MADE TO ORDER

REFLECTIONS ON SELECTED WORKS BY JEREMIAS GOTTHELF,
C. F. MEYER AND GOTTFRIED KELLER

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Notions of order are examined in selected works of three nineteenth-century, Swiss-German authors: Gotthelf, Meyer and Keller.

In each case, order is both a governing thematic and a property of textual (stylistic and structural) statement. Gotthelf’s novels are not highly structured; they delight in the materiality of peasant life - despite the frequently evident didactic intent. The interplay between the realist’s attention to the world in its own terms and the preacher’s concern to judge that world by Christian criteria produces the energy and fascination of Gotthelf’s narrative project. Meyer’s writing both articulates and embodies principles of order and containment. The textual patterning of the lyric poetry, the consummately framed Novellen, can produce an impression of perfectly wrought claustrophobia. Keller’s writing is similarly dense, but does not feel anxiously encapsulating like Meyer’s. Rather, Keller suggests that human order consists of complexly interacting structures of signification.

Three novels by Gotthelf are considered. Der Bauernspiegel traces the consequences of exclusion from order. Geld und Geist is a fictional realization of ideal order. Anne Bäbi Jowäger is Gotthelf’s supreme articulation of how his ideal and the unregenerate order of reality both overlap and diverge.

Meyer is represented by selected lyric poems - which deal above all with a longed-for order, enshrined in their aesthetic form - and two prose works. Der Heilige is a framed Novelle, whilst Jürg Jenatsch is unframed; both, however, use the issue of narrative itself to posit and question certain notions of order in the real world.

A single work represents Keller: Der grüne Heinrich, a novel of a scope which renders it uniquely representative. The central character, despite his instinctive preference for a private, internal order, encounters many external - social, economic, natural - orders. The novel shows how these agencies interact to create the complexly negotiated realm of human reality.
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which they have contributed to the production of this thesis and the happiness of its author.
This study will look at notions of order in the selected works of three Swiss authors writing in German in the nineteenth century: Gotthelf, Meyer and Keller.

Despite their closeness in time and place (Gotthelf - alias Albert Bitzius - lived in the hills of Canton Bern from 1797 to 1854; Meyer and Keller were both Züriicher and lived from 1825 to 1898 and 1819 to 1890 respectively), their writing reflects the fact that the three men were very different in character and background. Gotthelf was a cleric in a rural parish, a family man of robust convictions. Meyer was from a well-to-do background, but like other members of his family he was troubled by psychological instability, and although he married he never completely overcame the neurosis of his youth. Keller came from a humbler family background; his initial ambitions were as a painter rather than a writer. After a period in Germany he returned to his native city, where he became a civil servant. Despite several infatuations, he remained a bachelor all his life.

This study does not seek to suggest any recurrent common denominator in the work of the three authors - beyond a (perhaps characteristically Swiss) preoccupation with the multiple processes by which social, psychological, aesthetic order can be achieved. I would claim, then, that my concern with the articulation of order in Gotthelf, Meyer and Keller offers fruitful access to their work - but also respects the differences amongst them.

However, in each case, order emerges as a governing thematic and a property of textual (that is, stylistic and structural) statement. Gotthelf's novels are not highly structured; rather, they delight in the materiality of the peasant world he knew so well. Yet frequently one hears the presence of a sternly didactic intent. Precisely the interplay between the realist's attention to the world on its own terms and the preacher's concern to judge that world by the criteria of the Christian religion produces the energy and fascination of Gotthelf's narrative project. Meyer, in both his verse and his prose, is concerned not just to articulate but also to embody principles of order and containment. The textual patterning of the lyric poetry, the consummately framed Novellen, produce on occasion an impression of perfectly wrought claustrophobia. Keller's writing is similarly dense and intricate, but it does not feel anxiously encapsulating in the manner of Meyer's. Rather, Keller suggests that the order of the human world is in fact made up of complexly interacting structures of signification.

I do not claim to offer an exhaustive appraisal of the work of Gotthelf, Meyer and Keller; the nature of my topic demands a fairly detailed examination of individual texts. The three novels by Gotthelf were selected because of the light which they each throw on his ideas of order. Der Bauernspiegel is an imperfect novel which traces the consequences of exclusion from order. The second novel treated here (but the last to be written), Geld und Geist, is a fictional realization of its author's ideal of order. The third, Anne Bäbi Jowäger is his supreme articulation of how his ideal and the unregenerate order of the real world both overlap and diverge. Meyer is represented by a selection of his lyric poems and two prose works. The poems seem to me to deal above all with a longed-for order which is enshrined in their aesthetic form. Of the prose, Der Heilige is a framed Novelle, whilst Jürg Jenatsch is unframed; both,
however, use the issue of narrative itself to posit and question certain notions of order in the real, historical world and thus complement rather than duplicate the poems.

My discussion of Keller, although it opens with a brief survey of the theme of order in his oeuvre, concentrates exclusively on the second version of *Der grüne Heinrich*. I hope that the analysis justifies this narrowness, indeed exclusivity, of focus; in my view, that version of the novel is of a scope and importance which demands very detailed textual analysis. It is, I venture to suggest, one of the profoundest discussions of the multiple orders within which humankind lives, moves and has its being which the European nineteenth century produced.
Part 1:
JEREMIAS GOTTHELF
Gotthelf’s first novel, *Der Bauernspiegel*, lacks, at least in its latter stages, much of the richness of his finest work. The last few chapters lose narrative drive and tail off into something of a political manifesto.

Too many issues are addressed for them all to be convincingly woven into the simple tale of a young person’s early years. Still, although *Der Bauernspiegel* ultimately fails artistically, it represents a useful introduction to Gotthelf’s oeuvre. The concerns which are driven along by the energetic tide of the first part of the novel are too heavy and too many for the weak pull of the ebb and they are left, washed up and naked, for us to examine. We shall find them all recurring in Gotthelf’s subsequent, more successful novels.¹ Its most robust section is the description of Jeremias’s childhood and youth which takes up most of its length, but even this is in essence simply a catalogue of misfortunes and injustices. The novel identifies and highlights the (myriad) evils in everyday life by sketching the effects of these evils on a vulnerable young person, who is also the first-person narrator. In effect, the novel is an inverted image of an ideal human world. In order to investigate society, we approach it through the eyes of an individual who is spurned by it but who - except at those moments following the bitterest blows, when disillusionment temporarily overwhelms him - tries desperately to claim his place within it. It is crucial of course that Jeremias is not the subversive element for which he is mistaken. Each set-back he experiences can therefore be blamed squarely on society.

To this end, the young Jeremias is presented not merely as innocent, but as positively angelic. He is a ray of sunshine in a gloomy household, cherished by everybody. However, even before his birth, the roots of his future misery are made clear. They lie in the nature of the family to which his father belongs, thus introducing us to a fundamental characteristic of Gotthelf’s work: the importance of the family as the basic unit of society.²

Gotthelf’s households are never hermetically sealed constructs, as Kohlschmidt points out: “Ein klösterliche Familienzelle, abgeschieden von der Welt, kommt niemals für Gotthelf in Frage.” The members of a household have to survive in the “Wirbel der Welt”.³

Jeremias’s father is the eldest brother, and according to local tradition, the farm will pass to the youngest. This fact alone divests him of any real significance in the family, for his parents and siblings subscribe to an entirely materialistic mode of evaluation. Respect is won not through diligence or the capacity to inspire love, far less through mere human dignity, but through wealth. Jeremias’s father is treated as though he were little more than an animal, and his contribution to the farm is certainly similar to that of a horse or an ox, for he is a source of unpaid labour with no responsibilities. When he discovers


² The importance of the family unit in Gotthelf’s work has been widely recognized. In *Jeremias Gotthelf, der “Dichter des Hauses”* (Stuttgart, 1993), Werner Hahl analyses the way in which the family encapsulates all the issues which arise between the individual and society. Cf. also Schueler, H. J., “Gotthelf and Pestalozzi Reconsidered”, *Michigan Germanic Studies*, 9 (1983), 3-17 (p. 3) and “Haus” bei Gotthelf” in Fehr, Karl, *Jeremias Gotthelf: Poet and Prophet - Erzähler und Erzieher. Zu Sprache, dichterischer Kunst und Gehalt seiner Schriften* (Bern, 1986), pp. 135-38.

that Jeremias’s grandfather has swindled him out of any share in his inheritance in order to preserve the unity of the farm and to lure a rich wife for the inheriting brother, he leaves the farm in disgust. This marks the beginning of Jeremias’s alienation from society.

The family’s materialistic values represent another of the concerns which underpin all of Gotthelf’s writing. The perception of the framework within which the exterior world is housed is, for Gotthelf, crucial to the establishment of a successful social order. Where there is real Christian faith, material interests are put into context. Wealth does not seem so important next to the innate worth of every individual as a creation of God. Love becomes a more significant currency than Dublone, Neutaler or land.

The members of the family to which we are introduced are Christians in name only. Like so many of Gotthelf’s figures, their understanding of Christianity is merely ritualistic. Positive Christian principles have no place in their everyday lives or in their attitudes to one another. When Jeremias is taken ill as an infant, they are alarmed merely by the negative implications of neglected ritual:

Meine Kranklichkeit erregte große Angst, ich möchte vor der Taufe sterben; dann wären die Eltern schuld, wenn mir durch diese Versäumnis die Seligkeit fehlen würde. Im ganzen Hause hingen alle fest an dem Vorurteil, ohne Taufe könne man nicht selig werden.4

Jeremias goes on to criticize the unreflected nature of his relatives’ religion. They do not question the source of their beliefs - whether they stem from the Bible or from hearsay - and neither do they examine them as an entity (which would reveal the dichotomy between a loving “Vater im Himmel” and the perceived fate of unbaptized infants). The results are that they do not differentiate between faith in superstitions and in Christianity and that they fulfil Christian rites without transferring the import of those rites to their general conduct:

Der Großvater konnte gar trostlich beim Schlafengehen das “Unser Vater” und “Vater, vergib mir meine Schulden, wie ich meinen Schuldnern auch vergebe!” beten und handkehrum zu der Großmutter sagen: “Ich hoffe doch, daß Niggis Joggi einist e furige Ma werdi, wenn e gerechte Gott im Himmel isch; da Donners Schelm het mer hut wieder e ganzi Furen abfahren, u der Marchstei lyt ganz blutt und krumm.” (I, 15)

The family into which Jeremias is born is utterly cheerless: the lack of love and insight means that each family member is suspicious and resentful of the others, for they can see each other only in the light of material concerns - as potential or actual competitors. The unit therefore does not function as it should. When Jeremias’s naivety captures the hearts of his relatives, the extent of what was missing in the family becomes clear. Now for the first time there is mutual respect: Jeremias’s mother is no longer treated as a parasite, his siblings are treated with less coldness. Yet, despite Jeremias’s positive effect, greed still dictates the priorities on the farm, and his grandparents’ duplicity drives him and his parents away. His father is tempted into a lease on terms which he cannot possibly fulfil and dies felling a tree to appease the landowner. Corrupt officials collude to cheat the widow and her children of any inheritance.

Her children are now reliant upon the mercy of the community: they are “auctioned” at the Bettlergemeinde, an event explicitly likened to a “Maiktiag” (I, 68).

At this point the novel is turning its attention from the family to the wider community, its corrupt nature and its failure in its responsibilities. Even so, the family is seen as the all-important sub-unit of the community. If Jeremias’s family were functional, he and his siblings would not need the grudging charity of the community to begin with. First, his father would not have been effectively forced from the family farm into an impossible situation. Second, after his father’s death, the family would have stepped in to assume responsibility for the children. It is not misfortune, but the absence of any form of interest amongst his relatives other than self-interest which turns Jeremias into an orphan.

Jeremias now discovers that, to those around him, he is virtually worthless. This is brought home to him in the touching episode at the first farm on which he is placed. Jumping on to the farmer’s knee he asks “’Atti, hesch mih o lieb?’ Ehe dieser noch antworten konnte, riB mir der Knabe herunter, stieB mich weg und sagte: ’Das ist nit dy Atti, du bist nume dr Bueb!’” (I, 71). The father is delighted by his son’s behaviour: he simply cannot see the love which is latent in Jeremias, or the devastating effect on him of the rejection of that love. The reader knows that Jeremias is full of goodness, but this is irrelevant to those around him. He is not a child but a function - “dr Bueb” - and this realization breeds the stoic streak in his character which will come to predominate. Once again, the lack of Christian love in the family is to blame: “Ich hatte ein Herz voll Liebe, hätte so gerne alle geliebt, aber m eine Liebe wollte man nicht, Liebe gab man mir nicht, sondern glaubte mehr als genug zu tun, wenn man mir zu essen gab” (I, 71).

Like his father on his grandfather’s farm, Jeremias is accorded no respect. The family is interested only in his usefulness; the lack of any concern for him as an individual precludes any insight into his true character, and Jeremias’s sunny, affectionate nature is thus perverted into insolence and resentfulness. He finds consolation in the happier atmosphere at the Ghusmannsfrau’s home, and the contrast between a family through which love radiates and one governed by merely material concerns is underlined. This is again an indictment of a family which does not function as a unit, but we should bear in mind that the community as a whole actually encourages the inhumanity of Jeremias’s foster family. At the Bettlergemeinde the children are hawked to the highest bidders rather than entrusted to good homes. Their value increases according to their physical strength and the quality and quantity of their clothing. Everything rests on an understanding of worth which is informed entirely by greed. Jeremias now passes from one home to another. The community takes no interest in his fate once it has placed him, and steps in only when called upon to do so, in order to pass him on elsewhere.

In each place the story is different, but the underlying reasons for his difficulties are the same. The greed and lovelessness which predominated at Jeremias’s grandfather’s farm and at the first farm on which he is placed are seen to predominate elsewhere too. His happiest experience, as a Gassenbub, is as a virtual apprentice criminal. That interlude is brought to an end by the spiteful influence of the farmer for whom he had been Kindemeitschi. His next home is an affluent and a decent one, and in Mareili we

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6 Martin Neuenschwander in Jeremias Gotthelf als Dichter der Ordnung (Zürich, 1966), p. 43, notes the phenomenon of a family unit divided into functional components rather than named individuals in Geld und Geist.
and Jeremias encounter one of the kind, pious, commonsensical female characters who illuminate so much of Gotthelf’s writing. However, even this farm is not as praiseworthy as it would seem. It is engaged in a petty rivalry with the neighbouring farm to be seen as the better, more charitable of the two. This may seem laudable, in comparison to the stifling meanness of Jeremias’s previous homes, but in Gotthelf’s terms, the two tendencies stem from the same root. If the family “auf der Egg” is not mean, it is because affluence has released it from the pressure which makes meanness manifest itself. The family’s concern with its reputation is, for Gotthelf, symptomatic of the same obsession with worldly concerns which in a poorer environment results in rampant materialism. Charity for show is in fact the precise opposite of the selflessness which comes from Gotthelf’s notion of true Christianity.

The small-minded self-interest of the servants at the farm is therefore not altogether strange: their masters are not quite the shining examples that they appear to be.7 Mareili is the only exception, and it is therefore she who is most often the scapegoat for the servants’ spleen. In Der Bauernspiegel, goodness is always thoroughly resented by those who are corrupt (the Ghummisfrau’s persecution by the first farmer’s wife is another example). Jeremias is perceived by the servants “auf der Egg” as competition, and falls victim to their intrigue. Once again, it is jealous materialism which crushes him.

His next stop is with the “pfiffiger Bauer”. The farmer here has convinced the local community that he is an upright figure when he is really a rascal. Jeremias sees this, but the praise he receives from the farmer comforts him, and he believes that he will be treated differently. He works hard, confident that his wages are mounting up. Jeremias forms a great attachment for the animals in his charge. To some extent this is due to his desire to have something to call his own, but we must also see it as the logical last refuge for a boy bursting with love who has been consistently disappointed by the human world. When the farm catches fire, Jeremias is heroic in his efforts to salvage what he can for his master. The community arrives to offer further help: but nobody thinks of Jeremias. The local farmers are each aware of the possibility that their property could be the next to go up in flames, and it is therefore in their interest to demonstrate solidarity. Jeremias, however, is worthless to them in their material terms, and he loses everything. The community of Unverstand functions on a basis of self-interest, and even when it operates as a unit, as it does now or in the instance of the placing of orphans, it is only with personal profit in mind. Selfless community spirit this is not. Even Jeremias’s uncle feels no obligation towards him, a reminder that, if the community is corrupt, the family is the channel for that corruption.8

Anneli now arrives to rescue Jeremias from his despair with her kindness. Jeremias falls in love and becomes a man. For the first time the love within him is reciprocated. Jeremias now finds himself able to communicate his emotions: at last somebody is interested in him as he really is, rather than as a function. That he has become such a sullen character is due to all his attempts at sincere communication having been rejected: he has been unable to release his positive emotions, his love.9 He and Anneli relate

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7 This causal link between masters and servants is overlooked by Ulrich Knellwolf, Gleichnis und allgemeines Priesterum: zum Verhältnis von Predigtamt und erzählerischem Werk bei Jeremias Gotthelf (Zürich, 1990), p. 56. Gotthelf’s domestic orders - his families and farmsteads - are microcosms of society; here we see in miniature the consequences of bad government.

8 Neuenschwander, p. 26, sees in the battle against the fire the triumph of a calm order over a destructive force. However, order is not a singular possibility in Gotthelf’s work, and the order - the co-operation of the local community - which functions here is questioned even as it is seen to avert chaos.

9 We shall see that the importance of communication is a recurring theme in Gotthelf’s work. Cf. Godwin-Jones, Robert, Narrative Strategies in the Novels of Jeremias Gotthelf (New York, 1986), p. 23: “The only character in the farm community with whom Jeremias is able to communicate effectively is Anneli.” (p. 23).
their life stories to one another: “Ein Wort gab das andere, eine Offenherzigkeit kam über mich, das ich
nicht kannte” (I, 179).

The importance of communication is one of Gotthelf’s central concerns. It is seen to depend on
the existence of mutual respect. Where self-interest is paramount, real communication cannot take place:
distrust and indifference prevent it. What passes for communication tends to be anything other than
constructive. This is the case in Jeremias’s own family. Jeremias’s father “sprach nicht viel, nur im Zorn,
der aber selten ausbrach, konnte er nicht schweigen, sondern tobt fürchterlich” (I, 8). The grandparents
say nothing about their plans for the farm to the disinherited children. Eventually, of course, the family is
torn asunder: when the deceit is discovered, there is nothing else to hold it together. Where order is
replaced by disorder, then communication breaks down.

However, Anneli’s significance in the novel is not confined to the way in which her love allows
Jeremias to reach beyond himself. She, like Jeremias, has grown up as an orphan; he admits that she
has had an even harder time than he has. Both have survived - but, crucially, by different means. Whereas
Jeremias has resorted to sullenness and self-reliance, Anneli has looked to God. Jeremias has been
thoroughly abused by a materialistic society, but the extent of his suffering has been due to the fact that
(in the absence of any truly Christian influence on his life) he actually subscribes to the same values
which underpin that society. He may be better intentioned, more affectionate than those around him, but
like theirs, his view is limited to the tangible world. Anneli, on the other hand, is confident of God’s love
through thick and thin, and this in itself offers comfort. Moreover, she is able to put events into context.
Each set-back is relativized by her belief that it is limited in scope: the human world is subordinate to a
greater reality. To Jeremias, who is his own centre of a human world which is everything to him, each
blow is felt at its full strength, and it is pure stubbornness of character which enables him to continue.
Anneli can step back and see the blow (and her own importance) diminish in significance in the general
Christian scheme of things.

The most obvious effect of their differing outlooks is that Jeremias is filled with a latent anger
which is entirely lacking in Annéli. It is Jeremias’s anger which, as Fehr suggests in his excellent
analysis of Der Bauernspiegel, brings about his next and most crushing calamity. For the first time
since his scraps as a young boy, his simmering resentment is released through physical violence; he
becomes involved in a brawl at a dance, from which Anneli manages with difficulty to extricate him.
However, his fury has not yet abated; it drives him into sexual intercourse with Anneli, despite her
objections. She will later die in childbirth.

Jeremias sows the seed for his own tragedy, but again the general corruption of society is
indicated. Jeremias and Anneli are unable to marry because Jeremias’s employer robs him of his wages,
because of the unsympathetic attitude of the priest and because the community, after neglecting him for so

10 Schueler, pp. 6-8, identifies love as a redeeming power, but the breakthrough within Jeremias at this point he sees as one between his
self and his “better half” rather than, as I do, between his self and an external self - for the first time he and somebody else achieve real
understanding. Gerhard Gey in Die Armenfrage im Werk Jeremias Gotthelfs: Zu einer Frühform christlichen sozialpolitisches und
sozialpädagogischen Denkens und Handelns (Münster, 1988), pp. 61-63, does note that the selfishness of those responsible for his
upbringing has left him isolated in his self: “Konsequenz dieser selbstsüchtigen Gesinnung ist zunächst die emotionale Isolierung des
Jeremias durch den Verlust der Bezugsperson” (my emphasis). He also sees how breaking through to Anneli achieves a more general
socialization of Jeremias: “Anneli ermöglicht ihm [...] insgesamt die Integration in die menschliche Gemeinschaft und den Weg zur
Reinigung.” (p. 71).
11 Fehr, Das Bild des Menschens bei Jeremias Gotthelf, pp. 83-84.
long, now demands that he repay the cost of his "upbringing" (the price is inflated by his miserly former masters in collusion with the village elders). Mareili steps in to offer help, but again Jeremias’s anger spells disaster: he is too resentful and mistrustful to accept all that she offers. Hence, he and Anneli are regarded as financially untrustworthy by the community. The consequences are dire. When Anneli develops complications in labour, the doctor comes only belatedly and reluctantly, concerned about his payment - as is the undertaker after her death.

So whilst an avaricious society is seen to pursue Jeremias and Anneli to the end, Jeremias’s own ignorance of real Christianity aggravates his problems. Anneli’s death propels Jeremias into an understandable hatred of the whole world. Only fighting releases his feelings; he swears revenge on his former master, on the doctor, on the whole community (he wants to saddle it with a vast litter of illegitimate children). In contrast, the manner of Anneli’s death is emblematic of her resigned attitude: she glances at Jeremias with “unaussprechlicher Liebe” (I, 207) and smiles. It is her posthumous influence which keeps Jeremias from fulfilling his terrible intentions: he always finds himself drawn back towards her grave instead.

Already an outsider, Jeremias is now a declared enemy of society. His constant brawling is tolerated, but when he casts aspersions on the honesty of the local officials - particularly the “pfiffiger Bauer”, who is now a Statthalter - he is arrested and committed to a farcical trial. Escaping from his incarceration, his utter alienation from society is now emblematised in his emigration: he quits Unverstand and Switzerland and signs up for a Swiss regiment in Paris. In France, his stubbornness antagonizes his officers and his fellow soldiers. Yet again the selfishness and corruption of those around him leads to his ostracism. He comes close to death, but recovers to be educated - in both practical and religious matters - by the rather problematic figure of Bonjour. After the humiliation of the July Revolt, he and Bonjour return to Switzerland. Jeremias is taken ill, and again nearly perishes thanks to the woeful treatment he receives in the charity hospital. He survives to find that Bonjour is dead, and that he has left Jeremias his modest fortune. Jeremias, eager to serve his community with his new learning, is rejected as a teacher, a road engineer and even as a humble policeman. The Inspector of Weights and Measures (Fecker) who has befriended him persuades him to seek an unofficial position in which to serve. He finds a rural inn where he educates the children, and attempts to enlighten the whole community unobtrusively. In addition he writes his memoirs: Der Bauernspiegel.

We have observed how the failure of the family is what initially excludes Jeremias from society, and how selfish materialism and a lack of Christian love are responsible for that failure. We have seen how the community then seems to persecute rather than care for Jeremias. Again, it is the greed of the members of the community which is responsible. Over and over again in the novel a corrupt society is attacked. When Jeremias is arrested by the Landvogt, Gotthelf allows himself to lapse into caricature and slapstick in order to strip the local dignities of all their dignity (the Landvogt relies on his wife to whisper him instructions during the interrogation and even during the trial; the witnesses unwittingly allude to the bribery which has gone on behind the scenes).

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12 Urs Künfer, in Jeremias Gotthelf: Grundzüge seiner Pädagogik: Untersuchung über die Fehlformen der Erziehung (Stuttgart, 1983), notes that the poor education granted Jeremias by his community now leads him into behaviour which is damaging to that community (pp. 206-08). Künfer’s study examines the shortcomings of education in Gotthelf’s work in detail (pp. 80-290).
Even when Jeremias offers society his service he is spurned: despite the new political regime, public office is not won through merit but through bribery and intrigue. As a policeman, Jeremias would be an uncomfortable thorn in the side of a community in which the rules are in practice bent to serve self-interest rather than justice.

However, the most damning sketch of society is in Chapter Ten. Jeremias is living in a squalid hut with a couple who live off their wits. They exploit the weaknesses, the petty ambitions, jealousies, infatuations, the superstition and gullibility of those living in the surrounding area. When they arrive home in the evening they relate their exploits. These frequently ironic passages are virtuosic analyses of the dissolute mechanics of human coexistence. The man tells how he has been rewarded for arranging a tryst between a landowner and his previous tenant’s wife and for pretending to side with a man obsessed with the pursuit of a vendetta whilst neglecting his own children: “er müsse mir vier Franken mitgeben [. . .] Er gab mir sie recht gerne, lieber als einem, der ihm sein krankes Kind gesund gemacht hätte” (I, 101). His partner meanwhile has profited from a jealous wife, whom she tells that consecrated bread in coffee will make her husband faithful. This bread she promises to procure - at a price. (In fact she intends to use some hard bread her husband received from the unfaithful tenant’s wife for delivering the message from her lover!) The same woman’s daughter-in-law, feeling hard done by, pays her to supply her secretly with some wine. Next she learns from an unmarried girl, Trini, that the latter is pregnant and undertakes to persuade the father of her child, a miller’s son, that he should marry her. On the way she is commissioned to smuggle some liquor to a farmer’s wife. She finds the miller’s son and by alluding to Trini’s future inheritance and her capacity for hard work, and then blackening the name of the girl who has replaced Trini in his affections, succeeds in reawakening his enthusiasm for Trini. She receives flour, wine and sausage for her efforts, and also spots some timber which her husband will be able to purloin one night. On another occasion she is paid by a philanderer to dissuade his wife from believing rumours about his infidelities by saying that there are similar rumours concerning her, the wife. She also profits from the vanity of a beautiful daughter seeking a rich suitor.

“Der Alte” now tells of his success (through playing on their vanity and greed) in making a stable-lad and his master become disillusioned with each other, thus earning commissions from the stable-lad for finding him a new position, from his new master for supplying him with the stable-lad, and from his old master for filling the vacant position. He also profits from a bored son’s hypochondria and by assisting him in finding a rich wife - as well as from his father, who wants cows and liquor. On his way home he is commissioned by a master to find a husband for his maid - the urgency of the request suggesting that she is pregnant.

Everywhere the couple goes they are alert to the possibilities for profit from human weakness; they know all the local gossip and do not scruple to create more if it will serve its ends. If people really were what they seemed to be, the two of them would be deprived of a living, trading as they do on fictions, superstitions and false beliefs.

The woman also earns money as a soothsayer, and here her knowledge of the lives of her customers and of human nature in general is again invaluable:

Die Alte kannte alle Verhältnisse; so wußte sie gleich, was man eigentlich wissen wollte: daß die Frau vernehmen möchte, ob ihr Mann noch lange leben werde oder ob sie bald zu einem andern
komen könne, wüßte, auf wen sie ihr Auge schon geworfen, wüßte die Liebesangelegenheiten der jungen Mädchen, die neugierig waren zu vernehmen, was sie zuerst kriegen würden, ein Kind oder einen Mann? Da war ihr das Wahrsagen leicht. (I, 113-14)

If Jeremias's treatment by the community is shoddy, the reason for the corrupt condition which undermines the community's operation clearly lies here, in the rampant hypocrisy, the greed and selfishness of its members, rich and poor alike. The basic outlook of the individuals prevents real communication between them: it is the gaps which the non-communication creates that the couple which adopts Jeremias identifies and exploits. The various questionable impulses of their customers all have one thing in common: they are all secret. Were people more open with each other, their need for the old couple would be obviated.

Of course, in Gotthelf's terms, lying behind all this is the lack of a thoroughgoing espousal of Christianity, just as we have seen to be the case in Jeremias's own family. The shallowness of the general understanding of religion is exemplified when the fortune teller relates her encounter “bei der geistlichen Frau [. . .] wo in alli Versammlige lauft und in alle Kinderlehre seufzet und pläret” (I, 108). This most pious woman has been scheming for her son to make a profitable marriage, but her son is now pursuing another girl “ein braves Meitschi, halt o nit rych” (I, 108). This enrages his mother, who has already been planning to pay off all her debts with her windfall, and she attempts to persuade the soothsayer to turn her son against the poorer girl and turn the richer girl against her new suitor. This behaviour is characteristic of the whole community, in the affairs of which the woman so enthusiastically participates. Her Christianity has nothing to do with love, it is a mere cloak of respectability underneath which everyday life takes place with no regard to Christian principles. The one principle informing her conduct is that of materialism. She even offers to pay the soothsayer for her help by praying to God that He should reward her for “ein so gutes Werk” (I, 109). Ironically, her plan fails because the soothsayer, a semi-criminal thriving on the perverted values of the surrounding population, is, unlike “die geistliche Frau”, God-fearing:


Gotthelf certainly does not regard the soothsayer and her husband as admirable, nor is their hut a suitable environment for the upbringing of a child. However, their glimmerings of religion are here seen to be more genuinely felt, more of a factor in their behaviour than the showy devotion of one of the outwardly more respectable members of the community. In wry recognition of this the chapter containing the passage is entitled “Die christlichen Zigeuner”. It is therefore not surprising in Gotthelf's terms that Jeremias, even as he is being led astray, is happier in his spell at the hut than he is elsewhere. There is at least real affection there, and he refers to the man and his wife as his father and mother (I, 94).

It is of the essence of Gotthelf's understanding of Christianity that it is further reaching than a simple acknowledgement of God. In terms of order, it has two principal implications. The first is that the
human order be seen neither as autonomous, nor simply as a hurdle to be negotiated before achieving
heaven.\textsuperscript{14} In Gotthelf’s faith, the human world is implicated in a mighty overall order which unites
heaven and earth. We have seen that Anneli appreciates this and is thus able to relativize the injustices
she encounters and to love rather than hate. It is the lack of this insight which sours the atmosphere in
Jeremias’s own family and most of the families in which he grows up, as well as fostering the anger
within him. Material issues assume an overwhelming importance because they are not relativized by the
union of heaven and earth visible to Anneli. The second implication is that Christianity is not simply
theoretical but practical. There is the obvious practical benefit that where it predominates, there is
contentment: Anneli’s dying smile is emblematic of this. It also - because of the way in which it
encourages love, respect and tolerance - encourages communication, which is what enables social units to
function successfully. But more than this, it has a part to play in every detail of life. If heaven and earth
coexist in a single structure, all of these details suddenly assume a significance in a cosmic context. This
is why Gotthelf, with - not despite - his Christianity, is such a worldly writer. In his grand scheme,
everything has a role and a resonance. The individual who is conscious of this becomes more responsible
and more productive; the family unit likewise, and ultimately the whole community changes for the
better.\textsuperscript{15}

That this is not the case in Unverstand is indicated most forcefully by the distance between its
priest and his parishioners. When he visits Jeremias’s master, the priest’s children trample the crops and
he insists on eating outside, thus offending against local convention. The Church in Unverstand is a mere
symbol, not integrated into everyday life. The priest is as much to blame for this as the community: why
should the farmers respect a priest who does not respect them? The priest’s low regard for the farmers
and the way they make their living indicates that he does not see that they have a place in the overall
scheme of things. Moreover, the priest is seen to be as infected with materialist values as the rest of the
community: he and his family exploit the reluctant hospitality of the farmers in order to gorge
themselves. Later the priest completely fails to comprehend the value of the love between Jeremias and
Anneli and helps contribute to their tragedy by his narrow-minded adherence to the rules rather than the
spirit of his Church.\textsuperscript{16}

The understanding of religion as a mere social ritual with no real consequences is also apparent
at Jeremias’s first foster family when he is forced to say grace:

“Du Donners Bueb, wotsch jetzt bete?” schrie der Alte und faßte mich beim  Haar. Unter Heulen
betete ich [...].
Ob wohl über dieses Beten die Erbauung im Himmel tief, auf dem Tisch der Segen des giitigen
himmlischen Vaters groß gewesen sei, wer sagt mir das? (I, 74)

\textsuperscript{14} Cf. (for example) Steiner, Ernst, \textit{Individuum und Gemeinschaft bei Jeremias Gotthelf: Eine Untersuchung über ihre Bedeutung und
\textsuperscript{15} Cf. Gey, p. 138: “Richtige Einstellung zu Gott und zur Welt bedingen sich für Gotthelf gegenseitig. Der Annahme der christlichen
Religion muß daher auch einer Einschätzung und Wertung der materiellen Grundlagen für das Leben folgen.”
\textsuperscript{16} Knellwolf examines the shortcomings of the figure of the priest in detail (\textit{Gleichnis und allgemeines Priestertum}, pp. 33-71); in
particular he notes that the priest fails to be the “prophetic” figure in the community which he could be: his sermons are formulaic and are
incomprehensible to his congregation. Gotthelf’s novels attest to his conviction that Christianity as a formula is an unreal, hermetic order,
not a valid and functional influence in the order of the world.
There is a similar example when Jeremias observes that official events are often held on Saturdays so that the officials can enjoy a glass or two afterwards:

Auf den Samstag folgt dann kein Werktag, sondern der Sonntag; an diesem kann man, ohne etwas zu versäumen, ordentlich ausschlafen, und ein schwerer Kopf hindert an keiner Arbeit. Ob aber der liebe Gott auf seinem Tage an solchen schweren Köpfen ein besonderes Wohlgefallen habe, daran denkt man nicht, und ob solche schwere Köpfe an den lieben Gott und ihre unsterbliche Seele ordentlich denken können, darum bekümmert man sich wieder nicht. (I, 29)

Ironically Jeremias’s ignorance of real Christianity stems from the “piety” of the local community with regard to education. Gotthelf’s preoccupation with education inspired his next novel, *Leiden und Freuden eines Schulmeisters*, but it is also very apparent in *Der Bauernspiegel*. He is critical of the attitude which equates education simply with religious indoctrination. The ritualistic conception of religion persuades the farmers - and the schoolmaster and the priest - that the ability to recite doctrine is the most important aspect of education. Their own ignorance makes them suspicious of literacy or geography or even patriotic history. Practice is neglected in favour of theory. The children learn to recite theological definitions without understanding them; they struggle to read and fail altogether to grasp the import of what they are reading. They leave school with neither a sincere faith nor any useful skills.

