary commentators, has already been pushed back from the real awareness of the citizens of the country which caused the apocalyptic events.³ The reader is gently drawn into the warmth and quiet cheer of a German Christmas, even if ‘...Kälte herrschte draußen’(p.16), but it is a world outside the experience of the members of this family.

However, at this point there is no real cause for concern, as the reader is reassured by the narrator that ‘überraschend’ though this occurrence might be, it was not deemed to be ‘außergewöhnlich’. After all, Christmas, and its traditional manifestations within

families, has its place in the affections of the nation and should be accorded a high degree of importance in its calendar. Could it not also be seen, apart from being a well established custom, as an emotional and psychological prop at a time of great political and moral upheaval? The baggage from the past needs to be accommodated, partly from affection for such cherished practices and partly as a screen with which to blot out the suppressed knowledge of, and inability to accept, the burden of guilt placed on the nation's collective shoulders.⁴ The reader is told very emphatically that everything should unfold 'wie früher', in the words of the lady of the house. The choice of the modal verb 'sollte' tells its own story, the 'should' with its traces of make-believe, of 'let's pretend children', its overtones of 'it jolly well ought to' and 'I want it to be' are evidence of a manifest unwillingness to come to terms with the new reality, a German world which will never be the same again, which will not be able to abrogate responsibility or be seen as 'harmlos', the description attached to the Christmas tree.

The first Christmas which the reader has been invited to witness, despite the darkly critical rumblings between the lines of the text, the covert astonishment that there was such an appetite for the resumption of this sacrosanct ritual as if nothing untoward had occurred, has so far been permitted to stand as a relatively ordinary event. We now enter new and entirely uncharted territory; on entering it even the narrator, after all one of the participants of earlier festivities, confesses '...daß ich verwirrt war'(p.17). The year has moved on to mid-March, there is still much evidence of bombed-out houses, of neglected and overgrown parks, and our narrator sets out to ask for a quantity of otherwise unobtainable fruit from the uncle's family who are privileged enough to have access to such luxuries. The words used by the narrator's mother, to find out '...ob bei Onkel Franz "nichts zu machen" sei'(p.16) conjure up the mood and reality of the post-war black market system. Those who had the right contacts in the world of commerce

stood every chance of leading reasonably satisfactory lives, at least as far as their physical needs were concerned.

Much to the unsuspecting narrator's surprise, the strains of *Stille Nacht* permeate the evening air. There is no doubt as to the venue from which this incongruous song is emanating; there can also be no doubt as to the nature of the tune. The narrator instantly identifies the well-known words of one of the verses of the best-known and loved Christmas carol. Although there are many folk songs designed to be aired in springtime, the melody issuing from the uncle's sitting-room is held in a time warp and entirely inappropriate, laughable even. Its sheer grotesqueness is not mitigated by the quick assurance that 'Singen ist eine gute deutsche Sitte...' (p.16). The perplexed narrator and reader do not have to wait long before the paradox is explained. It is the charming Tante Milla who has precipitated a situation in which '...alles stürzte hinunter...' after uncle lost '...die Herrschaft über den leise schwankenden Baum...' (p.17). The family thus face their own *Stunde Null*, the reason being Tante Milla's inability and unwillingness to contemplate with any degree of equanimity the end of the festive season.

The desperate need manifest in Tante Milla's breakdown, upon realizing that Christmas has come to an end as it does, of course, every year in early January, has its origins in two related practices. Without doubt, the family togetherness required at this time and accepted as being *de rigueur* by most people and by the members of this particular family, with the exception of the black sheep Franz, is clearly the life blood, the *raison d'être*, the high point of the year and the emotional nourishment for the *Hausfrau und Mutter* in Böll's story. Family cohesion still provides the bedrock on which this woman's life is built, and to a lesser degree it helps to anchor the children, grandchildren, and assorted in-laws. This is never more apparent than at Christmas when each family, and at the same time the entire nation, draws strength from the continuity that this tradition with its attendant ritual offers.

Proximity and such shared ritual strengthen this bond on a personal and national level. Furthermore, it affords reassurance in terms of identity, familial and religious, resulting in a sense of belonging, a necessary prerequisite for most people in their quest for stability, prosperity, and emotional fulfilment. The warm glow in evidence at the annual Christmas celebrations in Onkel Franz's family villa testifies to such needs. But the seismic shock of the war, shared by the German nation, has opened up fissures in the well-trodden soil of ordinary lives and their accustomed pursuits. It appears that the family in Böll's story is unequal to the task of digesting this catastrophic disruption and the revelations of the atrocities perpetrated by this nation, or at any rate in its name, with the result that a semblance of normality needs to be re-established as quickly as possible. The 'actors' in this farce may be seen on one level as simply complying with the wishes of a dotty matriarch, trying to humour her, but at another level one might conclude that part of their motivation for enacting such a charade again and again stems from their own subconscious need. Surely, were it otherwise, they would not have allowed the old woman to terrorize the entire family with her unreasonable demands for so long. How better to achieve this desired situation than to pretend that everything is back to normal, that the old values are in place, that familiar practices can help to anaesthetize dimly felt guilt or even underpin psychological denial of unacceptable awareness? Stark truths are not to be contemplated and need to be excised from conscious thought by any means available. Tante Milla appears to lead the field in this respect but clearly she, mad though she is, is the cipher to represent others of her generation who have nothing to put in the place of the moral certainty and reliable spiritual guidelines lost at the end of an apocalyptic war and the resulting collapse of a morally corrupt system and its accompanying ideology.

What is left is the traditional ritual of Christmas and the presence and cohesion of the family.⁵ This helps to explain why Tante Milla screams for days on end, a startling

reaction to the dismantling of the Christmas tree, trivial in itself but obviously of great symbolic import. The reader might have expected ‘...eine aus allen Leibeskräften schreiende Frau...’(p.17) when faced with bombed-out cities and rubble-strewn streets and the emaciated *Trümmerfrauen* of the post-war period and with the realization that a once great nation had arrived at the ignominious nadir of its existence, but evidently this ordinary woman can only truly feel the aftermath of personal loss. Her hysteria ensures that after two days of her screaming the entire family finds itself ‘...in völliger Auflösung’(p.17) too. There is no known remedy for such uncontrolled and primitive behaviour, be it the services of psychiatry, priestly ministrations, pharmacology, Pastor Kneipp’s *Wechselbäder*⁶, or the solace of food.

It is the cynical son Franz, having largely excluded himself from the family celebrations and having poured scorn on the imbecile exaggeration of such traditions, who appears to equate his mother’s affliction with the sorry state, as so often identified by the Church in a bygone era, of one who is virtually possessed by the Devil and offers a potential means of restoring sanity, making himself extremely unpopular in the process ‘...weil erriet, einen regelrechten Exorzismus anzuwenden’. This suggestion is dismissed out of hand, in fact ‘...die Familie war bestürzt über seine mittelalterlichen Anschauungen...’(p.17) which are presumably deemed to contain a high degree of brutality and are, therefore, unacceptable to a modern and sophisticated people. The reader might view this as hypocritical posturing, given that this same nation had allowed itself to acquiesce in the barbarism of the Nazi years, a fact which does need to be exorcised before true normality can prevail. Interestingly, it is the *Faustkämpfer* Franz who later dons the mantle of the repentant sinner on behalf of the family and, no doubt, of his nation. The incongruity of this man’s decision, a man with friends from the lower social strata and a penchant for rough physical pursuits and of uncouth demeanour and coarse appearance, to enter ‘...als Laienbruder in ein Kloster der

Umgebung...', is striking. The narrator observes astutely that he reminds him more of '...einen Sträfling als an einen Mönch'(p.34). Franz has clearly been analysing his motives for the drastic steps he has taken and is aware that the survivors of the catastrophic unleashing of German military and ideological hubris and the terrifying consequences, cannot be allowed to escape punishment as there is collective culpability, at least to the extent of accepting moral involvement, however passive. He tells his cousin, the narrator, very quietly and hesitantly 'Wir sind mit dem Leben bestraft...' (p.34). This is not a German who thanks his creator for having been spared in the great bonfire of ideological vanities. Conversation on an everyday level is no longer something he wishes to engage in. His concerns have turned to the realm of atonement, of spiritual regeneration, of communing with forces beyond the reach of ordinary, narrow and blinkered, perhaps frightened, minds like those of the other members of his family. Renewal and redemption for him do not lie in empty ritual or the consumerism which his compatriots are turning to in order to overcome feelings of defeat, helplessness and deprivation. The narrator can only note that Franz is '...offenbar erleichtert, als die Glocke ihn zum Gebet in die Kirche rief [...] er eilte sehr, und seine Eile schien aufrichtig zu sein'(p.34). The hurry displayed by the monk and his sincerity convey to the reader that there are those who can be relied upon to seek atonement and thus attempt to gain exculpation and redemption. Franz is aware that this is more likely to be achieved in isolation, away from the contamination of the world and the pressures imposed by society on the individual to produce, to perform visibly and efficiently, to conform, to overcome feelings of inadequacy, and to re-establish order and prosperity.⁷

It is Tanta Milla's screaming despair, her psyche faced with the loss of everything that is familiar and dear to her and unable to live with such a void, which galvanizes the pater familias into action when he '...auf die Idee kam, einen neuen Tannenbaum aufzustellen'(p.18). He sets out to allay his wife's extreme suffering, and the family's

acute discomfort, not by driving out devils or other evil spirits, as suggested by his recalcitrant son, but by recreating for Milla the semblance of a *heile Welt*.⁸ This new reality will be a carefully contrived construct, a sham ritual beyond that which had at least passed for a meaningful tradition, an illusion to be maintained literally and metaphorically at all costs. However, 'Die Idee war ausgezeichnet, aber sie auszuführen, erwies sich als äußerst schwierig', the reason being that 'Es war fast Mitte Februar geworden, und es ist verhältnismäßig schwer, um diese Zeit einen diskutablen Tannenbaum auf dem Markt zu finden'(p.18). The word 'verhältnismäßig' in this context is richly comic in its understatement.

We now enter the realm of the emerging *Wirtschaftswunder* in West Germany. The commercial drive has reasserted itself '...mit erfreulicher Schnelligkeit übrigens...' (p.18) and the world of business is geared to rekindle consumer appetite and the obsession with material acquisition. The mercantile cycle can once again be observed, the consumers' needs are assessed and seasonal demand is carefully encouraged and supplied. There is little scope for maverick demands as necessitated by the ailing aunt's hysterical requirements, but astute business sense, determination, money, and contacts facilitate pandering to even the most unreasonable desires. The reader is regaled with the details and machinations, the ingenuity, and resourcefulness of this family and those who went on to fuel the industrial and commercial recovery of the defeated, dejected, and demoralized nation. This phoenix rises from the ashes by availing itself of, among others, the '...deutschen Spielzeugzentren, die gerade im Aufbau begriffen waren...' (p.18), frenzied telephone calls, the postal service's most urgent application, and, last but not least, bribery, in order to obtain all the requisite component parts of a traditional Christmas. The tree is duly refurbished, having been denuded at the conventional time of celebration by the spectacular tumble taken by the tree itself and by the greedy grandchildren's appetite for 'die Marzipanfiguren und das Gebäck...' (p.18) which had

adorned the tree. These culprits redeem themselves by undertaking an expedition into the forest to acquire the evergreen mainstay of the tradition⁹ about to be re-enacted within the family. The creed underlying the economic miracle appears to operate in embryonic form in the younger generation; a continuity of approach, by fair means or foul, is assured. Whether such acumen derives from genetic factors or from exposure to sharp practices and the resulting urge to mimic successfully adult conduct, the narrator is less than impressed and allows himself to share his assessment of the moral fibre, conditioned by previous generations' objectionable conduct, of the latest members of the acquisitive generation. He says 'Auch diese Generation, die dort heranwächst, taugt nichts, und wenn je eine Generation etwas getaugt hat - ich zweifle daran - so komme ich zu der Überzeugung, daß es die Generation unserer Väter war.'(p.18). Can he be serious in such an evaluation, given that 'die Generation unserer Väter' was the very age group which formed the backbone, and supported the tenets, of the Nazi regime? So the reader is left with the impression that the 'Väter' referred to can only be found by reversing the wheels of time and traversing history backwards to a time when perhaps there was rather less reason for heaping opprobrium on German identity. If this is to be read as an objective scrutiny of his own kind, found wanting when weighed in the balance of decency and the moral highground, then one would need to focus on the word *taugen*. Did a generation which 'taugt nichts' fail militarily, morally, commercially, humanly? What makes it worthless, useless or unfit? The ambiguity surrounding the function and identity of the narrator, touched upon earlier in this analysis, militates against firm answers.

In the context of the family's Christmas and the neurotic mother's insistence on a perpetually staged celebration, the frantic busy-ness manifest in the family is designed to create a false reality by replicating the erstwhile tradition, albeit without any kind of religious content, day after day running right through the calendar and stretching into narrative infinity. The stress of such almost superhuman effort takes its toll, of course, and

‘diese Tage werden in der Chronik der Familie meines Onkels als Tage mit außerordentlich hohem Verbrauch an Kaffee, Zigaretten und Nerven erhalten bleiben’.

The strain shows in haggard and severe faces and ‘...eine krankhafte Spannung...’(p.19) permeates the house. But the hard work and determination have the desired effect; the patient revives, her face takes on softer contours and great relief is felt by all, shared even by the priest whose traditional role, if only by his presence, is resumed. The family tableau is once again complete as ‘die Tannenbaumtherapie [...] hatte die Situation gerettet.[...] meine Tante war beruhigt und fast - so hoffte man damals - geheilt...’, she now happily goes to sleep at the close of the Christmas Eve ritual ‘...ohne jedes Beruhigungsmittel’(p.19) and is apparently restored to her former psychological equilibrium. The contrived re-staging of the German calendar’s most avidly awaited celebration will become her staple fare, stretching far into the future, as she will be forever unable and unwilling to forgo its solace.

The rest of the family, having succumbed to the emotional, and so very noisily demonstrated, dependency of this over-eager celebrant, will be required to deliver, in perpetuity, a task which initially elicits a degree of relief at having found a way of quelling unbearable hysteria, and ambivalent reactions when witnessing the childlike joy of Tante Milla ‘...im Schein der Kerzen...’(p.19). As this re-run is taking place on February 12th, in the middle of the outside world’s Carnival excesses, it does not surprise the reader that the gratefully emotional sobbing issuing from some of the assembled company is balanced by the same degree of giggling mirth. It seems entirely appropriate that simultaneously ‘...Karneval, ein Fest, das man bei uns mit ebensolcher, fast mit mehr Heftigkeit zu feiern gewohnt ist als Weihnachten’(p.21) is being enjoyed outside the drawn curtains of Onkel Franz’s house.

There is now in place a make-believe world in the private and public spheres, a world of feigned reality, of pretence, of wearing fancy dress and, of shedding the identity

of real lives. One notes the word ‘Heftigkeit’ in Böll’s description of the Rhineland’s predilection for serious abandonment to the demands of the Mardi Gras season.¹⁰ It, too, is derived from Catholic ritual and teaching, joyous excess to be renounced when tradition and the calendar decree. Those in thrall to its staging, predominantly in Bavaria and the Rhenish cities, attack this festival with such aggressive vigour, the ‘Heftigkeit’ of the text, that one fears for the participants’ safety and sanity. All restraint is abandoned as ‘...mindestens sechzigtausend Cowboys und vierzigtausend Czardasfürstinnen....’ roam the city streets. These were, by far, the most popular costumes in the post-war years; one wonders at the lack of imagination (as Böll’s comic intention clearly does by allowing both the male and the female preference to carry quite so many noughts) and the impossibility which many must surely have encountered in their search for the all-important boots, red, of course, for would-be Hungarian women, whilst the colourful ribbons cascading down on either side of the crown-like headgear would have been easily obtained. Does the New World fancy dress chosen by men and the choice of the local costume devised in the Old World of the vanished Austro-Hungarian empire indicate differing mental states in the two sexes? Such a theory would make the female of the species more conservative, even backward looking, whereas the male orientates himself westward. Of course, it could simply be a sign of macho strutting by overgrown boys who were fed a diet of Karl May¹¹ stories in their youth. The ‘...karnevalistische Kleidungsstücke...’ (p.21) seen everywhere, even in this particular house, in which the younger generation retains a hold on reality and the normal passage of time and moves in concert with it despite pandering to the whims of older family members whose biography has given them virtual dinosaur status, mirror the artifice of ‘wearing’ the Christmas tree at inappropriate times. The benighted aunt, whose hold on reality is so very slender, has reserved one corner of her unstable mind for the observation and condemnation of just such unholy, unruly goings-on as witnessed around her.¹² So ‘...beklagte sie das Sinken

der Moral, da man nicht einmal an den Weihnachtstagen in der Lage sei, von diesem unsittlichen Treiben zu lassen...'. It becomes clear to all those present that she '...sich wirklich in dem Wahn befand, es sei Heiliger Abend'(p.21). The narrator reinforces the impression of unreality, of irrationality, and instability by employing the verb *scheinen* repeatedly. Not only has Tante Milla surrendered to her illusory certainty but we read: '...alles schien in Ordnung zu sein'(p.19) and again a little later on in the text, when yet again the entire family is assembled around the tree '...man zündete die Kerzen an, ließ die Zwerge hämmern, den Engel flüstern, man sang, aß Gebäck - und alles schien in Ordnung zu sein'(p.20). This phrasing confirms that *Sein* and *Schein* have become irremediably blurred.

The family's '...Rücksichtnahme auf ihren merkwürdigen Geisteszustand...' (p21) makes them reluctant accomplices in this charade. Compliance with the aunt's sick demands now necessitates constant refurbishment and replacement of the tree, renewal of its decorations, replenished bowls of dainty and spicy *Spekulatius*, a plentiful supply of candles and busy dwarfs and even spare angels of peace, in order to satisfy the enormous, and yet never to be satisfied, hunger of a mad woman. The continued participation of the servant of the church, to whom the invitation is issued to join the family for the daily Christmas ceremony, the duration of which lasts little more than half an hour, is only made possible by Onkel Franz activating '...seine Beziehungen zu den höchsten Verwaltungstellen der Kirche...', earlier priests having pleaded other obligations or having suffered '...einen Lachkrampf' at the ludicrous spectacle; the offending chaplain is dismissed by the aunt as '...einen Proleten im Priestergewande...'; but the incident has left her surprisingly undisturbed and she calmly '...schob sich ein Stück Marzipan in den Mund'(p.23). So the representative of the established church is obviously of far less importance than the external trappings of her Christmas as long as the hand which stretches out to find comfort in swallowing the traditional Christmas fare is not left empty.

The resourceful uncle's string-pulling ensures that the matter is '...mit äußerster Korrektheit angefaßt, ein Prozeß wegen Vernachlässigung seelsorgerischer Pflichten wurde angestrengt...' (p.23), albeit unsuccessfully. Set against the farcical nature of this family's need for clerical presence and succour, the rule-book observance practised by the Church in accordance with standard procedure in cases of complaint sets one's teeth on edge. Does this degree of compliance indicate tongue-in-cheek pandering by the shepherd to the foibles of his sheep? Or does it also bespeak mutual benefits, as rumoured frequently, particularly in post-war German politics under the management of the CDU and its close links with the Catholic hierarchy?

The retired *Prälat* who happens to be a neighbour is, in geographical terms but also, due to his age, in terms of belief and shared attitude, a likely kindred spirit. His complicity in the farce being enacted can be relied upon. He declares himself '...mit liebenswürdiger Selbstverständlichkeit bereit, sich zur Verfügung zu halten und täglich die abendliche Feier zu vervollständigen' (p.23). Here business may be said to work hand in glove with the nation's spiritual guardians, an arrangement obviously mutually beneficial. The reader is reminded that Onkel Franz, who is '...Geschäftsmann genug, sich nun auf Dauer einzustellen und die wirtschaftlichste Art herauszukalkulieren' and 'mein findiger Vetter Johannes, der zu allen Kreisen der Geschäftswelt die besten Beziehungen unterhält...' (p.23) represent those who by their untiring effort and unflagging industry reconstructed the edifice of German business. Their expertise and energy, like that of many others, became the motor which drove the *Wirtschaftswunder* so effectively.