It is precisely the prevailing blindness to the overall order which Gotthelf blames for this. A practical education would otherwise be seen as an integral part of a Christian upbringing, for it is what prepares children to negotiate life in the real but also sacred world. This is made explicit when the mature Jeremias attempts to convince the men of the village he has adopted that educational reform is not a symptom of what they perceive to be the “Verfall der Religion”:

Ich begann mit vernünftigen Grimden ihnen zu zeigen, daß die Religion keine Gefahr laufe, daß man im Gegenteil die Leute recht christlich machen wolle, indem man sie vernünftig zu machen suche, daß die Geschichte der Menschen und die Lehre der Natur nicht von Gott abfahren, sondern beides Zeugen seien der Macht und Güte Gottes, daß das Alte Testament die Geschichte enthalte des Volkes Gottes, welche jeder Jude kannte, daß wir nun aber auch ein Volk Gottes seien, dem sich Gott vielfach geoffenbart, daß wir also auch unsere Geschichte kennen sollten. (I, 349)

Gotthelf’s Christianity is a practical force. It breeds happiness, it encourages a more enlightened attitude towards change. For Gotthelf, a failure to make the most of existence is nothing less than blasphemous; he is therefore critical of a reluctance to embrace progress.17 *Der Bauernspiegel* opens with an allusion to the conservative tendencies of Bernese farmers. Describing his grandfather, Jeremias notes how a mixture of stubbornness and meanness determines his farming methods:

Er war Meister in Feld und Stall. Das erstere bebaute er mit großem Fleiße, aber nach alter Mode, nahm lieber ein Klafter Naturgras, dessen Same ihn nichts kostete, als drei Klafter Pflanzengras, zu dem er den Samen hätte kaufen müssen. (I, 7)

17 This general affirmation of progress is reflected in the progress of the individuals at the centre of his novels: Hubert Fritz in *Die Erzählweise in den Romanen Charles Sealsfield und Jeremias Gotthelf: Zur Rhetoriktradition im Biedermeier* (Bern, 1976), p. 80, notes that Gotthelf’s novels always present a process of development. It also of course underlies his very great concern for matters pedagogical.
His grandparents' attitude towards education is also determined by prejudice:

Beide konnten Gedrucktes lesen, und besonders der Großvater las oft laut aus dem Schatzkästlein und dem Wahren Christentum; schreiben und Geschriebenes lesen konnten sie nicht, auch nicht rechnen; doch machte der Großvater wackere Bauernfünte, und kein Anken-, kein Garnhändler, obgleich die Letztern besonders durchtriebene Schälke sind, konnte die Großmutter um einen Vierer belügen. Daher hielten Beide auf dem Lernen eben nicht viel; wenn eins ihrer Kinder nur notdürftig lesen und beten konnte, so glaubten sie es überflüssig geschickt. (I, 8)

The didactic nature of Der Bauernspiegel is itself testimony to Gotthelf’s belief in progress.18 In the course of the narrative we repeatedly see that characters who are only superficially Christian suffer in the real world as a result. If Jeremias’s grandparents had not placed tradition (the survival of the family farm) and profit (a wealthy daughter-in-law) above love, they would not have been blinded to the disastrous consequences - to themselves as well as to their other children - of the settlement they make on the marriage of their youngest son. The grandmother is stripped of her authority, dignity and everyday comforts. That this previously domineering woman defers to her daughter-in-law strikes the family as odd, but, Jeremias explains:

Man vergaß, daß die Großmutter auf Erden Reichtum am höchsten hielt, daß sie natürlich vor reichen Leuten den größten Respekt hatte [. . .]. Nun war ihre Schwiegertochter reich, daher hatte sie Respekt vor ihr und durfte ihr Recht gegen sie nicht behaupten. (I, 28-29)

The grandmother cannot see the order beyond the human world and can measure worth only by wealth. Human identity has no essential value for her. For all her strength of character, this means that she has no inherent self-respect: without her wealth she is nothing in her own terms. When her husband dies, none of his children cry at the graveside:

Der Großvater hatte nichts Edleres auf Erden gekannt als “Husen”, nichts kostlichereis als Reichtum; demgemäß hatte er seine Kinder behandelt und erzogen, den gleichen Glauben ihnen eingebläuft, ihre Liebe dahin gerichtet, wo die seine war, nach Geld und Gut. Ihre Liebe war also nicht beim Großvater, sondern bei seinem Gelde; warum nun weinen, wenn man es nicht verliert, sondern gewinnt? (I, 52)

Because, for Gotthelf, the true nature of the real world is as a part of a greater, Christian universe, those awake to that context have the firmest grasp of reality. Thus it is the enlightened Anneli who sees that Jeremias is being duped by “der pfiffige Bauer”, not Jeremias himself. As Fehr puts it, for Gotthelf “Gottgebundenheit und Klugheit in der Welt sind [. . .] innig verbunden”.19

Gotthelf’s religion does not despise worldly assets. Indeed it actually invests material reality with significance, by anchoring it in an ultimate order. His attack is on the individual “wenn er im Leben und im Tode Abgötterei treibt mit Geld und Gut” (I, 32); a healthy respect for the real (i.e. relativized) value of both Geld and Gut is a part of his philosophy. When Jeremias’s master’s farm catches fire and

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18 The “Publikumsbezogenheit” of Gotthelf’s writing is a central aspect of Fritz’s study of his style (pp. 57-108 and 126-28). Of course the whole didactic enterprise is founded on the belief in the potential for resulting change.
19 Fehr, Das Bild des Menschen bei Jeremias Gotthelf, p. 78. Neuenschwander, p. 73, notes that “der Gottlose” is not merely damned for eternity, but that he is also at sea in the world because he is alienated from a real universal order.
Jeremias loses all his possessions, Gotthelf suggests in passing that servants’ possessions should be included in the insurance policies of their masters - hardly the advice of a novelist who despises money!

When Jeremias briefly succeeds in injecting love into his grandparents’ family, his popularity with his siblings is certainly due partly to his sharing with them the treats he is given by his grandmother. The “Leckerbissen” (I, 20) are thus invested with a positive value - a value which goes beyond price. In Gotthelf’s world value is never abstracted from materiality. Indeed, the love between Jeremias and Anneli is built on the foundation of an exchange of material gifts. As a young boy he gave her and her sister bread to eat at the first Bettlergemeinde he attended. He has forgotten the incident, but his kindness has not faded from Anneli’s memory - and her reciprocating gift, years later, of some money is what gives him hope in his despair after the fire. Seen in the correct context, money is truly valuable. Later, the money Jeremias inherits from Bonjour is also significant, despite the sad circumstances in which he receives it:


Once again, it is the context which Gotthelf’s faith gives to the material world which is important. In his terms, money and goods actually lose their true value when coveted by those with no appreciation of the unity of universal order. Meaning - of which value is a part - ultimately stems from that context.20 The cohesiveness of Gotthelf’s vision of order becomes apparent when we relate this relationship of phenomenon and significance to other experiential areas. In one of the key passages of Gotthelf’s oeuvre, Jeremias explains why the rote learning of the schools he attended is worthless: it teaches signifiers without explaining what they stand for or giving the children the means to discover this themselves (because the teachers and priests are themselves unaware of the significance which comes from the location of humankind in God’s universe). That Gotthelf should invest the passage with all the considerable force of his rhetorical style - it seems almost to vibrate with the hammer-like blows of “aber” and “nicht” - is indicative of the general implications of the specific message. The rhetorical repetitions assert the orderly coexistence of inwardness and outwardness, sense and sensuousness, mind and body:

Gelernt hatte ich in der Schule so viel als nichts. Lesen konnte ich, aber was ich gelesen, schwatzte ich nie aus, denn ich verstand es nicht. Wenn man recht nachsinnt, so ist das doch einer der größten Merkwürdigkeiten in der Welt, daß man Tausende und Tausende quält jahrelang mit Erkennen und Zusammensetzen der Zeichen, durch welche die Menschen ihre Gedanken ausdrücken, aber in den Zeichen die Gedanken dann auch finden, das lehrt man nicht. Man lehrt Millionen die Zeichen selbst machen, aber wieder nicht in die Zeichen hinein die eigenen Gedanken legen; so kennen wir Zeichen, machen Zeichen, vermögen aber weder etwas aus ihnen heraus-, noch etwas in sie hineinzubringen. Beim sichtbaren Zeichen bleiben wir stehen, es ist uns alles in allem, bei ihm steht unser Verstand still wie ein Ochse am Berge; das Unsichtbare im Zeichen, der Gedanke, findet kein Auge in uns, das ihn sieht, keine Kraft, die ihn erkennt, auffaßt und lebendig wiedergibt. Wer wundert sich dann noch, wenn man die eigene Seele nicht erkennt in eigenen Leibe und Gott nicht in seinem Weltkleide, wenn wir weder in Worte noch in Taten Geist zu legen vermögen, nicht zu finden vermögen in jedem

20 Cf. Kohlschmidt, Dichter, Tradition und Zeitgeist, p. 248, defending Gotthelf’s restricted range of material, who argues that his work gains from its very specific setting and its attention to detail because he locates those details in their relationship to “eternity”.
sichtbaren Begeben die unsichtbar waltende Liebe! Wer wundert sich dann noch, wenn wir in der Bibel nur Buchstaben finden, aber nicht Gott, im Fragenbuch nur lange Fragen, aber keine Erkenntnis, in der Kirche einen Pfarrer, aber keine Erweckung, in geistlichen Versammlungen viel Leibliches aber nichts Geistliches, vielen Unsinn, aber keinen Sinn? (I, 159)

Just as he is unaware of the ideas latent in the words he reads, Jeremias is unable to see the connection between the Church and real life; he has not the means to evaluate properly. His view is limited to the tangible world, excluding the ultimate source of meaning: "daß ich wohl den sichtbaren Landvogt vor Augen hatte, aber nicht den unsichtbaren Gott!" (I, 159). The same ignorance of the real nature of things lies behind the tragic loss of identity suffered by Jeremias: the community just does not see that he is really a small boy called Jeremias and bursting with love. His masters have no way of evaluating him other than in the context of their own economic unit: the farm, on which he really is "numdr Bueb!" (I, 71), a "Zeichen" divested of its true significance.

The importance of context is ironically illustrated following Jeremias’s incarceration in the Landvogt’s castle. The Landvogt, the personification of administrative order in Unverstand, turns out to be a buffoon. Jeremias escapes, and is concerned to avoid re-arrest. When an agent for the Swiss Regiments in Paris persuades him to join up, Jeremias objects that he cannot visit Bern to fulfil the formalities because he is a wanted man. The agent however merely laughs. Unverstand and the Landvogt hold no sway in the city. For the first time in his life Jeremias has his eyes opened to the wider world in which the community of Unverstand exists:

Ein Landvogt sei ein Herrgott in seinem Amte, da könne er regieren und kujonieren, so viel die Bauern mögen erleiden, aber in Bern, da habe er gar nichts zu befehlen, da sei ein Schreiber und ein Lieutenant in der Stadt mehr als ein Landvogt auf dem Lande. (I, 273)

Jeremias’s move to France subsequently relativizes even Bern itself and Switzerland as a whole.

Der Bauernspiegel is a rare example of Gotthelf’s venturing beyond his own corner of Canton Bern in a novel. It may seem odd that he should do this in the work which he most explicitly directed at the farmers of parishes such as his own, and the section of the novel set in France has been much criticized as being less convincing than the rest of the novel. Its inclusion is justified by the simple fact that foreign military service was a real part of the lives of Gotthelf’s contemporaries - indeed it was probably inspired by the military career and death of Gotthelf’s own brother.21 However, it is particularly valuable in Gotthelf’s attempt to show how no man-made society is autonomous: each political unit is subordinate to a greater one, and society as a whole is subordinate to the universal order. The events of the novel show that when the citizens of Unverstand regard their Landvogt as supreme they are committing the same fallacy as the French monarchs who believe that they represent absolute authority (and of course the point is validated by the familiar historical background). It is only the humility which comes from an acquaintance with God and his overall structure which gives true understanding.

There is an additional motivation for the incorporation of Jeremias’s adventures in France: the concern to demonstrate what Hanns Peter Holl calls the “Übertragbarkeit” of Gotthelf’s writing.22

22 Holl, Gotthelf im Zeitgefecht, p. 64.
Although Gotthelf's intimate acquaintance with the inhabitants of his rural milieu shines from the pages of the novel set in Unverstand, *Der Bauernspiegel*, despite its title, is explicitly intent on persuading us that the venality of the peasants, landowners and local officials of provincial Canton Bern is by no means just a local or even rural phenomenon.\(^{23}\)

Holl quotes the words of the *Fecker*, persuading Jeremias to write an autobiography:

"Euer Leben wird sicherlich manchem die Augen auftun, und er wird sagen: 'Ja, akkurat so ist es auch bei mir, aber es soll anders werden.' Und das werden viel mehr Leute glauben als Ihr denket, denn die Menschen und ihr Leben sind sich viel mehr gleich als man dem ersten Anschein nach glauben sollte." (I, 295)

Elsewhere in the novel there are many comparisons made between the corruption we encounter in Unverstand and the "high society" of Bern or Paris. Gotthelf is contemptuous of the notion that people are fundamentally different; he describes the shocked reaction of a farmer's wife to the contents of a novel about palace intrigues and remarks:

"Würde die gute Frau, statt die Nase aufzusperren, sie in ihr eigenes großes Hauswesen stecken, so würde sie mit noch größerem Erstaunen sehen, daß es in demselben akkurat gleich hergeht im kleinen wie dort in großen und daß da akkurat die gleichen Leute seien. (I, 126)

These allusions are in fact scattered through much of Gotthelf's writing. In *Der Bauernspiegel*, however, one of the most forceful suggestions that the rural community of Unverstand is analogous to more illustrious societies is the mini-state constructed by Jeremias and his partners during his time with the *Christlichen Zigeuner*. He and two companions initially clash over the right to collect dung from the roads, but then recognize a common interest and unite to repel all other competitors. Attempts to instigate a sharing of profits founder because of mutual (and well-founded) mistrust, but they do co-operate wherever this is to their advantage. The co-operation of the farmers of Unverstand operates on exactly the same principle. Fehr notes that the fact that the boys even persuade the village seriously to consider erecting a "Türli" to the village is indicative of the similar preoccupations of the street urchins and the villagers.\(^{24}\) Gotthelf loads the activities of the trio with constitutional and political vocabulary - "Legitimität" (I, 96), "auswärtige Angelegenheiten" (I, 97), "Finanzprojekt" (I, 98) - to drive home the true scope of this model of society.

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The end of *Der Bauernspiegel* is often interpreted as a pessimistic one. Although Jeremias has found the niche which the *Fecker* described to him, his position is not an official one. He has not been admitted into the social hierarchy. His position in the rural inn seems rather whimsical after the earthy realism of the first part of the novel. However, although the novel's last few chapters seem contrived, they do offer an insight into Gotthelf's vision of order; and they also offer hope.


\(^{24}\) Fehr, *Das Bild des Menschen bei Jeremias Gotthelf*, p. 69.
Although Unverstand seems to live up to its name right through the novel, when Jeremias sets out from it after his return from France he notes:


It appears that some positive progress is taking place. This description also attests to the transparency of Gotthelf's value system: physical details are emblematic of an indwelling ethos. The "speaking names" in his novels such as Unverstand, Gutmiitägen, Jowäger and even the pseudonym of Gotthelf itself are another part of his attempt to make his order an accessible one.25

Jeremias, it is true, is hardly welcomed back with open arms. However, his "work" in the country inn, though it may not be in an official capacity, is nevertheless within society.26 Gotthelf is drawing a distinction between the formalized, administrative structure of community life and the actuality of it. He is critical of the political structure because it is an attempt to secularize social organization. Because for Gotthelf it is only in relation to the Christian universe that reality may be gauged, the political structure is estranged from reality by its secularism. That is why the people of Jeremias's adopted village are so contemptuous of the administration and why Jeremias has to work so hard to convince them of the positive changes it has made. However, where church and people are in harmony, and where this harmony is incorporated into the political organization of the community, the structure is open to the wider sphere and will function properly.

Where this is not the case, political power is fragile: it exists in spite of its context. This is why Unverstand reacts so sharply - arresting Jeremias - when he casts aspersions on its officials: a hypocritical organization can absorb his disruptive behaviour, but it is paranoid about its dignity. It is not embedded in the universal order and senses that if its dignity is shaken, there is little else to support it. This incident is adumbrated when Jeremias's mother seeks an audience with the Landvogt.

Der Landvogt war kein böser Mann, aber wer etwas über die Regierung sagte - und dazu rechne er auch den Tadel irgendeines Gesetzes oder einer Verfügung - der hatte es bei ihm verspielt, den nannte er einen übeldenken Menschen, der keine Religion habe, denn göttliche und oberkeitlich G etobe schienen ihn gleich wichtig. (I, 62-63)

The Landvogt is stung by any suggestion that the administration to which he belongs is not absolute, because he senses his vulnerability. He cannot even accept the supremacy of God's law over his own.

Even the very positive figure of Bonjour is guilty of a similar confusion of human and divine majesty. He is a devout Christian who single-handedly rescues and educates Jeremias. However, his

25 Cf. Pascal, Roy, The German Novel: Studies (Manchester, 1956), pp. 101-42: "Moral qualities are exactly mirrored in the farm, the family and the village community; goodness or badness is exposed in the most tangible forms of well-being or disorder, prosperity or bankruptcy, harmony or discord." (p. 108).
26 Cf. Godwin-Jones: "Since he fits nowhere in society, he must create his own unique place" (p. 17).
political judgement is seen to be at fault. He waits confidently for Napoleon to reappear: his belief in this event is the inspiration for his life. When reality confounds his faith, he is a broken man, and when he returns to Switzerland (we learn from his letter) his hopes and expectations are further dented. His mistake is to separate heaven and earth: for all his devotion, he looks to God only for eternal salvation. For salvation on earth he looks to Napoleon: “Aber am merkwürdigsten war, wie er seinen irdischen Gott und seinen himmlischen, den Allvater und den großen Kaiser, in Verbindung brachte, beide Hand in Hand schaffen ließ, von dem einen sein irdisch, von dem andern sein ewig Heil erwartete” (I, 246-47).

It is no accident that Jeremias’s one remaining fault on his return to Unverstand after graduating from Bonjour’s tutelage is the same one which afflicts Bonjour: that of idealism. This is why he cannot understand the way the community rejects his efforts to contribute to it as an official. It is symptomatic of Gotthelf’s insistence on the validity and importance of worldliness that idealism is presented as a problematic character trait.

By contrast, the Fecker shrewdly forecasts each rejection and the reasons for it. He is the character in the novel with the surest grasp of reality. His job - an Inspector of Weights and Measures - is emblematic of his sense of proportion. He can see the overall Christian universe, knows where Unverstand stands in the general scheme of things, and he therefore sees things in perspective. He can perceive injustice without reacting wildly against it: his knowledge of human nature makes him understand it.

The Fecker may be critical of the community of Unverstand, but he is certainly not tempted to turn his back on it. Gotthelf’s whole Weltanschauung rests on his conviction that human beings are social animals. As Fehr puts it:

Von Menschenherzen geht die Brücke hinüber zum anderen Menschen; ist diese Brücke abgebrochen, dann ist der Mensch sich selber entfremdet. Denn er ist, auch nach Gotthelf, ein Zoon politikon, ein Gemeinschaftswesen, ja noch mehr, er ist auf diese Gemeinschaft angewiesen. Hat er keinen Ort und kein Ziel seiner Liebe mehr, dann fühlt er sich [. . .] grenzenlos verlassen; denn die Tiefe der vom Schöpfer gebauten Natur verlangt nach dem liebenden Du.27

The reason for this deep-seated need for social interaction is that whilst, to be sure, each individual must have his or her own faith, it is through a just society that the individual can participate in the overall structure embracing heaven and earth.28 It is the need for such a society and the endeavour to construct one which dictate the concerns which are so prominent in Der Bauernspiegel. Where individuals are aware of their own and their fellow human beings’ place in the overall order, there is love. Love is indicative of a respect for fellow human beings, an ability to see their true, not just their material value. This is closely related to the capacity to appreciate money and goods for their positive potential rather than as fetishes. Where there is personal integrity, love and respect, there is also communication, which enables individuals to co-operate productively. Muschg notes Gotthelf’s suggestion that in every society there must be constant reform in order to prevent revolution ever becoming necessary, a suggestion which

27 Fehr, Das Bild des Menschen bei Jeremias Gotthelf, p. 53 (Fehr’s emphasis).
28 Cf. Steiner: “Im Christentum vereinigt sich Individualkultur und Gemeinschaftskultur. Die beiden Bezogenheiten zum Ich und zum Du verknüpfen sich zur unlösbaren Einheit.” (p. 113, Steiner’s italics).
attests to the importance Gotthelf attaches to a social structure. Muschg also draws attention to the close link Gotthelf identifies between individual integrity and a valid society. This is illustrated in the manner of Jeremias’s rescue, when he is at his lowest point, by Bonjour: “Sie beginnt in der Seele, denn eine soziale und politische Verbesserung der Welt kann nur aus der geistigen Wiedergeburt entspringen. Der Hauptmann Bonjour macht Jeremias zum Menschen, indem er ihn zum Christen macht.” It is as a Christian that Jeremias returns to Switzerland anxious to participate in society, anxious to help construct the kind of society which integrates its members into the overall order of heaven and earth.

*Der Bauernspiegel* is not one of Gotthelf’s greatest works, but there are (at least) two senses in which it transcends the simplicity of mere didacticism, and they derive from Gotthelf’s creative acknowledgement of the forces ranged against his didactic purpose. First, there is the sheer deterministic ferocity of the argument in respect of social conditioning. The young Jeremias is truly threatened by the endless rejections he receives. The mature narrative self fully acknowledges that those who live in a monstrous world can easily become monsters. Second, Gotthelf meets head on the monstrously creative power of superstition. What gives the Christian faith its transforming energy is also what gives superstition its manic creativity. Superstition “makes” a whole universe, a kind of ideological surrogate, a replacement world: an order of significance that is ultimately destructive.

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If Der Bauernspiegel is not as overwhelmingly negative as it first appears, it does certainly convey its message by portraying the depressing consequences of the failure of social units - families and communities, even nations - rather than the happy results of success. Gotthelf himself clearly realized that it would be desirable to redress the balance, and Geld und Geist was written with the explicit intention of describing the "eigentliche Sonnenseite des Bauernlebens".31

It is quite clear in Geld und Geist, as it is in Der Bauernspiegel, that the building block for Gotthelf's vision of society is the family. The family provides the formative environment for the individual.32 Unlike Jeremias's family in Der Bauernspiegel, the Liebiwyl family is a decent one, and the three children are admirable: it is only when the family unit goes through its crisis that the children appear to stray from the straight and narrow. By comparison, Anne Mareili's family is corrupt, and the children who grow up in it are consequently worthless: Anne Mareili's mother bemoans the fact that (like her husband) her sons have no regard for her. Resli cannot understand how it is that his beloved has emerged from such a sorry household, and the narrator enlarges on the importance of family background:

Wie die Spanier fast alle dunkel sind, die Engländer aber bläulich-blond, in der Jugend wenigstens jeder seine Landefarbe im Gesichte trägt, so hat hinwiederum jeder Mensch seine Haußfarbe, und alle Glieder des Haußes sind mehr oder weniger damit angelaufan. Man sieht zum Beispiel Familien, in welchen alle Kinder und Kindeskinder, ja, bis ins siebente Glied hinaus, Schmutzgängel bleiben, sich nie waschen, als wenn sie müssen. (VII, 198-99)

So important is the family unit that Gotthelf has to manufacture an alternative influence to explain the transparent virtue of Anne Mareili. She explains to Resli that she spent much of her youth living with a grandmother, and that she subsequently found it hard to accustom herself to life with her own family.33

The Liebiwyl family of course becomes a paradigm.34 In order to define the recipe for such a successful unit, Gotthelf not only contrasts Liebiwyl with the Domgrüt, but has the household endure a period of crisis and effectively undergo a rebirth. Gotthelf is not shy about giving this recipe: the hallmark of his writing is his belief that successful existence is achievable if certain directions are followed: it is the ignorance or neglect of those rules which accounts for the extent of human misery. The point is illustrated in the opening paragraph:

Das wahre Glück des Menschen ist eine zarte Blume; tausenderlei Ungeziefer umschwirrt sie, ein unreiner Hauch todtet sie. Zum Gärtner ist der Mensch gesetzet, sein Lohn ist Seligkeit, aber wie wenige verstehen ihre Kunst, wie viele setzen mit eigner Hand in der Blume innersten

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32 Cf. Steiner, p. 39: "Ist ein Kind in eine bestimmte Ordnung hineingestellt, so prät sich ihm unwissentlich etwas von diesem Gemeinschaftsgeist auf. Er wird durch bloßes Einsaugen jenes Geistes erzogen und damit Teilhaber dieser Ordnung." Cf. also p. 64: "Die Ehe ist die Urselle im Kollektiv." (Steiner's emphasis in both quotations.) Steiner's study analyses the typical constituents of Gotthelf's family (including "Der Hausgeist"!) and ascribes the family itself a key social role. Cf. also Neuenschwander: "Alles einzelne, das uns in dem Romane [Geld und Geist] begegnet, scheint eingegrenzt zunächst in die höhere Ordnung der Familie und letztlich in die umfassendste, der von Gottes Hand gefügten Schöpfung in seinen Heilsplan" (pp. 42-43).
33 Holl also notes the importance of family context: cf. Gotthelf im Zeigerflecht, pp. 74-75.
34 Cf. Waidson, p. 89.
Kranz der Blume giftigsten Feind; wie viele sehen sorglos zu, wie das Ungeziefer sich ansetzt, haben ihre Lust daran, wie dasselbe nagt und frißt, die Blume erblaßt! Wohlgemäße, welchem zu rechter Zeit das Auge aufgeht, welcher mit rascher Hand die Blume wahret, den Feind tötet, er wahret seines Herzens Frieden, er gewinnt seiner Seele Heil, und beide hängen zusammen wie Leib und Seele, wie Diesseits und Jenseits. (VII, 7)

"Das wahre Glück" may be "zart", but it is possible to cultivate it. Gotthelf sees a definite order - here presented as a garden - and when the individual opens his or her eyes to that order, he or she can operate within it and create his or her own "Glück". On the other hand, he also acknowledges the real possibility of perversity: people can watch the destruction of happiness and do nothing to stop it.

This is an aspect of Gotthelf’s writing - a particularly striking one in Der Bauernspiegel, as we have seen - which has been neglected, as Peter von Matt argues:

Kein deutscher Autor hat es bis heute gewagt, die menschliche Bosheit, die sich gelassen an sich selbst erfreut, so deutlich als eine schlichte Wirklichkeit hinzustellen wie Gotthelf. [. . .] Diese Figuren sind nicht Reproduktion des Teufels in einer säkularisierten Welt, keine mythologischen Zitate, sondern ganz gewöhnliche, alltägliche Menschen, nur eben gnadenlos heimtückisch und perfid.35

Moreover, he points out that this cruelty is not just confined to occasional individuals such as the one (in Der Bauernspiegel) who orders Jeremias’s father to fell a tree despite the dangerous conditions, or the neighbour who watches the aftermath of the accident in the contented - and justified - expectation of profiting from them. It is institutionalized within the social order, and survives because the weight of tacit support overcomes any individual protest. Gotthelf’s most positive novel, Geld und Geist, must be seen in the light of this absolutely real potential for human beings to cause, and collude in the maintenance of, misery.36

Although Geld und Geist is essentially a portrait of an ideal order in the reformed Liebiwyl family, Gotthelf does address the issue of how that order functions in a world which is not ideal, and how it would be undermined if it could not do so. We shall see how - initially - Christen and Änneli are unable to cope with the modern world in simply practical terms. Kohlschmidt suggests that the fire alarm which marks Resli’s step towards adulthood (it marks the beginning of his and Anne Marcelli’s courtship after the false start of their first encounter) is also the bridging of the gap between his family’s order and the outside, modern world - and thus a necessary step: "[das Motiv der Feuerglocke], das in sich schon die Erweiterung des Gesichtspunktes von der privaten und persönlichen Ordnungsproblematik zu deren Bewährung in der geschichtlichen Realität enthält."37 Certainly, in the episode which is heralded by the fire alarm, Resli is exposed to just the kind of senseless, violent cruelty which Peter von Matt describes (on the way home from the fire he blunders into a fight and is knocked senseless).

35 Von Matt, Peter, "Der Diagnostiker unserer Bosheit: Hinweis auf einen unbeschönigten Gotthelf", Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 15/16 March 1997, p. 65. Von Matt argues that the promotion of Gotthelf as a champion of rural Switzerland has led to the suppression of the motif of willful "Bosheit" which - perhaps despite the author himself - is so often present in his work. Cf. also Parkinson, Michael H., The Rural Novel: Jeremias Gotthelf, Thomas Hardy, C. F. Ramuz (Bern, 1984), pp. 154-55, who points out how characters in Gotthelf’s novels are at the mercy of potentially cruel chance events.
36 Kohlschmidt’s claim, Dichter, Tradition und Zeitgeist, p. 330, that the Dorngrütläufer in Geld und Geist is the only greedy, selfish character to reach the end of a Gotthelf novel neither ruined nor reformed is a strange one. In Der Bauernspiegel such characters are legion, and indeed the whole community sustains them by - tacitly at least - assenting to their principles.
In *Geld und Geist* Gotthelf is concerned above all to characterize the nature of the *Glück* to which human beings may aspire. Understanding this is a prerequisite for the ability to follow the “directions” which lead towards it. It is not, despite the substantial religious content in the novel, a simple question of reward after death for a virtuous life. The contentment of the Liebiwyl family after their awakening might indeed suggest that Gotthelf’s *Glück* is an entirely earthly one - but this too is a misinterpretation. The key to Gotthelf’s writing is neither its religious aspect, nor his delight in everyday life, but the fusion of the two: because “beide hängen zusammen wie Leib und Seele, wie Diesseits und Jenseits.”

Gotthelf identifies two zones, but he believes that they are by no means mutually exclusive and that they actually engage with one another. Everyday life is a doorway to heaven, but more than this, because both zones pertain to the same fundamental order, a mode of existence which ensures salvation after death can also create an ideal environment on earth. The glorious plethora of description in his work arises from this conviction, for, as we have seen to be the case in *Der Bauernspiegel*, material detail acquires heightened significance; a trim village suggests enlightened inhabitants.

The Liebiwyl family as we initially find it appears worthy and contented, but Gotthelf, in a series of ironic qualifications, dismantles the illusion. Christen and Änneli are “in der Hauptsache einig und gleich gesinnt. Beide wollten ihr Gut verwalten, daß sie es einst vor Gott verantworten konnten, wollten gut sein und doch an die Kinder denken, aber jedes hatte dabei seine eigentümliche Weise” (VII, 14). *Eigentümlichkeit* is invariably a dangerous quality in Gotthelf’s characters: though it initially appears as a harmless degree of eccentricity, it represents a form of stubbornness which can come to threaten those in its vicinity; the outstanding example is of course Anne Bäbi Jowäger, who “meinte es auch gut, aber uf sy Gattig” (V, 7).

Although Christen and Änneli are much less “wunderlich” than Anne Bäbi, their individual peculiarities are nonetheless enough to ensure that the veneer of harmony in the household is a thin one. They are regarded as a model couple by the surrounding population, but we learn that Änneli is frustrated when her husband misses opportunities to earn money, whilst he is irked by her generosity to beggars. Gradually - despite the narrator’s goodwill towards them - we discover that there is a great deal of tension between Christen and Änneli: the latter apparently sometimes “gar weinte und [. . .] klagte, so was hätte sie nicht verdient, und sie halte es nicht mehr aus, und sie wolle lieber sterben als länger so dabei sein” (VII, 17). The discord is kept in check only by Änneli’s mother (and the memory of her after her death) and the “alte, schöne Haussitte” (VII, 19) of husband and wife reciting the Lord’s Prayer together before retiring for the night. This habit cleanses any wounds before they can fester. But, when Christen’s naivété

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38 Cf. Holl, *Gotthelf im Zeitgeflecht*, p. 72. Holl argues that Gotthelf sets up an “idyll”, only to show that Christen and Änneli do not yet understand how it functions.

39 Cf. Kiffer, *Jeremias Gotthelf: Grundzüge seiner Pädagogik*, pp. 37-40. Kiffer takes a more positive view of *Eigentümlichkeit*, taking it to represent Gotthelf’s delight in the individuality of his characters. Certainly Gotthelf does value the phenomenon of the individual, but in his work the word “eigentümlich” seems to describe the seed of a particular and dangerous quality, not mere eccentricity, but an aggressively didactic determination to make the environment conform to a personal mould rather than seeing it as it is and responding appropriately. Kohlschmidt, *Dichter, Tradition und Zeitgeist*, p. 257, expresses the connection between egoism and didacticism: “[Anne Bäbi], deren Triebkraft der Eigensinn und als seine Folge die Herrschsucht sind.” Cf. also Sengle, Friedrich, *Biedermeierzeit: Deutsche Literatur im Spannungsfeld zwischen Restauration und Revolution 1815-1848*, vol. III (Stuttgart, 1980), 925-26. Sengle describes the spectrum of characters in Gotthelf’s narrative world in relation to their positive or negative impact on his ideal of order. It is testimony to Gotthelf’s essential realism that Sengle must, in effect, concede that there are characters who cannot be accommodated in so schematic a description (p. 927). These characters have their place in Gotthelf’s order even if they are not prophets of his ideal.
leads to the family losing a large sum of money, the tension increases. A quarrel leads to the suspension of the shared prayers, and from this point the situation deteriorates rapidly.

It is in retrospect, after a sermon has led to reconciliation and a new start at Liebiwyl, that the reader can begin to analyse exactly what led to the crisis, what was lacking in the family. After the sermon, when Änneli is meditating on its implications, she gazes around her at the horizon, in a passage the significance of which Gotthelf highlights by means of his characteristic, weighty repetitions ("kam"):

[Änneli] sah, wie da eins ward der Himmel und die Erde, und von dieser Einigung kam der reiche Segen, kam der Sonne Licht, kam der Regen, kam der geheimnisreiche Tau, kam die wunderbare Kraft, welche Leben schafft im Schoße der Erde. Es ward dem Änneli ganz eigen ums Herz, als sie diese Einigung zwischen Himmel und Erde erkannte, und wie eben deswegen alles so schön und herrlich sei und so wunderbar anzuschauen, weil Friede sei zwischen Himmel und Erde, der Himmel seine Fülle spende, die Erde den Himmel preise. Und sie dachte, ob denn eigentlich der Himmel nicht alles umranden solte, nicht bloß die Erde, sondern auch der Menschen Leben, so daß, wenn die Jahre ihn drängen an der Erde äußersten Rand, vor ihm der Himmel offen liege. (VII, 89)

This passage is one of Gotthelf’s most powerful statements of ontological and novelistic order, and it is the Wendepunkt of the novel. Änneli’s initial motivation for ending the hostility between her and her husband arose from the priest’s warning that death can come at any moment, and that the gates of heaven are closed to those who have not made peace with those they leave behind. However, when this leads her to an awareness of the “Einigung zwischen Himmel und Erde”, her conversion takes an altogether profounder turn and gives her the strength not merely to restore Liebiwyl to its former, superficial harmony, but to instigate a new era altogether there.

The family has always been pious in the conventional sense, but it now embraces Christianity as an integral part of its everyday experience, rather than (in the routine associated with the Lord’s Prayer) as a mere coda to each day. The import of the “Einigung” is in its making religion inform every aspect of existence instead of being separate from it. Änneli’s spiritual rebirth thus has a host of entirely practical consequences.

Above all, for the first time the members of the family begin properly to communicate. The crisis it experienced had arisen through a series of misunderstandings, the fruit of reticence. Whilst they sulked, both Christen and Änneli grew distant from their children, who began to take sides (or - in Resli’s case - be wrongly perceived as doing so) and to quarrel with one another. Christen and Änneli now rediscover their sons and daughter and filial love is re-established. Änneli simply had not listened to Resli’s attempts to discuss Anne Mareili with her, but now the whole family takes an enthusiastic interest in his courtship. Throughout this novel, just as in Der Bauernspiegel, communication is seen as of the utmost importance; as well as the difficulties at Liebiwyl, the misunderstandings between Resli and Anne Mareili during and after the marriage negotiations stem from Anne Mareili’s inability to speak her mind, even when she is invited to do so. Her nervousness is mistaken for vanity by the Liebiwyl family; she can hardly eat, and Änneli, assuming that Anne Mareili does not appreciate her cooking, is offended.

41 Cf. Pascal, p. 123: “The parson (and Gotthelf) talks in religious terms; but his religious message is embodied and fulfilled in purely secular, practical terms.” The members of the family, Pascal observes, reflect upon themselves and their identity as members of a community.
42 Cf. Godwin-Jones, p. 61.
A lack of communication is one of the hallmarks of the Dorngrüt household. Anne Mareili’s father keeps his own council: when his wife tries to encourage him to discuss matters with her, she is crudely reminded of her lowly status. The reason that communication now flows so freely at Liebiwyl is that the infusion of Änneli’s new brand of Christianity means that, in contrast to the Dorngrüt, nobody there is disparaged: each member of the household enjoys both the affection and the respect of the others. This is a product of the metamorphosis in the family’s method of evaluation.

Much is made in *Geld und Geist* of the fallacy of evaluating in purely material terms - a symptom, we are informed in the second paragraph of the novel, of “die luftige neumodische Welt, welche alles zu Geld macht” (VII, 7). Indeed, of course, the modern form of materialism is in fact a form of abstraction from materiality - that is, money (just as a false “Geist” can be abstraction). It is one of the faults of the unreconstructed Liebiwyl that although “Christen und Änneli waren kreuzbrave Leute, von den brävsten, die man sehen will zu Stadt und Land”, “den Wert des Menschen schätzten sie doch nach seinem Besitztum und den Wert eines Lebens nach dem gemachten Fürschlag” (VII, 34). Elsewhere we are told:

> Es ist eine Eigenheit des Menschen, daß er die Größe und das Mächtige nur nach Pfunden, Zahlen, Längen und Breiten zu messen weiß, daß er fürs Geistige keinen andern Maßstab hat als der Zeitungsschreiber für seine Schlachten, deren Größe er nach der Zahl der Toten berechnet und nach der Menge der getanen Kanonenschüsse. (VII, 92)

When his wife irritates him, Christen consoles himself with the thought of her economic benefits:

> [. . .] und daneben sei sie auch sparsam, für die Hoffart brauche sie nichts; mit dem Haushalten möge sie nicht bald eine, und wenn es Ernst gelte, schaffe sie für zwei und brauche nicht eine Jungfrau hinten und vornen. So möge es schon etwas erleiden, und er könne leicht eine haben, welche viel mehr brauchte und dazu nicht verrichtete, was sein Änneli. (VII, 14)

Even as their rift begins in earnest, his reactions, introduced as though they were emotional, turn out to be underpinned by financial considerations:

> Ihn verlangte nach der Stimme seiner Frau, die er den ganzen Tag über nicht gehört, und es war ihm unwohl dabei geworden, denn sie war ihm lieb; und er hatte die Rechnung gemacht, daß, wenn sie schon gegen die Armen viel zu gut sei und mit ihnen viel unnütz verbrauche und das Lumpengesindel ziehe wie Zucker die Fliegen, so sei sie doch sonst sparsam und arbeitsam, und er könne leicht eine haben, mit welcher er viel böser zwieg wäre. (VII, 43)

After Änneli’s conversion, Christen awakens to his own materialism:

> “Geld, Geld, reich, reich,” hatte ihm früher immer in den Ohren geklungen, und wenn er von einem unbekannten Menschen reden gehört, so hätte er gefragt: “Het er öppis?” Jetzt solle fürder “Friede, Friede, fromm, fromm,” in seinen Ohren sein, und wenn er nach dem Werte eines Menschen frage, so wolle er auch anders seine Frage stellen. (VII, 99-100)

The knowledge that heaven and earth are intertwined allows him now to assess value without regard merely to material considerations.
Hanns Peter Holl has drawn attention to the positive effect of a matriarch in Gotthelf's work. Certainly figures such as Änneli or the Priest's wife in *Anne Bäbi Jowäger* conduct households which compare favourably with the Dorrgrüt. Yet it is not simply the nature of female authority which explains this (Anne Bäbi's regime is far from ideal!), but rather the tolerance which these individual women instil in their families. In both cases, the tolerance stems from an enlightened mode of evaluation. The consciousness of the relationship between heaven and earth allows them to rise above petty issues, above money or malice, for they see people, things and events in an altogether grander context.

Liebiwyl's new way of life is by no means simply a renunciation of earthly values in favour of a morbid spiritualism. On the contrary: it is the fusion of the two domains, and it invests practical issues with importance rather than divesting them of it, for such issues are now seen to resound in a wider sphere. For all Christen's new found contempt for the weight he had previously attached to wealth, *Geld und Geist* preaches neither a frivolous attitude to the first element in its title, nor unworldly dedication to the second. Its message is rather that true piety entails a responsible attitude to everyday life, since matters financial, agricultural or educational are to be conducted in the knowledge that they contribute to the universal order.

Gotthelf is thus critical of the notion that pedantic fluency in religion is more important than the ability to read, write and calculate, a notion which is attacked in *Der Bauernspiegel* and which also determines Christen's and Änneli's priorities in the education of their three children, as we see in the following passage, with its gentle comedy at the expense of two figures unable to cope with the modern world:

Mit gar vielem Lernen brauchten sie den Kopf sich nicht zu zerbrechen, aber fest in der Bibel wurden sie; das sei die Hauptsache, meinten Vater und Mutter, die hätte sie ohne große Künste im Rechnen und Schreiben hieher gebracht.

Allerdings waren auch beide in beiden Dingen keine Hexenmeister, und wenn Christen seinen Namen schreiben sollte, so nahm er einen Anlauf, als wenn er über einen zwölf Schuh breiten Graben springen sollte, und wenn Änneli mit dem Ankenträger uneins war in ihren Rechnungen, so wurde sie plötzlich einig mit ihm, sobald er die Kreide nahm, und was er aufmachte, war ihr recht, sie wußte wohl warum. (VII, 22)

This is emblematic of the sort of "Christianity" which is blind to the union of heaven and earth, pretending to see virtue only in the former, whilst actually being dazzled by the temptations of the latter. It allows simple people such as Christen and Änneli to avoid coming to terms with anything beyond their (and their ancestors') ken, and it leaves them and their community vulnerable. Christen is barely literate, but is nevertheless a *Vormund* in the village. He is utterly naive and easily duped. The crisis which the loss of the money creates between him and his wife gives the lie to the notion that being "fest in der Bibel" represents true piety. Insight into the existence of a universal order allows a more balanced outlook: material concerns are relativized, not trivialized.

44 Cf. Neuenschwander, p. 19: "Die Welt, das ganze Denken und Tun, alles Irdische ist aufgehoben in jenem unermeßlich weiten Zusammenhang." However, I hope to show that this is made apparent not just in moments such as Änneli's conversion, but in the text as a whole, in the worth which it ascribes to physical reality. (Cf. also Neuenschwander, p. 23).
45 Kohlschmidt, *Dichter, Tradition und Zeitgeist*, p. 290, discusses how Christen's education - and the outlook associated with it - leaves him ill-equipped when he finds himself operating amid an unscrupulous *neu Zeitgeist*. 
The novel is therefore never prudish. Indeed, it is heavily laden with Gotthelf’s characteristic, unsentimental insight into the mechanisms of rural life. The dances Resli attends are noted ritual: the young people of the village are all aware of the possible implications of every dance: “Zuvorderst steht eine Halbe Wein, welche der Tänzer kommen läßt, hintendrein kommt Essen, ein schönes Schnäfeli Bratis, dann eine schöne Heimfahrt und endlich ein lustiger Hochzeittag” (VII, 50). Dissecting the ritual, Gotthelf presents young women trying to hook an affluent husband, and young men sizing up the girls as they would horses in the market: their requirements - physical strength, housekeeping ability, thrift, a dowry - are entirely practicable. Indeed there are clear and sometimes explicit comparisons between the agricultural economy and the business of human relationships. It is observed that young lovers often seek out the crowds at markets in which to meet inconspicuously; the dances which follow markets are likened to them (“am Morgen auf dem Kühmäräit, am Abend auf dem Meitschimäräit” (VII, 50)).

Resli himself is as calculating as the rest, unimpressed by would-be seductresses: “Resli trank kaltblütig seinen Schoppen und dachte: wenn nichts Besseres kömmt, so trink ich aus und gehe” (VII, 51). Ultimately, it is love, not expediency which attracts him to Anne Mareili, but the chain of events, though complicated by the problems between his parents and then by the obstinacy of Anne Mareili’s father, basically conforms to the general formula: he dances with her, buys her food and drink, and marries her.46

After their conversion, the family is humble and loving, and Resli’s parents and siblings are all ready to sacrifice whatever is necessary for him to win Anne Mareili’s hand. However, this does not lead them into disaster in the way that Christen’s illiteracy did, for Resli too subscribes to the new, selfless outlook and is prepared to suffer for the common good if necessary. He is alert to the general scheme of things, and for all his anguish he can see his feelings in context. He therefore refuses to accede to the Dorngrüt farmer’s demands.47

Anne Mareili, after so much time in the midst of the perverted value system of the Dorngrüt, is not able to take so balanced a view: disgusted with her family’s avarice, she swings wildly to the opposite extreme and cannot understand why material considerations should constitute an obstacle in Resli’s mind; she does not see that his love for her is in no way diminished by his awareness of his responsibility to his family. Eventually she appears at Liebiwyl in time to witness Änneli’s death and be united with Resli. Änneli, who instigated the changes at Liebiwyl, is able to give the couple her blessing: we may assume that Anne Mareili has overcome her one-sided view of things and will pick up Änneli’s baton in the household in a spirit of humility.

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46 Cf. Jarchow, Klaus, Bauern und Bürger: die traditionale Inszenierung einer bäuerlichen Moderne im literarischen Werk Jeremias Gotthelfs (Frankfurt am Main, 1989), pp. 160ff. Jarchow describes the tension between “old fashioned” materialistic marriages and “modern” more sentimental marriages in Anne Babi Jowäger. In fact Gotthelf does not advocate the wholesale abandonment of material concerns, but rather an enlightened attitude towards them and an acknowledgement of sentiment as a “real” issue. On the other hand, it is certainly not true that Gotthelf endorses the attitude of those of his characters whose definition of a wife does not go beyond their attributes as a functioning element of a farming household - cf. Stump, Doris “Wider die Hoffart und den Hochmut der Frauen” in “... zu schreien in die Zeit hinein ...”: Beiträge zu Jeremias Gotthelf / Albert Bizius (1797-1854) ed. by Hanns Peter Holl and J. Harald Waber (Bern, 1997), pp. 149-70 (pp. 158-59).

47 Resli does not want to quit the family order in his quest for a wife - cf. Neuenschwander, p. 27. Rather, as I have suggested above, his venturing forth (towards a wife) represents his bridging the gap between the domestic harmony of Liebiwyl and the external order, thus validating the household. Moreover, Resli’s attitude towards the negotiations with the Dorngrüt farmers is explained by insight into the matter of evaluation rather than an unreflected adherence to tradition (cf. Neuenschwander, p. 37).
Werner Günter, among others, suggests that Änneli sacrifices herself for the sake of Resli and Anne Mareili. Not only is there no suggestion of martyrdom in the text, but the requirement for such a gesture would be antithetical to Gotthelf’s vision of order. The novel is founded on the belief that Glück can be achieved simply by understanding the context within which human beings live. The melodrama of martyrdom does not belong in Gotthelf’s unpretentious world even if just such a gesture is the symbolic basis of his faith. The significance of Änneli’s death lies rather in the promise of continuity, of stability based on a comprehension of Gotthelf’s order, which is clearly going to be the effect on her family of her enlightened life.

One moment during Resli’s and Anne Mareili’s courtship is a particularly eloquent encapsulation of Gotthelf’s vision of a system in which material concerns have a circumscribed, relativized but - or therefore - significant role. When they meet in secret and pledge their love to one another, Resli and Anne Mareili wish to exchange tokens of their engagement. Anne Mareili rejects various items as being too conspicuous, and they settle on coins. Money is thus not dismissed as worthless, rather its value is actually confirmed. It is introduced into another context, and now signifies not merely its face value, but also the honourable affection between the two young persons. At this moment the coins cease to represent Mammon and become the currency of Gotthelf’s harmonious union between heaven and earth. The description of the coin given by Resli expresses the esteem in which material things may legitimately be held without avarice: “Resli las einen treuen, ehrenfesten, alten Bernzwanziger, mit einem wackeren Schweizermann darauf, aus” (VII, 196). His choice is indicative of his now secure place in a family conscious of essential values, of his respect for tradition: later one of his principal objections to the Dorngrütbauer’s demands is the danger that Liebiwyl, after so many generations, should pass out of the family. Anne Mareili, for all her basic goodness, is still languishing in a corrupt environment and has not yet achieved Resli’s degree of insight - hence her subsequent misinterpretation of his misgivings - and she chooses a coin less resonant of tradition and “worthiness” and more of modernity and financial “worth”: “ein neu Guldenstück” (VII, 196).

The exchange of coins between Resli and Anne Mareili is a sophistication of the theme of money and its real value introduced in Der Bauernspiegel through Änneli’s donation to Jeremias and the latter’s inheritance from Bonjour. In Geld und Geist the positive potential of money as a symbol of continuity and cohesiveness when integrated in a valid structure is reiterated when the narrator contrasts the order represented by old money with the new regime in which every individual is his or her own authority:

Seit man im Kanton Bern kein eigenes Geld mehr schlägt, keine schönen Doblonen mehr, keine ehrenfesten Neutaler, hat man sich aufs Prägen von glitzernden Wörtern gelegt, die so ganz frisch, so hagelnagelneu glänzen, daß man darob des Teufels werden möchte. Mit der Zeit böset es ihnen freilich auch, aber dann prägt man neue, und kommod ists, daß man dazu kein eigenes Haus bedarf, jedes Wirtshaus und jedes Rathaus paßt dazu, und den Stempel trägt jeder im eigenen Maul. (VII, 214)

The negative potential of money is the danger of its becoming an end in itself rather than symbolic of anything worthwhile. Money for Gotthelf is of course subordinated within the Christian

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There is more evidence of the Dorngriitbauer's obsession with money when he visits Liebiwyl with his daughter to discuss the possibility of her marrying Resli. The negotiations are unsuccessful, but he is happy that even if the marriage between his daughter and Resli never happens, "so habe ich doch wohlfeile Laden und eine Kalbete, woran auch etwas zu verdienen ist" (VII, 283): it appears that his only concerns are material ones.

This, however, is not the whole truth. The Dorngriitbauer's avarice is not in itself his problem. Rather it is a symptom of his blindness to the overall structure in which he and his money exist. This blindness leads to arrogance: he is the centre of his universe, he sees no higher force. Anne Mareili reports sadly on the godlessness of the Dorngriit, and her father shocks the Liebiwyl family by remarking: "Von wegen dem lieben Gott [. . .] möge er nicht viel hören" (VII, 269). Like the Liebiwyl family before Änneli's conversion, his mode for evaluating the world around him is perverted. He laughs at the old fashioned Liebiwyl family and the ease with which he can exploit it: "Das sind dumm altväterische Leute, die für jede Sache einen apartigen Brauch haben, meine, wie witzig sie seien, und doch nichts verstehen; einmal für vierzig Kronen habe ich sie mögen. So dumm Lüt habe ich längs Stück nicht angetroffen" (VII, 283).

He is utterly unable to see the essential worth of the family, because he measures only its wealth and business acumen. The family is by no means as stupid as the Dorngriitbauer's egoism leads him to believe. Christen knows that he has lost money on the items he has sold, but in his value system, this is unimportant beside the issue of his son's marriage.

Just after expressing his satisfaction with his profit from the expedition to Liebiwyl, the Dorngriitbauer begins to complain about the attitude of Resli and his parents:

Uvrschants von ihnen ist es gewesen, daß sie nicht gleich eingeschlagen. [. . .] An uns wäre es gewesen, si z'bsinne, und nicht an ihnen. Sie hättens schon für eine Ehre nehmen sollen, daß es uns nur dr Wert gsi ist, gah z'luenge da in ihr Gitzinest hinauf. (VII, 283-84)

This is indicative of the real root of the Dorngriitbauer's nature: his arrogance. He cannot bear to be snubbed. He is quite prepared to cut off his nose to spite his face if he considers his pride to be at stake: we learn that he is ready to lose money rather than allow anybody to seem to get the better of him. It is only his suspicion that his own candidate for Anne Mareili's hand, the aged, corrupt but wealthy Kellerjoggi, is attempting to steal a march upon him that leads him to negotiate with Liebiwyl at all.

Whilst he seems to judge everything purely in financial terms, in fact his relationship even to purely material reality is distorted by his boundless self-esteem and his obsessive need to bolster it. It is not merely that he "knows the price of everything and the value of nothing", but that his conception of value is perverted: everything is coloured by his belief that he is beholden to nobody and nothing. This is an example of the divorce of phenomenon and significance which Gotthelf explicated in Der Bauernspiegel.

49 Godwin-Jones (p. 58) suggests that the status of money in the novel is uncertain until its conclusion; I would contend that throughout it is clear that money as a signifier of "material solidity" has a crucial place in Gotthelf's order, but that he recognizes the danger of its becoming an end in itself - the object of aspirations which thus misconstrue that order.
Christen and his wife never approach this degree of alienation from the Christian universe. Nevertheless, during the nadir at Liebiwyl, things are clearly veering towards the Dorngrüt model: it has been noted above that their attitude towards their children begins to be determined by self-interest and paranoia. Christen, for instance, fears that Resli is trying to take over the farm rather than to learn and contribute. He begins to do the opposite of whatever Resli suggests, even when this is to his own financial disadvantage - an attitude entirely characteristic of the Dorngrütbauer.

An awareness of the unity of heaven and earth leads to humility. It is the lack of this humility which engenders a perverted mode of evaluation. This basic truth must, for Gotthelf, inform any political endeavour:

Laßt einen Regenten eitel sein, so benutzt er den Staat ungefähr wie eine Dame ihr Schmuckkästchen, die Folgen sieht er nicht, wie nahe sie auch liegen; und zwischen monarchischen und republikanischen Regenten ist hierin kein anderer Unterschied als zwischen einem Tropf und dem andern Tropf. (VII, 44)

This does not represent indifference to political issues; Gotthelf can certainly not be accused of such an attitude. It is simply that for Gotthelf man’s political organization of his own society on earth must be perceived as subordinated to, and interacting with, God’s general will. Eitelkeit is symptomatic of an ignorance of the universal order, and it is futile to attempt to build a political order without the awareness that it is merely a part of a greater whole.50

The lesson of Geld und Geist, then, is not that money is evil, but that an unhealthy mode of perception can make it become evil. Far from despising material matters, Gotthelf sees them as important by virtue of their place in the overall scheme. The priest tells his congregation: “‘Würde man die Welt überwinden und an Gott sein Leben knüpfen, dann würden die Klagen über die Welt verstummen, sie würde wieder unser Paradies werden’” (VII, 237). Overcoming the world here does not mean leaving it behind altogether, but rather placing it in context and thereby transforming it: it is possible, with an enlightened attitude towards everyday life, to participate in paradise on earth.51

It is this which explains the wealth of material detail in a novel which is ostensibly concerned with the dangers of materialism.52 Paragraphs exalting cleanliness, praising good clothes, itemizing a well stocked Spycher, rejoicing in the description of a well tended manure heap are not merely Gotthelfian eccentricities, because all of these items are more than ends in themselves: they are indicative of spiritual as well as physical well being and thus for Gotthelf have their place in the novel just as they do in life.53 Similarly, as Küßfer points out, physical action - work - acquires a heightened significance: “Der Mensch ist durch seine Arbeitsleistungen Teilhaber der gottgewollten und zielgerichteten

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50 Cf. Martini, Fritz, Deutsche Literatur im bürgerlichen Realismus, 1848-1898, 4th edn (Stuttgart, 1981), p. 460. Martini sees in Gotthelf’s work an attempt to overcome the politicization of thought - “die Auflösung der ständischen Ordnungen” - by an insistence on the permanence of the peasant lifestyle and the Christian faith: an attempt undermined by his acknowledgement of the way the subjective ethos was infiltrating even his rural society: “In der Egozentrik der Ehrgeize und Triebe sah er die Rechtlichkeit der Familie zerfallen.”


Kultivierung der Welt." Just as an apparently unprepossessing item shines with real worth, so too do the least portentous of duties. The relationship between the divine and the mundane is well expressed by Christen's comparisons of church-going with bathing, and the wearing of a clean shirt on Sunday with the cleansing of the soul.55

It is this that infuses Gotthelf's work with its extraordinary energy. Whilst the biographical evidence makes it clear that Gotthelf wanted to be a creative writer from an early age and felt a need for artistic expression for its own sake, it is his conviction that novels such as *Geld und Geist* have the potential to reach beyond the aesthetic domain and change things for the better in the real world that most abundantly animates his fictional endeavour.

54 Kuffer, Jeremias Gotthelf: Grundzüge seiner Pädagogik, p. 49. He goes on to discuss the particular resonance in Gotthelf's work of the dialectic between material items and work: "Zugleich ist die Arbeit für den Menschen aber auch von größerer pädagogischer Relevanz. Am Widerstand der Materie bilden sich die schöpferischen Kräfte im Menschen, welche seine Gottebenbildlichkeit ausmachen. Der Mensch gewinnt Einsicht in seine Möglichkeiten und seine Grenzen und gelangt zum Bewusstsein des rechten Weltbezuges."

55 Pascal (p. 107) draws attention to the aesthetic delight Gotthelf takes in mundane tasks: "Pig-feeding, fence-making, hay-making, can be beautiful: that beauty arises in some manner from the satisfactory accomplishment of human duties" (cf. also p. 112).
If *Der Bauernspiegel* is concerned chiefly with the neglect of the potential for positive order and *Geld und Geist* with its realization, then *Anne Bäbi Jowäger* is Gotthelf’s attempt to portray the true scope of the human world: a whole which rarely matches the author’s ideal, yet in which he revels nevertheless. It is Gotthelf’s broadest canvas, a work in which he is at his most sure-footed in dealing with the kinds of characters and themes we find in all his writing.

Intended as a short tale, to be distributed as a pamphlet by the Canton of Bern in an attempt to erode the widespread faith in quack doctors, it grew to fill two volumes, treating its initial theme with a profundity far beyond what the cantonal officials could have envisaged. They can hardly be blamed for refusing to distribute the fat tomes with which they were eventually presented!

This very metamorphosis of *Anne Bäbi Jowäger* testifies to its being constructed on the same foundation which we have identified in *Der Bauernspiegel* and *Geld und Geist*: Gotthelf’s conviction that there is an accessible overall order. A ramification of this doctrine is that the consequences of an individual issue spread like ripples through that order. Gotthelf in *Anne Bäbi Jowäger* by no means abandons his original goal. Medicine and quack medicine are certainly major threads in the narrative. Even towards the end of the second volume of the novel, when Meyeli’s first child dies because of Anne Bäbi’s misguided attentions, Gotthelf unashamedly takes up the didactic mode:

Das arme Kind war am Krupp, an der Brüne oder meinethalb an einem entzündlichen Halsweh gestorben, jedenfalls an einem Übel, gegen welches ein Säftchen, und sei es aus Rosenhonig oder gar aus noch besserm, nichts hilft; da müssen ganz andere Mittel und zu rechter Zeit herbei, wenn so ein arm Kind von einem dieser Übel gerettet werden soll. (VI, 151)

The casual sounding vocabulary – “meinethalb”, “so ein arm Kind” – makes it very obvious that it is the general lesson rather than the particular event with which Gotthelf is preoccupied here.

However, in Gotthelf’s terms, a practical issue such as medicine does not exist in isolation. It is implicated in the wider scheme of things, and his narrative reflects this conviction. This is why the thread of medicine in the narrative is interwoven with familiar issues such as faith, communication, evaluation and the universality of experience.

In the pock-marked features of the docile Jakob the reader is presented with a cautionary image of the consequences of resorting to quacks. This is probably the kind of straightforward tale, or fable, the authorities had in mind when they commissioned the work. Gotthelf’s considerable research also enabled him to address several of the more damaging elements of home doctoring (he ridicules, for example, the belief that children will thrive on creamy, fatty diets, and the superstitions associated with childbirth – that the mother who gives birth in a military uniform will have a patriotic child, that pieces of food wrapped around the baby at its christening will make it strong and so on). However, Gotthelf is too sophisticated to be content simply to attack such practices and illustrate their danger. Moreover, the many
instances in the novel of bona fide doctors or clerics making such attacks and issuing such warnings, only to be mistrusted, resented and ultimately ignored by the barely literate farmers, suggest that Gotthelf did not believe that such a tactic was likely to be effective. Rather, he locates the matter in its context and addresses the reasons both for the superstitions which exist in the rural community and for that community’s vulnerability to unscrupulous charlatans. He realizes that quacks feed off a set of prejudices too deep-seated to be dislodged by mere warnings - and which are bound up with the whole structure of belief of the community.

It may initially seem odd, then, that we can say of a book conceived as a public health information publication that its central theme is the fallacy of separating heaven from earth. However, Gotthelf in a sense does what every good doctor aims to do: instead of just attacking the symptoms, he identifies the causes of the sickness.

Gotthelf does not allow us to forget that separating heaven and earth, “Leib” and “Seele”, is the fallacy from which all other ills follow.\(^{56}\) In his introduction to the second volume of \textit{Anne Bäbi Jowäger}, he writes:

\begin{quote}
Wer an geistlichen Dingen in einem sogenannten weltlichen Buche sich ärgert, der lege es weg, oder er bedenke, daß auch Gott Irdisches und Geistliches mischt im großen Weltenbuche und im Menschen selbsten, und daß jedes weltliche Buche Geistiges enthalten muß, wenn es kein schlechtes sein soll! (VI, 431)
\end{quote}

\textit{Anne Bäbi Jowäger} is undoubtedly a “worldly” book - but to Gotthelf, far from excluding matters spiritual, worldliness actually entails spirituality, for otherwise the nature of the world, informed as he sees it by the overall order in which mankind is implicated, would be misrepresented. Later the narrator informs us that God has given us two eyes in order to read two books: “das heilige alte Buch” - the Bible - and “das wunderbare Buch, das alt ist und doch jeden Tag neu wird” (VI, 63) - the “book of the world”: “ein Buch wirft Licht auf das andere Buch, beide strömen Leben sich zu, und halbdunkel wenigstens bleibt ein Buch ohne das andere Buch” (VI, 63).\(^{57}\)

In \textit{Anne Bäbi Jowäger}, Gotthelf’s insistence on the impossibility of truly understanding either heaven or earth in isolation is vividly expressed in the dichotomous figures of the curate and the doctor. The two are set against one another only in order to demonstrate their basic similarity. The one is obsessed with matters spiritual to the exclusion of the everyday world, the other sees anything intangible as a dangerous distraction from the business of real life. Both are handicapped by their tunnel vision.

The curate leans towards mysticism, professing to despise the material world. This, of course, is why the curate’s intervention as the would-be saviour of Anne Bäbi is so disastrous: he operates with no understanding of materiality and no personal stake in a world he claims to despise. Furthermore, in Gotthelf’s hierarchical universe, access to and comprehension even of the spiritual realm can be achieved only through integration in the real world. Hence, the curate is also unable to achieve true spirituality, and far from rising above material matters, he is a glutton, dazzled by sensuous luxury and secretly besotted with the minister’s daughter, Sophie.


\(^{57}\) Holl examines the motif of the two books in more detail: \textit{Gotthelf im Zeitgeist}, pp. 104-09.
Sophie, however, loves not the curate, but Doctor Rudi. Just as the curate misunderstands the spiritual world precisely because of his professed contempt for the material world, the doctor blinds himself to one of Gotthelf's two "books" - the Bible - and in doing so prevents himself from fully coming to terms with the reality of the other volume - the book of the world - however devoted to it he is.

In fact the doctor is more than devoted to the real world; he is positively heroic in his efforts to help its population. He is clearly imbued with a deep love of humanity - and yet, because he refuses to contemplate the Christian universe which for Gotthelf is humankind's true context, he is actually no more able to understand the real world than is the curate. True, he is better able to rise above petty concerns, but even whilst he sacrifices his wealth and his health in order to tend his patients, he curses their ignorance and their stubbornness. His attempts to wean them from the quacks merely set characters such as Anne Bäbi more firmly in their ways. His death is untimely, just like that of his father - a man of similar convictions. We have to see both their demises as significant rather than random events, for whilst both characters are dedicated to the real world, their fundamental misconception of it means that both are imperfectly equipped to survive within it.

In *Anne Bäbi Jowäger*, as in Gotthelf's other work, those blind to the relationship between the human world and its context lack the sense of proportion which is such a factor in the benevolent equanimity of those characters blessed with "true" insight. The outstanding example in *Anne Bäbi Jowäger* is, as so often in Gotthelf's writing, the figure of the enlightened pastor. Of course the pastor actually articulates - often at considerable length - Gotthelf's philosophy. However, his importance to the story lies as much in the way his values manifest themselves in him as a character as in his direct expression of them in his monologues. It is significant that he survives both his brother (Doctor Rudi's father) and his nephew. He lacks the aura of heroism which surrounds them (and which is apparent at Rudi's funeral) - yet they both die frustrated whilst he is still able to help the community of which he is the central pillar. The two doctors affect disdain for religion, but the pastor has nothing but respect for medicine. At one point he tells Hansli "ein Doktor sollte doch herbei [. . .]. Es fehlt Euer Frau freilich an der Seele, und was ich tun kann, soll nicht fehlen", but unlike the doctors or the curate, he is aware that "Körper und Seele sind gar in einem engen Zusammenhang, wenn es einem fehlet, so leidet auch das andere" (VI, 203). His greater understanding means that although the members of his flock may vex him on occasion, they do not baffle him in the way that the doctor's superstitious patients do. The doctor is limited by the extent of medical knowledge, a restriction which drives him to despair. He is unable to relativize this reality, to see a broader truth, and a similar inability to weigh things up against one another ultimately contributes to his death. He disregards his own needs - his charity means that he is left without the means which would allow him to marry - to the point that his life is devoid of comfort either physical or spiritual. He also disregards the elements and the state of his own health in his determination to treat his patients, to a degree which is suicidal. We must set this ultimately misguided heroism against the more cautious Samaritanism of the pastor, who is perfectly conscious not just of the needs of his flock, but also of his own fragility. Thus we frequently see him deputizing duties rather than over-exerting himself,
taking an after-dinner nap, enjoying - but never wallowing in - the good things in life. He exemplifies, in fact, the practical wisdom of the Bible of clearing one’s own eye before trying to help others with theirs.\(^5\)\(^8\)

The same instinct for balance explains why the pastor is so much more successful than his curate in meeting the needs of his flock: whereas the pastor is ready to adjust his response to a given situation, the curate simply fires off a hail of inappropriate dogma.

The sense of balance, the ability to relativize, which for Gotthelf comes with an awareness of the overall context of the world and its inhabitants, is thus crucial to a valid existence. It is nothing less than the ability to judge value, to gauge meaning - just as we have seen to be the case in *Der Bauernspiegel* and *Geld und Geist*.

Just as in those novels, in *Anne Bäbi Jowäger* the interrelationship of heaven and earth means that whilst material value is relativized and circumscribed, it is simultaneously affirmed. The cosmic context validates it in a way quite invisible to the miser, for whom the world is a balance sheet and Mammon therefore all-powerful. In *Anne Bäbi Jowäger*, the altogether positive figure of Meyeli, who is at once pious and practical, protests that she did not marry Jakob for his money, but “Nit, daB es mr ganz graglych ist!” (V, 340). Asceticism has no place in Gotthelf’s scheme of things. Even when he suggests that while God calls us, the world tempts us, even when he writes of overcoming the world, he is not preaching a disdain for worldly phenomena but rather insisting that these phenomena must be “eingeordnet”. Such disdain is both dishonest - as the curate’s Epicurean tendencies illustrate - and blasphemous, for worldly phenomena are the indispensable tools for humankind’s activity in the overall order. Meyeli’s reverence for the trappings of prosperity is entirely healthy, because it is an informed reverence for true value rather than untrammelled materialism. It sits alongside a sincere modesty borne of an understanding and an acceptance of her own place in the universe. Even when she confuses wealth with happiness, her modesty saves her from compounding the error:


Die Demut gewann in Meyeli die Oberhand, und statt sich zu erheben, begann es zu weinen. (VI, 41)

Gotthelf’s concept of value is perhaps most strikingly represented by the familiar motif of the *Spycher*, described as “die große Schatzkammer in einem Bauernhause” (VI, 38), but here, as in other novels, quite free of any connotation of miserliness. There is real wonder, echoing Meyeli’s “ehrfürchtvollem Schauer” (VI, 38), in Gotthelf’s descriptions of the *Spycher*:

Anfangs sah es fast öde aus im halbdunkeln Raume; einige Kleider hingen an Stangen, und Korn lag in Kästen; aber wie die Hexe von Endor Tote aus Gräbern, ließ Anne Bäbi steigen Schätze aus Kisten und Kästen. Wellen Tuch von allen Sorten, gemachte Sachen, gesponnenes Garn und Gspinnst (Spinnstoff), daß es Meyeli fast gschmuecht (ohnmächtig) ward und es einen

\(^5\)\(^8\) Knellwolf’s assessment of the priest (*Gleichnis und allgemeines Priesterstum*, p. 163) rather overlooks the sheer common sense which governs his attitude towards his own person, surely a positive quality, albeit in a very human priest, and one which derives from his insight into the importance of physical reality in the context of the overall order.
The items stored there are the fruits of honest labour, the commodities and the coins which underwrite the farm community. They are in fact nothing less than “value” incarnate. Without a mature appreciation of value in this absolutely solid sense, Gotthelf argues, there can be no hope of integration into the overall order of which, for human beings, the Spycher, no less than the church, is a central pillar. Together they represent endeavour on earth and the scale against which that endeavour may be measured and validated. Far more than in the didactic passages where the narrator or a pastor spells out Gotthelf’s convictions, it is in passages such as these, where Gotthelf evokes quite inimitably the inherent worth of food or everyday items, that he succeeds as a novelist in conveying his vision of a world of which every detail is implicated in a serene cosmic order.59

And such passages are by no means restricted to the Spycher: his novels, Anne Bäbi Jowäger not excepted, are positively brimming over with loving evocations of the things his characters make, wear and eat, of the houses they live in, the animals they tend. These may seem initially to pose a problem. How can the pious enemy of materialism exhibit such extraordinary relish for the description of a feather bed, or take such solicitous trouble over a description of the poor condition of Meyeli’s clothes?

Das Bett war so weich und warm [. . .]. Da war an Federn nicht gespart [. . .]. Man glaubt gar nicht, was so ein weiches, warmes Bett für ein Wohltat ist, wenn man an Wind und Wetter gewesen einen lieben langen Tag. (VI, 25)

So handlich waren Meyelis Hemdchen nicht, aber sie waren durchsichtig, kurz und klein, die Hühner konnten den Hafer dadurch picken, und vornen wollten sie ihm fast nicht übereinander. Das Kitteli war viel zu kurz, der Mond schien durch dasselbe und zeigte die bösen alten Strümpfe, von denen man nicht mehr wußte, waren sie gewoben, gelismet oder genäht. In gleichem Stil war das Tschöpli, und wenn Meyeli einmal drinnen war, so machte es ihm den ganzen Tag Kummer, wie es am Abend wieder hinaus. (VI, 26)

The explanation lies in Gotthelf’s conviction that these details are far from trivial: beds and clothes and food and drink positively throb with worth which has nothing to do with Mammon.60 They are a part of our foothold in his cosmic order, the foothold which is indwelling in the material world.61

For Gotthelf, then, material value cannot be understood without an awareness of one’s own place in the grand scheme of things and of the places of other phenomena. The same awareness is a prerequisite for the ability properly to appreciate other human beings. Those characters who see themselves as the centre of their own universe are inevitably unable to assess other human beings except in terms of their immediate usefulness. The Dorngrübauer, Anne Mareili’s father, exemplifies this


60 Swales also observes the delight in the comfort of Meyeli’s bed and the reverence for the Spycher which Gotthelf’s narration shares with the character herself. He calls such moments “Epiphanien des Materiellen” and identifies in them a fusion of beauty and worldliness (p. 70).

61 Parkinson, p. 141, notes Gotthelf’s conviction that material items are worth enjoying in its own right, and that describing in simple terms the appeal of an item to a character will communicate that appeal to the reader.
syndrome in *Geld und Geist*; in *Der Bauernspiegel* it is endemic in the village community which fails in its duty to Jeremias, seeing him only as a burden or a source of cheap labour.

Such characters lack the humility which is the precursor of sympathy and hence of love. It allows the individual to operate as a part of a community, thus taking up their place in Gotthelf’s overall order. In both *Geld und Geist* and *Der Bauernspiegel* we saw how important the family was as the basic unit of the community, as the individual’s point of entry to Gotthelf’s order. In *Anne Bäbi Jowäger*, the family unit is again the decisive environment for many of the protagonists.

The Jowägers, at least until Meyeli’s arrival in their midst, are marked by all the characteristics of the Liebiwyl family in *Geld und Geist* at its lowest ebb. The household is pervaded by the personality of its matriarch Anne Bäbi, the most extraordinary and convincing of all Gotthelf’s egoists.

Anne Bäbi is of course a tyrant. She is not only stupid and bigoted, she is positively dangerous to those around her and even to herself. She and Mädi nearly manage to kill Jakob with their care, and she eventually attempts suicide. However, throughout *Anne Bäbi Jowäger* Gotthelf somehow contrives to treat this (all too believable) monster with the ironic affection which is apparent in the wonderful understatement which opens the novel: “Hansli Jowäger war ein braver Mann, und Anne Bäbi, sein Weib, meinte es auch gut, aber uf sy Gattig.” (V, 7). She is not simply a model of a typical and dangerous type of person to be condemned, she is a means for him to exercise his insight and explain the phenomenon.