Just as those in charge of the continuation of the daily ritual in this story apply their thought processes and energy to how best to procure the desired results, by ingenuity and innovation, technical prowess, and admirable inventiveness, so the *Wirtschaftswunder* unfolding across the entire country, or more particularly in the Federal Republic established in 1949, is expanding with its adherence to a code of practice most conducive

to prosperous success. Members of this family, and others in the wider national context, are ‘...dankbar und aufgeschlossen’ for ‘...jeden fortschrittlichen Vorschlag...’(p.24) if it is likely to enhance their endeavour by making them more competitive and thus potentially superior in commercial combat. One is reminded of the later advertising slogan fashioned and memorably imprinted on the international consciousness by the car firm Audi, which would proclaim not only *Fortschritt* but more importantly *Vorsprung durch Technik*. The cradle of this industrial and commercial expansion is rocked in our satirical story. The practitioners involved in this modern economy are portrayed as less than salubrious, despite their earlier display of warmth and affection within the family circle, even suggesting in Johannes the spiv conduct so often associated with post-war success. There is taking place inside and outside the house the busy beavering of figures at work, be it the dwarfs’ incessant hammering or the unstinting labour of men and women rebuilding their shattered world. The enervating activity of the little men on the tree is obviously a pointless exercise, unless one regards them with the unthinking and unreconstructed gaze of the pathological Christmas addict Milla, but the external work perhaps also testifies to dire necessity and surely partly also to a desperate need to fill the inner vacuum sensed and suffered by the brittle national psyche.

One need hardly be told that the availability of special treats and the constant repetition of, by their nature, pleasant and at least potentially rewarding festive occasions lose their allure and after a time fail to satisfy those who are incapable of otherwise filling the space occupied by such mindless and meaningless charade and its farcically grim manifestations as depicted in this story. The wider implications are self-evident. Repeated experience palls in intensity and attraction, ‘a truth universally acknowledged...’¹³. The farce enacted in Onkel Franz’s well appointed house has by now ‘...eine fast professionelle Starre angenommen...’(p.24). We are watching figures in an almost macabre dance of Christmas past, present, and future, the participants of

which are grouped and behave as tradition decrees, but this is no joyous family get-together any longer. We are now in the presence of people going through the motions, of figures who have been drilled or wound-up like mechanical contraptions to perform their allotted roles in an unseasonal-seasonal play. The visual and olfactory elements are laid on as befits the efficient preparations undertaken by those who feel duty-bound to oblige.¹⁴ Heart-felt ritual turns to shabby pretence, and the required 'Glückwunsch', expected to be uttered at a given moment in the by now ossified proceedings, is proffered 'gähnend'. The boredom and revulsion experienced by the younger members of the family appear to have infected even the inanimate actors in this drama. 'Die Zwerge, ein wenig phosphoreszierend, bleiben starr in der Dunkelheit stehen, die Arme bedrohlich erhoben, und der Engel lässt ein silbriges, offenbar ebenfalls phosphoreszierendes Gewand sehen' (p.24). Does one infer from such phosphorescent menace that contamination of spirit, as witnessed with such deadly daily regularity by the ant-like tiny workers belabouring their equally minuscule anvils, has had a corrosive effect even on soulless creatures and has set them on the road to dissolution and decay? The thought engenders alarm. Such contagion bodes ill for the human figures involved in this manic comedy, especially as they are exposed to and can '...im Dämmer die Zwerge wie flinke kleine Teufelchen herumhämmern sehen...' (pp.24/5) or watch when '...während eines heftigen Gewitters die Zwerge sich plötzlich bewogen fühlten, ohne Hitzeeinwirkung die Arme zu erheben und sie wild zu schwingen...' (p.25).

The roles assigned to the participants are not subjected to closer scrutiny, as long as everyone '...seine Rolle vorzüglich spielt...' (p.25). The narrator plants doubts as to the awareness found in their minds. Referring to the compliant priest and the part he plays in this farce, he wonders '...wenn er überhaupt weiß, daß er eine und welche er spielt' (p.25), a sad indictment indeed when the realization dawns that the substance of such a performance is very much secondary, as long as 'er seine Rolle vorzüglich

spielt'. The simulated Christmas with its attendant manic activity seen in the hapless dwarfs and, outside the activities of the family's villa, among the millions of driven workers engaged in the pursuit of money, luxury and status that defined the German economic miracle, conjures up the toiling figures of the dark *Nibelungen* of Nordic mythology. In Böll's Rhineland there is much *Rheingold* being mined metaphorically and materially, with the capital of the newly established republic sited on the banks of the legendary *Vater Rhein*. The toll which these frenetic and often pointless activities exacts from those involved in them is not unexpected and pitiful to behold. The wear and tear manifest in the Christmas decorations and in the tree itself, regularly exchanged for a newer model, is very much in line with the newly blossoming personal 'replacement tendency', reflected in many crumbling relationships.

There is '...hysterisches Geschluchze...', an '...Anfall von Wahnsinn...', in fact a full-scale '...Nervenzusammenbruch...' (p.26) in Cousin Lucie; she virtually becomes a human *Trümmerhaufen*, like those in evidence throughout the bombed cities of Germany. The wear and tear of objects which '...das ganze Jahr strapaziert werden' (p25) is matched by the '...Verschleiß an Nerven und von sonstigen gesundheitlichen Störungen, die damals anfingen, sich bemerkbar zu machen' (p.26). Recognition and acceptance of these are not, however, immediately forthcoming; it is obviously less painful to blame external circumstances, therefore '...man schrieb die Störungen einer gewissen herbstlichen Sensibilität zu, wie sie ja allgemein beobachtet wird' (p.26). Scapegoats have their place in any family and society.

The non-addicted members of this blighted family seek recourse to illness, be it Lucie's deep and real 'Spekulatiustrauma' or indisposition feigned by the male members of the family. Absences need to be explained, though, and medical confirmation is demanded, as Tante Milla's need to assemble the entire family around her every evening will not brook any prolonged absenteeism. The façade of the game of Happy Families,

despite increasing 'Disziplinsschwierigkeiten', will be maintained. The gaps in the rows of houses, or the ruined remnants of formerly impressive structures, seen all around by those who do not choose to blot out this stark reality by remaining hidden behind the closed curtains of their own small, and ostensibly intact, world, do not cause '...anhaltendes Weinen...' in the ostrich-like aunt, whereas she notices '...jede weitere Lücke sofort...' (p.27) whenever her circle is depleted. The accustomed family cohesion is increasingly threatened as its desperate members feel themselves buckling under the unacceptable strain of having to keep up a sham existence. The '...wahrhaft finsternes Gerücht, das ein bedenkliches Licht auf eine allabendlich friedlich versammelte Familie wirft' (p.27) speaks of the hope that the family's Christmas ordeal might perhaps be ended by the death of the formerly much-loved mother. Could there be connivance to hasten this inconvenient woman's demise? Rumour has it '...sie sei vergiftet worden...' (p.28) but the insinuation cannot be confirmed. What is no surprise, though, is the medical evidence that there was in fact an infection present in Tante Milla's system. How could it be otherwise given her unnaturally and pathetically stubborn immutability; such a body – and by extension – such a psyche must indeed have been invaded by an alien and destructive virus. It had been '...von einem Enkel eingeschleppt...' (p.32) and readily accommodated by the aunt's weakened constitution.

There are other 'viruses' in evidence in this long suffering family, apart from Franz, the prodigal son, whose own chosen lifestyle we have already considered. The hitherto very sound son Johannes displays '...die ersten gesellschaftsfeindlichen Bestrebungen'. The heinous crime he is driven to commit is as follows: '...er trat aus seinem Gesangverein aus, erklärte, auch schriftlich, daß er an der Pflege des deutschen Liedes nicht mehr teilzunehmen gedenke' (p.28). The effrontery can hardly be criticized harshly enough by the seemingly shocked narrator. It spells explicit rejection of things

German, of a part of the country's much-loved culture, and testifies to Johannes's disgust at the uncritical adherence to old *Volkstum*.

This is only the first step in the rebellion surfacing in Johannes. He, the scion of a mainstream bourgeois family, grounded in generations of business leaders, success, and prosperity, with the accompanying credo of political conservatism, '...ist Kommunist geworden. Er hat alle Beziehungen zur Familie abgebrochen, kümmert sich um nichts mehr [...] derwischähnlich produziert er sich in öffentlichen Veranstaltungen seiner Partei [...] und schreibt wütende Artikel in den entsprechenden Organen'(p.31). He can now establish a real bond with his estranged brother Franz as they have found the common cause of wanting to reform their own family and, by extension, their unreconstructed society. All the younger males now contravene the code which had hitherto defined and guided the family across many generations.

There is Franz who, even prior to entering the monastery '...befindet sich in einem Zustand, der in unserer Familie bisher noch nicht vorgekommen ist; er ist arm'(p.31), unheard of disgrace indeed. Mercifully, so the narrator informs us with relief, '...die sozialen Folgen seiner unverantwortlichen Frömmigkeit treffen also nur ihn selbst'(pp.31/2) since he has not gone forth and multiplied as his bible would have instructed him to do. His own childlessness, however, has not blinded him to the detrimental effects of perpetual Christmas on his sister Lucie's children. They look '...blaß und müde...' (p.33), '...lächeln starr vor sich hin, während sie ausgetrocknete Nüsse knacken, sie hören den unermüdlich hämmерnden Zwergen zu und zucken zusammen, wenn der rotwangige Engel über ihre Köpfe hinweg "Frieden" flüstert...' (p.29). Here we are almost in the realm of child abuse, these are children brow-beaten by insensitively imposed duties. Franz is the first to try and alleviate the children's dreary and damaging participation by seeking '...einen Jugendschutz für die Kinder von Lucie zu erwirken...'. He is, however, unsuccessful in this quest. The narrator assures the

reader cynically, but from the family viewpoint with palpable relief, that 'Gott sei dank sind ja die Kinder begüterter Menschen nicht dem Zugriff sozialer Institutionen ausgesetzt' (p.32). The idea of social workers gaining access to a 'nice' middle class house and its much put-upon young inhabitants is anathema. The assumption that financial solidity and respected social status are sufficient protection for those who are born into such a privileged milieu is clearly in place and militates against drastic rescue measures. There is a good deal of heart-felt criticism behind these superficially humorous lines.

There is more irony in the passages which detail the 'Auswanderungspläne' of *Schwager Karl* and his rebellious family. The old motto which has operated in this and most other conventional families, namely *Bleibe im Lande und nähre dich redlich*, will be ignored in the face of unreasonable and intractable familial friction and perhaps as a gesture towards the undigested history of their native land. We are told:

Das Land seiner Träume mußte besondere Eigenschaften haben: es durften dort keine Tannenbäume gedeihen, deren Import mußte verboten oder durch hohe Zölle unmöglich gemacht sein; außerdem - das seiner Frau wegen - mußte dort das Geheimnis der Spekulatiusherstellung unbekannt und das Singen von Weihnachtsliedern verboten sein. Karl erklärte sich bereit, harte körperliche Arbeit auf sich zu nehmen (p.28)

All that has been the bedrock of family ritual and thereby the basis of their identity is being rejected and cast aside in favour of a new life, untrammelled by tradition and the constraints bound up with too close adherence to it. A pioneering existence is planned in which Karl, presumably not easily given to much physical exertion and unused to the rigours of real work, is prepared to become a new man, just as his wife has reinvented herself to become a new modern woman by adopting a revolutionary new and decadent lifestyle, especially on display at night with visits to night clubs, by espousing Sartre's existentialism, newly arrived from Paris. The new dress code, eagerly adopted by Lucie and her ilk, is designed to shock the traditionalists and affords them a new freedom of expression. 'Sie trägt Kordhosen, bunte Pullover, läuft in Sandalen herum und hat sich ihr

prachtvolles Haar abgeschnitten, um eine schmucklose Fransenfrisur zu tragen...’(p.30), a clear departure from the image, much cherished by the narrator, of womanhood, the ‘...milden Frauen [...] die sich sittsam im Takte des Walzers bewegen, die angenehme Verse zitieren und deren Nahrung nicht ausschließlich aus sauren Gurken und mit Paprika überwürztem Gulasch besteht’(p.31). All this is ‘...ein wenig schockierend...’(p.31) for a man and a society used to Victorian women, or their German equivalents. ‘Good girls’ and respectable wives from a middle class background do not behave in such controversial style. Of course, such new women will long to lead liberated lives away from their stifling home turf, in places to be found for Karl and his dependants ‘...nicht weit vom Äquator...’(p.31) where similar clothes are worn, where un-German spicy cooking is popular and uninhibited natives can dance lustily, to a rhythm not compatible with practices harking back to a different era and their text seemingly set in stone.

Despite such shocking departures from customary restraint and reliable behaviour, the narrator/cousin has no cause to bemoan any ‘offensichtliche Unsittlichkeit’ in Lucie. This unpalatable characteristic will now be illustrated by Onkel Franz, an erstwhile pillar of society ‘...bei ihm ist der Verfall komplett, schon vollzogen’(p.29). This hitherto ‘...biedere Mensch [...] wurde auf Wegen beobachtet, die einfach unsittlich sind...’(p.28). Despite the initial evidence of great devotion to his demanding wife, he has allowed himself to indulge in an adulterous liaison ‘...trotz seines hohen Alters...’(p.32), in dishonesty and sharp business practices, ‘...Praktiken von einer Art, die wir zwar bewundern, keinesfalls aber billig können’(p.32). The moral and spiritual decay is there for all to see, but the uncle, obviously buoyed up by the efficacy of his commercial ‘...Methoden [...] die die Bezeichnung “christlicher Kaufmann” kaum noch zulassen’(p.30), feels justified in his transformation and ‘...stellt für sich den Anspruch, in Verhältnissen und Bedingungen zu leben, die moralische Sondergesetze berechtigt erscheinen lassen müßten’(p.29). He has undergone ‘...eine vollkommene und sehr

plötzliche Wandlung...’(p.28) of such magnitude that he appears to feel entitled not only to reap the benefits of his success but also to draw up a new code of conduct, arising from the arrogance bred in those who live unreflectingly and indulge in dangerous libertarian attitudes. The wear and tear of such practices also suffered by the busily hammering dwarfs has degraded the moral substance of an erstwhile upright citizen and of many like him in their struggle to dominate and control.

In our story it is but a small step now into ultimate artificiality. Every member of the family having reached the end of their physical and emotional tether, they are now one by one supplanted by a resting actor, beginning with Onkel Franz himself. The deception is so phenomenally successful ‘...daß nicht einmal seine Frau die ausgewechselte Identität bemerkte’(p.29), nor do his children show any greater perception. The interchangeability of seemingly loved members of the family, of easily shed and assumed identity, of the blurring of individuality is alarming and signals an even greater decline of human certainty in the onslaught from those who set out to deceive and abrogate their responsibility. There is, however, a touching exception to this large scale deception and misrepresentation. It may be connivance and faulty observation on the part of the adults, or perhaps simply indifference, which prevents them from noticing the changed dramatis personae of the ludicrous Christmas farce and the merry-go-round of the society which has spawned such hollow ritual, but this is not true of one of the youngest members of the clan assembled yet again around the evergreen and everlasting tree. The child, rather like the boy in Hans Christian Andersen’s story of the Emperor’s new clothes, is not conditioned yet to play-act, to dissemble or to hide the truth from himself or others. There is still enough freshness in him and uninhibited delight at having discovered the fraud perpetrated by the dastardly grandfather, later to be followed by a succession of actors, to blurt out the observation that ‘...Opa hat Ringelsocken an...’(p.29), a fact entirely unlikely to occur as part of the grandfather’s normally conservative attire. His innocence

and confidence in his own judgment shame the older members of the family. Words fail them in situations of guilty embarrassment and they ‘...wie so oft schon in peinlichen Situationen...’(p.29) resort to singing in the hope that an anodyne song, with its ready made and impersonal words, will prove yet again to be the panacea for unresolved dilemmas and allow them to hide behind its bland and traditional sentiments.

A ‘kleines Ensemble’ of actors learn to play the parts of all the adult members of the family with the proviso that ‘...immer einer von den vieren im Original an der abendlichen Feier teilzunehmen hat...’ if only ‘...damit die Kinder in Schach gehalten werden’(p.30). The man of religion is undaunted and shown to be as gullible in his acquiescence as is Tante Milla. The imperceptible substitution of false characters for those whose real presence appeared to be of paramount importance when the painstaking orchestration of the family celebration was first set in motion chillingly reveals the depths to which a bizarrely warped mind with its inability to countenance an altered reality can descend. The unbending, mad Tante Milla has the advantage of material wealth, steadily being accumulated as the monstrous ceremonies are enacted each night, to allow her husband to finance such lunacy. This wealth, created by astute know-how and the willingness to explore any avenue which promises lucrative return on investment, however reprehensible in ethical terms, provides openings in a hungry job market for those whose prospects depend on the vision and drive of the business fraternity. The law of supply and demand operates so that the exploitation practised on those who are in no position to argue, such as actors of whom ‘...ja glücklicherweise [...] kein Mangel herrscht’, is seen as amply justified by the fact that they are lucky to have any work at all ‘...zumal ja den Schauspielern eine Mahlzeit geboten wird...’ which reduces the applicants for such jobs to the status of people who merely need to feed themselves rather than look for artistic fulfilment. The cynicism inherent in such an awareness knows that ‘...die Kunst [...] wenn sie nach Brot geht, billiger wird’(p.30). We are dealing here with cold-

blooded practitioners of the law of the commercial jungle, the ruthlessness of which underpinned the *Wirtschaftswunder*.

Responsibility for the smooth and continuous functioning of the Christmas show is delegated to an ‘...arbeitslosen Inspizienten [...] ,der die abendliche Feier überwacht und sorgt, daß alles wie am Schnürchen läuft’(p.32), and it does indeed. The puppet master has arrived and the empty ritual unfolds without undue stress for the indifferent members of the family who now grace the proceedings only in effigy, in the form of theatrical impersonation. There is no substance left at all, other than the occasional appearance of one or other member of the family circle who is then discernible for the narrator ‘...als einzige, wenn man so sagen darf, reale Person’(pp.32/3). His mannerisms give away his identity which is gratifyingly reassuring to the observer since earlier the text had informed the reader that the substitution left nothing to be desired in terms of non-detectability. ‘Es scheint doch unverwechselbare Züge der Individualität zu geben’(p.33), to be spotted only by those with a higher level of observation and awareness. In the story it is the relative outsider, our narrator, who displays this facility. Although ‘die Ähnlichkeit der anwesenden Mimen mit den Verwandten, die sie darstellten...’(p.32) is frighteningly convincing, there is one further step to be contemplated and subsequently implemented. The children, who up to this point have been required to bring their own persons, body and, ideally, soul as well, to the hilariously sad ceremony, are now given a welcome reprieve in the form of ‘Wachspuppen’ of the type seen ‘...in den Schaufenstern der Drogerien als Reklame für Milchpulver und Hautcreme...’(p.33). We are now seeing the most tangible link between ostensibly private sentimentality and blatant consumerism. Once again money is no object and the children are spared any further ordeal, the family has disintegrated, its younger members seek a new and more meaningful life elsewhere, out of reach of the tentacles of the bizarre practices which Tante Milla has enforced. Onkel Franz, the

instigator of the originally well-meaning sham ritual and the guarantor of its continued staging in order to safeguard the happiness of his uncomprehending wife, is '...lebensmüde'. There is slack work to be observed, lax devotion to duty, wax dummies are not dusted regularly, even '... Disziplinlosigkeit...' (p.34) is in evidence. So the suggestion that the food and drink offered to the acting substitutes be replaced by fake substances is a logical development in the inexorable descent into the surreal. There can now no longer be any kind of '...natürliche Gastlichkeit [...] seitdem fremdes Künstlervolk dort allabendlich herumläuft und die Familienmitglieder sich befremdenden Vergnügen hingeben' (p.32). The years since a grateful family celebrated the resumption of normal life after the devastation of a terrible war, in a spirit of smug togetherness and generous provision, but sadly for them, due to their mother's obsession, without the real spiritual substance required for an enduringly satisfying ritual and life on a broader level, have brought this same extended family to its knees; it has willingly brought about its destruction by allowing itself to enter into fossilized ritual long after the moment when new life should have been breathed into outdated thinking. The non-dusting down of the wax dummies can be taken to be symbolize such neglect. The narrator whose blood links him to these dysfunctional characters realizes that '...meine Tante und der Prälat' are 'die einzigen Zuverlässigen...' (p.34) in the drama which has been, and continues to be, staged in its sham reality. The two members of this older generation appear to be happy in the familiar glow of the remembrance of things past. The *Spekulatius*, no doubt, renders the same service as the much quoted *madeleines* of Proust's much-quoted novel. Be they truly happy or merely pretending, we are assured '...die Feier wird fortgesetzt' (p.34). There is uncritical and unreconstructed enjoyment of the memories of *die gute alte Zeit*, whose, in their eyes, untarnished patina continues to please. But, the narrator is now no longer able to tolerate this world of childish make-believe. He has '...einen Augenblick lang den

Eindruck, einer Versammlung von Gespenstern beizuwohnen'(p.33) and even tells us that 'ein scharfer Appetit auf saure Gurken mich ganz plötzlich [befiel] und mich leise ahnen [ließ], wie sehr Lucie gelitten haben muß.'(p.33).The experience has left him 'nachdenklich'(p.34). The ghosts from the past will haunt him and the German nation for a long time to come.