Anne Bäbi has never experienced the sudden conversion of Änneli in *Geld und Geist*. She energetically assaults the real world, with no idea that she is simultaneously engaging with the spiritual one. She would term herself pious, but her religion is simply a set of conventions, a part of a tradition. God certainly means something to her: she calls on Him as her witness, quarrels with Him and thanks Him, all within a few pages (V, 34-39) during Jakob’s illness. However, she is really treating God in just the same way as she does everybody around her: closing her eyes and ears to their reality as autonomous beings, and reconstructing them according to her immediate needs. Her treatment of those around her depends less upon their behaviour than upon her mood. Her egoism is so complete that the real world vanishes for her: it is very clear that like so many of Gotthelf’s negative characters, she lives in a world of which she is the absolute centre. As Fehr puts it, “Anne Bäbi beweist erneut, daß es die Welt nicht zu sehen, die Dinge und Menschen nicht klar zu unterscheiden und zu beurteilen vermag”. Staiger similarly notes how her egocentricity deprives her of a scale for her existence: “Sich selber gegenübertreten, ein Maß zu finden, vermag sie nicht.” We have seen already how the need to see things in relative terms is one of Gotthelf’s chief preoccupations. The fact that Anne Bäbi’s spiritual poverty has the consequence of alienating her from the everyday world is symptomatic of Gotthelf’s insistence on the enmeshment of the material and the spiritual zones.

The family over which Anne Bäbi presides is predictably dysfunctional, characterized, just as were Jeremias’s family in *Der Bauernspiegel* and Anne Mareili’s and, temporarily, Resli’s in *Geld und Geist*, by a lack of communication. Anne Bäbi’s tyranny and her scant regard for communication is well...

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62 Fehr, Jeremias Gotthelf: Poet und Prophet, p. 163.
64 Godwin-Jones notes the positive effect of communication in the “reformed” Liebiwyl family in *Geld und Geist* (p. 69), but it - or its absence - is equally important a theme in *Anne Bäbi Jowäger*.
expressed in her scornful response when Hansli dares ask her whether Jakobli has actually spoken to the
girl whom Anne Bäbi has decreed that he marry: "'0 gredt ha mitenangere! Was hatte si mitenangere
sölle rede? Gredt ha mitenangere! Jetzt wey mr schwyge, jetz han ih gnue für hinecht (heute Nacht), gnue
han ih!'" (V, 145).

Genuine communication is an essential lubrication in Gotthelf’s family orders - and its
importance is such that when it is thwarted, the power of words can become perverted:

Aber merkwürdig ist es, wie es Worte gibt, die sich wie mit Widerhaken einhänge in unsere
Seele; und oft gehen diese Worte hinein, wir wissen es kaum, und wie sie sich einhängen, fühlen
wir gar nicht, geradesowenig wie feine Splitter, welche in die Finger gehen. Aber gerade wie die
Splitter sich nach und nach bemerkbar machen, den Finger entzünden, seine Empfindlichkeit
steigern können ins Unendliche, gerade so ists auch mit diesen Worten. (V, 86)

This negative potential manifests itself precisely in individuals who find themselves outside society, in an
environment where normal, “healthy” communication is absent:

Je tiefer ein Mensch steht in der Reihe der denkenden Wesen, je enger sein Gesichtskreis, je
einförmiiger sein Leben, je spärlicher sein Verkehr: desto tiefer haften einzelne Worte, desto
größer wird die Macht der an dieselben sich knüpfenden Gedanken. [. . .]

Und solche Worte, absichtslos gesprochen, wie ohne Zweck das Kind seine Pfeile vom Bogen
schnellt, fliegen giftigen Pfeilen gleich zu tausenden durch die Welt, suchen sich Herzen, die
kein Schild deckt, dringen in Seelen, wo es dunkel ist, keine Macht zu überwinden ist. (V, 88)65

Importantly, however, words are not absolute concepts: in themselves they are meaningless:

Es ist doch kurios, wie die gleichen Worte ungleiche Produkte erzeugen in den Herzen der
Menschen, so daß man fast sagen möchte, daß Worte nichts bedeuten, die Stimmung des
Herzens aber alles. (V, 194)

This is because, as is the case with every other component of Gotthelf’s world, words are relative: it is the
context which is the defining factor. Just as in the other novels, in Anne Bäbi Jowäger true
communication is a product of mutual respect, or the ability to accept the reality of the world beyond the
ego, and it develops in Anne Bäbi’s family only gradually, as Meyeli dissolves the battle lines between the
various members of the household.66 Until then, conversation is limited largely to Anne Bäbi’s regal
pronouncements on matters beyond her ken, or her aggressive complaints about the shortcomings of her
minions, or to bickering between her and Mädi or Mädi and Sami. When Anne Bäbi or Mädi are sulking,
the household is silent but for the pointed clatterings of the aggrieved party in the kitchen. Hansli and his
son are understandably taciturn, preferring to avoid conflict. Gotthelf constructs a portrait of a household

65 In her analysis of this passage, Kunz (pp. 52-54) notes: “Das Abstraktum ‘Wort’ wird vielfältig versinnlicht wie kaum bei einem
anderen Dichter.”

66 Klaus Jarchow identifies in the particular example of the manner of interaction within the family which is the result of Meyeli’s qualities
(and in the economic benefits which follow) the general didactic import of the novel: “Erst auf der Basis eines veränderten emotionalen
Umgangs miteinander wird die Jowäger-Familie zu einer Reform fähig” (p. 163). “Das didaktische Ziel des Romans, eine neue
Gefühlskultur zu propagieren, wird durch den wachsenden Wohlstand der Jowägers beglaubigt. Ohne die Realisierung eines neuen
affektiven Verhaltens der ländlichen Bevölkerung ist in Gotthelfs Augen eine harmonische geordnete neue Gesellschaft nicht zu
verwirklichen” (p. 168). Jarchow sees in Gotthelf’s didactic purpose an assumption that a reform of the inner landscape of the individual
will lead to a similar reform of the external landscape (cf. p. 169).
which is strenuously segregated: the women bicker endlessly in the kitchen whilst the menfolk withdraw for monosyllabic exchanges between puffs of their pipes in the haven of the barn.\textsuperscript{67}

Once again, spiritual deficiencies lead to practical problems: Anne Bäbi and her family are plunged into brilliantly comic confusion precisely because of the lack of true communication. Anne Bäbi is suddenly convinced that she must marry off her son, and embarks on a quest to find him the right bride. So complete is her egoism that she automatically assumes that everybody in the family is aware and supportive of this endeavour - without her ever having actually informed them of it, far less consulted them about it. This, allied to a series of mistaken assumptions, cross-purposes and misunderstandings leads to a situation in which Anne Bäbi thinks Jakobli is happily engaged, whilst Jakobli himself is ignorant of the whole matter and dreaming of Meyeli, and Mädi is convinced that she is the object of Jakobli's desire.

The product of this formative environment is Jakobli, and for all his good nature, Jakobli functions no more effectively as an individual than the Jowägers do as a family. Anne Bäbi refuses to allow him to help his father work the land or to countenance his mixing normally with his peers in the village. The result is a character who is utterly at sea in reality: his “courtship” of Meyeli is inept in the extreme; he is duped when he goes to market. Gotthelf’s insistence on the importance of the social context is rigorous: because Jakobli is not allowed to take his proper place in the family or in the village, he is unable to realize his potential as a human being. His physical appearance is a constant reminder of the misguided upbringing which has thwarted his development in every respect.

It is when Meyeli arrives and Jakobli suddenly finds himself plunged into the roles of husband and then father that his transformation from an overgrown child into a man begins. “Es erwachte in ihm das Gefühl, Vater zu sein, Schirm und Schutz seiner werden zu sollen” (VI, 125). For the first time he acquires a sense of responsibility: a stake, in other words, in the family, in the farm, in the real world. His previous irrelevance in the household organization is manifest in Gotthelf’s comparison of a late developer like Jakobli with “einem, der zu Tische gerufen wird, aber er säumet sich, und wenn er könnt, ist der ganze Tische besetzt, ringsum kein Plätzchen mehr für ihn” (VI, 126). For Gotthelf, validity as a human being depends upon fulfilling a function in the context of the tangible, human world; only then is the individual admitted into the universal order in which his or her spirit can unfold. Jeremias’s search for a role within the community of Unverstand in \textit{Der Bauernspiegel} is another expression of the same principle.

There is a stark contrast between the Jowägers, alternating between sullen silence and bitter dispute, and the articulate family at the Pfarrhaus. Gotthelf qualifies his portrait of the pastor and his family by making the cleric something of a windbag and his daughter rather impetuous - but these are minor, human faults and the overall impression is of a decent household. The only occasions on which the conversation falters or becomes less than genteel are when the curate is involved - and he is the only member of the household given to sulking. He is also, of course, the only member of the household without a clearly defined role as husband or father or son or even servant. This is clearly an uncomfortable position which encourages him to seek comfort, a sense of belonging, among other young clerics with questionable spiritual leanings.

\textsuperscript{67} Cf. Godwin-Jones, p. 75.
The pastor, his wife and his daughter all diligently fulfil their roles within the family - his wife in particular is an inconspicuous but clearly pivotal model of friendly domestic efficiency. They are also all very clear about their collective role as the Pfarrfamilie within the village community, upholding standards and supporting the pastor in his work.

It is significant that the curate's disastrous attempt to grapple with Anne Bäbi's soul is presented as the culmination of his frustration at not having a proper role to fulfil, either within the Pfarrhaus, or outside it. He sees the pastor functioning as a shepherd to his flock, whilst he is expected merely to watch, learn and wait. He has no proper responsibilities: "Und wie hart ists nicht, so innerlich zu etwas Besserm gerüstet zu sein, niemand gibt uns Gelegenheit, es zu zeigen" (VI, 416).

Within the village community the curate is seen as an oddity. His ignorance of the life and work of his parishioners recalls the priest in Der Bauernspiegel, who offends the farmers by allowing his children to trample on crops and insisting on eating outside, in contravention of local etiquette. In Anne Bäbi Jowäger the Statthalter complains that the curate is ströfli dumy zytewys. Lezten Herbst sei er zSchnälfnge übers Feld gegangen und hätte die Leute gefraget: "Syt er an Kornsetze?" Seither hielte man ihnen das allenthalben vor. Sobald man an einem Markt oder in einem Wirtshause vernehme, daß einer von Gutmütigen sei, so frage man ihn: "Wottsch ga Korn setzen?" Sie hätten es afe ungern und wette, daß dr Vikari mit seinen Kornsetze es weiß ke Mönch wo wäre.

Sie sollten ihm das nicht so übel nehmen, antwortete der Pfarrer; das lehre man sie halt nicht, daß man das Korn säe, nicht setze, und daß man mit solchen Irrtümern so grob fehlen könnte, das begriffe man in der Stadt nicht. (VI, 405)

Despite the pastor's mitigating words, the curate's ignorance is a significant manifestation of his rootlessness - and, in Gotthelf's world, this means that he is isolated in spiritual as much as in practical terms.68

Although he is under the influence of an extremist sect and is at odds with the pastor in religious matters (and thus also in the matter of how the pastor approaches his duties), it is entirely conceivable that, had he been more integrated into the family and the community and given some responsibilities at an early stage, he could have evolved into a perfectly stable and enlightened character.

The curate and Anne Bäbi are cognate figures in their inability to recognize the world on its own terms. Anne Bäbi's obsessiveness leads her to choose a monster as a daughter-in-law, and to agree to a marriage settlement which would be the ruin of the Jowägers as a household and of her and her husband in particular. This seems uncharacteristic: selflessness is certainly not a quality associated with her. The explanation is that arrogance, born of ignorance of, or indifference to, the context within which she exists, is the key to her character. Meanness is merely a symptom of this; when there is a choice to be made between saving face or saving money, the former takes precedence. This echoes the behaviour of Anne Mareili's miser father in Geld und Geist, who is ultimately prepared to give up the more lucrative option in the matter of his daughter's marriage rather than allow the Kellerjoggi to have the satisfaction of outwitting him and risk making himself a laughing stock. Similarly, Anne Bäbi, having embarked on

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68 Götler notes that the curate's too schematic outlook alienates him from the practical side of the village community: "Er wird zunehmend an den Rand gedrängt und erscheint als Fremdling innerhalb des Dorfes. Für Gotthelf gehört aber gerade der Bezug zum praktischen Leben zu einem der wichtigsten Merkmale eines Pfarrers" (p. 115).
her campaign, is so determined that nobody should be able to ridicule her failure that she simply refuses to contemplate the possibility that she is signing away her own future - let alone to take account of Jakobi's feelings or the objections of other members of the household. As the pastor later observes, her principal aim is to demonstrate that she is the *Meisterfrau* - at whatever cost. She is able to distort reality to meet her psychological needs to the extent that even when the *Zyberlibure Tochter* stipulates so many clauses pejorative to the Jowägers in the marriage contract that the *Schreiber* who writes it is taken aback, her enthusiasm for the match actually increases. At first the clerk laughs when he hears the nature of the contract, and says that although he is happy to write it, he wonders who on earth would sign it! The clerk tries to give her the opportunity to think better of the deal by suggesting that he write it, but that they delay signing it for eight days. She assumes that he is merely trying to earn more money. The clerk begins to write, and then, as Anne Babi reports, the *Zyberlibure Tochter* begins to list her demands:

“Da hat das Meitschi angefangen aufsagen alles, was er schreiben solle, wie wenn es es im Fragenbuch gelernt hätte, styf eins nach dem andern; nichts hat es vergessen. Es hat den Schreiber selber verwundert; fry manchs Mal hat er sagen müssen: 'ume hübschli!', und zuletzt hats ihn inner gelächert; er wird gedacht haben, so es bsinnts Mönsch möchte er auch. [. . .] Etwas hat es gesagt, der Schreiber hat mich zweimal gefragt, ob er es schreiben solle; aber ich habe herzhaft gesagt, er solle nur.” (V, 157-58)

The supremacy of arrogance over avarice is demonstrated again when Anne Babi shows Meyeli through the *Spycher* shortly after the latter’s arrival at the farm and, despite her initial hostility to her son’s bride, presents her with good quality material. Anne Babi is determined that none of her neighbours should be able to deride her for having a daughter-in-law dressed in rags. After all her hysterical opposition to the match, as soon as Meyeli’s qualities become apparent, she claims the arrangement as a triumph of her own.

Sami, the “Fuchs” of the household, is sly enough to recognize and exploit Anne Babi’s lust for power. When the menfolk decide they want to make improvements to the farm and expand it, Hansli is pessimistic: “Aber aus der Sache gibt es doch nichts; sobald man etwas anderes anfangen will, so widerredt Anne Babi” (VI, 132). Sami, however, astutely suggests that his master complain to Anne Babi that the land is yielding so little that they will have to reduce their livestock. The plan works perfectly:

Potz Himmel, wie ging das los, und was mußte das Mannevolk vernehmen! [. . .]
Kurz, das Ende des Liedes war, daß Anne Babi rund erklärte daß ehe es eine Kuh weniger wolle, wolle es eine mehr oder zwei, sie könnten luegen, wie sie es machten. (VI, 133)

Had Hansli simply told her outright that he wanted to buy more cows she would have refused to allow him to do so, not because she was too mean to make the investment, but because to acquiesce in a plan which was not her own would be inconceivable for a character whose whole identity is founded on the premise that the rest of the world revolves around her and has no validity except in relation to her. Insensitive even to her immediate context, and utterly blind to the possibility that she might be a part of a universal structure, she is left without any consolation in the event of personal failure. When self-doubt emerges, it is literally the end of her world. This is why the consequences of the curate’s intervention are
so catastrophic: with her self-belief cracked, Anne Babi loses her slender grasp on reality and lapses into self-destruction.

That Anne Babi is such a dangerous character who perverts and even destroys those around her is due to her failure to see the structures within which she exists: she therefore knows no limits and no self-restraint. Clearly Anne Babi’s conception of religion is a fundamentally flawed one, for it too must be adapted to her egocentric outlook. Hansli and Anne Babi certainly have faith of a sort, but it is blind faith in the negative sense of being unreflected - just like the ritual faith we identified in Jeremias’s family in *Der Bauernspiegel*. Religion as ritual is not an organic force. It survives because it is embedded in tradition, to which Hansli and Anne Babi cling, like so many of Gotthelf’s characters, in preference to accepting moral responsibility and engaging with life more strenuously.

Anne Babi’s monosyllabic husband is certainly more sympathetic than she, but although he does not share her egoism, he does share her failure to appreciate that religion is more than a refuge from individual responsibility. He argues against depositing money in the bank: “Ich habe es wie David, der lieber in Gottes Hand sein wollte als in der Menschen Hand; so vertraue ich mein Geld lieber Gott an als den Menschen” (V, 9). His response when the pastor castigates the couple for having failed to vaccinate their child demonstrates the same understanding of religion as a passive rather than an active force which was responsible for the family at Gutmtütigen in *Geld und Geist* neglecting practical education - reading and writing - whilst insisting on the necessity of being “Bibelfest”. Hansli tells the pastor that he saw vaccination as a mere fad, whereas smallpox was something God-given: “und was von Gott kömmt, soll man in Geduld annehmen” (V, 50). He comforts his wife with the same fatalistic argument:

He, ich wollte die Sache nicht so schwer nehmen, öppe viel an der Sach machen wir nicht; wir können es dä Weg oder diese Weg machen, es kömmt öppe aufs gleiche heraus; es ist ein anderer, und der befiehlt; und wenn der nicht will, so kann man lang. (V, 47)

The pastor ridicules this position, pointing out that the argument could be used to justify complete inactivity, leaving everything in God’s hands.

Superstition survives in exactly the same way as this moribund conception of religion - it is sanctified by tradition, its adherents are utterly uncritical of it, and use it merely as a shelter from the rigours of reality. It is not surprising, then, that like Jeremias’s family, the Jowagers’ Christian faith is accompanied by a faith in superstitions and bogus healers, with consequences which are nearly fatal for Anne Babi’s son, and actually are fatal for her grandson.

“Blind” faith and superstition are compared when the narrator remarks:

Man sagt, die Zeit des blinden Glaubens sei vorbei! Tröpfe sind, die es sagen. [. . .] Ohä, der blinde Glaube ist noch da; nur schenkt man ihn jetzt nicht mehr der Bibel oder dem Pfarrer [. . .] Der Glaube ist dem Menschen angeboren; scheint aber Gottes Sonne nicht hinein, so spuckt der Teufel darein. (V, 243)

Darum fehlte es dem Wundermann an Kunden nicht trotz der aufgeklärten Zeit. (V, 243)

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69 Muschg points out that the quack doctor offers a blend of the “spiritual” and the “medical” calculated to attract their clients; *Jeremias Gotthelf: Eine Einführung in seine Werke*, p. 89.
This is the constellation of Glaube, Unglaube and Aberglaube which is so central to Gotthelf’s world.70 Very few of his characters are without faith altogether: for Gotthelf, faith is a fundamental part of the human psyche.71 However, where that faith is cut off from the overall order and becomes instead a surrogate comfort, a mere observance of tradition, it is regressive rather than invigorating. Instead of opening the world, investing it with all the potential of its significance as a part in an all embracing structure, it closes minds to anything which is not sanctified by previous generations - and to the possibility that such beliefs or practices may be flawed:

[Im Bernerland] hat auch der Brauch sein allzu großes Recht, und was der Brauch ist, sei es christlich oder unchristlich, recht oder lätz, das regelt ihren Lebenslauf. Diese Brauchreligion, die namentlich von Müttern und Tanten gepflanzt wird, die tötet das Rechtsgefühl, pflanzt ein falsches Gewissen auf, und dieses Gewissen ist der niederträchtigste Feigling, den es auf Gottes Erdboden gibt. (V, 338).

Gotthelf’s distaste for such life-denying forms of faith is explained by the vitality which is built into his own belief in a cohesive universal order. For Gotthelf’s order is far from being the static, aesthetic perfection which we shall see to be the ideal of Conrad Ferdinand Meyer. Cohesion does not imply stagnation, as is made clear in the narrator’s description of the institution of marriage:


Inherent in Gotthelf’s order is not just vitality, but a specific type of progressiveness. Gotthelf believes that human beings can only participate in the universal structure via their roles in the everyday world. Material reality and human society are thus imbued with an enhanced significance. Spiritual development requires worldliness rather than asceticism, and there is an in-built motivation to make the best of the given world. This is the conviction which explains the profundity of Gotthelf’s hostility to “Brauchreligion” and which inspired him to produce a two volume novel from the seed of a public health information pamphlet.

However, the other implication of Gotthelf’s metaphysical co-ordinates for order on earth is that he finds human life unimaginable without an overarching order to sustain it. If it wavers, humankind is divorced from the universal structure from which it draws its spiritual validation (in addition to, as we have seen, its practical vigour). Humanity outwith an established social hierarchy is denied its vitalizing influence as surely as foliage cut from a tree is denied its connection to the tree’s life-giving roots.

It is this inalienable requirement for order as an umbilical link between the human world and its context, rather than a reactionary instinct, which underlies the stern affirmations in Anne Bäbi Jowäger that “Ordnung muß sein”:

71 Cf. Swales, p. 73.
This is not to say that the social order, though established, cannot evolve - quite the reverse, as has been indicated above. However, although it is in fact essentially progressive, its evolution must be within certain parameters. Certain types of philosophical basis for the social structure are, in Gotthelf's terms "infertile". The structure must not be seen as an absolute. Unless a political philosophy acknowledges that human order is itself a component of a universal hierarchy, it is bereft of value.

So although Gotthelf prescribes progress, that progress is not to be achieved by a political system which denies its own relativity. Gotthelf's image of a ladder to heaven (e.g. VI, 396) may not be an original one, but it is an important one, for it encapsulates the hierarchical nature of Gotthelfian order.

Progress on earth which takes no cognisance of it is fundamentally flawed:

Gotthelf demands order, but an order which works by means of a spiritual drive: "Dieses Gewissen entsteht nur da, wo eine bestimmte Ordnung ist, deren sich die Menschen unterziehen müssen" (V, 280). In a secular system Gotthelf sees no such "Gewissen", only legislation and its enforcement. Where the conscience is not a guiding principle, the world is no longer a transparent order: "[In der Stadt] werde man je länger je gebildeter, aber vor lauter Bäumen sehe man den Wald nicht mehr, so wie man ja auch vor lauter Gesetzen bald kein Recht mehr finde und keinem Handel ein Ende" (VI, 405). It is this which lies behind the attack on communism towards the end of Anne Babi Jowäger, a key element of which is the charge that in a system such as communism (which, indeed, he sees as unable to accept matter on its own terms): "man solle nicht ans Jenseits denken, sondern seine Pflicht tun, eben weil sie Pflicht sei"(VI, 397). He concludes that, in a "closed" system such as this "so scheint das neue Hallunkentum die Bildung als ein Mittel zu betrachten, der Materie sich zu bemächtigen (nicht über sie sich zu erheben), sie unter die Zähne und von da in den Bauch zu führen"(VI, 398).

Once again, it is easy to misunderstand Gotthelf's attack on materialism. He does not demand institutionalized abstinence. On the contrary, as has been discussed above, overcoming greed for him entails not a contempt for material items, but the ability to evaluate them in terms of the significance with which they are imbued from their own place in the hierarchy or the progress up the hierarchy which they can help humanity to achieve. This engenders a sort of respect for the material world which is reflected in

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72 Buhne over-simplifies Gotthelf's attitude to socialism and communism when he asserts: "Er fürchtet [...] der Sozialismus führe zur Anarchie und zur Auflösung aller Ordnung" (p. 134) and "Das in Gotthelfs Augen Schlimmste an Sozialismus und Kommunismus ist die Gottlosigkeit" (p. 136). Cf. also Sengle, p. 902.
Gotthelf's readiness to discuss the loftier human emotions in "materialistic" terms. For example, he devotes three pages to a defence of the word "Schatz" as an endearment: "Aber ich möchte doch fragen, klingt es nicht bedeutsam mächtig, ja gewaltig wie mit Orgelton, fast wie die Stimme Gottes im Gewitter, wenn ein Mann auf eine Jungfrau oder sein Weib deutend, spricht: 'Das ist mein Schatz!'" (V, 348).

We have noted above how central a symbol of order is the Spycher - which Gotthelf explicitly likens to a "Schatzkammer" (VI, 38). The same affirmation of the concept of Schatz is apparent when children are described as "des Staates größte Schätze" (VI, 85). When Gotthelf describes life as "das höchste Gut des Menschen" (VI, 155) he is not being banal. Rather, as in the other examples, he is attempting to integrate material items into a coherent value system together with existence itself. He goes on to describe the state as "eine Verbruderung zum Schutze der Güter [. . .], dafür ist der Staat da, sonst ist er für nichts da" (VI, 155). This sounds aggressively reactionary; in fact Gotthelf is positing the state as the guardian on earth of values rooted in the universal order: as the upholder of enlightened civilization. Elsewhere Gotthelf is characteristically ready to mix matters emotional and material more casually in similes such as: "Jetzt erst begann der arme Bursche zu fühlen, was eigenliche Angst sei. Das Herz zog sich ihm zusammen, wie ein Geldseckel zusammengeht, wenn man am Schnurchen zieht" (V, 214).

Gotthelf shares many of the aims of the radical political movements of his time, even of communism. He is a stout defender of the "common man", and as Bauernspiegel and Geld und Geist make clear, he is a zealous champion of a practical rather than a catechismal education. However, his vision of the world relative to its context prevents him from admitting that any movement without a similarly profound basis for worldly aspirations can be a potent one: that is, any posited order which is not a universal one. Systems such as those espoused by the curate or the doctor are therefore as fallible as communism. The curate looks only heavenwards, the doctor cannot see beyond the tangible world, but both are blind to the overall order, and thus to the true nature of humanity and the world in which they live. Here the curate is compared by the pastor to a young doctor who knows only "ein bestimmtes System, eine eigentümliche Mittellehre": "Er ist berufen, er meint es gut, aber er kennt nichts als sein System, kennt den Menschen nicht und die unendliche Verschiedenheit der Naturen nicht, an welchen er dieses System anwendbar machen will" (VI, 196). The doctor dies, we are told, similarly unable to make the world fit his blueprint:

Er stand bloß auf der Höhe der Männer des Altertums, die, wenn sie zur Erkenntnis kamen, die Welt genüge ihnen nicht, oder sie seien von der Welt überwältigt, das Schwert sich in die Brust spießen und nie daran gedachten, die Ordnung, an der sie gearbeitet, in Unordnung zu verkehren, um sich zu retten. (VI, 402)

As Muschg says of the doctor "hinter seiner faustu$hen Tatkraft gähnt das Nichts".73

Any entirely secular system of order is also likely to be undermined by the human instinct for faith (discussed above) in something other-worldly. Gotthelf notes that it is this need to believe in something intangible which allows quack doctors to flourish - hence one such charlatan, "brauchte eben

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73 Muschg, Jeremias Gotthelf: Eine Einführung in seine Werke, p. 89.
auch wieder den Schein des Überirdischen" (VI, 147). No system which does not take account of the human sense of wonder is likely to remain convincing for long.

Gotthelf’s very progressiveness thus stems from the same philosophy which actually prevents his being a political radical. His ambition to improve the lot of his readers through their education is founded not on mere benevolence, but on the importance which his vision of overall order confers on life on earth. For all his commitment to education and his hostility towards the aristocracy, Gotthelf believes that everybody has a proper place within the social hierarchy and should be content with it. He does not want his peasants to become philosophers: he merely wants them to become more enlightened, more prosperous peasants.

Even within the family unit, each individual has a role with which it is unnatural to tamper: “es sei doch eigentlich die Mutter dazu da, ihre Kinder zu pflegen und zu warten” (VI, 120).

Gotthelf is an egalitarian by nature: the “Übertragbarkeit” of his novels has as a premise that the social elite is no better and no worse than the citizens of Unverstand or Gutmiitigen: their behaviour is merely translated to a different set of circumstances. However, for Gotthelf this is not a reason to advocate real fluidity in the social structure. The likes of his parishioners have a clearly defined function, of which it is their lot to make the best. There is a clear sympathy in Anne Bäbi Jowäger between the dashing, educated figure of Dr Rudi and the humble orphan, Meyeli. Meyeli is obviously a much more sophisticated character than any of the Jowägers. Indeed, she is a more profound figure than the bright, educated but impetuous daughter of the priest, Sophie - who grows jealous of the attention Rudi pays Meyeli. However, there is no suggestion that Meyeli, touched and flattered though she is by Rudi’s concern for her well-being, ever sees herself as a rival to Sophie for his affections. This is not simply because her marriage is inviolate, but because her very identity is bound up with her station in life: she has already graduated from her Godfather’s hovel to the Jowäger farm, and her ambitions cannot extend beyond Wohlstand within the farming community. It becomes clear shortly before Rudi’s death that, whatever attractions Meyeli might have held for him, Sophie need not have worried: Rudi himself knew that Sophie was the only partner for him: “Wenn ich sie gesehen habe, ist es nie so, als ob sie freundlich, schon die Wahrheit vor mir hingestellt. Brießg nit, es geyht dr gut, daß ich stirbe, es heiteres Leben wartet dir jetzt, wie de t ysvrdisen” (VI, 420).

Like every other tenet of Gotthelf’s philosophy, this one manifests itself even at the most prosaic level - as, of course, the universality of Gotthelfian order demands. So when he devotes a chapter (VI, Chapter 5) to the subject of midwifery, it is not just lip service to his appointed task of educating the rural population in matters medical. His strictures on the role of the midwife arise not just from common-sense, but from his belief in the general danger of hubris:

Gar viele Hebammen bleiben nicht mehr Sagefemmes, sondern überschreiten die Schranken, welche ihnen gezogen sind, wagen sich in Gebiete, die ihnen durchaus unbekannt sind, wo sich

74 Knellwolf’s suggestion (in Holl and Waber, ed., p. 187) that the curate is a parallel figure to the quack doctors is difficult to understand: the quacks offer an enticing blend of the metaphysical and the physical, whereas the curate seeks to ignore physical reality. In this respect he is in fact a parallel figure to Dr Rudi, who concentrates on the physical to the exclusion of the spiritual.


77 Kunz (p. 60) asserts that “Gotthelf strebt die Gleichheit aller an und lebt doch ganz von der ständischen Ordnung”.

78 Cf. Steiner, pp. 132-33.
nichts sehen und nichts als tapfen, ungefähr wie die Kühe werden getappet haben während der ägyptischen Finsternis.

Der Hebamme ist ihr Gebiet und die Zeit ihres Wirkens durch Gesetz und Natur ziemlich scharf begrenzt; wenn sie will und bescheiden bleibt, sie kann nicht irren. [. . .]

Nun gibt es aber eben viele Hebammen, sie bannen sich in diese Grenzen nicht, halten sich nicht in ihrem Gebiete, überheben sich, fallen in Dünkel und Sünde, ja es gibt deren, sie heben sich über den Arzt, urteilen über ihn, als wenn sie Professor und er ihr Zögling gewesen wäre. [. . .] Es mag zuweilen sein, daß eine ältere Hebamme in einzelnen Hand- und Kunstgriffen erfahrenerer ist als ein junger Arzt; das macht sie aber nicht zum Doktor, sowenig einer ein Gelehrter ist, wenn er Bücher binden oder abstäuben kann. (VI, 89-90)

Before we conclude that for all its progressiveness, the need for stability in Gotthelfian order, its pigeonholing of the individual and its exclusion of secular political systems make him intolerant or conservative, we must acknowledge the quality of generosity which is a hallmark of his writing.

Specific though the demands are which Gotthelf makes of the human world and the individuals in it, his novels betray his fondness for social units and people who do not conform to those demands. Even in Der Bauernspiegel, his bleakest novel, in which Gotthelf relentlessly exposes the canker beneath the veneer of the community of Unverstand, we cannot but become fond, as Jeremias does, of the thoroughly corrupt "christliche Zigeuner" who live off precisely that canker.

Certainly it seems in Anne Bäbi Jowäger above all that he has considerable sympathy for characters and social structures which, by all his own standards, are perverse. Anne Bäbi’s own household is a good example of this. Before Meyeli’s arrival it is spiritually destitute, permanently battened down against Anne Bäbi’s capricious wrath, ignorant of its own potential and suspicious of enlightened influences. Yet Gotthelf, even whilst he invites us to see how dangerous Anne Bäbi’s regime is, how benighted the household, positively delights in its archaic mechanics and even in the monstrousness of Anne Bäbi herself. The portrait of a household segregated between the feuding women in the kitchen and the stoical menfolk in the barn has been cited here as an indictment of that household, and it certainly seems inimical to Gotthelf’s ideal of the communicative family as the building block of society. However, it is also a comic masterpiece, like the descriptions of Anne Bäbi and her campaigns, and Sami’s astute manipulation of his mistress’s contrary nature, all of which are tinged with a definite warmth.79

There is similar relish in the passages describing the unsentimental approach towards the business of marriage taken by the rural community. One of Anne Bäbi’s first forays into the marriage market on behalf of her son is literally that - a visit to the market at Solothurn to negotiate with the mother of a prospective daughter in law, whilst Hansli is hardly more sentimental:

Wider dsWybe hatte er nichts, sagte Hansli; das sei ihm öppe graglych, ob eine mehr oder eine minder; aber es dueche ihn, es sollte öppe eini i dr Nächtsami z’ha sy; er hätte immer gehört, nüt zämmezelt, mit Kühne, die man auf dem Mārit kaufe, sei man immer bschisse. (V, 127)

79 Swales (pp. 71ff.) draws attention to the psychological sensitivity of Gotthelf; Mädi, he notes, is a secondary character (and indeed she is also an utterly unenlightened one) - yet Gotthelf grants her moments of centre stage such as when her ridiculous-seeming affection for Jakobli is represented in such a way as to give a full and sympathetic account of her emotional experience. I would suggest that even in these passages there is a note of comedy - but it is a gentle humour which only adds to the pathos and by no means devalues Mädi’s emotions.
Gotthelf constantly returns to the theme of the market, unable to conceal his fascination with a key element in the functioning of village life. Here we are treated to the details of Jakob’s lesson from the wonderfully laconic Sami on how to get value for money at the cattle market:

Drei Sachen solle er nie vergessen, so werde es schon gut kommen. Wenn er bei Gewicht handle, so müsse er immer daran denken, daß zwischen lebendig und tot wägen ein großer Unterschied sei; es wisse das noch mancher Ratsherr nicht. Wenn er frage, ob eine Kuh trage, und der Verkäufer sage ja und verfluche sich, daß sie trage, so müsse er sich wohl achen, ob derselbe etwa über die Kühe hereinliege oder sich mit den Ellbogen darauf lehne. Tue derselbe dies, so müsse er sagen, er sehe wohl, daß sie trage, aber er meine nicht da Wäg, mit einem zweibeinigen Kalb wüßte er nichts zu machen. Und endlich müsse er von allem, was man ihm sage, gäb wie man sich verschwöre, immer nur das Halbe glauben, und das sei manchmal noch zuviel. (VI, 309-10)

Once again we are faced with an apparent dichotomy between Gotthelf’s ideal vision and the benevolent attitude inherent in this sort of earthy, materialistic realism.

Moreover, the close of the novel throws up yet more problems. Dr Rudi’s demise is the occasion for a public display of mourning in the village which, the narrator notes wryly, is something of a contrast to the way in which he was taken for granted in his lifetime. Nevertheless, the sorrow of the community is undoubtedly genuine - and it is a sorrow which, unmistakably, we are invited to share. How does this square with the fact that, as we have seen, Dr Rudi is set up as a counterpart to the curate, as a model of a character whose death is at the very least emblematic, if not actually a result, of the shortcomings in his Weltanschauung?

The poignancy is underlined by the final paragraphs describing Meyeli’s particularly acute sorrow. Although there is no question of her revolting against her modest place in life, there is no doubt that she experiences a despair after Rudi’s death which suggests that although her influence will continue to transform the Jowager household, Meyeli will never fully flower there: “Es war ihm nicht, als ob ein Mensch ihm gestorben, sondern als ob ein Licht ihm untergegangen, und als ob es jetzt mit Jakobli und Kindern in dunklen Ängsten wandern müßte seinen Lebensweg” (VI, 430).

This need for stoicism has been adumbrated in the passages in which Gotthelf states directly that sometimes perfect happiness is not achievable, but that the individual must make the best of their circumstances, fulfil their allotted role:

Da ganz besonders sind dem Menschen Gottes Ratschläge unerforschlich; in tiefer Demut muß er sich beugen, wenn Gott es ihm verwehrt, das Beste, welches er in sich trägt, zur äußern Gestaltung kommen zu lassen; da ists, wo der Mensch das stille Genüen erlernen muß, das zufrieden ist mit dem Besitz, wenn die Welt ihn auch nicht sieht, zufrieden bleibt in dem Bewußtsein, von Gott gekannt zu sein, zufrieden zu sein, höhere Kräfte in sich zu tragen als die Welt zu deren Entfaltung Raum gibt. (VI, 308)

All this seems rather to call into question the idea that enlightened individuals, via their participation in the social order, can achieve spiritual fulfilment. It seems rather as though the real world is irredeemably imperfect, and that enlightenment involves resignation rather than the achievement of paradise on earth. Even the pastor and his household are somewhat problematic. The pastor is in many ways an ideal shepherd to his flock, a figure who is at once profound and earthy. Yet even he sometimes seems
incapable of communicating properly with the likes of Hansli. We see Hansli politely listen to the pastor’s philosophizing and then walk off shaking his head at it all, as set in his ways as ever. The pastor and the members of his family are as ideal a unit as we encounter in the novel - and yet, well-meaning though they all are, they fail to give the curate the role, either in the family or in the church, which would have integrated rather than alienated him. Must we conclude that Gotthelf actually believes reality to be irredeemable?

Responses to the novel’s last few chapters and the general issue of whether Gotthelf really intends to present us with a comprehensive existential order - and whether he succeeds in doing so - have been varied, but most commentators have recognized that there is an interpretative problem that has to be confronted. Fehr addresses the problem of the positive impression of a spiritually unenlightened character such as Rudi, and of the bond between the doctor and Meyeli, by turning Rudi into a Christ-like figure and - rather summarily - equating Meyeli with him. Rudi, he recognizes, is explicitly hostile to the Christian church. However, for all that, he believes that Rudi is in fact a true Christian - by virtue of his selfless deeds. His is “ein geheiligtes Dasein”. Meyeli is elevated to the same status: “In ihrem unbedingten Einsatz und in der Absolutheit ihres christlichen Wirkens gleichen sich Meyeli und Doktor Ruedi und fühlen sich einander verbunden über alle Schranken der menschlichen Ordnungen, der Moral, der Bildung und Gesellschaft hinaus.”

This is an assessment which explicitly separates the human order as it really is from the spiritual order: the mystic union between Meyeli and Rudi is on a higher plane than mere “menschliche Ordnungen”. It is certainly true that both Meyeli and Rudi are selfless servants to those around them - but in his anxiety to prove their equivalence, Fehr takes liberties with the evidence of the text. Rudi is undoubtedly hostile to the church, but Meyeli never exhibits similar tendencies. Meyeli, he notes, conveniently never expresses her faith: “ja, wir vernehmen nicht einmal, wo und wann es zu beten pflegt”. The same in fact could be said of many of Gotthelf’s lay characters, whose faith is never called into question, and the evidence suggests that Meyeli is as pious as any of them: at one point, for instance, we are told of her distress at being unable to attend church. Nor does she share many of Rudi’s other characteristics: he can accept no limits, whilst she is a model of modesty; his impatience with his patients is in contrast to her tolerance of Anne Bäbi’s excesses and Jakobli’s deficiencies. Fehr also pays scant regard to the text when he ignores all the evidence that, for all Rudi’s “Nächstenliebe und selbstlosen Einsatz”, his spiritual shortcomings - which manifest themselves in his inability to come to terms with his limitations - actually handicap him in the real world. This does not square with the gulf which Fehr’s reading implies between the human order and the spiritual one.

Moreover, Fehr’s explanations, whilst they undoubtedly assign both Rudi and Meyeli value, can do so only by elevating them to a higher spiritual plane. This is a strategy which goes obviously astray when Fehr attempts to apply it to a character such as Hansli. Hansli is another of those figures whom we are certainly invited to find sympathetic, and whose value we must therefore somehow explain. However, Fehr’s assessment of him is somewhat over-generous: he claims that Hansli is imbued with “christlischem

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80 Fehr, Jeremias Gotthelf: Poet und Prophet, p. 182.
81 Ibid.
82 Ibid.
83 Ibid.
84 Ibid.
Glauben und christlicher Verantwortung. Hansli trägt und durchsauert diese christliche Gemeinschaft".\textsuperscript{84} Hansli, it is true, is always well-meaning. As Fehr eagerly points out, he acquits himself admirably during his wife’s suicide attempts and delivers a very objective “Krankenbericht”, but this is hardly enough to transform someone who is in essence “ein braver Mann” to the status of a Bernese saint. For much of the novel Hansli actually shirks responsibility rather than embodying it: his one conscious policy is never to rock the boat. As we have seen, he is crippled by an overwhelming fatalism, which explains his failure to deposit his money in a bank or have his child inoculated - Christian faith perverted into lassitude. The real challenge in the case of characters such as Hansli is not to prove that they are greater than they seem, but to explain why Gotthelf should cherish them, and invite us to assign them value, as they really are. As we have already noted, Gotthelf is clearly fond even of the dreadful Anne Bäbi.

Waidson in effect suggests that the final chapter of the novel is so open and troubling as to undermine the perfection of the order Gotthelf has constructed. He calls it “morally incomplete”, but believes that the novel is artistically more impressive for this. Its artistic integrity is preserved at the expense of a flaw in its philosophical thrust.\textsuperscript{85} This view is not far removed from Muschg’s contention, taking the unenlightened but sympathetic Jowäger household as an example, that Anne Bäbi Jowäger’s message is that “wie immer bei ihm [Gotthelf], Leben größer sei als jede Theorie. Er weiß vor der erschütternden Grundfrage keine unfehlbare Antwort”\textsuperscript{86} Again, the suggestion is that Gotthelf found himself having to choose between a catch-all philosophy of order and an affirmation of the value of life as it is really lived, and chose the latter course.

Martin Swales similarly claims that Gotthelf presents “eine utopische Möglichkeit” - the one inherent in the image of the two integrated books - “die Wirklichkeit aber, die Gotthelf schildert, weicht immer wieder von diesem utopischen Ineinander ab. Denn meistens erleben die Menschen kein Ineinander, sondern vielmehr ein Durcheinander”\textsuperscript{87} However, he draws attention to the immense value inherent in Gotthelf’s vision of reality. Illustrated in the aggressive didacticism of an Anne Bäbi or a figure such as the curate is the danger of “eine Einengung des Menschenseins”\textsuperscript{88} - of a denial of human potential.

Gotthelf’s philosophy is not as schematic as that of the doctor or the curate, and therefore neither is his novel. Both the doctor and the curate are, as we have seen, unable to square their ideals with the actuality of the world around them. Gotthelf does not strive to do this: for him actuality is not ideal, but none the less a part of the overall scheme of things. Certainly we are invited to see Rudi’s spiritual failings as contributing factors in his demise, but they are not his raison d’être in the novel as they would be in a narrowly didactic work. That the celebration of Rudi’s heroic but truncated life becomes the setting for the work’s finale is testimony to the fact that whilst Rudi’s potential was limited by those failings, his value is real, and resounds throughout the overall order by virtue of the simple fact of its reality in the temporal world. Gotthelf does not try to make his ideal triumph over an obstreperous reality, nor to transcend that reality: he locates the actual and imperfect within his ideal and thus invests existence with such value that humanity becomes an overriding quality.

\textsuperscript{84} Fehr, \textit{Jeremias Gotthelf: Poet und Prophet}, p. 191.
\textsuperscript{85} Waidson, pp. 107-09.
\textsuperscript{86} Muschg, \textit{Jeremias Gotthelf: Eine Einführung in seine Werke}, p. 82.
\textsuperscript{87} Swales, p. 74.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., p. 75.
We have seen that Gotthelf’s insistence on the importance of context, of evaluation in relative rather than absolute terms, permeates his writing and is as important in *Anne Bäbi Jowäger* as it is in *Der Bauernspiegel* and *Geld und Geist*. When Jakobli finally emerges to take his proper place in the household, we are told that “er hatte nicht viel geredet, darum desto mehr Zeit, nachzudenken über alles, was er sah, und die Dinge, die er gesehen, zu vergleichen untereinander” (VI, 129). The scale of Gotthelf’s order - one thinks of the reference to the “Ordnung der Sterne, zu welcher ich mich zähle” (VI, 211) - means that it can absorb deviations from it, for they do not threaten a hierarchy which so dwarfs them in terms of time and space. It is an “ideal” which can accommodate that which is not ideal.89

The significance of context for Gotthelf - as a frame within which relative judgements can be made - also underlies another of his beliefs which alienated him from many radical political movements, but which also makes him tolerant in his writing of apparently “deviant” modes of existence. For Gotthelf, progress cannot be achieved by revolution, only by evolution.90 Gotthelf’s opposition to communism was founded on the issue of its attitude to materiality, as we have seen, but Tanner points out that he also saw in it the threat of the violent breakdown of order: “Den sozialen und vor allem den kulturellen Wandel fasste er weniger als einen Prozess steter Anpassung auf, sondern er deutete ihn mehr als einen Bruch der Regeln, als ein Aufbrechen der symbolischen Ordnung der Gesellschaft.”91 The significance of this lies in the fact that for Gotthelf, only social order allows the individual to participate in the overall order - so social order has an inherent value and any sudden, fundamental upheaval becomes a dangerous phenomenon. Even an imperfect order is better than none at all.92 Interfering in Anne Bäbi’s regime would in fact represent a revolution within the Jowäger household, and the pastor speaks for Gotthelf when he points out the danger of a sudden assault on a deeply entrenched organization to his nephew, who wants to remove Mädi, the maid, from the household. Even the identity of the seemingly indomitable Anne Bäbi is actually defined in relative terms, by her relationship to her sparring partner:

_Du aber, Rudi, vergreife dich nicht an der alten Dienstmagd, dem Mädi, und mute den Leuten ja nicht zu, daß sie dieselbe forttn! Ich kann wirklich nicht begreifen, wie dir nicht gleich eingefallen ist, daß geradezu die entgegengesetzte Wirkung hervorbringen würde. Die Magd und die Frau sind wohl an die dreißig Jahre bineinander, und das Kifeln, welches dir aufgefallen, dauert ebenfalls an die dreißig Jahre, sie haben sich beständig gezankt und doch nie entzweit [...]_.

_[...] Entfernt aber die Magd, so wird Anne Bäbi neu aufgereg_ _t für die Folgen welche dies hätte, stehe ich dir nicht. (VI, 282-83)"

It is this coming to terms with, and affirmation of, the world as Gotthelf finds it, which makes *Anne Bäbi Jowäger* a greater novel than *Geld und Geist*. It is true that *Geld und Geist* does not shirk from engaging with the real world, but its ultimate goal is to present a picture of potential realized. In

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89 Holl, *Gotthelf im Zeitgefücht*, p. 114, suggests that Gotthelf rejects systems. I (differentiating between Gotthelf’s ideal world and his vision of an overall order) would contend that the “system” of his universal order is so open, so all-embracing, that it obviates such a rejection. Cf. Sengle, p. 901: “Gotthelf spotet zwar bei jeder Gelegenheit über die “Ideen”, die “Systeme” der Philosophen und Wissenschaftler, aber er ist auf seine Art selbst ein Denker, ein Weiser, ja wie die Gotthelfforschung mit einem gewissen Recht zu betonen pflegt, ein Prophet.”

90 Cf. Steiner, p. 113.

91 Tanner, Albert, in Holl and Waber, eds, p. 58.

92 Neuenschwander rather overstates Gotthelf’s affirmation of order in the face of change; it is an affirmation which not only takes account of, but is founded on the capacity for progress through order (pp. 105-06; however, cf. also pp. 128 and 139).
Ann Bäbi Jowäger there is no such agenda. Gotthelf portrays an imperfect world which remains untransformed, and it is the dynamic mode of his portrait which succeeds, more than the preaching of the narrator or the pastor, in locating that world within his vision of a universal order.

Where the direct moralizing of Gotthelf and his pastor leaves off, Gotthelf the novelist takes over and constructs for us an epic order.93 Emil Staiger suggests that whilst the novel is an outstanding achievement, it is not a work of art of the highest class. He believes that in the second volume Gotthelf sets up “eine höhere geistige Ordnung”,94 but insists that Gotthelf fails to weave the “höhere geistige Ordnung” into the abundance of real life in the first volume and thus undermines the artistic merit of the whole. Staiger acknowledges:

Das der Tendenz entlaufene Leben, das sich so frei und übermütig in ersten Band getummt hat, wird wieder eingefangen und festgehalten von einer höheren Macht, ausgerichtet auf einen Geist, der alles einzelne nicht nur in vollkommener Pracht gedeihen läßt, sondern zugleich von innen erheilt und mit der tiefsten Bedeutung begaß.95

Yet throughout the novel, Gotthelf succeeds in investing the plethora of physical reality with a fundamental value by means which are not didactic and are all the more effective for it.96 Its crudest manifestations are perhaps “speaking names” such as “Jowäger”, “Unverstand” and “Gutmiütigen”, but elsewhere he achieves eloquence for signifiers by more subtle means. Gotthelf transfigures physicality: just as a pile of manure is “schön” and even “appetitlich” (V, 8) for Gotthelf by virtue of its being part of a greater structure and bespeaking positive qualities (it is “das eigentliche Herz des Berner Bauernhofes” (V, 8)), so Anne Bäbi’s fiefdom, however corrupt, is, is perhaps even despite itself, a part of Gotthelf’s universe - and Gotthelf’s portrait of it conveys this implicitly by its sheer sympathetic energy. He may criticize the eccentricities of individual men and women and the flaws in the way they interact - but the triumph of his fiction is to infuse them with positive worth, as well as setting up a context to validate that worth.

Gotthelf’s general narrative style has always been a matter of some controversy and his work has often been seen to lack aesthetic structure. His many digressions, abrupt changes in tone, sudden character changes all bespeak the well documented tendency for the novel to take over the writer (nowhere more dramatically than in Anne Bäbi Jowäger’s metamorphosis from pamphlet to two-volume novel!) - but his supporters suggest that these traits simply reflect his vision of reality. Günther, for example, concedes that Gotthelf’s work exhibits formal unevenness, but justifies that unevenness as a reflection of the author’s Weltanschauung: “Sinnenhaftes und Geistiges sind bei ihm in stetem Umschlag begriffen wie das Leben selbst, das im selben Augenblick Gegensätzliches zusammenführt.”97 Neuenschwander, in a not dissimilar defence, believes that Gotthelf’s eccentricity as a narrator - for example, his tendency to digress - is successful because it arises from the breadth of his vision of overall harmony; in effect this means that the nature of Gotthelf’s vision of universal order allows him virtually

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93 Swales suggests that “Bitzius” and his didacticism gives way to the triumph of realism in the writing of “Gotthelf” the novelist (p. 77).
94 Staiger, p. 228.
95 Staiger, p. 238.
96 In this respect I do, unlike Neuenschwander (p. 108), locate Gotthelf’s greatness in his realism and not in those moments which point more explicitly to the “wholeness” of his vision of order. It is precisely in the vigour of his realism that he achieves that vision as a novelist and not as a philosopher - or preacher.
97 Günther, “Jeremias Gotthelf, die grösste epische Begabung der deutschen Literatur”, p. 190.
unlimited poetic license. Gotthelf’s narration is done more justice in Friedrich Sengle’s suggestion that the “Stilmischung” is an attempt to open up the closed artistic form of the novel. Michael Parkinson notes the fact that author and characters often seem to be in a tug of war, and he observes that whilst Gotthelf’s “restless” narration exhibits many typically realist traits (the use of material items - clothes, for instance - to achieve characterization, generalization about social groups), there are many other styles which have little to do with realist writing (a biblical style, the polemical sermonizing, the fairy-tale mode, the tone of the “simple moral tale”). He argues that the switches between styles may have to do with the fact that Gotthelf, as a rural writer who was aware of addressing a largely metropolitan audience, knew that he needed to call on a whole range of narrative registers and prevent his readers from making assumptions based on their preconceptions of rural life. However, Parkinson supports the negative response of many other critics to the conclusion of Anne Bäbi Jowager, finding the affection between Meyeli and the doctor problematic and disruptive. Werner Kohlschmidt finds the conclusion too open: “Der Schluß […] ist nicht überzeugend, weil er das Wesentliche offen läßt, unausgetragen, im Gegensatz zum Abschluß von Geld und Geist, dessen Eindeutigkeit gerade im Vergleich mit dem von Anne Bäbi Jowager erst in seiner vollen Klarheit sichtbar wird.”

I suggest that the basis which sustains Gotthelf’s narrative act is the sometimes breathtaking assertion of the validity of given, material reality. It is precisely because Anne Bäbi Jowager - above all its conclusion - communicates this reality, rather than attempting to present a portrait of ideal circumstances (as in Geld und Geist) or itemizing the factors which suppress such ideal circumstances (as in Der Bauernspiegel) that it is the novel most totally expressive of its author’s vision and abilities. He does not need to transform his characters or their emotions or their society into anything more profound than they really are in order to affirm their validity. Rudi and Meyeli are not saints and they are not equivalent to one another: Rudi’s “martyrdom” is born of hubris, whilst Meyeli’s selflessness is born of humility. Neither is their relationship a unio mystica: it is simply unresolved affection. The final paragraphs are a monument to Gotthelf’s refusal to strip his characters or their emotions of their dignity by welding them into a closed structure. Gotthelf’s order is an open one: and so is this novel, the work which best represents it:

Als es Abend ward, die Lichter angeziündet wurden, viele Leute heimgekehrt waren, kam Jakobli ins Dorf und fragte Meyeli nach. Heimgekehrt war es nicht, und niemand wollte es gesehen haben. (VI, 430)

98 Neuenschwander, pp. 142-43.
99 Sengle, p. 936: “Die stilistische Vielschichtigkeit zerstört die geschlossene Form der Erzählung und öffnet sie den verschiedenen außerliterarischen Zwecken, die der Schweizer im Auge hat.” (Sengle’s italics).
100 Parkinson, pp. 134-35.
101 Parkinson, pp. 135-39.
102 Parkinson does, however, suggest that these style switches are often so abrupt as to prevent a fruitful interrelationship (p. 144). Cf. Bauer, Winfried. Jeremias Gotthelf: Ein Vertreter der Geistlichen Restauration der Biedermeierzeit (Stuttgart, 1975), who also discusses the different tones in Gotthelf’s writing (pp. 129-36). Bauer suggests that Gotthelf is simply aiming to keep his readers alert and entertain them, and contends in any case that the changes of tone are disconcertingly abrupt only in the early works (p. 134).
104 Kohlschmidt, Dichter, Tradition und Zeitgeist, p. 259.
105 Kohlschmidt’s criticism of the “openness” of the conclusion to Anne Bäbi Jowager (quoted above) is perhaps surprising in the light of the following definition of Gotthelf’s structural principal: “Die Romanstruktur, die Gotthelf anerkennt, ist […] nicht eine vorentworffene und dann nach dem Gesetz des Gleichgewichtes ausgestaltete, sondern sie folgt dem Leben selber, wie es nach eigenem Gesetz sich entwickelt: nicht ideal, sondern real” (Dichter, Tradition und Zeitgeist, p. 308).
Part 2:

CONRAD FERDINAND MEYER
For many of Meyer’s literary contemporaries, order seems above all to mean social order: the realist writers of the German speaking lands share an acute sense of the importance to the individual of the social context. Even as a prose writer, however, Conrad Ferdinand Meyer could hardly be described as a chronicler of his society. As a poet, he not only seems to fail to engage with his contemporary social reality, but actually repeatedly glories in escaping from it. It is hardly surprising that Meyer the poet should generally have been seen as an aesthete, striving to rise above the emotions of petty human life and grasp hold of something greater. Thus Arthur Häny, reviewing the progress of the Historisch-Kritische Aufgabe der Werke Conrad Ferdinand Meyers, writes of the poet that, in contrast to Hölderlin or Rilke:

Sein Grundproblem ist sehr fälschlich, einfach sogar, will mir scheinen. Die Überwindung des irdischen Karmas, die Läuterung der von der Welt verführten Seele im Angesicht des allzeit nahenden Todes, der Umschlag von der ‘irdischen’ zur ‘himmlischen Liebe’, das ist sein Grundproblem.¹

The implication is that order figures in Meyer’s poetry only in so far as it is an order alternative to the immediate, social world, an order created by the orderly architectonics of the poetic form.²

A glance at a poem such as Himmelsnähe seems to illustrate Meyer’s failure to address the structures of human coexistence.³ The notion of an ascent to the level described in the title recalls Goethe’s Ganymed, although, typically for Meyer, his poem is far less dynamic than Goethe’s. Ganymed soars upwards towards his maker, overcome by his feelings; the persona in Himmelsnähe is already located close to heaven at the opening of the poem, and the experience is not expressed as a rush of emotion, but as arising explicitly from the overwhelming stillness of the alpine environment. The poem is so evocative precisely because it is not straining its seams to inject grandeur, but rather echoes the “sounding silence” and conveys the scale of the scene through a series of modest observations - the sea of ice and the soaring peak are set against the fragile spring flowers, the constant roar of the waterfall, swirling in the wind, is set against the whistles of a marmot.⁴ The list of nouns at the end of the third strophe, “Ein Wind, ein Strom, ein Atem, ein Gebet!” creates a balance and interplay between movement and stasis, sound and silence.

At no point is the mundane life beneath this lofty retreat even mentioned; neither is any human emotion. The final line, summarizing the situation, states simply (albeit in a striking reversal of a more conventional formula) that “ich empfinde, daß Gott bei mir sei”. In other poems dealing with a “liberated” Ich, the sense of escape from the emotional experience of everyday life is explicit:

So sieht der freigewordne Geist  
Des Lebens überwundne Qual.  
(Michelangelo und seine Statuen, I, 113)

or:

O wie süß erkaltest mir das Herz!  
O wie weich verstummen Lust und Schmerz!  
(Im Spätboot, I, 80)

It is for poems such as these, in which a state of “Leidlosigkeit” is achieved, that Meyer is best known, Eingeliegte Ruder (I, 78) having become paradigmatic, and it is true that many of his finest poems are in this vein.

However, we should not conclude that Meyer is capable only of celebrating stasis. I want to look at a poem which seems exceptional in his Gedichte - one which even Henel, whose study of Meyer’s lyric poetry is the most enquiring and widest ranging to date, alludes to only to point out how unusual its subject matter is. I shall seek to suggest that precisely the exceptional poem may not only be typical of Meyer’s lyric achievement - but may also help us to understand that achievement rather more completely than the canonical poems alone allow.

Hohe Station (I, 129) stands out not only because it deals with a failure to isolate the self from society, but because, uniquely amongst Meyer’s poems, it incorporates both technology (the telegraph) and references to contemporary events (the assassination of President Garfield, Bismarck’s differences with the Kaiser and the Pope’s declaration of a Confessional Year). Hohe Station deserves some attention in its own right, for it is surely a supremely successful poem. Because of its uniqueness, it has proven tempting either to ignore it, or to force a reading of it which allows it to be subsumed under the standard reading of the poems which surround it in the Gedichte. In her article on the poem - which at least rescued it from obscurity - Mary Crichton rather tends to do the latter. She believes that the persona of the poem is in a condition of such balance (the motif, incidentally, which recurs in every interpretation of Eingeliegte Ruder) that the intrusion of the outer world can be accommodated without disturbing his serenity. The self is at once above the rest of humanity and at peace with it, and she takes issue with the suggestion that the sound of the telegraph - that is, the intrusion of contemporary social reality - is unwelcome. It is true that the attitude of the end of the poem seems positive: “die Gebärde der Zeit” is

6 Cf. Henel, pp. 166-72. The idea of “Leidlosigkeit” is spelt out in the poem Michelangelo und seine Statuen. Wiesmann means the same condition when he refers to “die Ruhe des Unvergänglichen” (Wiesmann, Louis, Conrad Ferdinand Meyer: Der Dichter des Todes und der Maske (Bern, 1958), p. 153). Both the lack of emotion and the sense of permanence are fundamental to it, and both these qualities clearly distance the experiencing self from the contrasting reality of fleeting, emotional human life.
7 Henel, p. 40.
compared to a pulse, "beseelend den Körper der Menschheit". Yet if we look at the moment and the
manner of the intrusion, it transpires that the initial reaction of the persona is indeed unambiguously
negative. After the first half of the poem’s description of an isolated mountain hut, the sound of the
telegraph is greeted with the exclamation: "Jammer!"; the sound is unsympathetic to the ear: "Ein
schrilles Gesurre"; the “bell” - which is seen rather than heard - is “schwarzlich”.

We have, then, a self whose instincts are, it would seem, to flee his own age and who resents its
catching up with him. The two lines following the ringing of the bell, however, suggest that if he were
ever to succeed in escaping his age, the consequences would be fatal. The suggestion is made forcefully
through the simile that likens the humming of the telegraph - symbol of the contemporary human world -
to the human pulse, giving life to the human body. The heavy, pulsating rhythm of these final two lines
gives the end of the poem tremendous impact (Mary Crichton’s discussion of the poem’s rhythm
strangely overlooks its most striking aspect, this final incarnation of the beating pulse). The introduction
of rhyme - the only instance of it in the whole poem - further underscores this. Effectively, the human
identity is being defined in terms of the Zeitgeist: humankind is merely a corpse if it is not imbued with
the spirit of the age.

Two factors persuade me that this is neither a maverick nor an insincere poem. First, as I have
suggested, it has an innate, tight-lipped power which is utterly convincing. Second - and this is the factor
which points us towards the help Hohe Station may offer us in our reading of other Meyer poems - the
sentiment expressed is not, in fact, completely at odds with the inward leanings of the better known
poems. This is why it is so important that, although “die Gebärde der Zeit“ is nothing less than a life
giving force, its arrival on the secluded scene provokes horror, not delight. Hohe Station, far from
representing the converse of the introversion of poems such as Im Späthboot or Himmelsnähe,
acknowledges precisely the same longing for escape which they do: that is why the self has sought out
such a spot, and that is why he greets the buzzing of the telegraph with the cry of “Jammer!”.

What does make this poem exceptional is the explicitness with which it characterizes introversion as a fatal instinct,
for a human being who retreats from his or her contemporary social context is effectively retreating from
life altogether.

Mary Crichton’s argument that the poetic persona has achieved a balance between the ideal
world of the mountains and the real world represented by the news on the telegraph rests partly on her
identification of a similar balance in the poem itself: the first half describes the persona’s lofty, remote
surroundings, the second half the arrival of news from the human world. Jean Pierre Bünter, whose
interpretation of the second half of the poem is closer to the one given here, also accepts that the first six
lines are unadulterated nature poetry. He sees a complete “Umschlag” in the middle of the poem; in the
first half the persona is high and alone in his subjective domain; in the second he is “ent-subjektiviert”.

Even if the first half of the poem really were as unambiguous as Crichton suggests, the self’s
anguish on hearing the telegraph and the conviction of the final two lines would tend to undermine her
thesis that the speaker’s position above the rest of humanity allows him to come to terms with it with
equanimity. However, if we look more carefully at the first six lines we may see that even prior to the

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"schrilles Gesurre" the notion of escape is subverted. The poet may be high in the mountains, but he is on a pass, by definition a place of transit. It is quiet - "Heut ist vorüber die Post, heut bin ich oben allein" - but the repetition of "heut" emphasizes the temporary nature of the isolation: the persona has not achieved lasting solitude, merely a respite. By the end of the poem, the suggestion that he is "oben allein" has been utterly undermined by his having been relocated firmly back in his own era. Yet even the claim in the third line that there is no noise around him, is immediately, and characteristically for Meyer, qualified (this is the "sounding silence" of poems such as Im Spätboot, Himmelsnähe and Nachtgeräusche (I, 26)): the silence is rendered imperfect: "Nur der Specht hättet“. 

The anthropomorphic descriptions of the animals around the telegraph station surely have a greater significance than an invocation of the fairy tale mode as Bünter suggests, although that invocation would in itself constitute a questioning of the validity of the persona's experience.\(^{11}\)

The use of the verb "hätteten" to describe the noise of the woodpecker is of course unsurprising; it is nevertheless a metaphor from the human world. More telling, however, is the description of the squirrel as: "Spielend auf offenem Plan; denn es ist Herr im Bezirk". The last three words of the description of the squirrel are imported directly from the social construct the persona is ostensibly fleeing: he describes the absence of a human community in terms borrowed from that very community. Even before he is awoken from his contemplation by the telegraph, the persona is imposing his human, socially defined mode of perception on his surroundings. He has failed to escape his era, he is still able to feel its pulse beating inside him, an essential even if unwelcome definition of his existence. 

If we accept that Meyer's poetry is built upon such a clear and honest view of life, it follows that human fulfilment must take place within the social structure, and not amid glorious solitude and the perception of some "Greater Reality". This may seem to contradict utterly the message of poems such as Himmelsnähe, cited above as an example of the typical Meyer persona, exulting in the isolation of the mountain peaks. Yet if we return to look more carefully at Himmelsnähe, we find that even here the motif of escape from social reality is accompanied by the shadow of death. The notion of death is, of course, to a degree implicit even in the title of the poem: the persona is already on the verge of the afterlife. However, initially at least, we are dealing with a real individual, temporarily located above the rest of the world. That his yen to ascend beyond his fellows is a dangerous one is emphasized from the start: his situation is insecure, "an schmalem Felsengrate". The peak before him is like a weapon, sharp and gleaming: "die Silberzacke". Helmut Koopmann traces the evolution of the language in the poem through its typically unspontaneous genesis: "Silberzacke" replaced "Silberhorn", while "blendend" was at earlier stages variously "strahlend", "schimmernd" and "leuchtend". This, I would contend, demonstrates a consistent attempt on the part of the poet to increase the sense of menace in the high altitude environment (whilst the exchange of a "Glocke" which was "klein" and "weiß" for one which is "zart" surely indicates a desire to suggest vulnerability within that environment).\(^{12}\) More telling still, but also overlooked by previous commentators, is the implication of the first two lines of the final stanza which define the

\(^{11}\) Cf. Bünter, p. 42.

constellation of the elements - including the persona - in the poem. The persona is situated alongside the marmot, whose puny whistle is contrasted to the “heisrer Schrei” of the hawk, above them. The wanderer, therefore, is equated with the prey whilst the predator soars in the heavens above (the ambiguity of “Himmel” which is so crucial to the title of the poem is implied here as well, though the word itself is not used). The very realm towards which he has striven jeopardizes his survival. The “Greater Reality” cannot be visited with impunity. We thus have two mutually exclusive contexts: the metaphysical one, longed for but fatal, and the purely human world, which Meyer’s personae consistently crave to quit, but which is the only one in which the human identity can survive.

Clearly Meyer senses an almost tangible order amid the cool harmony of the high peaks. We might be tempted, therefore, to conclude that he despairs of finding a significant pattern in a life seemingly so chaotic and is instead drawn to seek it beyond the grave. This would however be a simplification of the truth. In fact we have a conflict between two separate orders: the one which sustains the human identity and the one which is attainable only at the expense of that identity. In the perfect order he senses a stability and metaphysical significance which he misses within the social construct. Meyer is manifestly drawn towards the order of aesthetic perfection: but he recognizes that the attraction it holds for him is at least as morbid as it is “noble”. He asserts but also undermines the value of the aesthetic construct.

The idea that Meyer’s ideal as it is represented in his poetry is often overshadowed by the implication of death is by no means a new one, and biographical studies of the poet have always identified a morbid aspect to his character - hardly a surprising trait, perhaps, given his family history. Indisputably, Meyer’s life and writing were coloured by the suicidal tendencies so rampant in his family. In celebrations of poems which paint a picture of absolute balance, there is often a sense of relief that in such poems the poet seems at least to achieve his ideal without recourse to suggestions of the extinction of the self.

I would argue, however, that although death is often implicit in his poems, his longing is not for death as such. Rather, it is for the sense of order he perceives beyond the social sphere. It is indeed a desire for Leidlosigkeit: for the clarity, coolness and calm he so often senses high in the mountains. But Leidlosigkeit, for Meyer, is life-denying. Meyer recognizes that movement away from the social sphere is inevitably movement away from life - and is nonetheless drawn in that direction.

There are many poems which might serve to illustrate Meyer’s articulation of the moment of withdrawal from the human world and the motif of death which accompanies it. Himmelsnähe is cited above; the threat here is introduced subtly, but once we are alert to it, the characterization of the alpine wanderer as the willing prey, transfixed by the heavens like a rabbit by the stare of a stoat, is peculiarly graphic. In the early versions of the poem the persona’s soul is clearly identified with the hawk, soaring heavenwards.13 This identification, if we infer it also from the final version, further explicates the persona/prey metaphor, for if the persona’s soul has deserted him for the heavens, it is all the more telling that it now appears in a guise which is hostile to the persona’s human form, left on the mountain alongside the marmot. Once the soul has moved into the higher realm, the individual, far from being enriched, is fatally enfeebled, for he is no longer an entire being in an appropriate sphere of existence.

13 Cf.: Sämtliche Werke, III, 21-34; Bünter, p. 22; Henel, pp. 180-83.
Das Seelchen (I, 116) is another alpine poem in the same vein, but much more overt in its evocation of death. Here the poet lies on his back in a mountain meadow, staring at the sky, and is visited by a butterfly (an Alpine Apollo). Again, the sky is clearly invested with the spiritual significance of heaven, being described as “sel’ge Bläuen”. He senses something on his breast - we note the butterfly’s proximity to the wanderer’s heart - and glances down. Immediately, the butterfly is explicitly identified as the persona’s soul, a metaphor which is of course well established in myth and literature. His soul is “flugbereit”, shivering gently as it opens its wings. His contemplation of the heavens, then, has brought him to the very point of departure from the human world, the point at which his soul will depart from his heart and body. The opening of the wings reveals that they are transparent - the soul’s departure is to a literally insubstantial realm - and that they are tipped with blood: the consequences will be deadly. This closing note of threat, which has been anticipated by the shivering of the wings, is heavily emphasized. Indeed, the whole weight of the poem falls on its final line and especially on the word “Blut”. The question posed in the penultimate line (“Wie sind die Schwingen ihm gefärbt?”) ends the flow of the description of the scene, and injects suspense, although - or perhaps because - at this stage we cannot know why the colour of the wings should be so significant. The triple “b” alliteration in the final lines gives resonance to the transparency of the wings (“blank”) and the fact that they are tipped with blood (“betupft mit Blut”).

Das Seelchen was developed from a poem of 1871, entitled Alpenlüfte, in which the alpine air lifts great weights from the persona’s heart, and which concludes:

Und das ganze Leben
Wird zum tiefen Athemzug
(III, 42)

Whether the nature of the deep breath is intended to be ambiguous is doubtful in this poem - but it gains a certain poignancy when set alongside Luise Meyer’s description of her husband’s death:

Kurz, es war noch ein Abendrot, wie man es leuchten nicht hätte träumen können, dann - er wurde von den Engeln zum Himmel getragen! Ein Ende des Friedens und schmerzlos, in einer Minute war alles fertig. Ich hörte ein Atmen wie von einem Schlaflenden, die Türe war offen in sein Zimmer, ich im anstoßenden, ich fliege hin, aber schon war der Kopf zurückgelehnt und ein tiefer Atemzug - und alles war fertig. Und das war so feierlich, daß meine Tochter und ich durch Tränen hindurch nur loben und preisen können, daß Gott den Teuren zu sich genom men, an den er glaubte.14

The moment of escape is the moment of death, for the heavy burdens mentioned in Alpenlüfte, as becomes clear when the poem is reincarnated as Das Seelchen, are the baggage of a substantial existence. Das Seelchen points explicitly to the consequences of fleeing social reality and hints that the allure of the longed-for alternative to that reality is ethereal and spiritual in nature: “In sel’ge Bläuen starrt ich auf”. It does not, however, go any further in characterizing that allure. It is, nevertheless, reasonable to infer that, as in Himmelsnähe, altitude and solitude, the first bringing the persona closer to

God and the heavens, the second freeing him from the clutter of everyday entanglements, are of importance. _Das weiße Spitzchen_ (I, 111) is helpful in this context. It is in the form of a “dialogue” between the mountain peak and the persona, the former inveigling the latter to lay aside his books and undertake the climb. As Jean Pierre Bünter points out, the voice of the peak is of course emanating from inside the persona: it is the voice of his longing, whilst the other voice is that of his sense of responsibility and duty.\(^{15}\) This, then, is the manifestation of the dichotomy which we have observed in all the poems so far discussed.

The element of threat is present as early as the second line, describing the peak’s power over the poet: “Das ruft mich, das zieht mich, das tut mir Gewalt”. Later in the poem this power is described as unceasing, affecting the persona even in his dreams. The answering, resisting voice is heard only in a single couplet; the voice of temptation is given seven lines, including the insidious whisper of the final one, suggesting it will prevail. Even the one couplet in which the responsible voice makes itself heard is less than persuasive: it attempts only to postpone the expedition to the following day.