* * * * *

In one sense, of course, Tante Milla cannot, in terms of any kind of realistic diagnosis, stand for post-war German culture. If one of the reproaches that can be made to that culture is that it chose to forget the past and to evade history by some kind of flight into a mythology of familial cosiness, then Tante Milla is not representative of that failing because she is insane; she has no choice between remembering and forgetting. She is simply stuck in a kind of fetishistic relationship to Christmas.

Yet, at another level of statement, Böll's text does generate a satirical charge. In a sense it claims that what Tante Milla is doing, in exceptional and excessive form, is not unrelated to the less spectacular modes of forgetting and self-cocooning that went on in Germany after 1945. Germany gave the Western World many of the symbols and tokens of the Christmas festival. In this sense, Christmas was the acceptable face of Germany. Small wonder, then, that many of Tante Milla's compatriots might want to hold fast to that – the whole year round. The single-mindedness of that solution is a grotesque version of what the Mitscherlichs diagnosed as the inability to grieve in post-Second World War Germany, that obliteration of the past that seemed to coincide with the manic rebuilding of the *Wirtschaftswunder* years.¹⁵ In Böll's hands family ritual becomes a substitute for any kind of questioning, thinking, self-scrutiny. In some ways, then, in spite of its manic humour, Böll's little tale - of all the texts here considered – takes the darkest view of the

emptiness and dishonesty of family ritual. The target is apposite, and profoundly symptomatic. In his discussion of the story J.H. Reid tellingly reminds us that the family as an institution was particularly – one is tempted to say uniquely – central to German society, as is illustrated by the fact that between 1953 and 1969 Germany, alone amongst the major European countries, had a separate ministry for the family.¹⁶ Reid reminds us that there was a particularly intense debate in post-war Germany about the role of the family in the immediate past: had it been a bulwark against, or acquiescent in, the project of Nazi *Gleichschaltung*?¹⁷ It seems confirmatory of the satirical force of Böll's tale that, on being broadcast, it was attacked for beschmirching the fervour of German family festivals and was compared to the official assault in Communist East Germany on the German Christmas tree. Böll was, it seems, uncannily perceptive in his choice of symbolic target.

Of late, critical opinion has not been altogether favourable to Böll. He has, for example, often been attacked for his tendency to sentimentalise and, by that token, to blunt his socially-critical perceptions. There may be an element of truth in that accusation. Certainly he does not muster the ferocity of a Günter Grass. Yet somehow *Nicht nur zur Weihnachtszeit* remains peculiarly memorable. The central constellation of an unhinged matriarch, for whom everyday is Christmas, and a narrator, whose attitudes and sentiments appear, despite their resolute conservatism, curiously unfocused and even somewhat ambiguous, conspires to a criticism of post-war Germany that is deeply telling.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 9

1. John Klapper, 'The art of aggression and its limitations: the early satires' in *The narrative Fiction of Heinrich Böll: Social Conscience and literary Achievement*, ed. by Michael Butler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp.73-76.
2. Karl Korn, one of the first critics to promote Böll's young talent, writes: 'Die grausige Komödie [...] enthüllt durch eine groteske Erfindung die Verlogenheit einer sozialen Schicht, die sich sofort nach der Katastrophe in den Trümmern mit allem bourgeoisen Komfortgerümpel des Leibes und der Seele wieder einrichtete'. See: Robert C. Conard, 'Heinrich Böll's *Nicht nur zur Weihnachtszeit*: A Satire for All Ages, *The Germanic Review*, 59 (1984), p.97.
3. In a wider context Robert Conard feels that: 'Böll's story [...] remains alive because in it he chooses to criticize conditions which, though specifically German, still retain a general validity. In the choice of Christmas and in the critique of "die gute alte Zeit", Böll creates universality, which transcends the single interpretation of Germany's desire to suppress its Nazi past. The story can, in fact, be read with equal application in any country where a shameful past has not been adequately dealt with.' See: Robert C. Conard, as above, p.102.
4. Robert Conard says: 'The choice of Christmas as a symbol of Germany's forgetfulness (a people's desire not to conquer the past) is actually quite natural. Christmas, in fact, abrogates the concerns of the day. For a brief period people forget their troubles or at least disguise them behind a festive spirit. Traditions by their nature stress the past and in that manner distort the present and neglect the future, but Christmas more than any other celebrations emphasizes an idealized and romanticized past. Hence, the Christmas season functions as institutionalized escapism as it is employed in the work, a permanent flight from reality extending from December to December, a point reinforced in the satire by the twelve narrative divisions Böll gives the story.' He goes on to reflect on Böll's message: 'Böll is saying in this satire of 1951 that the German failure to conquer the past is more than merely a desire to forget the war and a refusal to assume responsibility for it, but also a failure to condemn fascism.' See: Robert C. Conard, as above, p.99.
5. Ingeborg Weber-Kellermann supports this point of view: 'Die ersten Nachkriegsverhältnisse hatten zu einer Einschätzung der Familie als dem einzigen Halt geführt, der in ungewissen Zeiten verblieben war, und daher zur Beschwörung althergebrachter Familienstrukturen.' See: Ingeborg Weber-Kellermann, *Die deutsche Familie: Versuch einer Sozialgeschichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch, 1974), pp.204/205.
6. Kneipp, Sebastian, 1821-1897, Catholic priest in Bad Wörishofen, founder of hydrotherapy.
7. Robert Conard also sees this link: '... the satire suggests a close connection between the repression of the past and the headlong rush into the economic boom. It implies, the more one wants to forget history, the more one must lose oneself in the frantic activity of production.' See: Robert C. Conard, as above, p.101.
8. Weber-Kellermann demonstrates the impact and import of the Christmas celebration: 'Das Entzünden des Weihnachtsbaumes hinter verschlossener Tür im Kreise der Kleinfamilie nun entsprach dem Bedürfnis nach Intimität und Abschließung nach außen, das kennzeichnend war für das bürgerliche Familienleben des 19. Jahrhunderts. Um diesen zeremoniellen Mittelpunkt rankte sich ein fast liturgisch anmutendes festliches Programm, das in vielen Familien bis in die Gegenwart gültig geblieben ist: unter Benutzung zahlreicher traditioneller Requisiten (grüner Zweig und Licht, gemeinsamer Trunk) gestalteten die Eltern als Frucht langer Vorbereitungen einen Abend familiärer, verinnerlichter Harmonie, mit der sie alle Konflikte beschwichtigen und für einige Stunden die Utopie einer heilen Welt hervorzaubern möchten.' See: Weber-Kellermann, as above, p.226.
9. The history of the tree is supplied by Weber-Kellermann: 'Im Mittelpunkt der strukturell geordneten häuslichen Weihnachtszeremonie und Kinderfreude steht der lichtergesäumte *Tannebaum*. Wohl hat es immer schon den Brauch gegeben, zur Feier der Jahreswende die Häuser mit grünen Zweigen zu schmücken. Die Römer zierten ihre Häuser zu den Kalenden mit Lorbeerzweigen, und auch für das mittelalterliche Deutschland ist solcher Grünschmuck aus vielerlei Quellen getreulich belegt. Aber Weihnachtsbäume waren das nicht. Als geschenktragende Schützelpäume erscheinen sie erstmals in den Zunftstuben der Reformationszeit, also noch nicht vornehmlich im Zusammenhang mit der Familie. Neben der bürgerlichen Handwerkswelt tritt dann später ein weiterer sozialer Kreis als Träger weihnachtlicher Baumbräuche ins Blickfeld: die europäischen Fürstenhöfe. [...] Im Volke aber hatte sich in Deutschland der Weihnachtsbaum um diese Zeit [approximately between 1700 and 1840] noch keineswegs durchgesetzt, und es dauerte eine beträchtliche Zeit, bis es endlich dazu kam. Zunächst war es nur die bürgerliche Oberschicht, die sich aus den Geschenk- und Umgangsbäumen der Zünfte allmählich ihren eigenen Weihnachtsbaum entwickelte und nach seltsamen Umwegen endlich die Verbindung zwischen immergrünem Baum und Licht vollzog. Im 19. Jahrhundert verbreitete sich der Brauch, einen Weihnachtsbaum zu entzünden, dann mehr und mehr bei den Bürgerfamilien in den Städten, aber richtig populär auch im Kleinbürgertum wurde er erst nach dem Krieg von 1870/71, als er auf den Wunsch des preußischen Königs in den Unterständen und Lazaretten aufgestellt worden war. Danach allerdings vollzog sich seine Ausbreitung mit lawinenartigem Tempo, -von den Städten mit ihren verschiedenen Bevölkerungsschichten auch auf die Dörfer.' See: Weber-Kellermann, as above, pp.224/226.
10. 'Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people. While carnival lasts, there is no other life outside it.' See: Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. by Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1968), p.7.

11. Karl Friedrich May, 1842-1912: author of travel and adventure books; well known for the Western adventures of Old Shatterhand, written at the end of the nineteenth century and read by every German schoolboy.
12. 'Der Karnival lässt sich, da er als Kontrahent nicht nur der offiziellen Ordnung, sondern auch der offiziellen sakralen und weltlichen Feste in Erscheinung tritt, als Gegenfest bestimmen [...] das die etablierten Festkonzepte zitiert, nachäfft und ihrer Feierlichkeit zu berauben versucht.' See: Renate Lachmann, 'Die Schwellensituation', in *Das Fest*, ed. by Walter Haug and Rainer Warning (Munich: Fink, 1989), p.311.
13. From the opening sentence of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*.
14. 'Nicht das ist das Kunststück, ein Fest zu veranstalten, sondern solche zu finden, welche sich an ihm freuen.' See: Friedrich Nietzsche, 'Aufzeichnungen aus den Jahren 1875/79' in *Gesammelte Werke* IX, (Munich: Mosarion Verlag, 1923), p.480.
15. Alexander und Margarete Mitscherlich, *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern: Grundlagen kollektiven Verhaltens* (Munich and Zurich: Piper, 1967)
16. JH Reid, *Heinrich Böll: A German for his Time* (Oxford: Wolff and Berg, 1988), p.79.
17. JH Reid, pp.79/80.

CHAPTER 10

Garden idyll and ideology- a family afternoon in Wolf's *Juninachmittag*.

The culture of the GDR was, for the greater part of its existence, wedded to the tenets of Socialist Realism. It was an artistic creed that prescribed the portrayal of positive individuals, men and women committed to serve by their work the well-being of their community. All of this makes Christa Wolf's *Juninachmittag* (published in 1965) particularly remarkable – because it insists on showing the family off duty, as it were. All my other texts concern momentous instances of family ritual – funerals, weddings and so forth. But Wolf's text is deliberately un-momentous. And therein resides its particular importance.

* * * * *

The narrator refers to the garden of her story as a vision, a dream trying to turn itself into reality, a latent reality which had been trying to demonstrate its inner force and show '...daß es nicht mehr und nicht weniger war als der Traum, ein grüner, wuchernder, wilder, üppiger Garten zu sein. Das Urbild eines Gartens. Der Garten überhaupt' (p.41)*. The reader is informed from the outset that the *Erzählung* will not be '...etwas Festes, Greifbares, wie ein Topf mit zwei Henkeln, zum Anfassen und zum Daraus-Trinken' (p.41). The narrative tone is soft-focus, and in the context of my thesis this text deals with a very informal piece of family ritual, without firm rules or set procedure as normally found on more structured occasions.¹ We are in the realm of the *Datschen* culture for which the word, in its Germanized form, was borrowed from the Russian, or rather the

* Page numbers in this chapter refer to: Christa Wolf, *Gesammelte Erzählungen* (Darmstadt: Hermann Luchterhand Verlag, 1980).

Russians, the puppet masters behind the 'really existing' socialism of the GDR. On reading and interpreting the story one is tempted, however, to attach symbolic importance to this walled-in, cloistered and secluded idyll, given that this garden with all the profusion of its flora is located quite close to the border between the two German states as they existed in their separate identity and reality until 1989/90. The alert reader cannot but see many a veiled reference to this fact and the implications for those who lived and thought in what was the GDR.

The story examines scenes from family life, a lazy summer afternoon spent in their garden refuge, reminiscent of the Biedermeier ethos² with its exhortation to *hegen und pflegen* one's own immediate world, in bright sunshine and also bathed in a warm and gratifying awareness of family closeness and of individual identity, behind which one detects references to the world outside and others' distinctly separate identities. The narrative uses the pronoun *wir* and its other case forms³ with striking ingenuity to differentiate between family members, to indicate the generation gap, to highlight the status of the familial insider and that of all others and, very conspicuously, to draw the distinction between the East and West Germany of the 1960s long before the *Wende*. The utopian vision of those upholding the tenets of socialism is reflected in the thriving and peaceful garden near the border, known to the world as the Wall and the Iron Curtain.

The *wir* watching the helicopters patrolling the area overhead is clearly that of the citizens of the GDR.

Wir aber, wenn wir gerade Zeit haben, können einmal am Tage sehen, wie nahe die Grenze ist, wir können die langen Propellerarme kreisen sehen [...] Vielleicht schicken sie sie bloß, um uns an sie zu gewöhnen. Man hat ja keine Angst vor Sachen, die man jeden Tag sieht. Aber nicht einmal die nächtlichen Scheinwerfer [...] rücken uns die Grenze so nahe wie die harmlos-neugierigen Hubschrauber, die das Tageslicht nicht scheun(pp.59/60).

These are clearly Western helicopters since Frau B., the neighbour who has joined the family in the garden, wonders whether the pilot might be a Texan, from the part of America her own son, normally resident *im Westen* and at that time in the 'Wild West' with his football team, is visiting.

Not only helicopters disturb the tranquillity of the family afternoon. The next intrusive noise is '...eines von diesen guten alten Verkehrsflugzeugen...' (p.44). The following passage in the narrator's ruminations brings before the reader the *Luftkorridor*, the aerial highway linking West Berlin and the Federal Republic of Germany. With seemingly childlike innocence and logic, the first person narrator examines the evidence and significance of this air traffic. The *Luftkorridor* being '...ein Wort über das man lange nachdenken könnte', one is tempted to give one's observations a political spin by trying to establish the direction in which the airlines '...die uns überfliegen...' - obviously the *wir* of the GDR citizens in another guise - are flying. The aircraft, watched and listened to by the family in its garden retreat, '...flog für jedermann sichtbar von Osten nach Westen, wenn man mit diesen Bezeichnungen ausnahmsweise nichts als die Himmelsrichtungen meint...' (p.44). The insertion of 'wohl' in the next sentence gives proof of the narrator's assumption that the passengers on that aeroplane are likely to perceive its flightpath as one '...von Westen nach Westen...' (p.44). This superficially nonsensical statement calls for clarification. We are told '...das kommt daher, daß sie [die Maschine] in Westberlin aufgestiegen war...'. This narrow air corridor, sanctioned grudgingly by the Soviet Union and the regime of their satellite state, is as busy as any motorway. There are '...Flugzeugtypen vieler Herren Länder...' (p.44) to be distinguished and identified if one is knowledgeable and discerning enough. The narrator admits, though, that even the fact of having lived through the last war has not given her such an aptitude. We are dealing here with another simplified *wir*, namely that of the pre-war generation and those whose childhood was blighted by World War Two. One is inclined to go beyond the technical

observation and assume that the person, whose reflections the reader is allowed to share, may actually not want to differentiate, whether aircraft or human beings. It is unlikely that the narrator, observing her family in the garden and revealing the diversity of her thoughts and associations to the reader, thus giving proof of an open mind and independent thought processes, would mention the fact of her inability to attach labels to aircraft if she was not also suggesting covertly that the idea of the *Feindbild*, much bandied about in communist circles, did not chime with her own beliefs.

There is disappointment, however, and perhaps even bitterness, in the tone of the passage in which the narrator speculates as to the intentions and real involvement of those passengers on the aircraft which constantly use the air space over the family's garden and, by extension, over the socialist republic. The soft seats are probably taken by politicians and figures from the world of finance and business, not to mention glamorous public icons, who see it as their duty and who gain a high degree of gratification from the exercise, to inspect, and then comment on the other Germany, with sincere and steadfast determination and in the knowledge of standing '...auf Vorposten...'. The '...ungünstiges Gelände' gives rise to brief moments of enquiry on the lines of 'Wie die hier wohl leben'. The dismissive (in the mind of the GDR citizen of our text) 'Leute. Na ja.'(p.45) only just acknowledges their existence; the interest is *flüchtig* and cannot begin to match the involvement manifest in the effort to uphold the tenets of capitalism in West Berlin, a much visited and subsidized political island.

The notion and necessity of passing through an uncomfortable and unacceptable barrier appears to be vaguely hinted at by Wolf when mother and young daughter are startled by the '...Knall eines Düsenfliegers'(p.47). The child, never having been traumatised in her lifetime by the frightening noises of war and their effect on the civilian population, is merely 'beleidigt' at the unwanted noise pollution in their quiet garden 'aber nicht erschrocken'. The mother, saddled with the *Gepäck der Vergangenheit*, tries

to hide from the otherwise sensitive child ‘...wie leicht mir immer noch durch einen Schreck der Boden unter den Füßen wegsackt’(p.47). One is tempted to link the *Schallmauer*, which is breached with supersonic speed and thus the cause of the sonic boom which disturbs the tranquillity, with the edifice of the *Mauer*. In order to overcome or breach such a barrier, be it air or the rigidity of an inhuman system, the pilot needs to force his aircraft through the obstacle, since it is ‘...extra dafür gemacht, und nun muß er durch. Auch wenn es noch mal so laut krachen würde’(p.47). The choice of words could be taken to point to other, later, inexorable events which were to become unstoppable once unleashed by those who perhaps were also destined for just such a task, brought to the political fore by their unique personalities and convictions at a particular moment in history. The consequences of such changes as would occur later, like the sonic boom, would not necessarily be appreciated or assessed in their full magnitude. ‘Der Schall bleibt hinter ihm’(p.47), a statement which indicates that the instigator of such heady flight is not always responsible for, or even aware of, the aftermath of his actions. I shall return to the question of such a sea change and an early (given the date of the publication of Wolf’s story) vision of a *sanfte Revolution* as conjured up in this peaceful garden.