The spiritual nature of the higher zone is perhaps represented here by the “ewigen Schnee”. The same phrase may arouse the suspicion that death lurks on the peak. It is a suspicion which will be reinforced by the reference to water (“Der See mir zu Füßen”), which is so often an agent of death in Meyer’s poetry (as it was in his family), and by the cowbells which are translated into the “peak’s” final utterance: Henel demonstrates convincingly that the bell is a motif Meyer associated with death.\(^{16}\) When the voice of responsibility responds that he will come the following day, but must first close his books and cupboards, it sounds rather like a dying man pleading for time to leave his affairs in order. The final line suggests that the afterlife has no respect for such mundane affairs.

Above all, there is a stark contrast between the cool solitude of the peak and life below in society:

> Was schaffst du noch unten im Menschengewühl?
> Hier oben ist’s einsam! Hier oben ist’s kühl!

This is the nature of the attraction, the contrast here helping to define it more clearly than in _Das Seelchen_ or even _Himmelsnähe_. Just as the water at the foot of the mountain has quit its sheath of ice and is journeying (ultimately to the sea), the persona is urged to quit his niche in society and head towards a cool, lonely, eternal sphere. These properties of the peak and the contrast between them and the “Menschengewühl”, more than any of the hints, motifs and connotations already observed in the poem, are what give _Das weiße Spitzchen_ its shadow of death. For what could be cooler, lonelier or more emblematic of eternity than death? And what offers a more complete contrast to the hustle and bustle of the throng?

In all these poems the accent is on the majesty of the realm to which the persona is fleeing rather than on the nature of the world he is fleeing. However, in _Das weiße Spitzchen_, the resonance of the word “Menschengewühl” makes it clear that it denotes a world in which the persona cannot find the clarity, the sense of order he craves. In turning away from the crowd, he finds that order in a zone which is “einsam”, “kühl”, and “ewig”: it is order through the absence of emotion, through absolute purity; and it

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\(^{15}\) Bünter, p. 10.

\(^{16}\) Henel, p. 176.
is deathly, for this vision of order is antithetical to life. *Hohe Station*, different though it may seem initially, is basically similar in theme; the unusual aspect of the poem is simply the choice that is made by the persona: the persona in *Hohe Station* ends the poem with his heart still beating fiercely, firmly located back in the real world. The other poems we have examined witness their personae slipping out of that world, but they are consistent with *Hohe Station*’s message that to do so is inevitably fatal.

Thus far we have looked only at mountain poems, in which it is perhaps inevitable that lonely, snowy summits will offer a contrast to life in a community. Other poems, however, make it clear that Meyer’s vision of pure order is consistent. The well known *Im Spätboot* is a striking example. Clearly travelling away from the city after a sociable evening, the self relishes the sensation of his brow cooling, of his heart becoming cold, of the silencing of delight and pain. Again at the end of the poem: “Schmerz und Lust erleiden sanften Tod”.

Already we have identified the coolness and contented loneliness we noted in the mountain poems, as well as - here even more clearly - the transcending of emotion which is implicit in escape from the “Menschengewühl”. The inversion of the “Lust und Schmerz” of the fourth line in the penultimate line serves to render the two interchangeable: it is emotion *per se* which is being left behind.

In this poem the fact that the nature of the escape is associated with death is made remorselessly clear. The darkness of the scene is repeatedly emphasized: “des Rohres schwarzer Rauch”, “der Schiffslaterne kargem Schein”, “das dunkle Boot”. The heart referred to in the third line is, of course, symbolic rather than anatomical, but describing it as growing cold is nevertheless striking. Death is actually mentioned in the penultimate line, albeit with reference to “Schmerz und Lust” rather than to the persona. The comparison between this ferry and that of Charon - a motif Meyer uses in several other poems - is unavoidable.17 We learn that the ship stops at a few small ports and that:

Bei der Schiffslaterne kargem Schein
Steigt ein Schatten aus und niemand ein.

Staiger refers to the shadows as symptomatic of the nature of the world the persona is entering: “Keine Menschen von Fleisch und Blut, nur Schatten scheinen sich hier zu bewegen.”18 Their significance is, however, surely greater than this. They do not simply move about, they specifically disembark and nobody comes aboard. Setting this in the context of the poem, we may assume that the process described is the same one anticipated in *Das Seelchen*: in that poem the persona’s soul is a butterfly about to take off from his chest; here, his soul is a series of shadows, ebbing away along with the experience of emotion and the heat of a social existence. The shadows disembark from Charon’s boat and leave the persona alone with the helmsman. The physical journey in the modern world of the steamship has turned into an allegorical journey; once again order has been found, a realm beyond passion - and once again it stands in opposition to human life.

Meyer’s vision of a pure but fatal order is located beyond human society and, crucially, beyond human emotion. Meyer used his art to express the longing for such an order (the poems examined above all do so). We have noted above that *Hohe Station* is unique in his poetic oeuvre by virtue of its references

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17 Henel devotes a chapter to the Charon motif: Henel, pp. 94-116.
to contemporary issues and technology. It would seem fair to surmise that art, for Meyer, not only enables him to express his desire to escape from the real world, but itself represents a means of escape. *Michelangelo und seine Statuen* thematizes art and seems to represent it as a way of achieving precisely that Leidlosigkeit which is a fatal temptation in *Im Spätboot*. The statues can represent emotions without being subject to them:

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\begin{align*}
\text{Ihr stellt des Leids Gebärde dar,} \\
\text{Ihr meine Kinder, ohne Leid!}
\end{align*}
\]

Perhaps in art, then, Meyer finds an agent capable of mediating between the metaphysical context and the human one, liberating his soul from real life without destroying his identity - thereby achieving Leidlosigkeit on this side of the grave:

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\begin{align*}
\text{So sieht der freigewordne Geist} \\
\text{Des Lebens überwundne Qual.} \\
\text{Was martert die lebendige Brust,} \\
\text{Beseligt und ergötz't im Stein.} \\
\text{Den Augenblick verewigt ihr,} \\
\text{Und sterbt ihr, sterbt ihr ohne Tod.}
\end{align*}
\]

Martin Anderle suggests that Meyer is indeed attempting to achieve the Leidlosigkeit of Michelangelo’s statues in his own medium: “Wie Michelangelo den kühlen Marmor gebraucht Meyer das sparsame, jahrelang abgewogene Wort.” Renate Böschenstein suggests that while Meyer’s muse is all too often associated with death - in the form of the dead mother, for example, as a voice from beyond a watery grave - the muse can nevertheless serve the personae of his poems as a means of achieving a sense of permanence within life. Zäch suggests that art removes “alles Belastende” from the “Ich”. That it was his art which kept Meyer sane for so long, enabling him to withstand the suicidal urges which claimed his mother and his daughter, has certainly been a leitmotif of biographies of the author. The lines from *Michelangelo und seine Statuen* quoted above have become favourites in such works.

Let us look, however, at the closing lines of that poem:

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\begin{align*}
\text{Im Schilfe wartet Charon mein,} \\
\text{Der pfeifend sich die Zeit vertreibt.}
\end{align*}
\]

Henel, noting that death is alluded to only in the final four lines, suggests that it is “a postscript or an afterthought”. He sees the poem along the following lines: the contemplation of art (he identifies the “freigewordne Geist” as that of the observer of the statues - Michelangelo - rather than that of an individual represented by a statue) sets the observer above the human world of emotion, just as death does. Art, however, can only offer a temporary Leidlosigkeit; in death it is permanent. “Even in the aesthetic state, so the end of the poem hints, man is not ultimately free, and the temptation remains to

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21 Zäch, p. 243.
seek final release in death."\textsuperscript{22} The casualness of the reference to death stems from the similarity of the states achieved through art and through death: "for a man steeped in the contemplation of art [. . . ] there will be no terrible struggle in passing away."\textsuperscript{23}

The central point in all this is the implicit closeness of death and art. Death may superficially appear as an afterthought in \textit{Michelangelo und seine Statuen}, but in fact it lurks between the lines from the start, for the achievement of Michelangelo in his statues is to divest them of the warmth of life. Indeed, Karl Pestalozzi suggests that in Meyer's poems the attempt to commemorate for eternity an emotion or a living entity necessarily creates a life-death polarity. That which is living is fundamentally fleeting, and thus, by definition, not eternal.\textsuperscript{24}

Art, therefore, does indeed facilitate the experience of the perfect order Meyer craves; it freezes tears, cools brows, stills emotion. It cannot, however, reconcile this order with life: Charon's whistling betrays his unconcern, for he knows that it is only a matter of time before Michelangelo's search for \textit{Leidlosigkeit} turns from art to death itself. The ferryman's appearance in the poem is far from incidental: he and art perform the same role, ferrying souls away from life: the poem is firmly in Charon's territory. Christine Merian-Genast argues that death is invoked in such a poem simply to show the limit of the artist's otherwise complete autonomy: "Nicht Gott, sondern er selbst steht im Mittelpunkt seiner Welt, und nur der Tod schränkt diese Machtvollkommenheit ein."\textsuperscript{25} In fact, though, there is an umbilical link between Meyer's vision of the artist and the motif of death. Art, by suspending the characteristics of life, actually invokes death, as surely as do the manifestations of perfect order sought by other Meyer personae in the mountains or on the \textit{Spätboot}. In another Michelangelo poem, \textit{Il Pensieroso} (I, 332-33), Giuliano admits that he envies the "leidlose" stones, and soon afterwards dies. Meyer quotes Giuliano's expression of envy and reports his death in consecutive lines, clearly implying a causal connection:

\begin{quote}
"Leidlose Steine, wie beneid ich euch!"
Er ging, und aus dem Leben schwand er dann
Fast unbemerkt.
\end{quote}

The marble belongs to the realm of perfect order, unsullied by feeling: and by yearning for that order, Giuliano releases himself from life, with which it is incompatible. His slipping out of life is in fact hardly noticed, so self-explanatory is it, so acquiescent is Giuliano himself.

Henel concludes that in \textit{Il Pensieroso}, art is presented "merely as a symbol of death".\textsuperscript{26} Again I would wish to add that it is not death itself which is the allure of art, but the perfection of the static, untroubled order art can represent. The contrast between this order and the reality of existence is what introduces death - as a concomitant of the order which is \textit{Leidlosigkeit}, rather than as an end in itself. Similarly, in \textit{Das Ende des Festes} (I, 191), the fullness of life symbolized by the feast is gently superseded by art. The ebbing away of the social mode of existence - "Die gesprächsmüden Lippen schweigen" - recalls the same process in poems such as \textit{Im Spätboot}: "O wie weich verstummen Lust und Schmerz!". The final line of \textit{Das Ende des Festes} records the ultimate ascendancy of art, spelling out the message

\begin{quote}
22 Henel, p. 166.
23 Cf. also Wiesmann, p. 182: "aller Trost der Kunst ist umsonst".
26 Henel, p. 168.
that art belongs to a zone which is irreconcilable with life, and that to surrender to it is fatal: "Still! Des Todes Schlummerflöten klingen!" Interestingly, Sprengel (who notes the correspondence of art and death in Meyer’s work) describes the journey made by the persona of Im Spähtboot in terms of "den Gewinn ästhetischer Distanz": 27 the journey away from life is the journey necessary for artistic perception.

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Thus far we have looked principally at the rarefied form of order which Meyer defines by its elevation, solitude, lack of emotion and coolness. It is an order for which Meyer clearly longs; most of the poems so far examined describe the process of embracing it. Art, by taking us beyond everyday emotion, can offer a taste of it.

Yet Meyer also warns against embracing that perfect order, simply because he knows that to do so is fatal. What motivates the (apparently) intellectual resistance to the emotional pull of morbid inclination?

His poem Schwüle (I, 75), set aboard a boat, illustrates what is at stake. The persona is aware of the tenuous nature of his hold on life, clearly tempted by the “liebe, liebe Stimme” (widely interpreted as that of Meyer’s drowned mother 28) which calls him “aus der Wassergruft”. Essentially of course this is a nature poem, one which speaks of anxiety deriving from the fact that, in the oppressive, hazy heat, nature, as it were, grinds to a halt. The contours between day and evening, between earth and sky, rock and reed tend to be elided. The poem rejoices when evening falls, when order is re-instated and the confusion is resolved. It is a nature poem, then, which speaks of a pallid-seeming existence, of an inability to see clearly, to divine significance, and of a gathering desire for death as a response. Life here becomes bearable only when a symbol of the metaphysical realm shines into it, not so much investing life itself with meaning as offering the hope of a meaningful conclusion to it. Still, however, the question remains: why postpone that conclusion if what is to follow is so alluring? The human world repeatedly appears, especially in the Novellen, to be chaotic and cruel: why not quit it for the deadly quiet alternative? Readers familiar with Meyer’s personality are likely to reply that the explanation lies in his strong sense of duty, a belief that suicide would be a shirking of his responsibilities - Thomas Mann identified a bourgeois “Gewissenhaftigkeit” as a fundamental aspect of his art. 29 If this is true, the very idea of responsibility implies a recognition of some sort of authoritative order within which the individual’s responsibilities are defined. That there is indeed truth in this will become apparent when we look in his poetry for specific treatment of the human world. Despite the distaste he often professes for life amongst his fellow human beings, Meyer is aware of a structure within the human world. His sense of duty stems as much from his sense of responsibility to his own identity as to those around him; crucially, that identity is defined in the terms of the structure of the world from which he so often craves release.

We have arrived back at the point which is made so impressively in Hohe Station.

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29 Mann, Thomas, Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen (Berlin, 1920), p. 559. Mann applauds Baumgarten’s study of Meyer and in particular its concentration on Meyer’s particular “Mischung von Bürgerlichkeit und Künstlerum” (p. 558).
Let us now look for specific evidence of Meyer’s interpretation of the responsibilities of the individual. We find it presented most clearly, perhaps, at the end of *Fiebernacht* (I, 138-39). The poem’s persona is bedridden after an accident in the mountains, and he reproaches the spirit of those mountains for luring him towards them and then failing to protect him as it has done before. The spirit replies that, previously, the blind courage of the young wanderer had moved it to protect him - but that now, the persona is “leidlich [. . .] vernünftig”, has a wife and house and is a member of a guild: he should no longer rely on the spirit’s protection. The persona’s instincts have not changed since his youth: he is still drawn by the mountains; but by the end of the poem he has realized (and we may reasonably read the poem as a description of a moment of self-realization rather than a genuine dialogue - indeed it would not be out of place as a dream sequence in *Der Zauberberg*) that his metamorphosis into an adult human being must entail a shift in context: his world is now that of society. He no longer has privileged access to the natural sphere: his new responsibilities have stripped him of the naivety, the blind confidence, which allowed him as a youth to skip through a system of meaning which was metaphysical rather than human, and which is now fraught with danger for him.

Bünter is determined to read more into the poem. He sees the state of being in “wachem Traume” as the state of artistic production. The interpretation is questionable, but even if we accept it, it is impossible to agree also that in the wakeful dreamer “Phantasie und Realitätssinn sich aufs beste ergänzen”. Reality is above all the situation of the mature persona, locked into a social niche - an existence which is explicitly incompatible with day-dreaming. If the dreamer is the artist, then art is incompatible with real life and is once again, as in *Michelangelo und seine Statuen* and *Il Pensieroso*, associated with a realm which is in turn associated with death: a realm which denies the individual a social function. In fact *Fiebernacht* is almost a verse articulation of Stifter’s story *Katzensilber*, where children are able to communicate directly with nature - incarnate in “das braune Mädchen” - but lose this ability as soon as they assume social identities: “das braune Mädchen” flees at this point, and lives on only as a fond memory, a “tiefes Weh” in one of the characters. Similarly, the persona in *Fiebernacht*, like that character, continues to yearn for the naive, pre-social state, but now realizes that it is no longer open to him if he is to survive as an adult human being, defined by his society. That Meyer himself experienced a similar yearning seems indisputable; that he also realized that to give in to the temptation would be fatal is, I suggest, the basis for much of his work.

It is all too easy to simplify the issues at stake in his poetry: striving for distance from something does not necessarily represent a desire to contemplate it more clearly, and a perfect order is not necessarily opposed by chaos. Maync is guilty of such a simplification when he identifies in Meyer “die durch den Abstand gewonnene Objektivität gegenüber dem Erlebnis, die Gabe, über die Masse der Einzelheiten selbstherrlich zu verfügen und sie zum Ganzen zusammenzufassen, die Fülle zu ordnen und zu begrenzen, aus dem Chaos den Kosmos zu gestalten.”

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30 Bünter, pp. 16-20.
32 Maync, p. 378.
Generally in his poems, the distance is celebrated for its own sake. The persona looks not down at the human world he has left behind, but around him, at the perfection of the mountain world. That the world below is not so much chaotic as complicated, and above all void of necessary significance, becomes clearer, as we shall see, in Meyer's prose. As Baumgarten observes, "Conrad Ferdinand Meyers plastische und pathetische Stimmunslyrik der Verschwiegenheit ist die Lyrik des intellektuellen, einsamen Kulturmenschen" - and, ironically - "des repräsentativen Menschen im ausgehenden 19. Jahrhundert."33

However, even in these poems it is apparent that the realm of perfect order is not opposed by chaos, but by a human social order which is unavoidable but imperfect, and the implication of many of the poems here discussed is that it is precisely the reality, the humanity of the social order which means that it can never offer the kind of serenity for which Meyer and his personae long. Responsibilities, emotions, practicalities and interaction - all the things which are left behind by the persona aboard the Spätboot or in the high alpine world - are its very basis; and they are the very basis of human life itself.

The two forms of order seem incompatible: aesthetic order is, by the definition of Meyer's poems, the converse of the warmth and gregariousness of the social order. Repeatedly the personae in his poems find themselves drawn towards the aesthetic order; repeatedly this is a fatal attraction. The duty of self-preservation demands that the individual remain locked in the social sphere, for that sphere provides the frame of significance which defines human life. The social order often appears as a bustling, avaricious, carnal structure, but at least in it human existence is possible. In the cool isolation of the aesthetic order the anonymous individual simply evaporates.

Nevertheless, Meyer, like so many of the personae in his poems, is unable to take a decisive step back into the real world: his yearning for the perfect order is too strong. The dilemma of his poetry lies in the antithesis between the world in which he accepts the individual must exist and the solitary, ethereal realm for which he longs.

In some poems, he attempts to break down that antithesis by investing the routine of human life with overtones of metaphysical significance, so that it seems that by steeping oneself in life, fulfilment can be found. Nature, as a voluptuous, potent force, is invoked in such poems as a setting which potentially invests the human order with a cosmic significance. In such poems, the rhythms of agricultural work are seen as part of a universal order, and the harvest in particular as something almost mystical. Der Triumphbogen (I, 159) identifies a girl, harvesting in a field, as Clio. Auf Goldgrund (I, 84) equates agricultural labourers harvesting corn in the real world with the saints and worshippers the observer has just seen in the aesthetic context of a museum; the "golden field" in the museum is echoed in the cornfield. Hans and Rosmarie Zeller show how the poem consolidates this equation and note: "Meyer möchte seine Leser von der Würde alltäglicher Arbeit überzeugen. Diese Würde soll nicht als subjektive Interpretation des betrachtenden Subjekts erscheinen, sondern als objektiv, ja im wörtlichen Sinne naturgegeben: Es ist ja die Natur, welche diesen goldenen Grund produziert."34 However, they also identify a problem at the root of this attempt to give significance to ordinary life: "Die Würde des Gegenstandes verbindet sich mit klassizistischer Einfachheit der Form, das Reale mit dem Idealem. Die Wirklichkeit um ihrer selbst willen ist es nicht wert, dargestellt zu werden, sie muß erhöht werden, sie

33 Baumgarten, p. 260.
wird "auf Goldgrund" gesehen, verklärt."35 Implicit, then, even in the attempt to unite art and life, is Meyer’s failure to divine real significance in life.

All too often, those poems in which the persona or character grasps life in its fullness belie their author’s real preoccupation: the moment of absolute fulfilment in worldly terms is the moment of extinction. Ultimately, it would seem, Meyer is unable to envisage complete emotional satisfaction within the social order - despite his efforts to persuade himself of a significance within the human and social world, a significance which we have seen him attempt to draw from nature. Poems such as Erntegewitter (I, 82), Schnitterlied (I, 83) and Die Veltlinertraube (I, 90) all reflect on the interrelationship between the natural and the human sphere. Erntegewitter depicts the death of the Dionysian girl, Schnitterlied speaks of the unity of the work process - a unity which has room for death, implicit in the metaphors of reaping. Die Veltlinertraube seeks to identify human selfhood and grape. All these poems invest the harvest with a sense of magic, and all of them end with more or less direct references to the death of the individual. All of them are overflowing with emotion - the absence of which is of course one of the most consistently important characteristics of Meyer’s perfect order. It is as if these poems represent an attempt on Meyer’s part to persuade himself into the human and social structure, grasping rather than shunning emotion. The attempt is not convincing: the ripe grape in Die Veltlinertraube is swollen with passion, but the pair of lips above which it dangles are going to destroy it, not interact with it. The emotional climax which it so delightedly anticipates will remove it from the real world. It is in many ways an effective poem; the tantalizing moment described in the last stanza is conveyed with wonderfully lavish language, and the use of colour is striking - but in the context of Meyer’s work as a whole, it represents a failed effort to seize life instead of shirking it. In Erntegewitter, too, the “frevle Maid” sates herself with the fruits of the harvest and exposes herself to the lightning, before flinging her glass from the top of the harvest wagon and jumping after it. For her, just as for the persona in Die Veltlinertraube, ripeness is not enough: it is concomitant with a self-destructive urge. Meyer the poet forces himself to embrace emotion and life, but even in doing so, he seeks release from it.

Schnitterlied, like Die Veltlinertraube, is an erotic poem, and again, the notion of ripeness, synonymous with the harvest - and here also implicit in the swollen red lips of the “Buben und Dirnen” - is tarnished with the shadow of death:

Von Munde zu Munde
Ist Raum für den Tod -

However, in this poem, the young people who have rescued the harvest and are now celebrating are successfully integrated into a social world which itself is clearly locked into a significant natural cycle. It is the shadow of death which lends meaning to that cycle, and to individual lives, but these dancers are happy in a real, emotional world and do not seek release from it as the personae in Das Seelchen or Im Späťboat, nor yet as those in Erntegewitter and Die Veltlinertraube all do. They simply accept death as the necessary conclusion to each unit of life in the cycle. It is significant, surely, that this poem is not only

not in the first person, but does not even have an individual character as its focal point. The poet can observe the theory of a meaningful social existence, but he cannot truly grasp hold of it.

Meyer also attempts to break down the antithesis between a deathly perfect order and a valid social existence in another way. We have observed how art enables the individual to retreat towards the aesthetic realm of perfect order, but that it, like physical retreat amongst alpine peaks, is ultimately opposed to a worldly existence. In some poems, however, Meyer tries to build a bridge between the two zones, not by fleeing emotion through art, but by locating the artist within the meaningful rhythms of the real world. We have seen (in *Auf Goldgrund* and the other harvest poems) that by situating human life within the natural cycle (itself invested with metaphysical co-ordinates) he endeavours to inject a significance into the order of everyday life which he all too often fears is meaningless. The other side of this coin is his attempt to endorse art and the artist as substantial phenomena by giving them a “real” context. By suggesting that poetry is as much a part of the productive business of life as tilling the soil, Meyer seeks to imply that the art which means so much to him (as a link to the perfect order) is a valid part of the substantial and human world.

*Säerspruch* (I, 93) represents an attempt to achieve this both thematically and in the very form of the poem. As Gustav Becker concludes in his analysis of the poem’s genesis, the poem aims to reincarnate aesthetically the tradition of the “Arbeitslied” - thereby requiring the rhythmic quality which allows the poem to be a functional element in the agricultural process. If the poem’s form - notionally, at least - integrates art and life, however, its content is more problematic. Meyer seems to want to justify - to integrate - the life of the contemplative individual, but is unable to carry through his attempt to show that a condition of aesthetic seclusion is not antithetical to life. Ultimately, as we shall see, his initial premise - that the life of contemplation can be reconciled with the conventional, productive existence - gives way to an attempt to justify it in terms which have nothing to do with “real life”: it is related instead to signification from beyond the framework of the human world.

*Säerspruch* very plainly implies that even the most passive individual is as fully human as the dynamic one. One seed fails to germinate, but “Die Ruh ist süß. Es hat es gut”. Another seed is fertile and pierces the soil: “Es hat es gut. Süß ist das Licht”. The poem goes on to tell us that “keines fällt aus dieser Welt”. This claim, applied to the passive seed (i.e., the reclusive aesthete), is a direct contradiction of the message of the poems considered above in which a persona reaches a point of such passivity that he feels himself slipping out of the human world. The sheer volume of such poems, as well as their strength, is indicative of the fact that *Säerspruch* is not as conclusive an expression of the poet’s understanding of his position as they are. Rather, *Säerspruch* is testimony to Meyer’s unease about the consequences of his way of life, of his aesthetic inclinations. The poem finally resorts to a direct appeal to an extenuating metaphysical force: “Und jedes fällt, wie’s Gott gefällt”. This ultimate line is also the ultimate means of self-justification, superseding the unconvincing claim that no seed falls out of this world. In fact, the passive seed is explicitly described as dying: once again, the language of the poem belies its ostensible message. *Säerspruch* aims to vindicate the hermit-artist, but it fails. The two forms of order, the deathly perfect, aesthetic zone and the human social sphere remain separate and irreconcilable.

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In his discussion of the metamorphosis of *Die Heimkehr* (VI, 83-88) into *An die Natur in Spätsommer* (III, 374-75), neither of which was included in the *Gedichte*, Henel detects a change in tone:

Meyer’s prodigal son in *Die Heimkehr* returned home not only to find security but also to take his place in the community and to do his share:

Da wird die Arbeit ausgetheilt  
Und Jeder auf den Posten eilt,  
Das Seine zu vollenden;  
Und Jeder hat sein eigen Amt,  
Und wieder sind sie allesamt  
In einen Bund geschlossen.

The echo of these lines in the later poem is gentler, but it is also much less determined:

Ein jedes Werk des Jahres  
Hat seine eigene Weihe  
Und ist ein Wunderbares  
In wunderbarer Reihe  

The cycle of the seasons has taken the place of the family circle [. . .].

This represents another example of the poet’s on the one hand admitting the overwhelming importance of the social context, and on the other finding it impossible to stop himself and his poetry drifting away from it. Henel himself concludes “that Meyer’s concern with society and with his own position in it was uncertain and mutable, that it expressed only a secondary need, and that it was constantly interfered with and modified by more vital concerns”. The evidence of his poetry suggests that he believed that the social context was the only possible one for the individual human being - but that he was nevertheless unable to settle in it for long without feeling drawn towards the fatally static order which he describes in so many of his poems: this is the malaise immortalized in *Eingelegte Ruder*.

The most concrete manifestation of the social structure is of course the state itself, and in *Firmelicht* (I, 112), which deals with patriotism, we find a good example of the unresolved clash of alternative forms of order which is so embedded in Meyer’s poetry. It seems at first that the poem is a straightforward and heartfelt affirmation of the country in which the persona was raised, and to which he is now returning from his wanderings. Moreover, as in poems such as *Saerspruch*, there is an attempt to integrate the artist into the worldly milieu. The poet asks what he can do for his country:

Was geb ich, das dem Tod entflieht?  
Vielleicht ein Wort, vielleicht ein Lied,  
Ein kleines stilles Leuchten!

Perhaps, after all, Meyer has succeeded in mediating between the social order and the eternal one. Though his own death is imminent, his modest aesthetic gift to his nation (“ein kleines stilles Leuchten” to shine alongside “das große stille Leuchten” of the snowy peaks) will live on.

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37 Henel, p. 206.  
38 Henel, p. 197.
Once again, however, if we look at the poem more closely, we shall find several telling indications of the incompatibility between Meyer’s two alternative orders. Bünter’s examination of Meyer’s mountain poems draws considerably on transaction theory.39 Strangely, in his discussion of Firnelicht, the poem which is perhaps most susceptible to analysis in the light of that theory, he fails to apply it.40 The Ich of Firnelicht is not stepping back into the social sphere in returning home. Far from it: he is retreating from the (adult) world to the place of his birth. Switzerland is not associated with the business of adult existence: on the contrary, it is the world from which the Ich is returning which is described in terms of its markets, cities and battles. The “Heimat” is not once referred to in human terms, as a state: we hear only of its clear mountain light. The shift is a psychological, not merely a geographical one: the Ich is returning not only to the region of his birth, but to the uncomplicated, pre-social state with which he associates that region. The “reines Firnelicht”, the absence of social concerns, the repeated use of “still” all relate this vision of the homeland to the zone to which the personae of Himmelsnähe, Das Seelchen, Im Spätboot retreat: the zone of clear, cool, inhuman order. Nowhere is it clearer that this zone is one which is uninhabitable for the adult individual, for in Firnelicht the Ich’s adult life has been spent away from it, in social, political and commercial reality. Just as in Fiebernacht, the implication is that the zone of perfect order is one which one can inhabit as a child, but which one must leave behind as one matures. Returning to it is fatal: and indeed, in Firnelicht, the shadow of death is as explicit as it is in any of the poems cited above. It is made quite clear that the poet-persona has not returned home to take up his place in its society, but to die.41 His poem is a parting gift to a country which is, for him, simply a natural phenomenon and a psychological cipher. Once again, art itself is here closely associated with the motif of death: his poem is definitely not a way for him to find a niche amongst his countrymen, but rather to express the comfort he finds in retreating from the emotions and cares of social life. True, the poem will survive his death - but it survives as a monument to the failure of its creator to do the same by maintaining his role in the social scheme of things. It is a poem which celebrates the clarity of a perfect order, an order which Meyer was never able to reconcile with existence in the human, worldly order, and therefore with survival as an individual. The ambivalence - the bad conscience awakened by a longing for morbid perfection - which informs Hohe Station is central to Meyer’s whole lyric œuvre.

40 Bünter, pp. 31-32.
41 Cf. Kittler, Friedrich A., Der Traum und die Rede. Eine Analyse der Kommunikationssituation Conrad Ferdinand Meyers (Bern, 1977). Discussing Der geisteskranke Poet, Kittler shows that while life is associated with confusion, death is associated with truth: “So hat der Wahnsinn deinen Gegensatz nicht am Leben sondern am Tod, nicht an irgendeiner Heilung sondern am gemeinsamen Ende von Wirklichkeit und Schein” (p. 9). The same contrast, I suggest, is apparent in Firnelicht: the adult state is a confused one, and it stands in contrast to a pre-social state (childhood) and post-social state (death) of clearly defined order.
It may seem odd to choose to examine *Jürg Jenatsch* in an investigation into “order” in the work of Conrad Ferdinand Meyer. His prose works are well known for their obsessive attention to structure, for the intricate frames which, in many cases, house and provide the discursive framework for the central narrative. *Jürg Jenatsch* has no frame and would seem to be a straightforward, even grand, historical story narrated by an invisible third person. However, I shall want to argue that in fact its narrative structure - in terms of chronology, point of view and location - is a volatile one.\(^4^2\) Probably as a result, *Jürg Jenatsch* has often been seen as less accomplished and rather nebulous compared to the later, framed *Novellen*. In fact its thematic and formal aspects represent an instructive insight into the forms of order Meyer perceives around him. Meyer’s poems shiver with the tension between a yearned for perfect order and a fear that the only order available to the individual human being is a deeply imperfect one. A similar tension lies behind the desperate power of *Jürg Jenatsch*.

Order manifests itself in *Jürg Jenatsch* most strikingly as a quality which is endangered by the dramatic appearance of a figure who is repeatedly portrayed as being “larger than life”: Jürg Jenatsch is a character who flouts every convention, breaks every promise, exchanges even his religion in pursuit of his goal. He is a character who inspires a shiver of fear even in his most loyal friends and admirers.

Yet the appraisal of Jenatsch’s significance by one of those friends - significantly one of the most conspicuously stable, bourgeois and integrated figures in the novel - posits the possibility that even so revolutionary an individual as Jürg Jenatsch does in fact belong within an order. The friend is Heinrich Waser, described in this passage not by name but by social and political role (“‘Ein schwer zu beurteilender Charakter’, sagte der zürcherische Bürgermeister” X, 251), and his “explanation” of Jenatsch is as follows:

> "Ist es nicht ein Glück für uns ehrenhafte Staatsleute, wenn zum Heile des Vaterlandes notwendige Taten, die von reinen Händen nicht vollbracht werden können, von solchen gesetzlosen Kraftmenschen übernommen werden, - die dann der allwissende Gott in seiner Gerechtigkeit richten mag. Denn auch sie sind seine Werkzeuge, - wie geschrieben steht: Er lenkt die Herzen der Menschen wie Wasserbäche." (X, 251)

The order asserting itself in Waser’s analysis is the order of history. Jürg Jenatsch, for all his monstrosity, is an agent of history, a necessary element of a teleological order.

I shall argue, however, that by means of his narrative technique, Meyer at once sets up that possibility and also calls it into question. Ultimately he presents history as one of a *plurality* of narratives, and not as one which is authoritative by the simple fact of its uniqueness. He thereby acknowledges that the human, social order which is a product - and producer - of that narrative is the only possible framework in which the individual can operate and survive. Yet he also expresses his despairing failure

\(^{4^2}\) Indeed, even the story’s genre has been a matter for debate; some critics have treated it as a *Novelle*, others as a novel: cf. Burkhard, Marianne, *Conrad Ferdinand Meyer* (Boston, 1978), p. 83. Meyer insisted that it was a *Novelle*, but the critical consensus has long been that it is in fact a novel (cf. Maync, for example, writing in 1925, p. 146-47), albeit, as Osborne remarks “a novel which reads like a *Novelle*” (Osborne, John, *Meyer or Fontane? German Literature after the Franco-Prussian War, 1870-71* (Bonn, 1983), p. 95).
to divine a stable, signifying basis to validate that order: to make it the meaningful framework for existence which he craves. Nowhere is this refusal to believe in the absoluteness of human order more apparent than in the matter of the evaluation of the novel’s central character and his motivation. In this, and in other aspects of the novel, the issue of representation and representativeness becomes crucial: who stands for what (and can be portrayed as standing for what)? The question of whether Jenatsch is what he comes to represent emerges as so problematic as to throw into doubt the very assumptions of historical narrative upon which the text rests.

However, let us look first at how Jürg Jenatsch manifests himself as a figure who threatens both his environment and his own selfhood by his refusal to recognize the conventional restraints operative in social living.

Whether or not Jenatsch is actually an agent of fate, the fact that he clearly believes that he is means that he appeals to a force beyond the social sphere: he tries to impose a vision of order rather than exist within the one he finds around him. It may be argued that he is successful in imposing his vision – he does indeed free his canton – but, importantly, his efforts are fatal to himself.

Jenatsch’s belief that he is a tool of destiny persuades him that he is beyond the constraints of society. His goal may be an earthly one, but he is convinced that he is a superhuman figure, directed by an ethereal hand. That his death is portrayed as ultimately utterly inevitable echoes the morbid overtones of poems such as Im Spätboot or Das Seelchen: life is only sustainable within the social context. To step beyond it is to begin to die as an individual. Jenatsch smiles as he sees Lukretia lift the axe to kill him: he appreciates that he is finally going to find peace, to be released from the labyrinthine human and material order - just as so many of the personae of Meyer’s poems also fade contentedly from life into death. Jenatsch long ago stepped beyond the social constrictions which inform human life; his physical death is merely the climax of that process.

Thus, not only does he die, and just at the moment when he should have been reveling in the glory of his achievement, but if we examine the novel carefully we shall see that from a very early stage there is evidence to suggest that he gradually puts aside his human qualities. It is no accident that Jenatsch is repeatedly described with the same adjectives which in Meyer’s poems are attached to the lifeless realm of perfect order. As the novel progresses, descriptions which focus on his excitability and warmth increasingly give way to epithets such as “Kalt” and “kaltblütig” which recall the coolness which envelops the personae of Meyer’s poetry as their active lives ebb away. Even Jenatsch himself is aware of what is happening: “Es ward ihm schwer, zu brechen mit der ganzen Vergangenheit. Er wußte, daß er sich selbst in seinen Lebenstiefen damit zerbrach” (X, 180).

The first hint of this danger is perhaps when Jenatsch loses his wife. He reacts icily, and Waser fears that: “als Jürg trünenlos am Grabe seiner Lucia gestanden, habe er mit ihr alle Harmlosigkeit der Jugend, alle weichen Gefühle und vielleicht jedes menschliche Erbarmen versenkt” (X, 71). Furthermore, Waser shivers to think of his friend, in such a mood, in the company of “diesem kalten Fanatiker”, Blasius Alexander (X, 72), a man who is portrayed as utterly inhuman and who dies a martyr.