The status quo of the two republics is not seriously in question on this sunny afternoon on which at least one family is united and draws strength from itself and each member of this close-knit unit, despite the proximity of the *Schutzwall*, erected in 1961⁴ ostensibly to protect East Germany against the menacing hordes of imperialist invaders from the West. This is the description found in the *Museum für deutsche Geschichte* in *Ost-Berlin - Hauptstadt der DDR*, the nomenclature used defiantly in contravention of Allied agreements and regulations. The Wall is the very effective means of containing the population of the Socialist state within its boundaries, but it appears that there is literature available which allows its readers to dream of travel outside the area designated as friendly countries. The ‘Mittelmeer’ and Italy, referred to in the book being read by the

mother of this family, are denigrated by the child as '...Fremdwörter...' (p.42). In hindsight one cannot help thinking of one of the key demands voiced prior to the *Wende*, that of *Freizügigkeit*. Whilst the GDR family's travel scope extends only to the Baltic and the Black Sea, what rises from the pages of the mother's book is the sweet scent of mediterranean trees and flowering shrubs. This heady perfume takes her into a fantasy land not shared by those around her since its effect can only be experienced by turning the pages and inhaling, by the power of a fertile imagination and the writer's descriptive skill. Clearly, this is potentially dangerous territory, to be discussed rather cagily by the husband and wife. Not in front of the children, perhaps... Such dots give a further clue to the controversial nature of this literary conversation since they are also found in Wolf's text. They appear in the brief dialogue on the merits of the work in question⁵ in which there is no doubt as to its literary quality but '...wie sie mit diesem Land fertig wird...' (p.42). The '...Geruch von Macchiastäuden und Pinien...' needs to be excluded from the reality of life in the GDR, in order not to encourage subversive thoughts, and the cautious and practical mother assures the reader that '... ich [...] steckte meine Nase widerspruchslos in die Handvoll stachliger Blätter, die das Kind mir hinielt...' (p.43). We are safely back in the land of non-exotic northern European plants, of wild chives, of mint and dried grass in which the child '...sommers wie winters [...] nach allen möglichen Kräutern roch...' (p.43). This is political terra firma, a safe footing from which to negotiate life, within the family.

There is evidence of great effort in this garden - and again, by extension, in the former GDR. The pater familias is seen, or rather heard, to be engaged at one end of the garden in pruning vines. This particular year being one of rapid and luxuriant plant growth, he needs to trim back its excesses '...weil er [der Wein] sich gebärdete, als stünde er an einem Moselhang und nicht an einem dürftigen Staketengitter unter einer märkischen Kiefer' (p.42). The odds must surely be stacked against such an enterprise, as

was the case in so many other fields of endeavour. Much energy went into production, much thought was given to improved methods, workers were exhorted to give their utmost, medals were awarded and laudatory speeches were delivered, but the fruits of such labours on the whole left a good deal to be desired.⁶ The ‘Wette’, referred to as perhaps not having been understood by the lowly snail, constantly hovers in the background of this text. One is conscious of a context of a competitive struggle taking place between two incompatible ideologies. Those who use their energies in the service of the Western system feel rewarded, gratified and go home from West Berlin, or any other place of work, because ‘Man hat die Woche über das Seine getan [...] und am Sonnabend fliegt man guten Gewissens nach Hause’(p.45). Here effort is not always repaid and even nature does not live up to expectation. The father who ‘...stand neben dem kleinen Aprikosenbaum, der dieses Jahr überraschend aus seiner Kümmerlichkeit herausgeschossen ist...’ leads the reader to find in the following lines a fulsome description and praise of its fruitfulness and impressive output. This near certainty is thwarted, though, by the sober statement that it has not managed ‘...mehr als eine einzige Frucht zu bilden, und diese winzige grüne Aprikose gaben wir vor anzusehen...’(p.49). It is not enough for the narrator to avail herself of the word *vorgeben* in order to highlight a practice commonly found in rigidly controlled societies, ruled by fear and thus encouraging cultivation of the survival instinct. The ‘winzige grüne Aprikose’, this poor specimen, in terms of size and its unripe state, does however need to be fulsomely appreciated. Just as the members of the family are required to applaud, for reasons of affection, love and harmony within the family circle and an awareness that effort must be rewarded, however poor the product (this being a psychological need tacitly acknowledged), so credit must be given in the political sphere where little is due.

The willingness to take notice, to take seriously what the utopian garden, or the society professing to want to establish a latter-day Garden of Eden, furnishes evidence of

complicity in a sham system explicitly stated by the narrator. There is a readiness to look, to recognize, but it is mere pretence, indeed ‘...so weit treiben wir die Täuschung’(p.49). The reality remains unquestioned and unexplored. There are, however, other hints, interspersed in the text, of doubt, of fear of the *unbewältigte Vergangenheit*, accusations of unwelcome censorship and of a deep gulf which exists between citizens, even neighbours, notably the *Gartennachbar* found worthy of a brief dialogue on the subject of tomatoes.

Conflicting views on the cultivation of garden produce give rise to argument and strife. The neighbour, an engineer, is clearly a solid citizen; he ‘...hält sich überhaupt an Vorgedrucktes’ regarding ‘...seinen Haarschnitt...’ or the ‘...Innenarchitektur...’ of his house, appears not to be interested in politics ‘...aber sieht hilflos aus, wenn wir den letzten Leitartikelfade nennen’(p.50). These temperamental and, perhaps, ideological differences⁷ are not openly acknowledged by either side (the *wir* at this point in the text denoting the gulf, which the awareness of ‘them’ and ‘us’ opens up) due mainly to the firm assurance given by the narrator, part of the *wir* group, that ‘...der semmelblonde Ingenieur mit seinem froschgrünen Auto dasselbe Recht hat, auf dieser Erde zu sein...’(p.50). The tolerance voiced here speaks of a liberal mind and spirit and signals by its striking emphasis that the sentiments expressed are not, and have traditionally not been, widely held. The German context lends even greater weight to their laudable substance. In contrast with the green profusion of this tolerant family’s garden, the engineer appears to be happier and more at ease with his ‘...neues froschgrünes Auto...’, which is regularly wheeled out ‘...zur Sonnabendwäsche...’. Be the car ‘froschgrün’, the hue decided on by the mocking neighbours, or ‘lindgrün’, the preferred and more poetic description found in the official prospectus, we are seeing a man whose realm is not nature but modern technology, order, rules and firm facts. There is surely also a hint here

of consumerism in the GDR, barely acknowledged but latent in the consciousness of its citizens⁸.

The teenage daughter, who joins the other members of the family in due course, does not need merely to humour the annoyingly compliant engineer but is naturally inclined ‘...alles, was mit dem Ingenieur zusammenhängt, modern zu finden’. The parents, whose outlook on life was shaped by a different age and who are unable to jump across this generational divide, know ‘...welch katastrophale Sprengkraft für sie in diesem Wort steckt’(p.50). The reader, too, is aware that ideas and progress are often to be feared, including notions of sacrosanct modernity, the new age’s gleaming shrine, more particularly any science-based doctrine. The gap between daughter and parents widens further on the innocuous subject of the engineer’s ‘...schicke Sonnenbrille...’(p.50). The *wir* of the parentally subjective distaste for it and the *wir* of mother and father watching their nearly grown-up child ‘... wie sie über das Stückchen Wiese stakste [...] und ihre Bluse glattzog, um uns klarzumachen, daß es kein Kind mehr war, was da vor uns saß’(p.51) make manifest that ‘they’ and ‘us’ can also operate within one family as, of course, it was operating at the time (and to some extent still does ten years after German reunification) within the German nation sundered by war and the subsequent ideological divide. The undercurrent of equivocal feelings in the members of this family, gathered in the shelter of their garden idyll, surfaces from time to time, and the devoted and astute mother is able to interpret it. The loving father’s argument with the elder daughter as to the merits and demerits of certain school plays is identified as being a smoke screen for his real concern: ‘In Wirklichkeit erträgt er nicht seiner Tochter schmerzhafte Hingabe an alles, was sie für vollkommen hält; erträgt nicht den Anblick ihrer Verletzbarkeit...’. His love is such that he places himself ‘...töricht genug, immer wieder bei Gewitter ins freie Feld, um die Blitze, die ihr zugeschlagen sind, auf sich abzulenken’(p.52). The alternating reception elicited in the daughter by any proof of parental love and, at the same time,

evidence of an awareness that a child will always be seen by the parents as vulnerable, however accomplished and independent, can either produce ‘...stürmische Zärtlichkeit...’ or ‘...wütenden Undank...’(p.52). A mere man and father is unequal to such feminine wiles and reacts like the snail mentioned earlier in the text, namely by vowing to withdraw into his male shell. He protests fiercely; ‘Von dieser Sekunde an werde ich mich nie wieder in diese Weibersachen einmischen, das schwöre ich’. The women are, however, not taken in by such laughable macho posturing. He has gone out on an unconvincing limb; his women folk know better: ‘Aber wir hörten nicht auf seine Schwüre, denn er ist eingemischt, mit und ohne Schwur’(p.52). He surely cannot have believed that he would ever be able to renounce his feelings of deep familial involvement, his devotion to his children, his being part of the ‘cake mixture’ of an intact family from which individual ingredients cannot realistically be extracted once they have been truly blended by affection, commitment and habit.

Each member of this family in their different ways, depending on temperament, age, sex, and their position within the unit, asserts him- or herself at times. The nameless *Kind*, in starting a verbal, obviously much-played and much-loved, game of linking obvious and astonishing and imaginatively nonsensical word pairs, jockeys for an appearance in the limelight of the family’s interest. The implicit rules are known to all four of them, and they also appear to share the same fertile imagination, either passed on through the natural phenomena of heredity or through the exposure to family traits and pursuits bestowed by nurture, and thus they ‘...überschwemmten alles Land mit den hervorragendsten Mißbildungen...’(p.53). This conjures up before the reader, familiar with the verbal aspirations and needs of GDR reality, the earnest neologisms listed in bound glossaries which chronicled some linguistic developments in the eastern German state across the forty years of its separate existence. For example: those GDR citizens who were allowed to inhabit large and elegant Elbe-side villas were termed

Sonderbedarfsträger. Such GDR-speak, be it euphemisms designed to conceal unwelcome truths or standardised or ideologically loaded terms, rears its ugly head as soon as the aforementioned engineer, set apart by his own nature from the family whose likes and dislikes inform this sunny afternoon's mood, is invited to join the light-hearted but revealingly informative word game played with delight and ingenuity within the family. The narrator reminds the reader of the surrounding garden, and, by association with the labour required in order to bring forth produce from such a place, offers an image of tremendously strenuous application on the part of this man who is governed by reason, not by imagination and the ludic urges the others so willingly indulge in. The *Spieltrieb* is absent in the engineer, and this fact is made abundantly clear; no flights of fancy here. Asked to utter the word combination which surfaces instinctively and effortlessly in his mind he '...grub vor unseren Augen sein Gehirn sekundenlang um und um, er strengte sich mächtig an, bis er, sehr erleichtert, Aufbau-Stunde zutage förderte'(p.53), a struggle reminiscent of the arduous labour involved not only in serious gardening but even more appropriately in coal mining and the *Fördertürme* required in such an enterprise. The family feels duty-bound to fall in with such earnest and politically correct endeavour and follows with other similarly sober terms, such as 'Arbeits-Brigade', 'Pioneer-Leiter' and 'Gewerkschafts-Zeitung'. Although the component parts of such words can be attached to other verbal partners, the playfulness inherent in this family's make-up has evaporated. They contrive to continue briefly but '...wir trieben es lustlos ein Weilchen, lachten pflichtgemäß kurz auf bei Leitergewerkschaft und brachen dann ab'(p.53). They do not discuss '...diesen mißglückten Versuch...', in order to spare the feelings of the charitably inclined elder daughter. She feels compelled to apportion blame; clearly the rest of her family is unable and unwilling to give credit to a man who is not part of *wir*, the strongly voiced family identity, since 'er hat eben Bewußtsein!'(p.53). The implication is that in

the eyes of the more fanciful members of the family he is diminished by being simply a creature of 'Bewußtsein'.

As the reader is given access to an evidently close-knit, albeit combative, family, the narrator presents both children together and also in their separate identities. In this enchanted garden mother and daughter conduct a very feminine conversation, with the teenage girl playing the role both of the eternal Eve and also that of the wicked queen in the fairytale of Snow White, or is it the Lorelei who with her wiles spelt doom for countless boatmen on the river Rhine? Hair is being combed, doubts expressed as to the girl's appearance, hidden fears surface in this budding young woman and the impossibility of mothers being able to allay such doubts, and apprehension is made plain. The terrible question of '*Spieglein, Spieglein an der Wand, wer ist die Schönste im ganzen Land?*' voiced imperiously by Snow White's stepmother, in her desperate need to triumph over the younger woman's greater beauty, is here not uttered covertly in order to score over a mother whose own looks by comparison are, perhaps, beginning to fade but in order to gain reassurance for the girl herself. This is one of the roles assumed by mothers the world over, namely that of providing psychologically supportive comments and agreeable pats on young backs burdened by doubt as to self-worth and appealing looks. It is clearly no mere fishing for compliments when the girl, although '...sie sich zu beherrschen suchte...' feels compelled to try and elicit a favourable comment from her mother regarding her 'Frisur' and its potentially detrimental effect on her large nose, as she perceives it. Her mother '...fügte [...] hastig ein...', thereby stepping into the shoes of the expected massager of delicate psyches, and exclaims '...aber erbarm dich [...] du hast doch gar keine zu große Nase!'(p.54). The following *Gretchen-Frage*, pointed mercilessly at the unsuspecting mother, erroneously relieved at having answered so reassuringly, is seen as '...die Frage aller Fragen...' (p.55), 'Was möchtest du lieber sein, schön oder klug?'(p.54). A young girl

on the threshold of womanhood, unsure of herself despite the pugnacious stance taken earlier, will not be fobbed off with feebly worded platitudes; she is too astute not to sense and recognize evasive answers. Her mother, whilst struggling to find an adequate response, is distracted and moved by the realization of her daughter's development towards becoming someone closely mirroring her own character and, the reader reading this into the ambiguous sentence, her appearance. She is aware that, at this unsettled time in her growing daughter's biological journey from childhood to womanhood, the notion of being a clone-like creature is anathema; the mother's fervent hope is '...wenn sie es bloß noch nicht merkt!' (p.55). While identities are painfully being shaped, the uniqueness of any one human being must not be questioned, still less jeopardised, by even the most loving comparisons. The question which gives rise to such musings can only be diverted by gentle reprimand which focuses on the propensity of, particularly, teenage children to disbelieve or even mistrust parental utterances, thus rendering futile any attempt at answering such probing, and unsettling, questions.

What might have occasioned a sullen and disappointed withdrawal by the daughter from the cosy and revealing filial/maternal dialogue instead produces a refreshingly and equally revealing childlike outpouring of affection for a much loved parent who is aware that, hidden behind the posturing, fake adult behaviour and precocious verbosity of the beloved child, there is a deep need to show, and be shown, great love. The mother/narrator tells us that '...ich hatte ihre weichen Lippen überall auf meinem Gesicht und an meinem Ohr sehr willkommene Beteuerungen von Ich-hab-nur-dich-wirklich-lieb und von ewigem Bei-mir-Bleiben und Immer-auf-mich-hören-Wollen...' (p.55). Such declarations, reminiscent of words spoken by ardent lovers, are gratefully and enthusiastically absorbed by this mother who, with her enquiring mind and intellectual pursuits, may not be typical but who is emotionally representative of all mothers, or fathers too, when it comes to '...meiner Schwäche und meinem Hang zum

billigen Selbstbetrug' (p.55). Parental credulity is a given, albeit self-mocked, in the make-up of a successful parent's emotional survival kit.

The younger child's brief absence facilitates this dialogue; its return ends the exchange of loving words and gestures. The reader is instantly aware of sibling rivalry, present in all families, however much love there appears to reside within the parents and however evenhanded they strive to be when showering their children with such emotion. The returning child says contemptuously, sneeringly and evidently jealously 'Jetzt lecken sie sich wieder ab...' (p.55), cold water being poured on the unwelcome show of affection. Children compete for their parents' love, even within the stability of the family depicted with such insight by the narrator, within the reassuring shelter of this idyllic garden, in the warm glow of feelings flowing between the members of this group, represented here by the high profile given to the unusually abundant existence of four-leaf clover. The younger child recaptures the distracted mother's attention by casually tossing a bunch of such rare clover leaves into her lap. Such *Glücksklee* represents 'keine optische Täuschung...', it is '...kein doppelter Boden...' but 'solides verblättriges Glück' (p.55). This plant, credited with the power to confer good fortune and happiness, is to be shared by the members of this family, thrown into the mother's *Schoß* and taken from it again to pass to the child's sister in order to bestow much *Glück* on her. The word *Schoß* in the German version is clearly of some significance since it denotes not only the lap on which children can sit but also the womb from which these children made their way into the world. The *Glücksklee* will be preserved between the pages of the novel, the reading of which had filled the earlier part of the afternoon for the mother. The security and shelter of her womb is now provided by parental and familial love and by the protective isolation of their garden. However, pages of the novel which speak of doom, misfortune and grisly deeds of revenge, of victims of fate, are not deemed to be appropriate as protection and preservation of the beneficent clover. Traces of superstition are hinted at in this passage

suggesting that the mother, aware of the privileged circumstances of their charmed family circle which is held up to the reader so convincingly and mouthwateringly, is unwilling to jinx the contentment experienced by parents and offspring alike. ‘Die Seiten [...] ließ ich aus, denn was weiß ich von vierblättrigem Klee und von der Glückszahl Sieben, und was gibt mir das Recht, gewisse Kräfte herauszufordern? Sicher ist sicher’(p.56). The members of this close-knit family are bound together by affection and affinity so that their father’s lost, or rather mislaid, pieces of string, earmarked for one of his gardening tasks on that sunny afternoon, cause the women to reflect on his childishly drawn conclusion that, naturally, they are to blame. They need no *Bindfaden* to tie them into a unit but its loss leads to a typical small altercation familiar to anyone who has experience of such irritations. The narrator/mother’s realization, communicated to her children simply ‘...mit Blicken...’ is that ‘...man hätte ihn nicht so lange sich selbst überlassen dürfen...’ or at least, feeble male-being that he obviously is, ‘...man hätte ihm wenigstens ein Kleeblatt in die Tasche stecken sollen, denn jedermann braucht Schutz vor bösen Geistern, wenn er allein ist’(p.57). Such a ringing female endorsement of family cohesion, of mutual support given within the family unit, of the desirability of conferring strength and even good fortune on its members is balanced by the moan issuing from the ‘lucky’ father. Despite their best efforts to help find the ludicrously hyped-up pieces of string, the women hear ‘...den Vater sein Geschick beklagen, das ihn unter drei Frauen geworfen hat’(p.57). This moaning father clearly knows that he has been dealt a good hand of cards by fate, feels compelled, however, to remonstrate with it and his female companions, partly to vent his annoyance at having been thwarted in the completion of a self-imposed task, but possibly also in line with the mother’s acknowledgment of superstitious anxieties, in order to divert the attention of an envious and resentful deity from the demonstrably happy family in its blissful garden.⁹ The reader, once again, is faced with one of the narrator’s multifarious pronouns *wir*. The women, among whom it is the

father's fate to dwell and by whom he is at times exasperated, '...seufzten also und wußten uns nicht zu helfen' (p.57). Here we are clearly dealing with a *wir* defined along gender lines. There is, however, no cause for the reader to feel concern on that score since the fundamental harmony and understanding underscoring the afternoon are manifest. The luckless father's '...düsteres Gesicht' will soon assume once again the relaxed features the reader expects in this happy setting. One has to read to the end of this text to be in the presence of real existential reflexion. The afternoon is not exhausted yet; there is still time to allow the violent and dangerous outside world to intrude into the garden idyll. Earlier the mother and the younger child had been engaged in looking up towards the sky. Imagination had taken over and the clouds overhead had been given various fantasy descriptions and realities. They had been scrutinised for their rapidly changing shapes, with ships and castles alternating with '...wilden Gebirgsketten und goldüberzogenen Meeren der Seligkeit'. There had been 'keine Unwetterdrohung weit und breit' (p.45). The fast and surprisingly incongruous changes overhead occurring in '...wunderbarer Schnelligkeit [...] denn dort oben hatten sie den Trick heraus, eins aus dem anderen hervorgehen, eins ins andere übergehen zu lassen...' (p.45). Entertaining this may have been, but the *sie* high above the earthlings of our story instil a sense of unease, despite the wondrous workings at their disposal. Those gazing up are both enchanted and impressed by the spectacle over which they have no control, and the reader is told that 'uns kam ein Anflug von Unsicherheit über die Zuverlässigkeit von Himmelslandschaften, aber wir verbargen ihn voreinander' (p.45). The shifting reality witnessed here also suggests perhaps that there is doubt as to the reliability of the political system, of 'them' and the wisdom of their ever-changing claims and expectations. The perceived illusionary nature of such landscapes, be they celestial or political, appears to be strongly hinted at.

The void left by the absence of certainty regarding the outside world and the need to occupy time in this environment engender a conversation between mother and younger

daughter (*das Kind* as she is referred to in the text) on boredom. The obliging mother is eager to dispel any signs of *Langeweile* in her child since such manifestations of dissatisfaction can be an irritating blot on parental landscapes, designed to upset and disrupt, to be avoided by filling such moments with activity.¹⁰ Such a remedy is easily devised as long as one is not faced with muscle-flexing nations. The vague 'Mach doch was' imperative uttered by this mother at the same time has her reflecting on the '...Langeweile von Erwachsenen...', as it can have a built-in propensity for political and military fall-out. 'Was sollten wir mehr fürchten müssen als die tödliche Langeweile ganzer Völker?'(p.47). The alarm with which this peace-loving mother and, by extension, the reader react to this question is quickly brushed aside with a Fontane-like evasive and curtailing sentence, this being obviously 'ein weites Feld' or even 'ein zu weites Feld'. Are we hearing echoes here of ennui which whole nations felt, of frustration and dissatisfaction in the political arena, both in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, leading to disastrous manifestations of sabre-rattling and the resulting destruction and death? Such uncomfortable musings are, however, dismissed before they can truly rise to the surface: 'Aber davon kann hier nicht die Rede sein'(p.47). One might also allow oneself to think of the boredom which can suffuse overly-regimented societies.

This mother gratefully turns her attention to the child and enters into an educational discourse which can be said to hinge on the press and on censorship. Whereas information is to be gleaned from newspapers, there is ever-present the figure of the censor. In this delicate story it is the father who is seen as the culprit, as he withholds '...die besten Sachen' from his offspring; clearly his motives are protective and not reprehensible, but the child's response to such well-meaning intervention is one of frustration in the face of being denied access to something which '...spannend gewesen [wäre]’(p.48). Any child would be determined never to allow such *Bevormundung* later in its life. The GDR context, of course, jolts the reader into the bitter awareness of just such

a reality, imposed by a shaky system on its citizens, not for reasons of protecting them from the harshness of historical facts or unpleasant events in our time, but out of a sense of fear.

Looking ahead, the concerned mother in the text projects herself into a future in which individuals or, perhaps, even an entire nation will ‘...seinen Kindern von einem frühen Alptraum erzählen’(p.48). The horror of memories, not in any way cushioned by Proustian cakes and their aroma, the ‘Remembrance of Things Past’ will conjure up death and destruction, not merely as portrayed in the isolated article in the tabloid press, but as collectively remembered guilt. As Christa Wolf says in *Kindheitsmuster*: ‘Das Vergangene ist nicht tot; es ist nicht einmal vergangen. Wir trennen es von uns ab und stellen uns fremd’¹¹. The *unbewältigte Vergangenheit* of the German people, or at the time of the publication of this text, the two Germanies, will continue to be a reality. ‘Der Garten wird längst versunken sein...’ by then but German history will not have shared the fate of Vineta or Atlantis. A story told by our narrator’s grandfather revolves around ‘eine grausige Bluttat’ committed by a man who was sentenced to ‘...Wahnsinn durch einen Wassertropfen [...] der in regelmäßigen Abständen tagein, tagaus auf seinen geschorenen Kopf fiel’(p.48). It is surely no coincidence that Wolf at this point stretches the theme of this reflexion to include an earlier generation. Her husband ‘...fuhr fort, sich über meine Großväter zu entrüsten, und ich fuhr fort, sie in Schutz zu nehmen, als müßten wir einen unsichtbaren Zuschauer über unsere wahren Gedanken und Absicht täuschen’(p.49). Whereas this family carries around in its consciousness its own private past and the memories associated with it, to be dredged up at times, interrogated and discussed on a national level, GDR thinking and censorship did not truly allow the recent German past to be held up for scrutiny, thus denying its citizens open access to unpalatable secrets, shameful culpability and subsequently the benefit of catharsis through exposure to the horrific truth. The family in the idyllic garden of Wolf’s *Juninachmittag* will go on

enjoying its serene and restorative ambience,¹² but there are repressions at work behind the idyll.

In the context of Frau B's visit to the garden in question, the pronoun *wir* is employed to denote family togetherness vis-à-vis the intruder, however welcome. This neighbour is clearly something of a horticultural expert, able to dispense advice and well-versed in all things botanical and '...kein noch so merkwürdiges Verhalten irgendeiner lebenden Kreatur...' is a mystery to her. She is an astute observer and '...sie sieht mit einem Blick die Krankheit und ihre Wurzel, wo andere Leute lange herumsuchen müssen'(p.58). Frau B., who has looked into '...das Innere der gelben Rose...' has a talent for looking below the surface of mere petals and finds it rewarding to expose this rose to her x-ray eyes, delving deeply into the soul of this multi-petalled flower. At the core of this floral specimen there is quite a different and unexpected colour, namely '...ein Rosa, was es sonst nicht gibt'(p.58).

The many years of practical involvement through work, through productive effort and expertise, would lead one to expect Frau B. to be well able to pronounce constructively and knowledgeably on all gardening matters. She has earned '...durch lebenslängliche Arbeit an den Produkten der Natur ein gewisses Mitspracherecht über sie...' (p.59), surely an example of GDR-speak in a culture of 'experts', the right to interpret signs of failure, to identify the causes and to deliver a personal and informed verdict on '...alles, worauf ihr Blick mit Zustimmung oder Mißbilligung gelegen...'. Not '...der Hundertjährige Kalender...' (p.58), nor those who have usurped the right of the ordinary citizen to contribute to the welfare of his country by exercising his 'Mitspracherecht', should presume to marginalize such valuable human material. The narrator clearly fudges the issue when she declares only semi-bravely, 'es ist ja nicht ganz ausgeschlossen' that this notion should be entertained, conceding at the same time that it would only be fair if '...MAN ihr nun vor anderen mitteilen würde: Also hören Sie mal

zu, meine liebe Frau B., was dieses Jahr die Ernte betrifft, dachten WIR...’(p.59). *MAN* and *WIR* written in capital letters, and thus carrying a more striking hidden message, surely refer to the political puppet masters controlling the lives of all the characters introduced to the reader in these pages. Although the tone of this apparently genuine offer of a consultation between equals is deceptively friendly and inviting, ostensibly prioritizing Frau B., no-one would foolishly infer that it is Frau B. whose opinion will truly be sought. This approach is a well-tried and age-old ploy, often successful and based on the assumption that *der kleine Mann*, or *die kleine Frau* in this instance, can be made to feel uncertain and his convictions manipulated.

The four climatic disasters announced unceremoniously by Frau B. fill the erstwhile happy family with foreboding and fear. The closeness and secure ease with which the familial *wir* has been experiencing its garden idyll is further assailed by the arrival of another harbinger of doom. Die Witwe Horn appears and joins the party, bringing news of an ‘Eisenbahnunglück’. The peace, seemingly as fragile as glass, is instantly shattered. Even the ‘Guten Tag’ offered in unison by the *wir* of the family, and possibly now including Frau B. who has established herself as one of them in contrast with the newly arrived scandal and doom monger, is uttered ‘beklommen’(p.59). A violent and dangerous world is brought into this tranquil garden by one who obviously relishes such gothic and detailed horror as can be found in the accounts of death and disaster issued sensationaly by the press. The ‘Glitzern in den Augen der Witwe Horn’ is the surest indication of such inclinations.

The threat that impinges on the garden idyll is left unspecified (apart from the railway accident). The mood that diminishes the well-being of the family in *Juninachmittag* is, then, existential rather than political in character. Yet it is important to recall the time of which Wolf writes here – the early 1960s. It is the period of the building of the Berlin Wall, a period when (whatever the official versions claimed) the GDR felt

embattled and uncertain. ‘Imperialist aggression’ may be merely a slogan, but in context it did have a certain force, as the gradual escalation of the Vietnam war made itself felt. Both East and West were also memorably confronted with the potential outbreak of nuclear war by the Cuban crisis of 1962, the daring stand-off between Kennedy and Khrushchev which arose from the threat perceived by the USA to their national security, as a result of the intended installation of Soviet nuclear weapons on Cuban soil. Such factors are not mentioned by name in *Juninachmittag*, but the all-pervasive sense of a threatened idyll, of a little enclave in a troubling and troubled world, is utterly characteristic of a story which also has a timeless quality.

The narrator in her musings¹³ introduces another kind of separate experience when she allows the assembled company to share the new *wir* of inclusion for all those in the garden. However great the intellectual and emotional gulf between those partaking of the benefits of this peaceful garden may be, there is to be found a far greater divide between the living and the dead. The silence observed in honour of the actor’s wife, who lost her life in the aforesaid train crash, fills the mind’s eye of each of those present with the images of her living presence. ‘Aber wir konnten es ihr nicht sagen, sie war schon vorbei, sie wendete uns auf eine unwiederrufliche Art den Rücken zu...’(pp.61/2). She is gone ‘für immer’ and her unwillingness to turn back and grant the living another chance to imprint her on their consciousness is indicative of her new status. She is no longer part of the *wir* of the living, reminiscent of the loss Orpheus suffered when he was permitted to try and coax Eurydice back from Hades, her new consciousness or state of oblivious otherness so wonderfully put into words by Rilke in his poem¹⁴. A human identity has been obliterated and ‘Sie haben ja nichts mehr von ihr gefunden...’(p.62). The reader registers with surprise that the *Witwe Horn* has clearly tapped into a common vein of interest among her otherwise contemptuous neighbours. Her own need to share her knowledge of the human tragedies arising from the *Eisenbahnunglück* has been satisfied

and she is unwilling to sit down to indulge the others' curiosity further. In her view it may be detrimental to one's equilibrium if one allows oneself the luxury of being seated, a precondition for thinking. 'Wer sitzt, der denkt.'(p.62), and only those whose thoughts can be relied on to comfort and not to unsettle can afford to indulge in such non-activity. Only work and contact with others provide solace and ensure that, in the case of this unloved and irritating widow, painful reminders of the existing but absent family members are, and should remain, banished. After the reader's exposure to an intact and apparently happily united family, the narrator redresses the balance by juxtaposing '...ein hassenwürdiger Mann...' who left his wife, '...Enkelkinder, die man nicht kennt...' and a '...Schwieger Tochter, dieses liederliche Frauenzimmer...' whom she has '...mitsamt dem Sohn hinausgeworfen'. Even the '...Nachbarkinder, diese Nichtsnutze...' (p.63) fail her by playing tricks on her. Her efforts at filling the house with living creatures, such as tiny chickens, and thereby giving her life a purpose and a sense of renewal, symbolized by the eggs which she dyes and gives to the ungrateful children of her neighbours, are in vain. Ultimately, even a mother can find herself alone in the world although she has living relatives. She realizes time and time again '...daß niemand da ist [...] nichts und niemand, wie man sich auch den Hals verrenkt'(p.63), which strikes a sombre, even warning, chord in this unlikely setting which is otherwise marked by familial warmth and closeness. The widow's time in the garden, even with people who are far from extending the hand of real friendship to her, has recharged her vital batteries, allowing her to face her own world again. The narrator interprets Frau B's '...gewichtige[n] Schritte...' as a clear statement of non-solidarity, a sign '...daß sie sich nicht gemein machte mit der hageren Frau, die neben ihr trippelte'(p.63). There is no shared female identity, no *wir* which might bring *die Witwe Horn* into the fold of women and allow her to draw comfort from such inclusion. Frau B. shows herself to be judgmental and blames the pitifully lonely widow for her misfortune. She cannot be forgiven because moral boundaries need to be drawn and

observed when unhappiness is deemed to have been brought on by one's own inadequacy or misdemeanours, lest others are contaminated by such failings. 'Die Grenze galt es zu hüten, die unverschuldetes Schicksal und selbstverschuldetes Unglück auf immer voneinander trennt' (p.63). Here we are in the avowed presence of yet another *Grenze*, a boundary or wall erected in people's minds just as effectively and unforgivingly as the *Mauer*, which at this time separates Germans from Germans with a different political and geographical biography. Frau B's mindset displays no Christian charity, perhaps not surprisingly in a country of official atheism, but very likely to be mirrored in Western fellow human beings and their attitudes.

The reference to unhappiness and death has introduced the concept of transience into the gentle mood of this summer afternoon. The narrator in her reverie is faced with the stark reality of human life and its ultimate conclusion, shared by all sooner or later. This thought is as unwelcome as the certainty, pointed out in the context of the dead wife of the actor neighbour, that '...das Spiel ging ohne sie weiter' (p.64). The idea of life continuing without the individual, forced to contemplate such an unpalatable truth, is fundamentally unacceptable. A foretaste of death is being experienced by the narrating and reflecting mother. 'Der sinkende Tag...' becomes the metaphor for gradual decline, and suddenly 'der ganze federleichte Nachmittag hing an dem Gewicht dieser Minute'. Time and death are seen to walk hand in hand and this fading day takes its symbolic toll '...auch an der Rose [...] die nur heute und morgen noch außen gelb und innen rosa ist.' (p.64). The sense of falling through time and sinking into oblivion, and of corporeal reality being finite is seen as being only of future significance, since all living beings are firmly grounded in their physical form. 'Aber man kriegt Angst, wenn immer noch kein Boden kommt, man wirft Ballast ab, dieses und jenes, um nur wieder aufzusteigen' (p.64). A conscious mind needs to believe that the time for the dissolution of one's inner being,

of the end of the self, cannot be approaching, least of all at a time of happy awareness of the familial bond and an anchored existence.

The narrator at this point uses the most comprehensively applicable *wir* of the entire story. ‘Wer sagt denn, daß diesmal wir gemeint sind? Daß das Spiel ohne uns weiterginge?’. This large *wir* encompasses all humanity; its stark labelling attaches the certainty of mortality to each member of the human race. By the time the narrator/mother has thought her way to the end of this inescapable truth ‘die Sonne war kaum noch sichtbar. Es begann kühl zu werden’(p.64). The shadow of death has fallen over this erstwhile sunny garden, and the earlier ‘unbearable lightness of being’, Kundera’s inimitable phrase¹⁵, has evaporated. The lazy afternoon has taken on a new and heavy existential meaning. She is brought back down to earth – and the Earth of the living – by the welcome realization that the children are no longer arguing and unclouded harmony has been restored.

In conclusion, I should like to comment on the allegorical implications of one small incident in *Juninachmittag*. Father is talking with the neighbour who criticizes ‘...die mindestens sechshundert gelben Butterblumen...’ in the garden of the narrator’s family. He wants them removed ‘...damit sie nicht zu Pusteblumen werden und als Samen sein akkurat gepflegtes Grundstück bedrohen konnten’(p.46). The neighbour is an inadequate botanist, since buttercups do not turn into *Pusteblumen*, the dandelion clocks beloved by all those who are young at heart and relish blowing their fragile seeds through the air and who enjoy their unstoppable movement in all directions. Since the *Pusteblumen*, with the notion of easy *pusten*, contain a pushover element against which resistance is virtually impossible, they are presumably meant to be dandelions. The family members, having lost all respect for the paranoid neighbour, because of the unreasonable demands made by him

...hatten viel Spaß an dem Gedanken: Armeen von Pusteblumenfallschirmchen - sechshundert mal dreißig, grob gerechnet - treiben eines Tages in einem freundlichen Südwestwind auf des Nachbars Garten los, und er steht da, ächzend, weil er zu dick wird, bis an die Zähne mit Hacke und Spaten und Gartenschlauch bewaffnet, seinen Strohhut auf dem Kopf und seinen wütenden kleinen schwarzen Köter zu seinen Füßen; aber sie alle zusammen richten nichts aus gegen die Pusteblumensamen, die gemächlich herbeisegeln und sich niederlassen, wo sie eben abgesetzt werden, ohne Hast und ohne Widerstreben, denn das bißchen Erde und Feuchtigkeit, um erst mal Fuß zu fassen und einen winzigen Keim zu treiben, findet sich allemal. Wir waren ganz und gar auf seiten der Pusteblumen(pp.46/7).

It is an enchanting vision. At one level it expresses the family's irritation with the pedantic neighbour. At another, more symbolic, level it implies a gentle hope that change may be in the air, that rigidity may be overcome. Looking back now, after the *Wende*, it is tempting to hear a whimsical prefiguration of the events of 1989. Perhaps the seemingly ineffectual, harmless dandelion clocks might be taken to represent the fervent desire for change, for an opening up of ideological rigidity, for the bestowal of real human rights and freedoms on the citizens of the GDR, the non-violent approach adopted by the *Volk* (*das* and later *ein*) in the East. Could the gently persuasive wind blowing the seed of revolutionary ideas from the South West be originating in Leipzig, to the South West of the garden into which Christa Wolf's text has taken us? Is this breeze generated by the prayers and pacific exhortations uttered and absorbed by those who finally felt driven to assert themselves without fear to demand a democratic system for the eastern German state, too? Is the Nikolaikirche in Leipzig the soil from which such demands will issue and take root, as unstoppably as the dandelion *Fallschirmchen* anchored themselves in the earth? The family in the garden, years before such events could be contemplated seriously by citizens, politicians and commentators alike, can be credited with a fertile imagination, but their felicitously prophetic dream may rank as a moving moment of literary prescience. To conjure up gossamer dandelion clocks defeating heavily armed adversaries like the grim neighbour or, by extension, an entire *Volksarmee* and *Volkspolizei* of a tough

system with all the trappings of a fortified totalitarian state, is inspired and may suggest that the author's own unfettered thoughts did at times turn to such visions of the future.¹⁶ The seeds of the imagined *Sanfte Revolution* did, of course, bear fruit in 1989 when the Wall was finally breached. It spelt the end of an era and catapulted the liberated countries into euphoria but subsequently into the maelstrom of political, economic and spiritual uncertainty, matching the *Angst* felt by the mother/narrator when she felt herself losing the ground from under her feet in the contemplation of her mortality.

At the end of the *Juninachmittag* as the family bid farewell to their idyllic retreat for the time being '...war die Luft voller Junikäfer. An der Gartentür drehten wir uns um und sahen zurück' (p.64). The *wir* has been reduced from encompassing all humanity and now only encloses the family with the warming cloak of belonging. The afternoon has fled along with time; it is already difficult to recall what filled it and gave it shape and substance. Such is human nature that it needs to move on, not look back to past events. They do, of course, inform the present, and in the context of the GDR of the 1960s (and from the vantage point of our time) the family at the garden gate and the reader, along with 17 million liberated or, depending on one's experience and point of view, dispossessed citizens allow the question to rise to the surface of their minds: '*Was bleibt?*'. The title of another of Christa Wolf's works,¹⁷ asking precisely that, may have the last word.