Another idea associated with Jenatsch and very pertinent to the question of “order” is that of disproportion. This is of course crucial to his belief in the capacity of one, supernaturally guided man to

43 This evolution in the epithets attached to Jenatsch is discussed in more detail below.
alter history, a belief challenged by Wertmüller in Venice (X, 102). As he “pursues his destiny” Jenatsch is described as “grenzenlos” (X, 131), “übermenschlich” (X, 74 and 227), “maßlos” (X, 227 and 236) and “gesetzlos” (X, 251). Even when Jenatsch is still a minister, he is not a moderate man, as the following, seemingly trivial, exchange regarding his wife, Lucia, implies:

“That Jenatsch should choose a career as a minister of course implies that even very early on he starts to look beyond the physical world. This trait remains harmless, however, so long as it is translated into the social institution of the church. It does not remain thus harnessed, and his sense of otherness - encapsulated in his belief that he is the servant of destiny - estranges him not just from his fellow men, but from their norms. Taube notes that this is a recurring motif in Meyer’s Novellen, one we shall encounter again in Der Heilige: “ein seit dem Jenatsch immer wiederkehrendes Motiv ist der sich zum Herrenmenschen entkettende Kleriker, der sich ablöst von katholischer Ordo und ‘Religio’, also wörtlich verstanden, von allgemeiner Ordnung und Bindung”44 - and he also observes that all these figures are destined to be destroyed even as they assert themselves against the prevailing order. Consistently in Meyer’s work, flouting accepted norms is at the expense of human identity and is thus self-destructive. Fritz Lockemann recognizes the danger inherent in exceeding the human scale, as it were: Jenatsch - and other similar heroes such as Becket in Der Heilige - “haben die Gebundenheit ihrer Epoche im wesentlichen überwunden, sind aber auch des Haltes dieser Bindungen beraubt [. . .] Die Welt aber, ihrer Umwelt erträgt solche Freie nicht, sie sind Todgeweihte. So finden sie die ihnen gemäße Ordnung erst im Tode, auf den ihr Leben unaufhaltsam hinströmt”.45

By stepping beyond the perimeters of conventional behaviour - whilst remaining active within the society defined by those conventions - Jenatsch becomes potentially destructive not just to himself, but to those around him - a shark in a duck pond. The lack of a sense of proportion - the result of his failing to occupy a social niche - is seen to lead directly to the cruelty of which Jenatsch is capable. His murder of Planta is an outstanding example of that cruelty; looking back on it, Jenatsch sees it merely as a youthful indiscretion. Believing himself and his actions to be guided by fate, he is blind to the hideousness of his behaviour in normal, human terms. Even earlier than this, when Waser reproaches Jenatsch for the inordinate brutality of the Volksgericht at Thusis, Jenatsch simply dismisses the point. Just afterwards, he threatens his friend with a knife in order to encourage him to reveal what he has heard - and afterwards thinks nothing of what he has done. Waser later decides that Jenatsch’s behaviour is due to his “nicht durch städtische Bildung veredelte Natur” (X, 46). But the issues are larger than this: what makes Jenatsch superhuman also makes him inhuman.

It is this lack of humanity which so clearly distinguishes Jenatsch from a character such as Rohan, and which explains why, at Rohan’s departure from Chur, its citizens feel such sympathy for the duke, whilst Jenatsch - their liberator! - makes them shudder. George W. Reinhardt believes Lukács is wrong to accuse Meyer of a failure to apply ethical standards because of his ironic narrative techniques:

“an ethical message is perceivable”. However, that ethical message, I suggest, is nothing more or less than the value of humanity, a quality which is seen to be available only within a social and human order to which Meyer does not grant an ethical basis beyond the network of its own internal signification. Meyer shudders at the inhumanity of Jenatsch, and he recognizes the essential worth of a character such as Waser - but he also sees how that same society can take advantage of inhumanity by applying the narrative of history to it as a justification. Meyer does not apply an external ethical principle. He longed for the stable evaluative basis which would allow him to do so, but could perceive none. In its absence, on the other hand, he nevertheless insists on the (relative) value of humanity, however imperfect the basis of the social order in which it resides.

Jenatsch’s future destructiveness is prefigured in the murder of his wife by her brother. Although the brother appears initially to be merely a harmless idiot, it transpires that his insane religious zeal, by dissolving normal inhibitions, has rendered him lethal. As we have seen, the lack of humanity apparent in this murder gradually becomes a trademark of Jenatsch himself, and in both cases it clearly stems from the lack of a sense of proportion. Both in German and in English the words “Menschlichkeit” and “humanity” not only denote the quality itself, but imply that it is a defining characteristic of the human being. Meyer is suggesting precisely that, in stepping beyond the perimeters of social convention, Jenatsch loses the context which keeps him alive to his relativity, loses his humanity and ceases to be a real human being. For as long as he takes a part in human affairs without accepting the constraints by which those affairs are regulated he is a destructive element and his loss of identity is finally expressed in his physical death. Interestingly, in killing him, Lukretia is obeying Landessitte: fulfilling, in effect, a social tradition. Jenatsch achieves his ambitions - defined within the terms of society’s framework - by stepping beyond the conventional code of that framework - but accepts the inevitability of social tradition exterminating him.

The ambivalent reaction of the Mayor of Chur and his compatriots after Jenatsch’s death reflects the impossibility of reconciling the Grisons hero with his society. We learn that they “verzichteten darauf, die Urheber seines Todes, die ihnen als die Werkzeuge eines notwendigen Schicksals erschienen, vor Gericht zu ziehen” (X, 268). Not only does this express the subconscious awareness of the inevitability of Jenatsch’s death and ironically reintroduce the fate motif, but it leaves open the question of exactly who or what are, or are perceived as, “die Urheber seines Todes” - a refusal to explain away ambiguity which we shall see is characteristic of the narration of the story.

We also encounter the divide between the substantial and spiritual realms when Lukretia considers entering a convent as a retreat from the political and emotional world. At the point in the novel when she decides to do so, her mood is as apathetic as that of the passenger in *Im Spatboot*, and the

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convent is represented in her mind not merely as a point beyond the stress of real life, but explicitly as a place for the dead: “Was morgen komme war ihr gleichgültig, lag doch wie ein stiller Friedhof das Kloster Cazis dort über dem Rhein.” (X, 246) Ironically, the eagerness of the nuns to have her join them is fuelled to a large degree by material concerns (with Lukretia would come her fortune). The nuns have not attained serenity, they are still operating according to the rules of everyday life and take a lively interest in the affairs of the society in the midst of which they are. The scenario is reminiscent of the one in Hohe Station. There too, an apparent refuge beyond everyday concerns is invaded by those concerns.

The problems attached to the figure of Jenatsch stem, then, from the fact that he is, or believes he is, obeying a force which is incompatible with earthly human circumstances. Rohan perceives this danger when he first meets Jenatsch, then still a minister, and warns him that soldiers and clerics have separate roles: “Der Geistliche hüte die Seelen, anders richtet er Unheil an.” (X, 52). Jenatsch - uncharacteristically - blushes and can find no response to this. Though he quits the ministry the same day to take up the sword, he does not become a soldier like Rohan, a part of military structure: he sees himself as an agent of a supernatural force, but now free of the shackles of his social role, commanded only by fate. Ironically, when Rohan sticks to his word rather than command his troops to fight for France, he too is obeying an impulse which is not compatible with political reality, and of course he goes on to fight for his faith rather than for his king and dies as a common soldier soon after. Rohan’s demise can in fact be attributed to his failure to adapt his ideals to reality: his “Gerechtigkeit” is contrasted with Richelieu’s “kalter Berechnung” (X, 159); he himself contrasts his sense of honour with Richelieu’s ambition. At one point the duke - again Richelieu is the antithesis - is described as “der sein gegebenes Wort hoch und heilig haltende Rohan” (X, 211). It is this reverence for an ideal beyond tangible reality which renders Rohan vulnerable to Richelieu’s Realpolitik.

Richelieu is described as standing “über den Schranken der Gewissenhaftigkeit” (X, 176). That he is gewissenlos does not mean, however, that he is a rogue element in society like Jenatsch: his aims are political, like Jenatsch’s, but his instincts are practical. He lacks the fanatical, suicidal instinct which Jenatsch has as a result of his apparent belief in destiny. Towards the end of the novel, Jenatsch quite obviously believes himself to be beholden to nobody and nothing: he has lost even his reverence for Jesus Christ: “Der gute Herzog wird mich nicht durchschauen, wie sein Gott den Judas” (X, 177). Perversely, this believer in direct supernatural intervention loses his very faith because, in flouting the social context he loses all humility. If he ultimately seems drunk on ego rather than patriotism, it is because of his inability to differentiate any more from his “lofty” point of view.

If the appalling consequences of withdrawing the human sword from the social sheath are presented through the figure of Jürg Jenatsch, the alternative - a conventional but essentially humane way of life characterized by the readiness to compromise, to accommodate rather than challenge a pre-existent reality - is also examined in the novel. There is a clear echo of Meyer’s more dramatic poems, in which life is attacked so energetically that it gives way to death, in his colourful account of the bloody deeds of Jürg Jenatsch. As the creator of historical narratives, Meyer is both appalled and fascinated by the behaviour of grandiose individuals on the stage of world history. And he is at pains to create figures of contrasting import: figures who are prepared to compromise with - and be compromised by - worldliness.

48 Cf. Martini, pp. 821-22, on Jenatsch’s hubris and the issue of absolute values.
In the poems the social context is frequently alluded to only as something banal and hectic from which the dying persona has escaped. Strangely, though, the persona often seems to regard those implicated in a social existence with affection and even envy: although he cannot feel emotionally fulfilled in their midst, he implies that they have a validity as human beings which he lacks. In Jürg Jenatsch, concentrating on an individual beyond social bounds, there is the same implicit distaste for society: its pettiness and corruption is highlighted. Nevertheless, the condemnation is never outright. This diffident attitude is perhaps best illustrated in the way in which bourgeois characters such as the Mayor of Chur or the eventual Mayor of Zürich, Heinrich Waser, are portrayed.

Their weaknesses and limitations are clear. They repeatedly fail to measure up to the magnitude of the events in which they find themselves implicated. They have often been dismissed as rather contemptible compared to the grander figures of the novel: Marianne Burkhard, for example, labels Waser “negative” and agrees with Schmid that “his neutrality is rooted in fear and calculation”.49 Harry Maync is of a similar view: in Meyer’s incarnation of him Waser acquires a “Beigeschmack von philisterhafter Enge und pedantischer Gravität”.50 In granting that Waser is no romantic hero it is, however, important to note that fear and calculation are characteristics which are altogether human. It is also true to say that Waser is entirely humane. He is ambitious and politically astute - but not necessarily negative. He is utterly loyal to his bourgeois principles and to his not very bourgeois friend Jenatsch (on whose behalf he pleads with Grimani in Venice). His name does not appear on the list of corrupt Zürich officials received by Wertmüller. Waser is often laughable, but one senses a high degree of affection in his portrayal.

The canton of the Grisons - its landscape, climate and population - is frequently used in Jürg Jenatsch as an analogy for Jenatsch himself. At the very start of the novel, we are introduced to its volatile weather; at the start of the third book its extreme conditions are again described - snowy peaks, fertile valleys, the fierceness of the Rhine in early spring and its contrasting peacefulness later. Its people are fervently religious, but divided by their faiths. They cling to traditional, violent customs such as the one dictating that Lukretia avenge her father’s death with the weapon which killed him. On the other hand, it is observed that “Der erste, beste dieses Volkes könne dem geriebensten Diplomaten zu raten geben. Die Staatskunst sei hier so allgemein verbreitet und landesiüblich” (X, 196). Equally, Waser is clearly an embodiment of Zürich society: cautious, clever and mindful of his self-interest. Yet, despite Meyer’s frequent frustration at the prosaic nature of Zürich’s philosophy, he remained fond of the town and certainly never despised it. Waser’s portrayal reflects this.

Though Meyer is drawn to the grandeur of Jürg Jenatsch, just as the personae in his poems are drawn to a perfect order beyond life, we can infer a substantial dose of affection, and even respect, for a figure such as Waser, just as we can for socially integrated harvesters in his poems. If their social order seems shallow, at least they are valid within it and thus as individuals. They, unlike Jenatsch, do not reach beyond their humanity.51

50 Maync, p. 157.
51 Cf. Brückner, Hans-Dieter, “Der Bürger im Prosawerk C. F. Meyers”, Seminar, 1 (1965) 9-16. Brückner notes the survival of Waser: “Jenatsch geht unter, für Waser dagegen birgt das öffentliche eben keine Gefahren. Als Werkzeug der Geschichte führt der Gewaltmensch einen notwendigen politischen Umsturz herbei, der Bürger nutzen ihn aus.” He also observes how Waser and the other “Bürger” in the story - Sprecher - prefer to remain within their native order: the rivalry between Waser and Wertmüller in the matter of Sprecher’s daughter, and
These bastions of conventional society, then, are not contemptible characters. Their intentions are good and they radiate the solid warmth so absent from the make-up of a man such as Jenatsch — and above all, they survive him. Twice Waser is compared with Jenatsch: once by Jenatsch himself (“Auch einer, der sein Ziel erreicht hat!” X, 255) and once by their school friend, Fausch (“Auch ein Pfiffikus! Aber mit unserm Jenatio verglichen, ein Ingenium zweiten Ranges.” X, 259). It is true that both set themselves a goal and achieve it. The difference between them lies in Waser’s succeeding within the social context, by its rules and in its terms, whereas Jenatsch’s triumph, won by scorning that context, will inevitably (in conventional terms, at least) be something of a Pyrrhic victory, costing him, as it does, his life. Jenatsch seems at ease with himself only at the moment of his death. In contrast, Waser, as a rotund and amiable Mayor of Zürich, seems an entirely stable figure.52

Yet, as we have observed, even a figure as firmly locked into society as Waser suggests that men like Jenatsch — men ready to do deeds “die von reinen Händen nicht vollbracht werden können” (X, 251) — are necessary to change the course of history according to God’s wishes. Only Jenatsch’s readiness to sacrifice himself and represent divine force on earth enables him to win freedom for his canton: society itself does not follow any super-social inspiration. After his death, therefore, Jenatsch, by default, as it were, is integrated into another kind of order: the human order which could not accommodate him in his lifetime is able to do so in the order of the historical narrative which emerges only after the immediate revulsion at his deeds has subsided, the narrative in which he becomes a national hero. This achievement rests on a teleological faith, the acceptance that the exceptional man is in tune not directly with his immediate (social) environment, but with the unique and necessary historical destiny of that environment: an all-embracing order.

John Osborne notes that Waser’s teleological explanation of Jürg Jenatsch is undermined by his own opportunism, which so clearly lies behind it: it is entirely in his interest that Jenatsch’s achievements be rendered monumental rather than controversial, that his idea of order can reassert itself and capitalize on Jenatsch’s sacrifice.53

However, to see the full extent of how the authority of this potentially transcendental order is thrown into question in the story we must look not just at the characters but also at the narration of the story itself, and how that colours any analysis of the representation and representativeness of its hero.

Chronologically, Meyer does not move steadily through the period with which he deals. The novel lurches from episode to episode (this is one of the characteristics which makes it so reminiscent of a Novelle). This has long been seen as a defect in the work’s construction by critics who ignore the self-consciousness of its narration (a defect which is generally explained by its being an early work by an as

53 Osborne, Meyer or Fontane?, p. 93.
yet unaccomplished writer). More importantly, the point of view of the novel is similarly volatile. Although there is no identified narrator as such, the “invisible narrator” does not appear as omniscient. We are consistently presented indirectly with the view of a participant in the recounted events. These characters have privileged access to those events, of course, but they do not have the capacity to stand back from their involvement and offer an explanation of any incident or person which is not also an interpretation. In a sense, then, there is a multitude of implicit “frame” narrators within the text. This partiality is something that Meyer himself came to see as an essential creative crutch.

Given that Jürg Jenatsch therefore in fact follows Meyer’s characteristic narrative style at a deep, if not at a superficial level, I want to return to the starting point and insist that there remains a question to be answered. The fact is that in Jürg Jenatsch he - exceptionally - does not build a frame to throw the central story into a dependent relationship, he does not employ a “protruding” first person voice to make narrative authority an immediate and inherent issue. Why not?

I suggest that Meyer deliberately invokes all the authority of the ostensibly unproblematic third person, invisible narrator, only to call that authority into question. Jürg Jenatsch is itself a history, and the lack of a clear basis to it thereby radically challenges the notion of authoritative history - of a meaningful basis, then, to the perceived “progress” of human life.

Mugge-Meiburg recognizes this general tension in Meyer’s use of history: “Even while making the implicit assertion that his tales carry more weight because they are based on history, Meyer uneasily addresses the problem that history itself can be dealt with only through shaping it according to the artistic constraints of a narrative.” However, in Jürg Jenatsch this works differently the way that it does in the framed Novellen. There is no identifiable narrator to create one particular narration: and no contrast, therefore, between that version of events and the version introduced via the frame. In Jürg Jenatsch we have what appears to be a singular history, which is then undermined from within to reveal itself as an unresolved clash of possible perspectives. Its episodic nature is not “justified” by the personalized narrator’s dwelling on events which he or she witnessed, or which particularly affect that narrator, or simply which the narrator considers particularly significant. It is explained only by the text’s tendency toward fleeting identification with particular perspectives and occasional privileging of particular issues - political, ethical, psychological. Each episode thus represents the ascendancy of one of many narrative strands. The “choppiness” of the novel’s chronology is a structural manifestation of the consequence of a view of history as narrative and not as an inviolate series of true events. Time itself, then is appraised and presented not as an inevitable continuum but as a structure which can be interpreted according to the requirement to present a particular kind of narrative. There is thus an identifiable refusal to offer a definitive explanation even amid the superstructure which would seem to present just that. Like the

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55 Cf. Herzog, Valentin, “Jürg Jenatsch”: Ironische Erzählformen bei C. F. Meyer dargestellt am “Jürg Jenatsch” (Bern, 1970). Herzog provides a useful survey of the way the perspective shifts within the novel and how this affects the reader’s attempt to assess Jürg Jenatsch (pp. 69-83).
56 Cf. his letter to Heyse, 12 November 1884 (Briefe II, p. 340).
58 Valentin Herzog differentiates between the author (who is always omniscient) and the narrator (with a view of events which is determined by the author). However, Herzog does not discuss how Meyer in Jürg Jenatsch, in contrast to his strategy in the framed Novellen, seems to offer an omniscient narrator - but does not deliver an authoriative historical order (Herzog, p. 69).
“choppiness” of the chronology, the same quality in the point of view represents a fastening on to particular narratives, thereby undermining the notion of history as an ultimate order and leaving us with a plurality of narrative possibilities.

Jacobson suggests that “Meyer may be said to intuit the unexpressed drama inherent in chronicles and other raw materials of history and to give it its appropriate form and style”. In fact, by focusing on the issue as he does, Meyer surely confronts the possibility that historical narrative itself is by no means the authoritative ordering principle which it appears to be: rather it is a more or less randomly predominant narrative, predominant, that is, within a range of possible versions of the same story. Style is not inherently “right”, but rather a concomitant of a particular interpretation of events, of a particular history. Jacobson himself shows how, within the story, the incident in which Wertmüller offers to rephrase a prosaically styled letter in order, he feels, to do the potential of its contents justice (X, 108) highlights the importance of the style of narration. Wertmüller, however, is not instinctively sensing the correct style, but simply choosing one which appeals to him. The issue is an important one in the novel: the “grand” sounding passages of dramatic history are thus reflected upon rather than being unselfconscious assertions of history as truth. Osborne offers a perceptive analysis of the foregrounding of style as a manner of dealing with malleable events: “Meyer self-consciously reminds his readers of the principal stylistic choices with which he felt himself presented in the composition of Jürg Jenatsch”, and argues that in the different stylistic approaches to events - represented, on the one hand, by the melodramatic account of the violent events in the Grisons and, on the other, by the cooler account of the diplomatic intrigue in Venice - Meyer holds an ironic mirror to the age of philosophical transition in which he himself lived.

The most striking way in which the narration - history! - is questioned is, as I have suggested, through the issue of the interpretation of the central character. Jenatsch, we shall see, is set up by the narration as an agent of destiny, but the suggestion is also repeatedly undermined by alternative possibilities. In fact in this and every other aspect of Jenatsch’s reality, a definitive interpretation is impossible on the basis of a narration which thereby suggests that history is a mere gloss rather than a uniquely true explanation of past events. By delving behind the momentousness of history to deal with its characters, Meyer undermines the standard version - standard order - of history. Maync observes “nach Meyers Auffassung wird die Geschichte nicht von Verhältnissen, sondern von Männern gemacht”. Undoubtedly Meyer tends to focus on an individual at the heart of historical events rather than trying to present an overall picture. However, the nature of those individuals has important implications for his vision of historical order. The characters he presents are ambiguous characters: and Meyer shows how public history avails itself of the interpretative possibilities they present in certain ways. He shows how ambiguous characters determine the course of history - but more than this, he shows how the interpretation of these characters and their deeds - their representation, that is, in the public sphere - is

60 Osborne, Meyer or Fontanel?, p. 92.
61 Cf. Osborne, Meyer or Fontanel?, pp. 88-102; in particular pp. 88-91, and p. 101: “Meyer’s response to the problem of how to treat the story of Jürg Jenatsch is to make that problem itself the theme of his novel. The novel is so written and constructed that the sensational horrors of a family feud among a backward people stands in dialectic relationship to an epic story of the struggle for national identity in the complex world of modern Realpolitik.”
62 Maync, p. 149.
ultimately the decisive aspect in constructing the order of history, the order from which the human and social order of any particular time and place is derived.

Lukács is undoubtedly right when he suggests that in his historical fiction Meyer dwells on the unknowability of great men at the centre of momentous events, and that this distances his work from the popular aspirations beneath these events (although he does concede that the vestiges of a link remain in Jürg Jenatsch). Where his analysis falls short of appreciating the intricacy of Meyer’s work is in its assumption that Meyer is distracted from the process of history and his writing overwhelmed by fatalism because of his subscription to the cult of the great but unknowable individual as the agent of an equally unknowable fate: “Diese Heldenkonzeption hängt bei Meyer eng mit einer fatalistischen Ansicht von der Unerkennbarkeit der Wege der Geschichte, mit einer Mystik der “großen Männer” als der Vollstrecker des fatalistischen Willens einer unerkennbaren Gottheit zusammen.”

In fact Meyer is not distracted from the idea of history, but he does indeed question the idea of history as progress, the idea which is of course fundamental to Lukács. In place of history as destiny, however, Meyer posits not history as an organic, in-built process, but history as a set of narratives. In the dominant narrative, the “order” which coincides with the demands inherent in the sense of identity of any society, destiny is a tool used to “tell” a teleological order which validates that society; it explains and integrates those great men. Meyer’s own narratives explore other possibilities, showing how these figures could operate within other narrative structures and refusing to take their representativeness for granted.

Rather than, as Jacobson claims, aiming to achieve objectivity, Meyer shows that objectivity is impossible amid the conflicting potential styles caught up or discarded in the process of evaluation which is the writing of history. In this interpretation of an ambiguity there lurks, therefore, a double disjunction of reality from any clearly defined, signifying order: the fear that the human and social order is not a necessary one but merely the product of a more or less random narrative.

The problem in Jürg Jenatsch is that the characters - and indeed the nations and creeds - which interact are operating under vastly differing codes and, of course, with incompatible ambitions. This may sound like a literary commonplace, but in Jürg Jenatsch it is not merely a means of plot-creation, but rather a central theme itself. Most importantly there is no resolution to the interpretative dilemmas thrown up by the crossed lines of the plot and characters. No single moral, political or spiritual structure emerges as uniquely valid, so that every human judgement is seen to be arbitrary. Patriotism, political and religious conviction, personal ambition, honour, love, a belief in fate: all of these putative guiding principles recur throughout Jürg Jenatsch. The most obvious interpretative problems, both for the individual living amongst these clashing value systems, and for the reader, are therefore simply those of identifying which of these principles are valid and which are not, and of assigning precedence to those which are. To complicate matters further, each of them is also subdivided, entailing clashes of its own.

The motif of patriotism illustrates this point. Patriotism, Heinrich Waser observes late in the novel, seems to be the one constant thread running through the figure of Jenatsch: “Sie [seine

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64 Lukács, p. 271.
Vaterlandsliebe ist der einzige überall passende Schlüssel zu seinem vielgestaltigen Wesen" (X, 251). I shall suggest that the contradictions in the portrayal of Jürg Jenatsch are a sustained presence in the tale, not just a result of a dichotomy between the real figure and an idealized Meyer representation of him. Patriotism is also apparent in other Grisons figures such as Lukretia, who delays avenging her father’s death because of it, and Pater Pankrazi, who prefers an independent, Protestant canton to a Catholic annex. However, patriotism is not an absolute value. The French soldiers display the same quality - and it eventually sets them against the patriotic “Bündner”. The patriotism of the French also illustrates the plurality of understandings of the concept itself. Whereas Baron Lecques places it above all other priorities and wants to defend the glory of France to the bitter end, in spite of the capitulation signed by his commanding officer, Rohan’s patriotism, though unquestioned, must take second place to his sense of honour: he will not break his word (this, of course, is precisely what Jenatsch does for his canton). Rohan’s patriotism is further complicated by his being a Huguenot in the service of a Catholic French court. Again, Jenatsch offers a contrast: having started the story as a vehement Protestant minister, he ends it as a Catholic, after a conversion motivated by political considerations and furthering his patriotic ambitions.

This illustrates the fact that in Jürg Jenatsch religion, like patriotism, is a relative concept. The intricate confessional geography of the Grisons - an otherwise tight-knit, not to say tiny, community - is also indicative of this. Religion may seem to offer a metaphysically informed, homogenous system of understanding - but imported into the real world, it too loses its absolute authority. This is underlined when we discover that Pompejus Planta - whose political doctrine is a conservative one based on the principle of a stable and self-justifying aristocratic hierarchy - has himself converted from Catholicism and back again, implying that his faith is a less than absolute quality. It is also suggested that the political principle he stands for is not an absolute one as he pretends: his petty skulduggery at the start of the novel (he is clearly plotting Jenatsch’s assassination with a man Jenatsch describes as a base criminal) hardly contributes to a sovereign image. On the other hand, the alternative principle, which has adherents equally vehement - that of democracy - is also undermined as a supreme system. It consistently takes second place to other concerns - practical, short-term ones or spiritual ones. Early in the novel Jenatsch explains: “Ich bin ein Demokrat, das weißt du. Aber da ist ein schlimmer Haken. Die Veltliner sind hitzige Katholiken, zusammen mit dem papistischen Drittel unserer Stammlande würden sie Bünden zu einem katholischen Staate machen - und da sei Gott vor!” (X, 41-42); and indeed, by chapter ten the avowed democrat is casually referred to by the narrator as “der bündnerische Diktator” (X, 221). The passage quoted above, apart from illustrating democracy’s limited authority in the mind of one of its advocates, becomes ironic in retrospect also with regard to religious conviction, when Jenatsch eventually turns not only his canton but even himself to Catholicism later in the story. To drive home the irony, on hearing of this conversion Waser echoes Jenatsch’s earlier words: “Da sei Gott vor!” (X, 252).

Both religion and democracy raise very acutely the issue of representation in politics - religion in that political rule stands for (represents) the rule of God on earth; democracy in that it is power wielded

67 Cf. Wiesmann, pp. 68-69: Wiesmann believes the same emotion motivated Meyer himself to make a hero of a figure - Jenatsch - whom he knew to be a “Schurke” - thereby making the character’s misdeeds inexplicable and the character unsatisfactory. Maync, by contrast, believes that the “Schurke” who was the historical figure is successfully transformed in the novel, and that his misdeeds are the consequence of the “Tragik des Genies”, which is to be too great for the real world, to have nowhere to go after fulfilling destiny. Cf. also Langmesser, pp. 301-02 for another positive interpretation of the character.
only by virtue of the popular representativeness of the ruler (in respect of the people), as symbolic power. Jenatsch’s apparent mutability brings such matters to the fore, but the tale never offers a consistent interpretative key as to what kind of representation Jenatsch really aspires to. Patriotism and religion are each potential narratives; that they clash and subdivide illustrates the privileging of plots which is necessary to obtain the semblance of a coherent narrative order.

Without any shared, absolute guiding principle, the act of interpretation, of attributing significance, becomes inevitably tentative. The novel is basically a biography of Jürg Jenatsch. His aim is independence for the Grisons and he achieves it. Yet after his death, his compatriots and other interested parties find themselves unable to decide how to remember either the deed or its agent: a straightforward national hero Jenatsch certainly is not. (They decide not to prosecute his assassins, but nevertheless bury him with “ungewöhnlichen, seinen Verdiensten um das Land angemessenen Ehren” X, 268). The reader, after finishing the “biography” is likely to find him—or herself in a quandary in respect of the evaluation of Jürg Jenatsch.

Jenatsch appears from one point of view as a martyr - in which respect he acquires another surrogate identity: the representativeness of the victim/martyr, standing for a national identity and a heroic response to suppression. He frees his country and in the process of doing so he sacrifices everything which is dear to him - his loved ones, his faith, his integrity. He is a hothead, but a well-intentioned and a successful one. This is how his uneasy admirer Waser sees him: he cannot applaud Jenatsch’s extreme means, but he is fascinated by the romantic figure his friend cuts, and certainly supports his aim. From another point of view he is a fanatic who threatens the stability of all Europe through his reckless tunnel vision. From yet another standpoint, he appears entirely different: his hot-headed recklessness is a front behind which he spins a web of carefully calculated intrigue. His patriotism is merely an excuse for him to unfetter his swollen ego, to pursue his lust for power.

The differing points of view from which we observe Jenatsch account to a large extent for the difficulty faced by the reader in “pinning down” Jürg Jenatsch. Our initial impression is surely a favourable one: for much of the first part of the novel we are looking over Heinrich Waser’s shoulder and see Jenatsch as an impetuous figure but a noble one. That he should, for example, hold a knife at his friend’s throat to obtain information is alarming but seems spontaneous rather than sinister. Our first view of Jenatsch in a less sympathetic light is through the letter Waser receives from Ritter Doktor Fortunatus Sprecher, in which Jenatsch’s participation in the assassination of Pompejus Planta is reported in outraged terms. Sprecher sees Jenatsch as “teuflisch” and “blutig” (X, 73-74). Immediately afterwards, however, Jenatsch is again described as a heroic freedom fighter against huge odds.

In the second book, set in Venice, we are probably still inclined to “support” Jenatsch. Waser reappears at this point to reintroduce his sympathetic interpretation of the man and his behaviour. Jenatsch has killed a superior officer in a duel and arrives in Venice to attach himself to Rohan. Wertmüller - introduced as a rather petty character - meets Jenatsch and finds him distasteful, asking himself the key question, “‘Bist du ein Held oder ein Komödiant?’” (X, 103-04). However, Wertmüller is at this stage, unlike the reader, ignorant of Jenatsch’s friendship with Waser and his childhood relationship with Lukretia which partly explain his strange reactions during their conversation. The Provveditore, Grimani, has apparently long disliked Jenatsch and is now determined to have him tried
and executed. Waser and Rohan, on the other hand, accept a witness’s report at face value which seems to justify Jenatsch’s conduct in the duel. They - and probably most readers - do not believe Grimani, who insists that Jenatsch is not the spontaneous hero he has hitherto appeared to be, but a master of intrigue. Rohan disregards Grimani’s warnings that Jenatsch could be fatal to him. Soon afterwards, Wertmüller forms an assessment of Jenatsch which is similar to that of Grimani, suspecting his shows of emotionalism may be insincere, merely a tactic. However, the reader, like Rohan, is likely to dismiss Wertmüller’s opinions as the fruits of jealousy: Jenatsch has rather usurped him at Rohan’s side.

It is in the third book, when Jenatsch decides to betray Rohan, that we may begin to have more substantial doubts about our picture of Jürg Jenatsch. Rohan has been presented as an unambiguously sympathetic character, and the reader is likely to share the later qualms of the people of Chur about Jenatsch’s treatment of him. Above all we must now reconsider the doubts voiced earlier by other characters, and largely ignored. Grimani’s predictions have come true: he was right to suggest that Rohan’s position between the interests of Richelieu and the Grisons would prove intolerable, and his specific warning about Jenatsch has been entirely vindicated: “wer in Bünden sollte es wagen, gegen das mächtige Frankreich sich zu verschwören oder gar mit offener Gewalttat zu erheben! Gewiß keiner [. . .]. wenn nicht vielleicht jener Heilose - Euer Schützling, Georg Jenatsch” (X, 134).

Suddenly we must wonder whether Grimani’s other opinions on Jenatsch were also correct. Can it really be the case that “dieser Mensch berechnet jeden seiner Zornausbrüche und benützt jede seiner Blutwallungen!” (X, 131)? His emotional manner has certainly brought him an astounding degree of success.68 Similarly, Wertmüller, who has been doggedly trying to expose Jenatsch’s plotting during the winter in Chur, suddenly appears in a different light - perceptive rather than envious. On the other hand, we can still believe that Jenatsch is pursuing liberty for his people rather than power for himself, albeit with less certainty than before. Lukretia, who despite her father’s murder, has remained convinced that Jenatsch is fighting for the Grisons’ cause alone (this is how she justifies her failure to exact revenge from him), learns of his intention to betray Rohan and exclaims: “Könnet Ihr - ich will glauben, der Heimat zum besten, - immer nach Neuem greifen und, ohne daß Ihr daran untergeht, das alte Wesen wie eine Schlangenhaut abstreifen?” (X, 189, my emphasis).

Lukretia, more than any other character, holds Jenatsch dear - yet it seems that even she is beginning to wonder whether it is patriotism or the lust for power which drives him.

However, it is not just the variety of the directly stated points of view of the novel’s characters which prevent a straightforward interpretation of Jenatsch. More fundamentally disruptive is the capriciousness of the narrator. We have already observed the influence of the narrator: both Grimani and Wertmüller were initially presented as very unsympathetic, which devalued their opinions. Wertmüller, in particular, metamorphoses completely (though not, I think, unbelievably). When we first meet him as an adult, in Venice, he seems very petty: rather intoxicated, he attempts to provoke Jenatsch. The narrator likens the latter to “die große Dogge, die in ihrer Hütte liegt, ungen, aber nur mit leisem Knurren die

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68 Cf. Burkhard, Marianne, Conrad Ferdinand Meyer, p. 77. Burkhard points out that even Grimani’s theory that Jenatsch has provoked and manipulated duels to gain promotion in the army does not now seem so incredible: we recall the reports which reached Waser concerning Jenatsch’s military career: a succession of heroic deeds and duels in which the other, often superior, officer always seemed to come off worse.
Neckerei eines unterhaltungslustigen kleinen Klaffers erträgt, der als überlastiger Gast zu ihr hineingekrochen ist” (X, 105).

The implication for the weight we attach to Wertmüller’s - the “Klaffer’s” - forebodings is clear. Yet later, in Chur, the same character is seen to be loyal and brave far beyond the call of duty, and it is he who makes Jenatsch seem petty when the coup finally occurs and he prevents Jenatsch from meeting Rohan at the end of Book Three, Chapter 9.

The figure of Rohan is sympathetic throughout the novel and is always associated with honour and humanity. The degree to which we trust his judgement, however, does change. In Venice he seems profoundly wise; his handling of Jenatsch and Grimani and the scene involving Lukretia lend him great dignity. By the time Jenatsch’s rebellion takes place in Chur, the portrayal of Rohan has changed to make him seem elderly, frail and naive, a pawn in a political game. We certainly have to dismiss his earlier assessments of Jenatsch - for example, “Dieser Mensch erscheint mir unbändig und ehrlich wie eine Naturkraft” (X, 131).

The narrator, then, posits unstable co-ordinates in the novel in the form of characters whose standing alters considerably according to the light in which they are presented.