* * * * *

Time and time again, in my analysis of the various texts at the heart of this thesis, I have drawn attention to the relationship (or lack of it) between outward forms of (often ritualized) behaviour and the values which that behaviour purports to represent. In Christa Wolf's short tale the events are, in defiance of the expectations of

her culture, overtly modest, overtly not housed in the mode of great public statement. Yet in spite of this understatement, and also, in a sense, because of it, her study of the family at leisure offers both the allegorical invocation of German history and politics (as I have suggested) and also the symbolic legitimation of the quest for values that are other than those enshrined in the official culture. So many of the texts discussed in this thesis have called into question the values that animate the family occasion. Our starting point was the splendid symbolic certainty of Gotthelf's *Die schwarze Spinne*; but the majority of the subsequent texts do not generate a narrative symbolization in support of the family's act of self-symbolization. Yet, strangely, Christa Wolf's text gets close to doing just that. The narrator gently explicates the values operative during that family's lazy summer afternoon in the garden and invites our assent to them. Compared to Gotthelf, the affirmation is modest and tentative, but it seems valuable nonetheless.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 10

1. A remedy against, or escape from, the routine or unpalatable demands of everyday life may be seen in the ‘...Kultur jener Feste, die – in einer sachlich, künstlich, technisch gewordenen Welt, wie es die moderne Welt ist – die Naturverhältnisse sind: die Entdeckung der Landschaft, die Konjunktur des Parks und des Gartens vom botanischen und zoologischen über den englischen Garten bis zum Schrebergarten, [...] Auch das alles [...] sind Feste.’ See: Odo Marquard, ‘Moratorium des Alltags’, in *Das Fest*, ed. by Walter Haug and Rainer Warning (Munich: Fink, 1989), p.688.
2. Wolfgang Tschorn analyses the role of the garden in the nineteenth century but his words also chime with the significance of the garden idyll in Christa Wolf’s story: ‘In der Romantik gilt noch der durchgeformte Garten als das Bild der nichtchaotischen Natur, in der man gleichzeitig vor Überraschungen und damit der Gefahr des Desillusionierenden geschützt ist. Doch auch dem Ziergarten, der dem englischen Park nachgestaltet ist, spricht man mehr und mehr die Rolle zu, vor dem Bedrohlichen der Außenwelt abzuschirmen. Immer weniger bedeutsam wird damit in der Biedermeierzeit der Charakter des Gartens, die Art der Natürlichkeit; entscheidend ist seine Funktion als Gegenwelt zum öffentlichen Bereich...’ See: Wolfgang Tschorn, *Idylle und Verfall: Die Realität der Familie im Werk Theodor Storms* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1978).
3. See also Michael Beddow: ‘Sources of identity: reflections on the pronoun “wir” in Christa Wolf’s fiction’, in *London Germanic Studies* V(1993) 173-186.
4. The *Mauer*, initially in the form of a barbed wire fence, was erected on the night of August 13th 1961, in order to stem the flow of GDR citizens who elected to live in the West. They, because of their valuable qualifications, represented an unacceptable loss to the Socialist system.
5. The book the narrator/mother is reading has been identified as *Lange Schatten* by Marie Luise Kaschnitz (Hamburg: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1964). Hannelore Mundt focuses on the significance of the Kaschnitz stories within Wolf’s text. Mundt argues that Wolf intentionally draws a parallel between her own story and the underlying themes of the Kaschnitz tales. Due to the dangers the individual is exposed to, both from politico-military forces and from natural phenomena and accidental death, order and human happiness are at all times threatened. This sense of fear and an awareness of transience are deemed to be the motives for withdrawing into the idyllic setting of the *Juninachmittag* garden. See: Hannelore Mundt, ‘Ordnung und Chaos, Zeitlosigkeit und Vergänglichkeit: zur Symbolik in Christa Wolfs *Juninachmittag*’, *Monatshefte*, 83 (1991), 161-175.
6. On one visit to East Berlin in 1980 I took photographs of extravagant and, given the dereliction of buildings visible in many places, embarrassing statements of intended, but largely fruitless, effort, e.g. ‘Wir verpflichten uns, alle Arbeiten mit einer Gütenote von 1,5 fertigzustellen’, a qualitative statement clearly based on school assessments.
7. It is interesting to note William Rey’s observation regarding Christa Wolf’s thinking: ‘Die Selbstbefreiung Christa Wolfs von den Fesseln des orthodoxen Marxismus beginnt [...] schon in *Juninachmittag* (und nicht erst in *Nachdenken über Christa T.*). Lange vor dem Ende der DDR geht sie in Distanz zu den Idealgestalten ihrer Frühzeit (Lukács, Bloch, Seghers) und wendet sich den Repräsentanten moderner bürgerlicher Kultur, wie etwa Freud, Thomas Mann, Max Frisch und Ingeborg Bachmann, zu.’ See: William H. Rey, ‘Christa Wolfs *Juninachmittag*: Vorspiel zu den letzten Erzählungen’, *Weimarer Beiträge*, 389 (1992), p.90.
8. In the months immediately after the *Wende*, it was very difficult (in fact it became almost impossible) to buy any used cars in all areas of the *alte Bundesländer* which bordered directly on the former GDR, for the simple reason that they had been snapped up by those from the new federal states who had had to make do with inferior vehicles and lengthy waiting periods before acquisition – epitomized by the *Trabant* or *Trabi*. Money was, of course, in short supply initially and eager car enthusiasts had to opt for the secondhand car trade. This was sadly followed by a spate of serious accidents since the new owners of such mechanically superior cars, which dazzled by their looks and speed potential, were as yet ill-equipped through inexperience to control adequately their new automobile status symbols.
9. The narrator displays ‘Glauben an unsichtbare Schicksalsmächte [...], die auf das Leben des Menschen Einfluß haben. Das Bewußtsein der Erzählerin transzendierte also die Alltagsrealität. Sie ahnt, daß die sichtbare Welt eingebettet ist in ein unsichtbares Kraftfeld, das Leben und Tod umfaßt. Dieses Kraftfeld läßt sich aber nicht näher definieren. Dennoch widerspricht dieser Weltentwurf, der die Dimension des Geheimnisvollen einbezieht, der positivischen Tendenz des Marxismus.’, clear evidence that the author herself is also identifying with such political ‘heresy’. See: William H. Rey, as above, p.93.
10. The child’s keen interest in, and predilection for, the ‘blood and guts’ details of gruesome newspaper stories, referred to a little later, is seen as arising from boredom. William Rey extends this thought to analyse the political fallout when applied nationally and internationally: ‘Die nationale Langeweile, so ist zu schließen, enthüllt sich als eine psychologische Wurzel des Faschismus. Im Unterschied zu der Mutter hat das Kind den deutschen Faschismus nicht erlebt. Was die Mutter erschüttert, ist die Erfahrung, daß die Lust an der Grausamkeit so stark in diesem “naiven” Wesen entwickelt ist.’ See: William H. Rey, as above, p.94.
11. Christa Wolf, *Kindheitsmuster* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1976), p.9.
12. Gail Finney reflects on the appeal of the garden: ‘The ideal quality of the garden image is bound up with the fact that most literary gardens have affinities with one or both of two major prototypes, paradise and the

pastoral, and that each of these prototypes embodies an ideal: the paradise myth celebrates the felicitous mode of being before the Fall, pastoral glorifies the felicitous mode of being outside the city.' See: Gail Finney, *The Counterfeit Idyll: The Garden Ideal and Social Reality in Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Tübingen: M.Niemeyer, 1984), p.6.

13. Wolf adopts the 'Erzählstil des inneren Monologs, der in dem Text eine wesentliche Rolle spielt. Er erlaubt es dem Leser, unmittelbar an den Erfahrungen, Gefühlen und Stimmungsschwankungen der Erzählerin teilzunehmen. Außerdem wird er in den Vorgang des Erzählers mit einbezogen, denn von Anfang an unterbricht die Erzählerin den Akt des Erzählers, indem sie sich an einen fiktiven Leser wendet, den sie mit "Sie" anredet, ohne ihn zu identifizieren. [...] In ihren inneren Monolog sind Gespräche mit ihrer Familie und Gestalten aus der Nachbarschaft eingeschaltet, die die Richtung ihres Gedankenstroms beeinflussen und eine Reihe von Assoziationen auslösen. Daraus ergibt sich das episodische Erzählen, das die späte Prosa Christa Wolfs vorwegnimmt und eine eigentümliche Verbindung von epischen und essayistischen Elementen darstellt.' See; William H. Rey, as above, p.85.
14. Rainer Maria Rilke, '*Orpheus. Eurydice. Hermes*': *Neue Gedichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1907).
15. Milan Kundera, '*The Unbearable Lightness of Being*' (London: Faber & Faber, 1984).
16. Wolfram Mauser emphasises the strong effect, as perceived in Wolf's view, which the creative imagination can have on ossified political systems: '...weil es dem Verfestigten und der Macht des Faktischen gegenüber nur *eine* wirksame Herausforderung gibt: die verflüssigende und lösende Kraft der Phantasie.' See: Wolfram Mauser, "'Gezeichnet zeichnend": Tod und Verwandlung im Werk Christa Wolfs', in *Erinnerte Zukunft: 11 Studien zum Werk Christa Wolfs*, ed. by Wolfram Mauser (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1985), p.201.
17. Christa Wolf, '*Was bleibt?*' (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1990).

CHAPTER 11

The wedding and the *Wende* in Grass's *Ein weites Feld*

As the furore surrounding its initial appearance made clear, Günter Grass's *Ein weites Feld* (published in 1995) contrived to irritate a great many people. The most spectacular example of irritation was the discussion in the television programme *Das literarische Quartett*¹. Marcel Reich-Ranicki was by far the most vociferous in his condemnation; but he was not the only detractor. For the most part, the critical response to this novel was overwhelmingly negative². On the face of it, there may be nothing particularly remarkable in all this. After all, any novelist can write a bad – or at any rate unpopular – book. *Ein weites Feld* is, admittedly, a very long novel; it is also a very literary novel; not a great deal happens in it. Yet none of these flaws (if flaws they are) are enough to account for the sheer animus to which it gave rise. The resentment was surely out of all proportion to its (literary) cause. The true source of the novel's ability to disconcert its readers was less literary-cum-aesthetic disappointment than sheer political outrage.

I want to suggest that a great many readers sensed in Grass's latest novel the will both to represent – and to criticize – the *Wende*. One has to say at the outset that *Ein weites Feld* is not obviously a political novel. The events which constitute the plot-line have not a great deal to do with momentous public happenings. Essentially the novel is anchored in the mentality of two figures from the GDR: Theodor Wuttke, an elderly bureaucrat, known by the nickname of Fonty because of his truly spellbinding knowledge of (and, indeed, near-identification with) Theodor Fontane, and Hoftaller, also a figure largely derived from literature, from a novel by Hans Joachim Schädlich³, who has transposed the syllables of his original name (Tallhover), and who stands for the eternal spy. Now, clearly, both figures are not without political implications; but we are

concerned, precisely, with implications rather than overt statements. Yet the offence to political sensibilities was – for all the indirection of Grass's text – very great. How may this be?

I think that there are a number of explanations one can offer. One is that the novel frequently works at the level of a particular allegorical sub-text; it puts certain happenings before us, but their significance is to be found in the implied (rather than the actual) statement. The indirection is deliberate, and polemical. The novel implies criticism of the rapid, self-confident uni-directionality of the *Wende* where (as one might put it) the traffic all flows one way. And *Ein weites Feld* seeks to reverse this flow, to defend indirection, subtlety, and sub-text against the sheer overtess of the *Wende*. And finally, there is the Wuttke/Fonty figure. It is, perhaps, no exaggeration to say that Fontane is one of the most humanly attractive and genuinely European of all German novelists. He is renowned for his irony, his understatement, his unemphatic good sense, and humanity. In *Ein weites Feld* Grass summons up the ghost of Fontane, and suggests that, had he been living at the time, Fontane would have been less than euphoric about Germany's third attempt at national unity in something over a hundred years. The allegorical mode of the novel, both in what it says and in the way that it says it, conspires to deflate the claims made for the *Wende*, particularly for its historical inevitability and moral rightness.

* * * * *

As an example of the allegorical mode of the novel, I want to concentrate on the depiction, in Chapters 13, 14, and 15, of the wedding of Wuttke's daughter Martha to the West German property tycoon Grundmann. My contention is not just that we may, but that the text obliges us to, read the scene allegorically. By making an ostensibly ordinary marriage transparent upon the German marriage of East and West, Grass makes his novel

bear the particular burden of articulating, through one modest scene, a set of complex intimations to do with national identity and unity, with past and present.⁴

The private union, its accompanying religious ceremony, and the subsequent opulent luncheon are only of deeper interest to the reader because of the obvious references to the fundamental changes taking place in the newly united Germany in which this marital merger is set, at the time of the *Wende*. It is, like the fusion of the two German halves which have been allowed once again to become *ein Volk*, at the insistence of the erstwhile East Germans, an unequal union, that of a rich man and a woman of modest means and personal attributes who is, however, not lacking in vigour and strength of conviction.

The marriage is depicted as a conversion, by the bride, from one initially strongly held faith, namely socialism, to another, ostensibly Catholicism. It does, however, clearly signify Martha Wuttke's desire to embrace capitalism, the real new faith, wholeheartedly and unreservedly, with energy and determination. The need for this conversion has been growing over a considerable period of time. As Martha's belief in the 'real existierenden Sozialismus' has waned so the hopes and needs of her compatriots have increased. Need for change is in the air and becomes the motor which drives actions, privately and nationally, in the former GDR. Martha is clearly aware that she is exchanging one faith for another. '...Monate vorm Fall der Mauer hatte Martha den Entschluß gefaßt, ihre Glaubensleere aufzufüllen und die Religion ihres zukünftigen Mannes anzunehmen' (p.261)*. Her decision to marry a rich *Besserwessi*, the term coined to reflect West German arrogance, equipped with all the entrepreneurial know-how associated with the victorious Western system, does not meet with wholehearted approval from the

* Page numbers in this chapter refer to: *Günther Grass, Ein weites Feld, 3. Auflage* (Göttingen: Steidl Verlag, 1995).

watchful father, the sceptic who foresees disappointment and long term problems.

Grundmann, by his name, conjures up the *Gründerzeit* of Bismarck's Germany, the time of uniting the plurality of German states into a greater *Reich*. The bride's father clearly baulks at the proposed union and the envisaged espousal of a new faith by his otherwise cool-headed daughter. 'Vorsicht vor Übereifer' is in order. Wuttke, in a distancing act, continues his '...Spaziergänge auf der rotchinesischen Teppichbrücke...' (p.262). This might indicate that a bridge may be required to allow two faiths, two worlds perhaps, to meet, or could it be a reminder that remnants of communist convictions are still active? Wuttke, who may be seen as the representative of the writer commenting on the events of his era, needs to write in order to deal with the inner and outer world, since '...für den ist nur wirklich, was er sich ausdenkt' (p.263), as his wife puts it. It is reality refracted through the prism of the writer's perception. Wuttke also knows that 'was wirklich ist, klebt nicht an der Oberfläche. Das steckt tiefer drin' (p.265).

Jutta Osinski characterises literature thus:

Nicht Erlebtes muß Literatur vergegenwärtigen; sie kann auch anschaulich machen, wie Wirklichkeit überhaupt erlebt wird - lückenhaft und aus vielen Perspektiven. [...] eine ästhetische Wirklichkeit begründen, in der Literatur (Fontane) und äußere Realität (Geschichte und Zeitgeschichte) [...] als ein Intertext erscheinen. [...] Der Roman fiktionalisiert das Faktische, also Politisches und Historisches, und faktualisiert das Fiktionale z.B. Fontanes Figuren...⁵

She also invests Wuttke's French granddaughter 'mit der Fähigkeit, Texte, Fakten, die Wirklichkeit, wie sie ist, aus der Perspektive von Imaginiertem zu durchdringen und so den Erkenntniswert von Fiktionen für die Wirklichkeit zu bestätigen.'

Martha Wuttke herself (Mete to her father à la Fontane and daughter) has '...keine Zweifel mehr, nur noch manchmal...', and in any case she needs '...ne Perspektive [...] Geht nich ohne...'. She remembers her days in the FDJ, membership of which brought not only social inclusion, but also spiritual fulfilment - for a time at

least. The young people whose minds and souls had been filled by the socialist creed had ‘...nicht nur gesungen, sondern geglaubt...’(p.267). Wuttke eventually does show acceptance of Martha’s marriage and conversion. He says with disarmingly ironic simplicity : ‘Ob Kommunismus oder Katholizismus, fängt beides mit K an und hält sich partout für unfehlbar...’(p.268). Thus one faith replaces another; all creeds claim infallibility and exclusivity in their assertion to be offering the only truth. Martha had lost her faith in Lenin and ‘Marxengels’ early on, giving her father, who, by his obsession with Fontane and an earlier period in Prussia’s and Germany’s history, straddles these different periods, the opportunity to conjure up Frederick the Great’s dictum ‘Jeder soll nach seiner Fasson selig werden’. In one sense, such a statement, coming from one of the great symbols of Prussianism, sounds surprising. Yet we would do well to remember (and Fonty insists on our doing so) that the legacy of the great architect of the Prussian state is more complex and differentiated than traditional stereotypes allow. Of course, Frederick the Great can be seen as the spokesman for rigidity, inflexibility, for unswerving allegiance to the state; but it was none other than he who rejoiced to have Voltaire at his court. It was under his rule that a significant codification of citizens’ rights occurred. Fonty/Fontane may be one acceptable face of Prussianism, but he reminds us that Prussia has had others as well.

Hoftaller, the ever present shadow accompanying Wuttke/Fonty, the link with the past in his various incarnations of spy, in the service of whichever system was wielding political power across two centuries of German history, cynically furnishes the connection with Bismarck’s *Gründerzeit* (an earlier *Wende*) by quoting the words of the young Kaiser: ‘Führ Euch herrlichen Zeiten entgegen...’ but pours scorn on the erroneous optimism by dismissing this promise: ‘...wie heute, lauter Illusionen und massive Großsprecherei. Mantel der Geschichte! hat neulich der Kanzler von drüben gesagt. Dem schlägt eine historische Stunde nach der anderen. Wird sich noch wundern, der

Herr'(pp.270/1) A dire warning indeed. Osinski sees Hoftaller 'als ambivalent lesbare Chiffre' and asserts that ' als Fontys Beschatter ist er derjenige, der Fäden spinnt, Verbindungen herstellt, Vergangenes aufdeckt, die Gegenwart auskundschaftet.'⁶

Wuttke is far more disposed to put pen to paper, to intellectualize events, past and present, and to reflect on the likelihood of personal and national success than to address the practicalities of the actual wedding. He is aware that *Wessis* are essentially different beings, and says so : '...Dieser Herr Neunmalklug aus dem Westen...' and '...Die ticken doch ganz anders als wir'(p.269), which leads him to suspect that the *Ossis*, his own kind, cannot truly be 'saved' even by the conversion, be it that of his daughter to Catholicism or the larger scale espousal of the capitalist ethos as practised by the West. This view would no doubt be shared by Grundmann. For him '...und [seine] Konsorten bleiben wir Ostelbier, heidnische Protestanten, Ketzer im Grunde [...] Da hilft kein Konvertieren, so sehr das in Mode ist.'(p.269). We are confronted here with the unbridged gulf still manifest after official conversion, political or religious. The 'Weihwasserkur', his description of Martha's 'baptism', intended to bestow the spiritual riches of the Church of Rome on an erstwhile 'heathen', seems to relate to the shower of Deutschmarks lavished by the former West Germany on the poor relation in the East.

Wuttke, even at this early stage of the union between two individuals, and by the obvious analogy with the political unification, foresees failure on a spiritual and financial level, a notion which flies in the face of the generally felt euphoria, be it personal or political. Ordinary readers' reactions to *Ein weites Feld* varied greatly, not only as a reflection of their literary assessment of the novel but more significantly on a moral and political level, their perception coloured by the geography of their lives. In the words of Jutta Osinski it is particularly the 'Ostleser, [more positive in their verdict on the novel], die ihre eigenen Desillusionierungsprozesse wiedererkennen'.⁷

The approving words uttered by the usually cynical Hoftaller regarding the satisfying effect which Catholic ritual has, particularly that of confession with subsequent absolution granted to believers, prompt the reader to draw the conclusion that Martha's decision to embrace Catholicism and, by extension, the eagerness with which Socialist Germany insisted on joining its rich brother nation in the West will bring '...dieses Gefühl, neugeboren, sozusagen taufrisch zu sein [...] Verdanke der katholischen Kirche ne Menge'(p.273). It is surely the same feeling which the political *Konvertiten* (who had earlier, at the regular candlelit Monday evening demonstrations in the GDR's cities before the opening of the Wall and the resulting upheaval, expressed their desire to be united with the Western capitalist system) sought to experience. Their need is for a sense of having been cleansed of political error, tacit acceptance of deficiency, of illiberal and often inhuman treatment by the regime, of a sense of complicity or inadequate protest. The baptism of the conversion is to provide absolution and thus to enable them to make a fresh start; it would leave them not only *taufrisch* but also *tauffrisch*.

The reader is later reminded that in the earlier life of the not-so-young bride '...zwei Verlöbnisse waren in die Brüche gegangen...' (p.304). The temptation is great to interpret this fact as a reminder that Germany also made two earlier attempts to find success, harmony, and prosperity in a *Reich* based upon a yearning for union, namely Bismarck's Second Reich, established after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870/1, and the Third Reich which failed so disastrously, precipitating the Second World War and bringing about the horrors of the Holocaust. Longing and need for a new beginning fuel the urgent wish to leave the past behind, be it for emotional or historical reasons. Grass by his perceived presence, almost as if his own outline was visible behind and around the visually so effective cover design of his long novel, sounds an indirect warning. *Das Gepäck der Vergangenheit*, particularly in the German context, will not disappear; it is a powerful reality. Grass is clearly concerned to make this fact abundantly real and even

tangible. One example of this can be found in the talk Wuttke gives on Fontane's *Kinderjahre*. In this he states that he is '...ganz eins mit ihm, der als metallener Guß in Neuruppin auf der Steinbank sitzt' (p.272). This creates a solid link not only with Fontane the writer, observer, critic, and sceptic but also with the Germany of another era, and the inference drawn by the alert reader is that this parallel can also be applied to other periods of history, albeit less materially in terms of direct identification. The indirection of Grass's approach does not allow apodictic certainty. The title of the novel *Ein weites Feld* clearly indicates not only the link with Fontane. Father Briest, whose favourite expression it was, used it whenever he did not want to commit himself to a fixed standpoint or verdict. Grass, too, leaves the *weites Feld* open, thereby reflecting his own, or indeed anyone else's inability, to put out clear markers when faced with having to judge the history of German unity and unification, be it in Fontane's age or in the late-twentieth century.

Although the new life, the planned East/West wedding, or, in the wider political context, unification, is depicted as one containing hope and promise predicated on the assumption that the warm embrace of both the husband-to-be and of the richly endowed western part of the country and its beneficence, there is a clear reminder that the East will not, and should not, be expected to shed its identity entirely or to consign its own separate past to oblivion. It must be allowed to retain some of its essential roots, down to displaying nostalgic sentiments towards the *Prenzlberg*. This part of Berlin, known more formally as the *Prenzlauerberg*, with all the cultural and political connotations evoked by that name, conjures up the idea of Berlin's own *Rive Gauche*, the home of the intelligentsia, of poets, song writers, dissidents, and other questioning spirits. It is Wuttke's realm, territory equally familiar to and comfortable for Grass and other kindred spirits. The *späte Hochzeit* – an allusion surely also to the *verspätete Nation* - referring to either Martha's nuptials or to unification, is to be celebrated in this district, in an

atmosphere which before the *Wende* tended to be full of doubt, secrecy, conspiracy, and betrayal. Suspicion was the prevailing currency. The setting chosen by Fonty for the wedding breakfast, namely the ‘Offenbach-Stuben’ (presumably a reference to the composer), is yet another link with the previous century, the foundation of the Second Reich established after the Franco-Prussian War.

The father of the bride finally allows himself to arrange the details of the important luncheon following the wedding ceremony with the landlord of the restaurant, but the narrator does not fail to point to the political scene, with its momentous developments. In fact, there is such an abundance of material to be screened by anyone with the required perception of, and fascination with, the simultaneously enacted political merger that Fonty, replying to a polite enquiry as to his working life, states: ‘Es ließe sich von jedem Tage ein Buch schreiben!’(p.276). The exclamation mark is worth noting. Equally noteworthy is the fact that Wuttke reserves ‘...einen Tisch für zwölf Personen...’(p.277). The reader may be forgiven for thinking of biblical connotations – specifically of the Last Supper. Is there, then, something sacramental about this wedding reception which so persistently invokes the union of the the two German states? Perhaps, but one wonders if the sacramentalism does not promise more than it can in fact deliver.

In this context the priest who officiates at the service is an all-important presence. We are told that he is ‘...riesig und ungeschlacht...’(p.300), and thereby the reader is reminded of the term that Grass frequently and mischievously applied to Helmut Kohl – ‘die regierende Masse’. With that phrase he, of course, poked fun at the Federal Chancellor’s physical bulk, but Grass also lost no opportunity to attack Kohl’s unshakable, well-nigh religious, conviction of the absolute rightness of the speedy unification process, his fierce dismissal of any forms of scepticism or doubt and his belief that the success of unification at administrative and governmental level would generate its

own socio-psychological justification. So at one level, the portly cleric bespeaks the triumphalist presence of the new leader of the new Germany.

Yet there are further implications to the priest figure. In an explicit moment of allegorizing commentary the text tells us that he ‘...jenem Augustinermönch nicht unähnlich war, der einst vor versammeltem Reichstag sein “Ich kann nicht anders” zur Redensart gemacht hatte’(p.305). The reference, of course, is to Luther and once we pursue the ramifications of that presence, the issues become manifold and complex. At one level, the Luther figure who proclaimed that he could ‘do no other’ brought a voice of thunderous doubt into the ‘Reichstag’ by insisting on the need for reform of reprehensible and dubious church practices and doctrines. Yet Luther’s doubt co-existed with a hardline defence of the established political order – one thinks for example of his condemnation of the Peasants’ Revolt.⁸ By this token, Luther has been seen as the presiding deity of the German propensity to cherish the distinction of the human mind, the freedom of its spiritual energies, while at the same time acquiescing in political unfreedom. Is the Luther figure at this wedding, then, the doubter? Is he the spokesman of the Protestant GDR, now being pressurized into a shotgun wedding with the Catholic Rhineland (which gave the Federal Republic its capital for some four decades)? Or is he the old spectre of Germany’s tendency to political authoritarianism? We cannot be sure. All we can know is that Mete’s wedding is powerfully accompanied by all manner of allegorical underpinnings and commentaries.

The table booked for a party of *zwölf* (in the event there will be only ten guests partaking of the culinary delicacies) is designed to allow the wedding guests to enjoy the meal ‘...mit dem Brautpaar als geschlossene Gesellschaft...’ (p.277). A German reader is inclined to make the connection with Willy Brandt’s emotional words at the time of the *Wende*: ‘Jetzt wächst zusammen, was zusammengehört’. Preparations having been made for Mete’s *Hochzeit* (we are back with Fontane and his beloved daughter), the narrative

moves on to the wedding ceremony in the Hedwigskirche, the Catholic church (a stone's throw from Checkpoint Charlie) which stirred such powerful emotions in the years from the building of the Wall in 1961 to the precipitate, confused and emotional opening of the Iron Curtain in 1989.⁹

Fonty's initial expectation and curiosity are dispelled almost instantly and replaced by a deep sense of disappointment. He reflects dejectedly that '...ihm habe jener "sinnbetörende Hokuspokus" gefehlt...' (p.278). This is a reference to Fontane's novel *Graf Petöfy* in which another young woman felt the need to convert to another faith, albeit less hurriedly. Her more considered action is contrasted with the, in Wuttke's eyes, over-hasty conversion entered into by his own, probably misguided, daughter who '...ohne Zögern zuerst der alleinseligmachenden Partei das Verlöbnis aufgekündigt und alsdann der alleinseligmachenden Kirche das Glaubensbekenntnis nachgesprochen habe [...] immer kolossal überzeugt' (p.278). The lacklustre church service, without '...alle früher üblichen Mysterien...' and in which '...nichts Lateinisches geboten wurde...' (p.278), is represented as diluted ritual, lacking spiritual force. Does one infer that in an age when very little remains shrouded in mystery, when ignorance of real intentions behind public ritual is not the order of the day any longer, when science and more enlightened thought contrive to reveal the realities of human society with the help of writers and the omnipresent and seemingly omnipotent Press, when the individual no longer has access to hitherto darkly sensed spiritual possibilities? The veil has been lifted for those who have been exposed to a new liturgy which may be equated with the new political reality preached by those who have enough insight to be able to expound these changes. German life, too, perhaps is deemed to lack spirituality and the new union and new creed will not compensate for lost belief.

The punchy word 'Schummelpackung' (p.279) is chosen to convey Fonty's reaction to the ceremony and it indicates the negative assessment made by many, in the

East and West, in the aftermath of the initially euphorically greeted *Wende* and the longed for coming together of the two Germanies. Although ‘beide gaben ihr Jawort deutlich’(p.279), it is clear that disillusionment quickly followed the joyous merger. It reflects with sadness and a sense of ‘I told you so’ the dire consequences of the hasty currency union, the annexation of the East, the shutting down by the *Treuhand* of large sections of GDR industry, later succinctly termed ‘das Abwickeln’(p.611), the bitterness felt in the West arising from the enforced solidarity tax and the feelings of lost identity and even *Heimat* in evidence in the *Neue Bundesländer*.

The wedding party repairs to the ‘Offenbach-Stuben’ ‘...ziemlich abgeduscht...’(p.279), drenched by a rain shower, but the reader registers the analogous notion of cold water having been poured on a cherished dream, that it has ‘rained on the parade’ of this too hopeful and all too trusting nation. Even on the day of the wedding, one cannot ignore the paucity of other guests at the restaurant. The landlord bemoans the decline which has affected his own business and reflects the downward trend of the economy in the former East: ‘Der Wirt klagte ein wenig über die neuerdings sprunghaft steigende Miete und über das Ausbleiben vormals zahlungskräftiger Stammgäste.’(p.276). Clearly *tempora mutantur* and the repercussions of the *Wende* and the accompanying upheaval are felt even here. The doldrums experienced by individuals and the country as a whole are regrettable, but he at least is determined (unlike many of his compatriots) not to lose hope and says: ‘Was soll’s, kann ja nur besser werden’(p.286).¹⁰

The narrative neatly juxtaposes the bridegroom Grundmann with the rather flaccid determination of the representative of the East German entrepreneurial spirit seen in the person of the landlord. Grundmann, a ‘...straffer Herr...’, as opposed to the ‘...Wirt [...] ein schmächtiger Mittvierziger...’(p.286), is in possession of all the faculties required of a *Wessi* who will turn the run-down state into the ‘blühende Landschaft’ promised by Chancellor Kohl before the *gesamtdeutsche* parliamentary elections in 1990. Grundmann

has many a disparaging comment to make on the sorry state the former GDR finds itself in: '...völlig brach alles [...] Stagnation. Der alte Schlendrian...' (p.308). His words may be patronizing but they are nevertheless realistic. He clearly intends to ensure that the new beginning for the fledgling *neue Bundesländer* will be 'auf solidem Fundament...' (p.308). There are chilling predictions of icy capitalist winds blowing away unsatisfactory attitudes in the needy East: '...müßten wir mit der Ausdünnung im Personalbereich jetzt schon beginnen [...] um konkurrenzfähig zu bleiben...' (p.308). The profit principle will sweep away human priorities. One of Theodor Wuttke's sons, who had defected to the West, confirms the harsh demands made on those who want to live successfully within the capitalist world and its profit powered ethos: '...Da war Leistung gefragt...' (p.288). Those weighed in the balance and found wanting do not succeed, materially or psychologically.

The human mind has an abundant capacity for nostalgia, filtering past experiences, and retaining those which conjure up pleasant memories. Some of the wedding guests express such sentiments when looking back on a childhood and youth of considerable hardship: '...schöne Jugend jewesen...' (p.288). And, of course, it was their *Heimat*. Many of those who chose to stay within the reviled system had been sustained by the hope that ultimately the Socialist ideology could, and would, develop into a more humane and effective system. But there is sympathy, nevertheless, for those who gave up such hopes and defected to the West lured by its much vaunted *Wirtschaftswunder* and the democratic freedom enjoyed by its privileged citizens. Regret is felt and expressed that, as a consequence, separate experiences have been lived through, not only by the individuals at this wedding but equally by the two German states and their inhabitants. The officiating priest in one of his blunt statements made at the luncheon table accurately assesses this division and its effects when he says: '...wir sind uns ja alle fremd geworden, leider, bis

in die Familien hinein'(p.287). It requires no effort of thought to extend these words to the alienation evident in the minds of *Ossis* and *Wessis*.

The first speech made by the father of the bride is awaited with some trepidation by his immediate family, since Wuttke can be relied upon to be irreverent. Given the Fontane connection, the obvious literary source to be drawn on might have been *Der Stechlin*, since it contains a wedding. Fonty, however, elects to refer to *Graf Petöfy* in which a ring with the inscription 'Entsage' assumes great significance. The notion of restraint, of renunciation, of forgoing pleasure and reward appear inappropriate in the context of a wedding, but seen in the wider political context the '...Tauschwerde des Konvertierens...' (p.289) take on the air of relevance. The cautionary finger being wagged is so obvious that even Grundmann tunes in to the substance of Wuttke's exhortations: '...Verstehe! Wir sollen sozusagen auf Sparflamme kochen'. However, the advice will clearly be ignored, not only by this individual but also more generally by all those charged with the reconstruction of the old GDR. Grundmann continues: 'Aber das ist keine Devise für Bauunternehmer. Wir nehmen, was wir kriegen. Wir kleckern nicht, Schwiegervater, wir klotzen!' (p.289). So the restraint wisely advocated by Fonty, and by many other thoughtful individuals and even by some organisations in the newly reunited Germany, is rashly thrown to the wind. The reader pictures those who stand to gain from the new political reality and is tempted to think of them as *Raffkes* and *Schofelinskis*, Grass's own labelling for Jenny Treibel of Prussian (and Fontane) fame and her descendants in our own time.

The restraint urged by Fonty is not the only covert link with the events taking place in the outside world. Having described his daughter's conversion to Catholicism as '...ein "ökumenisches Wechselbad"' (an experience in which hot and cold water alternate, as prescribed by Pastor Kneipp in an earlier age)¹¹ Wuttke allows himself, his listeners at the table and, naturally, the reader: '...einige Rückblicke ins finstere

Mittelalter “inklusive Hexenverbrennungen”’. This conjures up the Inquisition, the terrible tool of the Catholic church, employed when dealing with dissent and perceived heresy. The more modern equivalents of the Gestapo in the Third Reich and the Stasi in East Germany readily spring to mind. Fonty also prophesies with manifest certainty that ‘der Scheiterhaufen kommt wieder in Mode’(p.281). In this context it is worth remembering that it was not long after the joyful opening of the Berlin Wall that many prominent figures from the East, and particularly literary celebrities like Christa Wolf, were pilloried unmercifully for their perceived complicity in the machinations of the hated regime. The files laid open by the Gauck Commission for the perusal of all former victims of Stasi surveillance provided explosive, and often controversial, revelations of collaboration.¹² Many friendships, family relationships and marriages did not survive the impact of these carefully compiled records. The ‘Scheiterhaufen’ was indeed back in fashion.

Observers of the political developments surrounding the *Wende* are, of course, aware that it was brought about without violence on either side, allowing it to be known as the *sanfte Revolution*, just as in *Graf Petöfy* the ‘...handlungsförderde[n] Pistolschuss...’(p.281) is omitted, with the result that ‘kein Tröpfchen Blut fließt literarisch’(p.282). The *sanfte Revolution* has enabled the citizens of the former GDR to partake of the benefits of capitalism which has evidently triumphed over the utopian dream of socialism, with its attendant impracticabilities. Wuttke describes Catholicism as an ‘...in Jahrhunderten geübte Disziplin des längeren Atems...’ and as ‘...farbenprächtig bis in den Sündenfall hinein...’(p.282), by implication contrasting the full-blooded ethos of Catholicism and its firm validation of material things with the more ascetic, inward creed of protestantism, perhaps paralleling the higher ideals of communist aspirations. Grass neatly forges a visible and tangible link with the earlier era of a newly united *Reich* by once again indirectly bringing to mind the Fontane of the 1890s. Wuttke is wearing a

medal bestowed on him for ‘...Verdienste um das kulturelle Erbe...’ of the GDR, but ‘...ein anderes Markenzeichen spät nachklappernder Ehre...’ would not look out of place either, namely the ‘...Hohenzollernhausorden erster Klasse’(p.284)¹³, pinned to the chest of the *Unsterbliche*. Fontane had been highly critical of the tough *Zeitgeist* of the Prussia of his day, the time of the *Sozialistengesetze*, with the reviled Prussian *Spitzelwesen* working behind the scenes, monitoring and censoring the artistic and political life of the nation. What had buoyed him up, as Fonty knows, was ‘die Hoffnung des Unsterblichen auf die Arbeiterklasse’(p.312) and in Fontane’s own words: ‘Die neue bessere Welt fängt erst beim vierten Stande an’¹⁴.

At this very point, Grass arranges for the *Tagundnachtschatten*, in the shape of Hoftaller, to appear uninvited, unwanted, and undistressed by the far from welcoming reception. The ‘...mit rotem Seidenband zum Geschenk gebundene[s] Päckchen...’(p.312), his wedding gift, is not, however, a traditional offering; it is in fact ‘...ne abgeschlossene Kaderakte...’(p.314), full of ‘Peinlichkeiten’, reading matter not conducive to bridal bliss on this special day. Hoftaller and his ilk have hounded many a citizen, across the past two centuries, in the service of sternly dictatorial paymasters. Even Fontane was unable to prevent involvement in such activities, as Hoftaller says: ‘Ist ne Menge zusammengekommen, angefangen beim Herwegh-Club, Dresden nicht zu vergessen, später die Londoner Jahre...’(p.315). These ‘...allzeit rückläufigen Gedanken...’(p.312), the realization that the past will always contaminate the present, particularly in the German context, inevitably have the effect that the happy enjoyment envisaged for this special meal evaporates : ‘Marthas Glück war verbraucht, ihre momentane Schönheit dahin’(p.313). Within moments the dream of an harmonious outcome of the marriage, and in parallel, the fate of the newly united country, desired and dreamed of for so long, appear doomed to failure, or at least to a cohabitation of unequal partners with little compatibility in evidence, destined to descend into resentment,

recrimination, and bitterness, the latter to be experienced mutually. The bride at the luncheon table ‘...zerrte dann am Ringfinger ihrer rechten Hand, als wäre ihr der neuglänzende Schmuck schon jetzt lästig’(p.313). The euphoria is at an end, personally and nationally, as eyes and minds have been opened to the reality of that union which had been wished for so fervently. Martha’s earlier tears, seemingly testifying to distress, had been due to feelings of happiness when she was still under the illusory impression that the new beginning would spell contentment, improvement, and spiritual nourishment. This dream has been swiftly shattered.

At one point in the wedding celebrations some culinary details are given. They serve to lighten the tone, but they also sustain the allegorical argument. The final choice for the main course has been ‘...die rosa gebratene Entenbrust namens “Schöne Helena”...’. It meets with general approval, but the reader is mouthwateringly conducted through other suitable dishes, dismissed as potentially controversial by Wuttke’s wife, ever eager to avoid discord. The ‘nach Offenbachs “Orpheus in der Unterwelt” bekannte Ochsenrücken...’(p.290) was roundly rejected. Could it be that Emmi Wuttke disliked the idea of calling for the return of the dead, i.e. the past in the political sense with all the uncomfortable associations? Orpheus wished to do precisely that when he pleaded with the Gods to be allowed to bring back Eurydice. Another contender for pride of place had been the beef fillet ‘Ritter Blaubart’. The infamous much-married knight and his ‘...Wiederholungstätergeschichte...’(p.290) would have been too sensitive a subject with possible allusions to forbidden rooms in marriage or political union.

By referring to the *Kartoffelpuffer*, which accompany the roast duck and provide a topic of conversation, Grass contrives to insert a reference to the separate development of the German language in the divided nation. As any glossary compiled to list ‘GDR speak’ will confirm, potatoes were officially described as ‘...Sättigungsbeilage...’(p.290), a fact with which Martha’s friend Inge acquaints the assembled company in the course of the

wedding breakfast. (And, in the context of this thesis, any discussion of *Kartoffelpuffer* reminds us immediately of Fallada's *Kleiner Mann-was nun?*)

The theme of separateness, of diverging development, of unequal status is highlighted again and again in these passages and always the implication is allegorically present behind the wedding foreground. The guests are interested to discover '...wie der reiche Wessi Grundmann [...] Martha, die arme Ostmaus, aufgegabelt hat. [...] Nichts hören wir lieber als rührende Geschichten, obendrein gesamtdeutsche mit glücklichem Ausgang'(p.291). The reader notes the irony. At the same time, one is reminded that such relationships were fraught with danger in the days of the division of Germany, when a holiday resort on the Black Sea was a meeting ground for sunseekers from the East and the so-called Free World, long before the collapse of the communist system with its ever-present surveillance.

The priest Matull in his lengthy speech clearly points an accusing finger at his church, the Church of Rome, for not contributing to the routing of the inadequate and inhumane system. He gives full credit to '...etliche Hirten der anderen Glaubensgemeinschaft, während meine Kirche sich still verhielt, wohl meinend, sie sei nicht zuständig für die Zwänge dieser Welt'(p.301). As in the dark years of National Socialism, Lutheran pastors, individually, but to some extent with the backing of their church hierarchy, were instrumental in sustaining criticism of the regime, peacefully but determinedly encouraging dissent and organizing meetings in churches which became a haven of hope for despairing citizens and the mainspring of the eventual outpouring of the will of the people who demanded to be allowed to be 'ein Volk', who wanted 'Deutschland, einig Vaterland!'. This was achieved at great personal risk to the clergy and spurred the multitude to equal courage.¹⁵ Although Germans had hoped for unification at some future date, as Grundmann feels compelled to claim '...glaubte ich felsenfest an die Wiedervereinigung...' (p.292), the reality of an ever greater rapprochement and

accommodation between the two states scarcely gave rise to hopes for unification, let alone certainty. It is a well-known fact that even political experts in the West had not foreseen the developments of 1989/90.

One divisive aspect is spelled out very clearly, though: it is the role of the victorious Deutschmark. It bought, for those in possession of sufficiently large amounts of it, preferential treatment and power to dictate terms. This applied most strikingly in other communist countries. Grundmann himself points to the ‘...Unrecht der Teilung [...] - wie damals üblich, saß und aß man getrennt - zuerst bedient, selbstverständlich der Währung wegen’(p.292) and ‘...weiß noch genau, wie sehr uns diese offensichtliche Schikane empört hat’(p.293). Martha’s friend Inge confirms this from the viewpoint of an *Ossi* when she says: ‘Ohne Westmark warste nich mal die Hälfte wert. [...] War überall so inne sozialistischen Bruderländer [sic]’(p.294), surely a bitter realization, given the officially propagated close friendship. These recollections are swiftly followed by the conviction that ‘aber nu wird ja alles besser, wo wir die Einheit kriegen...’(p.295). Such childlike faith fuels the table talk. It grants an opening for *Hochwürden* Matull to voice caution and to demand from his fellow guests, and by implication from Germany as a whole, the will to face up to the inherent dangers of being too trusting a nation. The vast majority of people may look at the situation solely through the prism of the coveted Deutschmark on the assumption that after the quickly engineered currency union all obstacles to happiness will be removed, but other factors, less obviously ascertained, deserve close attention. The priest points out solemnly: ‘Das Geld alleine wird es nicht bringen. Noch fehlt der Wille, einander hinzunehmen, wie wir geworden sind’(p.295). Tolerance and acceptance of differing opinions and standpoints, perceptions, and assumptions must be fostered, nurtured against a background of fifty years of separate development, of differing political education, of unrealistic expectations, and of a rude awakening following the initial euphoria of the *Wende*. Grundmann, of course, has the recipe for success, for rebuilding

the neglected eastern part of Germany and for matching the standard of living attained in the West in those same fifty years since the two countries set out on their officially ordained separate paths in 1949 after the founding of the two republics: 'Hart arbeiten werdet ihr müssen, verdammt hart arbeiten, sonst läuft hier nichts, sonst geht es weiter bergab'!(p.295). A further dimension is added by the Wuttke son Friedel, a publisher of religious tracts in the West and an early exile from communism. It is his stated opinion that 'was wir brauchen, ist eine klare Offenlegung der Schuld'. This demand for unequivocal apportioning of blame for historical events appears, at first sight, to be directed at his family, but 'das gilt für alle, die hier mitgemacht haben'(p.295). One could extend this quest for the truth to cover the period of the Third Reich for which the rulers of East Germany laid total culpability on the western part of Germany, allowing it to shoulder the entire burden of *Wiedergutmachung* after the Second World War. Although some political leaders had justification for claiming non-involvement due to incarceration by the Nazi regime, or their enforced exile, the population at large in the former GDR was spared the heavy burden of the *unbewältigte Vergangenheit*. The book planned for publication by the younger Wuttke is to contain '...erschütternde bekenntnishaft Zeugnisse [...] und zwar aus Ost und West'. Its title, 'Wie wir schuldig wurden'(p.295), can clearly be stretched to cover the pre-war period, the war years and subsequent political errors and culpable behaviour. Fonty, at this point, defuses the situation by availing himself of Fontane's non-committal phrase 'ein weites Feld', attaching it to guilt, and to German unity as an even *weiteres*. The issue remains unresolved.

The bridegroom's student daughter highlights the generational difference in her appraisal of unification. It causes her 'Mißbehagen' since she has grown up orientating herself westwards, resulting in the direct statement: 'Also Dresden, das sagt mir gar nichts. Von Köln ist es nach Paris viel näher oder nach Amsterdam'(p.296). This indicates a lack of identification with the parts of Germany which in earlier generations

had been considered home as much as the Rhineland. The girl is obviously ill at ease with those whose lives were shaped behind the Iron Curtain. The gulf between her and them may exist for a long time. Awareness of kinship alone will not close this gap. Where earlier generations were aware of the GDR as part of their German identity (even if they had never been there) the young people of the late 1980s had no such complexes about their national and cultural identity.

The act of faith entered into so willingly by Martha Wuttke, allowing her to embrace a new religion, and by implication her espousal of capitalism, along with the millions of GDR citizens, attracts a lengthy homily from the priest, ostensibly the purveyor of spiritual sustenance, a man who could be relied upon to impart knowledge and share the tenets of his belief. Martha, in her quest for a new creed to fill the void left by the gradual erosion of her formerly held convictions, i.e. the certainty that the communist ideology with its quasi-religious fervour no longer satisfied her critical faculties, ‘...bat um Entlastung...’. She calls her previous faith ‘...trügerisch und blindlings parteiisch...’. The priest can offer only his ‘...Stillhalteglaube...’, a watered down version of true belief. He speaks of ‘...meinen verdornten Glaubensresten...’(p.302), which received a new injection of vigour from one who had come for help. In a felicitous allusion to the novel’s title and Fontane’s use of its meaning, Grass tells the reader on behalf of the priest that, once he had lost his own certainty, ‘...ein wüstes Feld, reich an Disteln...’(p.302) had been stretching before him. In a daring reversal of their positions, the priest acknowledges that by accepting Martha for conversion and baptism he himself has found a new and exciting perspective. The strength residing in the *Ossi* bride and, along with her, all those in the East who had been cheated out of truth and dignity, her vigour and perseverance have released in him a new consciousness since ‘...ihre im Grunde unbeirrbare Glaubensstärke [...] die nur umgepolt werden wollte [...] hat mich zweifeln gelehrt’. He is now able, like Luther (the

Augustinermönch referred to elsewhere) to wear ‘....des Glaubens Kehrseite, den unansehnlichen Zweifel, als Alltagskleid...’(p.302). If one stays within the allegorical mode, one can ask oneself whether the two systems, represented here by Martha and the priest, have not rendered an equally valuable service to each other - an injection of doubt. The new faith, capitalism, must not be internalised too unquestioningly despite its many obvious attractions. The ‘...Trugbild blühende Landschaft...’(alluding to Kohl’s tantalisingly suggested ‘land of milk and honey’), the ‘...Glaube an die Allmacht des Geldes...’, the assumption that prosperity can be found virtually overnight, promises made by eager politicians at the hustings in order to attract votes, all these must be subjected to strong doubt. If there is to be a God, then: ‘Gott existiert nur im Zweifel’(p.303). Martha finally realises that she, along with her compatriots, will have to learn ‘...positiv zu zweifeln...’, to give up ‘...diesen verdammten Glauben bis zum Gehnichtmehr, der uns kaputtgemacht hat...’. It leads her to the conclusion that ‘...wenn wir hier rechtzeitig unserem Sozialismus sowas erlaubt hätten, na, ne gesunde Portion Zweifel, wär vielleicht doch was draus geworden’(p.306). The citizens of the former GDR will need to bring to bear this new-found ability and willingness to question all glibly presented solutions and remedies, made by those in power or aspiring to it. Thus a repetition of the ossified practices, thought patterns prevailing in GDR days, the stifling of dissent by feeding lies or by intimidation, can be avoided. Otherwise the newly united Germany will not prosper, politically, economically, and in human terms. The verdict on the Second Reich, Bismarck’s Germany, ‘Preußen-Deutschland birgt keine Verheißung...’(p.309), should sound a note of warning. An important element during the teething troubles of the infant Greater Germany will be a greater awareness, on the part of the triumphant *Wessis*, of their need to curb their tendency to display great insensitivity. The dignity of those who were dealt a worse hand by history after the Second World War

must be respected. At the point the wedding proceedings have reached, the priest's words are still apt: 'Wir kennen uns nicht. Wir erkennen einander nicht'(p.312).

Fools rush in..., as with a typical and insensitive gesture Grundmann, who '...wedelte [...] mit der Kreditkarte...', demands to pay 'sofort und für alles!'(p.316). The father of the bride stands his ground and insists on observing '...die alten Spielregeln...' which dictate that 'der Brautvater zahlt!'(p.316).¹⁶ Grundmann, for whom the price of a mere three course meal is a financial 'Klacks', desists from further argument when Fonty ends the '...prinzipiellen Handel...' by employing a reference to the old Prussian way of life – and death: 'Das hier ist Ehrensache. Oder will sich mein Schwiegersohn etwa mit mir duellieren?'(p.316). Clearly there is more at stake here than a decision as to who may be allowed to pay. Some values of significance from the collapsed system, which has been swept away so brutally fast, must survive: 'Nichts Großes, nur was von uns bleibt...' (p.317), like Fontane's monument, 'die sitzende Bronze' in Neuruppin, reflecting an earlier age.

* * * * *

What we have been tracing through the wedding scene is a clear, referential and evaluative thematics; referential, in the sense that the characters embody their culture; evaluative, in the sense that the text regrets the enforced, unequal character of the union. As to the totality of the novel, it does not generate, for much of its (perhaps excessive) length, the kind of explicitly allegorical statement we have been considering. Yet the very mode of the novel is, one would suggest, a representation of the case against post-*Wende* euphoria: 'Siegen macht dumm! '(p.63) The novel is written, then, in sympathy with the complexities of defeat and in criticism of the simplicity of triumph. And its very complexity, indirection, diffidence is an assertion of values swallowed up in the

purposiveness of the victors. This indirection is the indirection of a largely conversational novel, heavily dependent on two figures who are intertextual (i.e. mediated, indirect) presences rather than immediate characters in their own right. It is significant that, in the wedding scene, Wuttke quotes Fontane's famous remark about *Der Stechlin*: 'Zum Schluß stirbt ein Alter, und zwei Junge heiraten sich; das ist so ziemlich alles auf fünfhundert Seiten' (p.298). *Ein weites Feld* is a novel in that mode.

In this sense the Fontane intertext is crucial - at various levels of statement. Grass is at pains to invoke Fontane's scepticism about euphoric visions of progress, of human betterment. Indeed he invokes Fontane's own indirection as novelist – the stance of the tactful eavesdropper. He reminds us of Fontane's own pride in a novel that is largely discursivity, talk, and social occasions such as seen in the *Stechlin* remark...nothing happens. But in *Ein weites Feld* a momentous event occurs - and is implicitly devalued by the Fontane mode of narration. In a sense, then, the indirection of the novel is polemical, a validation of modesty, scepticism, and irony in the face of the unexamined certainties of progress. If that political progress is one in which one state comes to obliterate another, *Ein weites Feld* reverses the process and suggests that the obliterated state had claims to make - politically, culturally, ethically.

There is, perhaps, a final intertext at work. If, within the cultural orthodoxy of Socialist Realism, one of the modes of freedom open to the creative writer was to write allegorically (to make the foreground statement stand for another - implicit – statement) then here we have a similar enterprise. The foreground statement, the sheer vulnerability of those two huddled figures, captured unforgettably in Grass's drawing on the cover,¹⁷ is transparent upon the political and cultural vulnerability of a whole way of life. Thereby Grass offers an indictment of a climate of political self-congratulation and self-deception. The hope that was in evidence in the symbolic shower of *Pusteblumen* in Christa Wolf's *Juninachmittag* generates Grass's wedding reception in *Ein weites Feld*, allegorically

expressive of outwardness, embarrassment, of a sense of making the best of a bad job, and an optimistic note is struck in Wuttke/Fonty's postcard to the archive which ends the novel and provides yet another link with Fontane and the united Germany of another age: '...bei stabilem Wetter ist Weitsicht möglich. Übrigens täuschte sich Briest; ich jedenfalls sehe dem Feld ein Ende ab...'.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 11

1. In August 1995.
2. Much of the evidence for this can be found in Oskar Nagt ed., *Der Fall Fonty: 'Ein weites Feld' von Günter Grass im Spiegel der Kritik*, (Göttingen: Steidl, 1996).
3. Hans Joachim Schädlich, *Tallhover* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1986).
4. Paul Irving Anderson formulates the nexus thus: '...die Außenwelt, die Gleichzeitigkeit der Romanentstehung ist die Wiedervereinigung; wie es zur ersten Einigung den Original -, so gibt es zur Wiedervereinigung den Recycling-Fontane...'. See: *Fontane Blätter* 62/1996, 176-177.
5. See: Jutta Osinski, 'Aspekte der Fontane-Rezeption bei Günter Grass', *Fontane Blätter* 62/1996, 112-126.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Uprising of German peasants 1524/5.
9. The famous choir of the St. Hedwigskirche met and rehearsed regularly, drawing its members from East and West Berlin, thus uniting music lovers from the two halves of the city which was divided politically. The building of the Wall in 1961 prevented further joint concerts and recordings. Many a German family cherished and played records of, particularly, Christmas carols sung by this choir. Along with the candles displayed in West Germany on Christmas Eve on window sills facing east, they came to take on the symbolic meaning of hope and solidarity, especially after 1961.
10. Such optimism was not shared by all former GDR citizens, as waiting lists for sessions on psychiatrists' couches showed in the years after unification. *Böse Zungen* claimed that the only real boom experienced in the *neue Bundesländer* was found in the realm of psychotherapy and counselling. Such services, however, failed to prevent an unusually high incidence of suicide.
11. Sebastian Kneipp, 1821-1897, Catholic priest in Bad Wörishofen, founder of hydrotherapy.
12. A young journalist provides an example of the repercussions: 'I was reminded of the case of my father's secretary and her dubious past. My father had moved to East Germany shortly after the Wende. He assumed the artistic directorship of a state-owned theatre in the city of Stendal. In his new office, he kept on his predecessor's secretary. She adapted quickly to the western management and won praise. Years later, though, a note was found that indicated she had once cooperated with the Stasi. She lost her job immediately.' See: Oliver August, *Along the Wall and Watchtowers* (London: Flamingo, 2000), p.171.
13. Fontane was not honoured until late in his life and career, and then not fully.
14. In a letter to his London friend James Morris, 22. 2.1896. Surprisingly, Grass misquotes Fontane on p.312 when he says 'Alle Zukunft liegt beim vierten Stand'.
15. Oliver August, in a conversation with a visitor to a town in the old Federal Republic, gains an insight into the changed status of the church in the former GDR: 'Herr Peterson from Dresden prayed in the chapel. He told me he was praying for the church itself. "In the east, religion is not very popular any more. Clergymen are being blamed for the end of socialism. Some people say: "You Christians should all be shot. You betrayed us. You betrayed *den Sozialismus*." "The church leaders who organised the protests in 1989 that led to the Wende are being ignored now, pushed out.' See: Oliver August, as above, p.190.
16. Wuttke falls in with traditional practice here: '...die einzelnen Bauelemente der Hochzeitsbräuche ordnen sich nach den subjektiven Stellenwerten, die ihnen die jeweils ausübende Gruppe im Zusammenhang ihrer inneren Logik verleiht, nach den Interessendominanzen, die sie innerhalb der Gesellschaft einnehmen.' See: Ingeborg Weber-Kellermann, *Die deutsche Familie: Versuch einer Sozialgeschichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch, 1974), p.162.
17. He was clearly inspired by August von Heyden's water colour of Fontane, found together with his diary entry for 8. 1.1866 and depicting the author swathed in a huge woollen scarf and his face barely visible under a floppy dark hat pulled down over his eyes.

CONCLUSION

I have no wish, at the conclusion of this thesis, to succumb to the charms of excessive schematism. I do not wish to claim that I have illuminated a clear-cut, stage-by-stage process of historical change. One could, however, claim that, broadly speaking, the texts which I have explored bear witness to an increasing problematization of the values of family life. Not, of course, that there is a unidirectional process in evidence. Reuter and Böll offer forthright denunciation; Stifter attempts to create a certainty that his own creative imagination will not fully sustain; Broch and Grass express profound unease as the celebratory foreground is questioned by psychological and political subtexts; yet Mann and Wolf (in their vastly different ways) offer a measure of validation to the deliberate creation of family occasions. And in stylistic terms, my texts enact a number of variations. Gotthelf offers a vision of activities and values held in symbolic, indeed sacramental fusion. With Stifter and Storm the symbols become a shade brittle. In Böll's manic Christmas story there is a ludicrous disjunction between the enforced symbolization of the daily celebration of Christmas on the one hand and any sense of real symbolic value on the other. In their overtly socially-critical mode both Reuter and Fallada see the family occasion as profoundly symbolic, but the symbols are negatively loaded, and bear a destructive charge. By contrast, Christa Wolf reinstates the symbolic potential because the act of narrating becomes one that validates the symbolic textures of family life. In the case of Grass, the overt symbolizations of post-*Wende* culture are but ham-fisted allegorizations; the true symbolic validation within his novel is to be found in its ironies and indirections. To repeat the point, then, with which I began: the story told by my chosen texts is, neither thematically nor symbolically, a unidirectional one. But that is not to say that there are no implications for (literary or socio-political) history. It is worth

remembering the force of the title to Grass's novel. In it, a late-twentieth century writer, writing a novel about late-twentieth century events, invokes a famous phrase from a late-nineteenth century novel (*Effi Briest*). That phrase warns against 'going too far' and the warning is meant politically. Germany, in her euphoria at unification, should beware of going too far too fast. Yet what the phrase also does is to 'go far' in cultural terms – to invoke earlier texts of German and European literature (extending back even to the Baroque in the employment of the Paternoster lift as some kind of Wheel of Fortune). That Grass 'goes far' culturally perhaps helps to justify the project behind this thesis – which is to take soundings of some 150 years of German literature. In the process one registers weighty shifts of theme and of literary mode – from the splendidly rich symbolism of Gotthelf's account of the sublime family ritual to Grass's nervously allegorical chronicle of an awkward wedding. At either end of the spectrum, my texts, in their different ways, bear witness to literature's ability to express, explore and find a cognitively appropriate form for some of the deepest human needs and aspirations, needs and aspirations that have centrally to do with the values and ceremonies of family life.

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