The exercise of evaluating Jenatsch is rendered still harder when we realize that even the direct comments of the “omniscient” narrator cannot be accepted at face value. In fact, it would appear that the narrator is as liable to be misled by appearances as any of the characters. In this respect the narration of Jürg Jenatsch is analogous to the reporting of Fortunatus Sprecher. Lund points out that though Sprecher is concerned to present an unbiased (“vorurteilslos” X, 73) version of events, his letters such as the one mentioned above describing the murder of Pompejus Planta are strongly impregnated with his own conservative and emotional reactions to events.69

If we look at the epithets applied to Jenatsch in the course of the novel, they reveal a narrating voice which is no more sophisticated than Sprecher’s or any of the other characters whom we have seen to be limited in perception and volatile in their reactions. The epithets all tend to highlight existential categories (rather than political ones) - passion, fervour, energy - but how far do they correlate with political allegiances? Once again, the narrative voice seems to offer no consistent insight. Repeatedly, and especially in the first section of the novel, Jenatsch is described as acting spontaneously, wildly, passionately. In the second paragraph of the fourth chapter, when we first encounter Jenatsch, the following symptomatic phrases are attached to him: “ein Feuerschein wilder Kraft”, “die Gewalt eines unbändigigen Wills”, “durch die Gefahren eines stürmischen Lebens” (X, 35). Later however, countering testimony to, for example, his “hinreiBende Wärme” (X, 96) and “Heftigkeit” (X, 103), we find adjectives which seem to contradict Jenatsch’s fiery image. Unobtrusively but repeatedly he is described as “kalt” or “kaltblütig” (e.g. X, 126, 206, 233). By the time Jenatsch discovers that Rohan has failed to obtain ratification for his accord with the Grisons from the French court, it is clear that the narrator now believes that his conduct is not as wild as it may seem: Jenatsch is filled with anger, “aber sein berechnender Geist behielt die Zügel und lenkte die brausenden Mächte seines Gemüts auf immer neuen, immer gefahrvolleren, aber wohlbemessenen Bahnen” (X, 175). It is even suggested that he rivals Richelieu at political intrigue. The following passage portrays a very different Jenatsch from the one

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initially introduced to us: “Der dem Kardinal an kluger Berechnung gleichstehende Bündner hatte die Maschen des Netzes zu fest geknüpft und zu sicher zusammengezogen, als daß selbst die Schlauheit Richelieus eine Lücke zum Durchschlüpfen gefunden hätte” (X, 211).

Our narrator’s interpretation of characters and events is entirely susceptible to appearance and circumstance. When Jenatsch is striving on Rohan’s behalf to persuade his compatriots to accept the “Thunserartikel”, the narrator comments on Grimani “wie sehr, wie vollständig hatte er sich geirrt, als er den Herzog vor Georg Jenatsch glaubte warnen zu müssen!” (X, 157). A few pages later, it becomes clear that, on the contrary, Grimani’s warning was far from mistaken. Occasionally the narrator even admits that events and characters are not amenable to authoritative judgements and is explicitly ambivalent (for example the “Sei es [. . .] sei es” (X, 238) in which refuge is taken with regard to Serbelow’s reasons for signing Jenatsch’s treaty). Some important questions are simply never addressed: we never discover why there is such a personal and deadly hatred between Pompejus Planta and Jenatsch, a hatred which makes both of them behave in a way inappropriate to their grand ideals (Planta plots Jenatsch’s assassination, Jenatsch and his cohorts hack Planta to death). In this matter the narrator treats as a matter of course something which is crucial and entirely opaque. The reader must come to his or her own conclusions - and cannot be confident of the authenticity of either the evidence or the witnesses as represented by the narrator.70

The implication is that the narrator, like the characters in the novel and like the reader, cannot appeal to a stable, supernatural signifier. When characters in the novel do attempt to invoke metaphysical justification - religious, moral or otherwise - we have seen that the result is conflict. Lukretia exemplifies the problem: she is moved in different directions by her affection for Jenatsch, the traditional values of her society which would have her kill him, her faith and her patriotism. Indeed she is effectively paralysed by the impossibility of effecting clear judgements, unable to decide whether or not she should exact revenge from Jenatsch and uncertain about the validity of her reluctance to do so. She oscillates hopelessly between reclaiming her place in society and attempting to flee it altogether. Even when she finally kills Jenatsch, she is merely delivering a coup de grâce which would otherwise have been administered by someone else.

It has been generally accepted that Jenatsch, whatever his true motivation, is at least successful whereas Rohan, too proud to descend to political intrigue or break his word, is a failure - yet even this assessment is more problematic than it would seem. Critics have tended to overlook the fact that eventually the French Court does in fact sign the treaty negotiated by Rohan.71 If Jenatsch had waited an hour longer with his betrayal, it would have been rendered unnecessary and Rohan would have emerged covered in glory instead of a broken man.

The absence of any reliable system of evaluation is humorously highlighted when Rudolf Planta refers to the uncertainty regarding the real nature even of the world itself: “Ich aber sagte ihm, daß ich Euch von Kindheit an kenne und daß in Verkehr mit Euch, wie übrigens mit jedermann auf dieser, wie

70 At any rate, a potential history is alluded to and simply suppressed. Again, narration is seen to be a process of privileging, not just representing.
71 For example Marianne Burkhard, whose assessment of Rohan as a principled but ineffective figure is typical (Conrad Ferdinand Meyer, p. 79).
die neuesten Gelehrten behaupten, sich drehenden Erde, nichts besser sei als ein guter schriftlicher Kontrakt" (X, 218).

The interpretative difficulties of the novel mean that we can never be entirely sure whether Jenatsch is an egomaniac or whether he really is driven by fate. In chapter 2 the narrator explicitly tells us that "die Gunst des Schicksals war mit ihm [Jenatsch]" (X, 154). Lukretia also seems to believe that it is Jenatsch's destiny to free the Grisons - yet, as we have seen, she later wonders whether his motivation is noble patriotism or mere ambition and begins to compare him to politicians. The narrator, as noted above, begins to suggest that Jenatsch is calculating rather than inspired. Towards the end of the novel he is increasingly portrayed as vain; Rudolf Planta's insinuations that Jenatsch is wallowing in the material rewards of his new, powerful position are never refuted. On the other hand, suggestions of some supernatural force behind Jenatsch continue; Lecques's assassination attempt on him fails: "der Hahn schlug nieder, ein Pulverblitz flammte auf der Zündpfanne, doch der Schuß versagte" (X, 223); a thunder storm breaks just as he appears in Chur (X, 253). This is the stuff of political legend and myth-making - and admits of the possibility of a significant mismatch between the actual person and the legend - of a representation which functions almost independently of that upon which it is based, but functions nevertheless. Again Jenatsch throws up the problem of representation: whether or not he justifies the accolade, he is a symbol, a potent image in the political arena.72

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Meyer has often been seen as in love with monumental history, yet what strikes one is his thematization of history-in-the-making (that is, in the telling). This is manifestly so in the Rahmennovellen - but perhaps seems more surprising in Jürg Jenatsch, which is unframed and seems at first glance to be unselfconsciously monumental. This is an issue bound up with the narration of the story. The narration does not initially sound volatile, but rather monolithic and grand. On closer inspection we see that the grandeur often has to do with transposing the events into grand but apparently incompatible narratives, where they acquire a representativeness - sexual, theological, nationhood. Each representative order thus jostles with another, each impinges on the authority of the others. History in Meyer's fiction is translated into orders of signification which his narrative refuses to favour over one another, just as it refuses to offer the consolation of an attainable clear and singular order which overrides the relativity of real life.

72 Cf. Jacobson, Jürg Jenatsch, pp. 87-88: Jacobson differentiates between, on the one hand, an assessment of Jenatsch in historical and political terms and, on the other, his moral and psychological portrayal in the tale.
In Jürg Jenatsch Meyer shows - through the volatility of both the events of the novel and the manner of their narration - that he fears that human society exists without a reliable, and reliably knowable, interpretative basis. This is exemplified in the experience of the reader, attempting to assess the central character but left without the stable references necessary to do so. The act of interpretation is thus intensely foregrounded, thematized, but (in the process) it becomes unstable and shifting. It is, as it were, foregrounded into instability. There is no knowable order that is uncontested and uncontestable.

Both Jürg Jenatsch and Der Heilige have exceptional central characters; both texts thematize the issue of how those characters are to be interpreted. Der Heilige is a frame Novelle, the narrator of the central story is himself a character, and as such is much more obviously liable to arouse the critical attention of the reader than an anonymous, superficially omniscient narrator such as that of Jürg Jenatsch. And the critics have not stinted attention on Hans der Armbruster. Der Heilige has been seen as enormously flawed because the narrator, a lowly crossbow maker, is unable to appreciate and hence to communicate the truth of what he observes at the court of King Henry II. The reader’s view of Thomas Becket is obscured by such an inadequate narrator, and the reader is thus unable to determine the true nature of Becket and his story. The earliest and most vociferous proponent of this argument was Franz Ferdinand Baumgarten. That he should take such a line is hardly surprising in view of his belief that “der echte große Novellist und jeder organische Gestalter erzählt vom Standpunkt seiner Allwissenheit”, whereas Meyer, of course, “zieht sich auf den Standpunkt des Zuschauers zurück”. Lukács complains that Meyer deliberately chooses a figure who is simply not up to the job of telling the story of Thomas Becket. Sjaak Onderdelinden takes quite the opposite view to the earlier commentators. He argues that far from selecting an inadequate narrator, Meyer has gone to considerable pains to qualify Hans for the job - to the extent that Hans becomes a “Supergestalt”. Onderdelinden identifies a second frame, that part of the Novelle in which Hans tells the story of his childhood and travels prior to his arrival at the English court. This “second frame” is, he believes, incorporated in order to legitimize Hans as a narrator.

Hans is perhaps no “Supergestalt”, but Onderdelinden’s main argument is of course right; to dismiss Hans as simple-minded is careless. Yet there is a wealth of evidence to suggest that despite his near omnipresence and his insight, Hans fails to deliver a conclusive explanation of the career, conversion and martyrdom of Thomas Becket. Becket can be seen as a devious figure, whose sudden change in behaviour on becoming Archbishop of Canterbury is merely a part of his plan to humiliate the King, thereby exacting revenge for the loss of his daughter. Alternatively, the story can be read as showing just the opposite: Becket undergoes a genuine conversion and the King suffers God’s revenge, not Becket’s. Many critics believe that both sincere piety and - subconsciously - revenge motivate Becket or that Der Heilige simply does not definitely reveal Becket’s true motivation. The line between the view that Becket acts on the basis of conflicting motivations and the view that the Novelle does not grant us definite insight into the matter has tended to become indistinct. We should be clear that there is a difference between a character who acts from two simultaneous impulses - a genuinely ambivalent character - and a character who is inscrutable because of the way he is presented - in which case it is the text, not the character which is ambiguous. The confusion arises because the two categories are not mutually exclusive, and indeed many critics - such as Williams - believe that the ambiguity of the Novelle is designed to be emblematic of Becket’s psychological ambivalence. Finally, critics such as Baumgarten believe that the ambiguity they identify in the Novelle is a defect, either a direct result of Meyer’s poor craftsmanship or an attempt to disguise it. In the former case, Meyer has an idea of what motivates Becket but fails to represent it, in the latter, Meyer himself is unsure and takes refuge in prevarication.

Meyer’s own comments seem designed to intensify the debate, for whilst they are sometimes vehement and seem conclusive individually, they are contradictory when taken as a whole. Several of them have become almost hackneyed in Meyer criticism, and I reproduce some examples here only to show how little stock we can place in them.

On the matter of the frame itself and its impact on the presentation of the inner story of Thomas Becket, Meyer claims that it has several advantages:

2. Energische Angabe des Kostüms durch ein lebendiges Stück Mittelalter, ich meine den Armbruster mit seinem Vorleben u. seinen Raisonnements.

(To Betty Paoli, 19 April 1880. Briefe II, 347)


79 Cf. Lund, pp. 4-12.

80 Although cf. Silz, Walter, Realism and Reality: Studies in the German Novelle of Poetic Realism (Chapel Hill,1954): Silz’s suggestion that “it is to be doubted that Meyer himself entirely understood his hero” (p. 101) is within an altogether positive treatment of the Der Heilige.

Previously, however, he seems to have been less certain: “der Rahmen, so oder so, stört, scheint mir, entschieden die Wirkung. Die feine tiefe Natur des Thomas Becket verzerrt sich im Hohlspiegel eines anderen Kopfes, wer immer die Geschichte erzähle” (to Betty Paoli, 3 February 1877 - before Der Heilige was completed. XIII, 284).

On the subject of Becket’s motivation, Meyer had the following to say:

In den Akt seiner [Becket’s] Bekehrung durchdringen sich Rachsucht und Frömigkeit auf eine unheimliche Weise. (to Lingg, 2 May 1880. Briefe II, 306, Meyer’s emphasis)

[Becket] bedient sich, ohne gläubig zu sein, […] der Kirche als einer Waffe, um die ihm sonst unmögliche […] Rache vollziehen zu können. (to Friedrichs, date not known. Briefe II, 354)

Becket, sagen Sie, will an König Heinrich Rache nehmen. Keineswegs, er muß gegen seinen Willen u. nicht Rache nehmen (das ist ihm zu roh u. auch zu gefährlich), sondern strafen. (to Betty Paoli, 17 January 1881. XIII, 297, Meyer’s emphasis)

Most often quoted of all is his suggestion in a letter to Louise von François (21.4.1881) that Der Heilige is “absichtlich mehrdeutig” (XIII, 300, Meyer’s emphasis).

Several of these excerpts are contradicted even within the letter from which they are taken, and there are many more examples. Taken together, their inconclusiveness leaves us with the central conundrum: whether our interpretative uncertainties derive from a sustained rhetoric in the text, as well as with the problem of whether these uncertainties stem from the character of Becket himself or from his portrayal - or from both.82

Despite all Hans’s qualifications for the role of narrator, it seems abundantly clear that his narration is indeed designed to be questionable.83 The fact that he is in so many respects ideal only serves to highlight the uncertainty principle built into any act of interpretation: if even Hans’s narration seems open to doubt, then we can assume that no other figure could have resolved the questions which he leaves open. Although he boasts of his keen eye: “Mein Blick, sei Euch gesagt, ist scharf und sicher von Natur und hat mich von Kindheit an nie betrogen” (XIII, 18), he soon afterwards admits that “es kommt […] beim Urteilen wie beim Schießen lediglich auf den Standpunkt an” (XIII, 24). The irony here is unavoidable, and implies that even the sharpest eye is not objective. Lund points out the similarities between this and the ironic treatment of Doktor Sprecher in Jürg Jenatsch, who promises an unprejudiced account but goes on to offer one brightly coloured by his own opinions (noted in my section on that novel).84

Hans’s repeated assurances that he is speaking the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth are undermined obviously in his own account.85 Hans’s assurances include this one, strikingly

82 Tusken points out that common-sense suggests that the many diverse interpretations imply a degree of latent uncertainty in the text: if Hans’s narration really did conclusively reveal Becket to be sincere or insincere, the debate would not have flourished as it has (p. 215).
84 Lund, pp. 103-07.
85 Cf. Evans, Tamara S., Formen der Ironie in Conrad Ferdinand Meyers Novellen (Bern, 1980), pp. 60-61. Evans notes that the ironizing of specific comments (not just Hans’s own ones, but also those he reports) tends to undermine the most extreme statements and
addressed to his audience in the middle of a reported speech: ""Mit jenem Bischof oder mit diesem Abte"" - ich bin der Namen nicht mehr sicher und möchte Euch um nichts in der Welt, auch nur in einer Kleinigkeit, das Unwahre sagen"" (XIII, 81).

Only a page later, Burkhard interrupts Hans to object:

"aber was zuviel ist, ist zuviel. Das kommt aus deinem Eigenen!"
"Herr", versetzte Hans der Engelländer mit einem bösen Lächeln unter seinem grauen Barte, "es mag sein, daß der Kanzler dazumal nicht diese körperlichen Worte ausgesprochen hat, dem Geiste nach hat er sich so ergangen, das dürft Ihr mir glauben, und nicht ein-, sondern hundertmal." (XIII, 82)

Not only does Hans admit that he is doing more than just mirroring actual events, he also breaks his own promise never to depart from the truth in the smallest detail. To tell something "dem Geiste nach" entails interpreting the nature of that "Geist". How much faith can we have in him after this? Later, the already broken promise is shattered when Burkhard points out that two "Unheilskunden", which Hans specifically says Henry received on the same day, are recorded as having arrived a full year apart: "'Bleibt mir vom Leib mit nichtigen Zahlen!' grollte der Armbruster" (XIII, 105-06). Moreover, Hans tacitly admits that his own participation in the events he is describing makes him less than entirely neutral. When he refers to his own feelings or the treatment he receives, the effect is comical, so trivial are these matters against the background of the historical significance (an issue to be examined below) of the central story. When Becket arrives back at the court at the head of a procession of Saxons - a critical juncture - Hans mentions his satisfaction at seeing his rival for Hilde’s charms, Trustan Grimm, dressed as monk: clearly Hilde has spurned him. Later, when Becket (not unreasonably given the circumstances) calls him a "Schalk und böser Knecht", Hans asks: "War das nicht eine Ungerechtigkeit? Ich überlasse Euch das Urteil, jetzt, da Ihr meinen Wandel von jung auf kennt und ich Euch nichts von meiner Blöße verhehlt habe" (XIII, 131). Such passages hint that his account is coloured by his personal reactions, however heroically he may have striven at the time and be striving now, as narrator, to maintain an objective view. Meyer insists on the impossibility of such a quality: history for Meyer exists as a narrative; untold history is a contradiction in terms.

There is in fact much greater uncertainty about Hans and his role in the proceedings than is generally recognized. Several apparent inconsistencies about his character and his code of conduct suggest that he may not be being entirely candid. Hans implies, but does not confirm, that he assisted Becket in liberating a condemned "witch" - against the wishes of his King. Later, however, in the Gnade episode, he claims that he could never disobey the King, whom he continues to help seduce Gnade even after he becomes aware that she is the Chancellor’s young daughter, excusing himself by reminding his audience that Henry was his master and he was bound to follow his wishes. At one point, whilst still under the misapprehension that Gnade is Becket’s mistress rather than his daughter, Hans laughs at the

Hans would have his audience believe that he attained his place at Court without ever actually aspiring to such heights. Yet, reading between the lines, we might infer that his career is steered by a cunning ambitiousness. He travels through Germany, Spain and England learning his craft. He moves from one master bow maker to another as his skill grows. When his novel design (testimony to his imagination, not necessarily a desirable quality in the narrator of a “true” story!) is approved by King Henry and he enters Court, he rapidly becomes the monarch’s most trusted servant. This he achieves simply by being ever at Henry’s side. On hunting expeditions, the King leaves everybody behind as he recklessly tears across the countryside - everybody but Hans, who rapidly succeeds in making himself indispensable: “wenn ich mich auch nicht mit bösen Listen einschmeichelte, war ich doch auch witzig genug geworden, um mir mein gutes Spiel nicht täppisch zu verderben” (XIII, 35).

Hans, who appeared painfully naive as he set out from his monastery in Switzerland, the butt of the ridicule of those he met (he is divested of much of his clothing in one incident and persuaded to pray on his knees to a brothel in another), now makes an astute diagnosis of the true balance of power between the King and his Chancellor: “König Heinrich betrachtete den von ihm aus dem Nichts Gehobenen mit Wohlgemut als sein Geschöpf, aber das Geschöpf [. . .] war dem Schöpfer unentbehrlich geworden und unterjochte ihn mit seinem sanften Eigensinn” (XIII, 36).

And Hans does not fail to respond to this situation. Alone with Becket, he lets slip a Moorish phrase and then intimates that he knows, or suspects, that the Chancellor is the Prinz Mondschein who won for himself a position at the court in Cordova precisely similar to the one now enjoyed by Becket in London. If this is not quite blackmail, it is at least a devious means of bonding himself to Becket, to whom he promises his silence.

Hans is indignant when Becket, after the death of Grace, indicates his distaste for him, and also insists that when he leaves England he has earned “meinen ehrlichen Lohn” (XIII, 141-42), despite the King’s new coldness towards him. He never admits that he did anything other than his duty. Critics have tended to accept this without comment. Yet if Hans has proven elliptical or elusive in other matters, it is not unreasonable to suppose that he might also be so in this one, and there are indications that he does feel less blameless than he would have his audience believe. After the murder of Becket, he groans: “Mea culpa, mea culpa.” (XIII, 136) - but refuses to admit at any point in what respect he might be responsible. However, when he contemplates the possibility of selling the handkerchief which he dipped into Becket’s blood, he again implies that he perceives himself to be in some respect guilty: “es ging mir gegen die
Erinnerungen des Gemüttes, ein Blut zu verkaufen, an welchem ich nicht ohne eigene Schuld war" (XIII, 142).

In fact we learn that Hans does not actually inform the assassins, who believe they are carrying out the King’s wishes, that he has orders from Henry to protect Becket. He does step between Becket and his attackers, but this action would obviously prove futile. It would be possible, in the light of his later suggestions of guilt, to surmise that he does not do his utmost to save Becket. Once again, the evidence is inconclusive: the element of doubt is surely present.

It does at any rate seem that Hans’s narration is not authoritative, and that the frame is intended not simply to add colour or authenticity but to be obtrusive: it demands critical attention. As Hans and Rosmarie Zeller observe, the story is about itself as a story: “daß hier das Erzählen thematisiert wird, daß das Erzählen erzählt wird”. Instead of using the framework in the conventional manner to guarantee the central story, Meyer makes the frame shift. Every time the external story interrupts the internal one, it is not to remind us of the authority of the teller of the tale but to relativize him: the interruptions are made by Burkhard when he questions the truth of what he is hearing. Just as in Jürg Jenatsch, the reader finds that the co-ordinates required for assessing the significance of the story and the characters in it are not reliable. Far from taking refuge from a troubled world in the coherence of an aesthetic form, Meyer subverts the aesthetic form to illustrate the true hopelessness of finding solid ground in a world which he sees as self-referential, lacking in certain foundations. Hans’s story is full of different possible interpretations, and it is ironic in the extreme when he condemns ambiguity in art:

“Habt Ihr das aus Byzanz gekommene Bild gesehen, das die Mönche in Allerheiligen zu Schaffhausen als ihren besten Schatz hüten? Es ist ein toter Salvator mit eingesunkenen Augen und geschlossenen Lidern; aber betrachtet man ihn länger, so ändert er sich durch eine List der Zeichnung und Verteilung der Schatten die Miene und sieht Euch mit offenen Schmerzensaugen traurig an. Eine unehrliche Kunst, Herr! Denn der Maler soll nicht zweideutig, sondern klar seine Striche ziehen.” (XIII, 72)

It is not only because of the unreliability of the narrator that Der Heilige is interpretatively elusive. A number of different motifs are built into the text which seem to lead us towards different interpretations but which are never unequivocal. One of them is the comparison of Becket with Christ. There is a series of direct or indirect linkages of Becket and Christ: the picture of the saviour referred to in the passage quoted above is compared by Hans to Becket’s face; Becket speaks to the image of Christ “wie zu seinesgleichen” (XIII, 77); Becket’s entrance to Canterbury after exile in France is

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90 Cf. Jacobson, Manfred R., “The Narrator’s Allusions to Art and Ambiguity: A Note on C. F. Meyer’s Der Heilige”, Seminar, 10 (1974), 265-73. Jacobson identifies parallels between this moment and the narrator’s other reference to art - the statues of which Becket is so fond: “Both the painting and the statues are mentioned in digressions and brought into conjunction with Becket. Both of these works originated in Byzantium and in both descriptions our attention is focused on the eyes” (p. 272). He draws a distinction, however, between ambiguity which is a trick of technique, as in the painting, and the “inherent”, “artistically true” ambiguity of the statues. His suggestion that this was Meyer’s anticipatory response to criticism of the Novelle’s ambiguity is perhaps too pedantic, and I believe that the importance of the sculptures is to do with the perfect deadly order which Meyer, as is clear in his poetry, perceives in art. Hans is perplexed by the sculptures because he dwells firmly in the order of practical life.
91 Cf., for example, Evans, pp. 74-75: Evans identifies an additional source of polyvalence in parallels between the figures of Burkhard and Hans, Becket and Heinrich which relativize their characterization - and hence the import of the inner and outer texts. “Er [Meyer] schildert den Heiligen, er schildert die Welt, wie er sie sieht: vieldeutig.”
marked by green branches strewn along his route. Such intimations of course suggest a narrative of martyrdom. There is also the motif of fate. The prefigurations of later events early in the Novelle may indeed be taken as manifestations of this motif: a prophetic nun sees a white lily, representing a saint, emerge from the marriage of Becket’s parents on their wedding night; Hans’s first master in London shouts at Becket: “Schade, Pfaffe, daß du kein Kind hast, das dir ein Normanne verderben kann!” (XIII, 31). Above all, though, Becket’s fatalism towards the end of the Novelle is striking. However, the fate motif is not only attached to Becket. Random words taken from Virgil (“sagittas, calamo, arcui”) correctly predict Hans’s career. Later events conspire to make Hans seem not just fated but also fatal: Gnade and Becket are both placed in his protection and both are killed; even Hilde, whose life he attempts to rescue on his own initiative, dies in his arms.

Suggestions of unchristian magic are also present in the story: when Becket is still flourishing as Chancellor, the Saxons spread rumours that he has bound Henry to him through “geheime Wissenschaft” (XIII, 28) which he learned in Moorish Cordova. He intervenes to rescue the condemned “witch”. Hans’s reaction to the way Becket converses with the image of Christ is that it is “lästerlich” (XIII, 77) rather than devout. Very often, the motifs of black magic, fate and Becket’s Christ-like quality are hard to distinguish from one another. For example: is his intervention on behalf of the witch due to the sympathy of one sorcerer for another or to Christian pity? When Hans’s gift of a handkerchief soaked in the martyr’s blood fails to effect a miraculous cure for his Hilde, is it really (as Hans surmises) because Becket bears him malice from beyond the grave, or simply because Becket’s relics have no miraculous properties anyway? Once again we detect Meyer subverting the distinctions between categories as he does in Jürg Jenatsch, making the confident interpretation of such phenomena impossible. In the case of Der Heilige, Meyer’s text is curiously poised between (on the one hand) the life of a saint, where absolutes might be expected to be operative, and (on the other) a modern, secular story, shot through with psychological and sociological relativizations.

Even if we look beyond supernatural motifs, and treat Hans’s words with caution, it is hard to form a firm picture of Becket as a person. He is undeniably ambitious. He is an aesthete, but one who famously turns into a ascetic. In doing so, does he lose his ambition and his refinement? When he apparently finds himself unable to give Henry the promised kiss of reconciliation, is it because his Christ-like quality of mercy is overstrained by the sight of the pouting lips which defiled his daughter, or because Henry’s face is simply so ugly that it repulses him? Hans seems to think that both reasons are valid. Any interpretation of Becket can only be tentative. Our picture is influenced by a narrator who is shown to be unreliable, and the text never confirms any of the hints of magic, fate or holiness which are attached to its central character. Just as in Jürg Jenatsch, our uncertainty is the result of the lack of stable co-ordinates. Meyer portrays a world isolated from stable cognition; there is no reliable context available.

The combination of a narrator who lacks authority and a text which tacitly points the reader in different directions, neither refuting nor confirming any particular possibility, means that Becket the man remains enigmatic. It may well be that he acts from mixed motives, but the ambiguity inherent in the Novelle prevents us from knowing for certain. The fact is that Becket’s real personality remains a secret and the only clear legacy to emerge is Becket the legend, Becket the symbol. This truth is ironically
highlighted in the title of the tale. At the outset of his narration, Hans makes the following, retrospectively striking remark:

“Ihr mögt leichtlich besser Bescheid wissen, Herr Burkhard, in dem was meines Herrn Königs Fürstenhandel und Taten im Weltlauf betrifft: was aber den Wandel und die Natur seiner Person angeht - und des Thomas Becket Menschenanlitz auch" - fügte er scheu und leise hinzu -, “so habe ich wahrlich vor einem Jahre in jener trunkenen Nacht nicht geprahlt, als ich mich berühmte, sie zu kennen.” (XIII, 15)

Yet this story, in which the narrator promises to reveal the true character of the martyred Archbishop, is entitled not “Thomas Becket” but “der Heilige”. Hans wrestles with his own version of the story, with his interpretation of the man, in a dark room with only an old man to hear it. Outside, the whole of Zürich is celebrating Becket’s symbolic significance which has long since eclipsed the actuality of Becket the human being: he has been canonized. A world which was singularly unable to come to terms with Becket during the last part of his life has responded by turning him into an emblem after his death. This response has a manifestly political significance: most obviously it has implications for King Henry’s authority and the position of the Saxons in his realm. Becket the enigmatic individual is in effect digested and reformed in the terms of human society.

We are thus presented with two alternative narratives: history as it is constituted in the public domain, and history as it is told by Hans Armbruster. The contrast between the two to some extent demeans both versions: neither appears inherently true to the manner of the past events with which it is concerned. Both histories are responses to a need to engage with those events in a certain manner. It is clear, however, which version will become “authoritative”.

Roy Cowen observes that in his story, Hans is composing, welding together fragments: “In seiner Komposition setzt Hans die ‘Bruchstücke’ wieder zusammen.” However, he is not piecing together a jigsaw: the pieces have not one, but an infinite number of possible combinations. Each depends on the whim of the composer, and each can completely transform the contingent pieces - events, persons - by virtue of the context in which they reappear. Komar notes that “it is significant that the only satisfactory resolutions of tension in the Novelle take place in Hans’s story rather than Becket’s” - Hans has the money he is owed paid to him, and his conscience is relieved by telling his story. Hertling makes a similar point: “Der Hauptgrund für seine [Hans’s] Erzählung jedoch ist die Hoffnung auf eine Art Katharse, ist die Erinnerung als Beichte - ist der Versuch, seine Handlungsweisen in England zu rechtfertigen und seine Unschuld zu bezeugen. Dies gelingt ihm auch.”

His narration is not just prompted by, but informed by his sense of guilt; his story constructs order rather conveying truth. Similarly, the history celebrated in the city outside is a programmatic story written by society’s religious and political superstructure - and not some permanently sanctioned process.

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92 Simon’s study identifies in the text an unresolved conflict between the “Novelle” and the “legend” - the former attempts to explain Becket’s motivation, the latter rests on the idea of his inherent saintliness (cf. p. 230); “Die Lektüre des Textes als Legende widerspricht derjenigen als Novelle [ . . . ]” (p. 237).
93 Cowen, p. 255.
94 Komar, p. 337.
All the evidence suggests that Maync is right to argue that Meyer was drawn to his historical material above all by individual figures: his histories are basically biographies.\(^96\) It does not follow, however, that “das Geschichtliche ist im ‘Heiligen’, weit mehr noch als im ‘Jürg Jenatsch’, bloß Folie für die handelnden Menschen”.\(^97\) History, as a narrative order, is the issue at the heart of Der Heilige. The central character is the means by which he explores how history is constructed - not by a series of events, but by the way in which these events are told. In the ambiguity of Becket he reflects the distance between an inaccessible truth and historical representation.\(^98\)

Meyer, in both Jürg Jenatsch and Der Heilige, seems to attempt to delve beneath the power battles of history in order to explore men who shaped it and are shaped by it. However, the only certainties with which we are left are the ones with which we started: the historical figures whose importance lies in the “reality” assigned to them by posterity, in the partial judgement of those harnessing their legacies to their particular wagon. As in the case of Jürg Jenatsch, the representational aspect of the martyr is contrasted with the possible reality of the figure upon whom that representation rests, and the contrast reveals that history cannot be re-examined and re-constituted as pure fact: it is the representative role which the figure is allotted within a particular, prevailing historical narrative which matters.\(^99\) We do not know whether Becket was a martyr to his faith or to his lust for revenge; what matters is that he became a saint, a beacon for the Saxons and a key factor in the future relationship between the Catholic Church and the English Court: precisely his significance “im Weltlauf”. Similarly, Jenatsch’s countrymen are tentative in the extreme in their appraisal of the man, but bury him as a national hero: and he was remembered as a heroic freedom fighter in Meyer’s day (and indeed still is to this day).\(^100\)

Meyer has his narrator boast that he will show us what lies behind recorded history. The latter, he implies, is only a part of the truth, his own tale will reach further: “‘Jetzt komme ich zu reden auf ein Geheimnis der Ungerechtigkeit, das zwar in keiner Chronik wird verzeichnet stehen, aber doch die Grabschaufel ist, die Herrn Thomas und Herrn Heinrich, einem nach dem andern, seine Grube gemacht hat’” (XIII, 43). Yet, despite Hans’s intimate position at the Court, he is eventually compelled to admit that his tale is not necessarily more correct in matters of fact than is the orthodox version of events: “‘Beide haben Recht und Unrecht, Eure Chronik und mein Gedächtnis, jene mit ihren auf Pergament gezeichneten Buchstaben, ich mit den Zeichen, die in mein Herz gegraben sind’” (XIII, 106). Later, his interpretative input is made explicit:

Was jetzt geschah, Herr, was in dem Innern des Kanzlers vorging, wer kann es sagen?
Ich meine [. . .] (XIII, 118)

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\(^96\) Cf. Maync, p. 174: “Was Meyer an diesem Stoffe anzog, waren wieder nicht die weltbewegenden Ereignisse an sich, sondern ihre geheimen Beweggründe, nicht die äußere Haupt- und Staatsaktion, sondern das innere Problem, die Seelenhandlung der beteiligten Menschen.”

\(^97\) Ibid.

\(^98\) Cf. Silz, p. 96: the gap between the “saint” and his “reality” “calls into question the very idea of history as a true record of ‘reality’”.

\(^99\) The act of representation inherent in the phenomenon of martyrdom is not discussed in Colin Walker’s essay on “Unbelief and Martyrdom in C. F. Meyer’s Der Heilige” in German Life and Letters, 21 (1967-68) 111-22, which is more concerned with Becket’s “real” religious identity and motivation.

\(^100\) Osborne insists (Vom Nutzen der Geschichte, p. 85) that Hans’s own story never actually overshadows the public, historical events. One of the reasons it does not is that Meyer has him tell the story within the context of the telling of the same story within the public sphere - the celebrations in the city - thereby not uniquely privileging Hans’s version. On the other hand, the very fact that his story is so clearly coloured by his personal input alerts us to the way in which public history similarly reconstitutes the past in the light of certain impulses.
He is not, then, offering the revealed truth, but merely his memory, as shaped by his emotional reactions, of what he experienced. Neither his version, nor the “Chronik” is perfect. The reader is not asked to opt for one or the other, but to realize that historical truth is a matter not of absolutes but of narrative modes. Hans’s version will always be true for him, even after Burkhard has pointed out factual inaccuracies such as the chronological one which provokes the remark quoted above. In general terms, however, the version which actually matters is the one which assigns King Henry and his Chancellor places in the scheme of signifiers which is social and political reality. The scenario is similar to the one which Martin Swales has discussed in Das Leiden eines Knabens: there too, a narrator attempts to correct a story, but is ultimately impotent to change anything.\textsuperscript{101} The King does not alter his policy on the basis of Fagon’s tale, and certainly Hans recounting his career to the ageing Chorherr will affect neither Becket’s canonization, nor the way in which Becket is remembered.

As we have seen, Meyer’s poetry amply articulates his own desire to make contact with what lies beyond society, but also the impossibility of doing so without sacrificing an existence which is made or broken by social co-ordinates. That these co-ordinates are self-referential, not resonant with the authority of a force beyond society, explains the pathos behind so much of his writing - and the absence in the story of a key to Der Heilige. Both Rohan in Jürg Jenatsch and King Henry in Der Heilige are undone by their absolute trust in the untrustworthy central character. In the latter story, the King’s belief in his Chancellor is characterized as a “Felsenglaube”. Meyer - albeit reluctantly - implies that such faiths are as dangerous as the belief of a sailor that he is securely moored when his anchor is in fact simply hanging beneath him in a bottomless, swirling ocean. It is a lesson Hans perhaps learns when he sees Becket duped: “‘Mir hatte geschaudert, da ich den Mann, welchen ich als allwissend kannte, zum ersten Male als einen Getäuschten und Betrogenen erblickte’” (XIII, 58).

It is quite clear that Becket is a perfectionist. It is repeatedly stressed that his dress and taste are exemplary and that his performance as Chancellor is immaculate. However, his taste for perfection draws him away from society. He has a country retreat, a place sheltered from the violence which he abhors (he cannot even bring himself to pick up a sword with blood on it), where the animals know no fear of humans; a place which is designed according to his Moorish aesthetic - and ethical? - principles and quite out of place in England. There he nurtures his daughter Gnade, the most perfectly beautiful creature Hans has ever seen. Becket’s retreat is reminiscent of “das Rosenhaus” in Stifter’s Der Nachsommer, a place similarly divorced from the external world, similarly peaceful, similarly flawless. This is the manifestation of Meyer’s perfect order, not, as in so many of the poems, atop a mountain, half way to heaven, but nevertheless quite explicitly in a state of complete disjunction from the surrounding, human world. The irony of it is that it is a paradise built on the fruits of Becket’s spectacular success as an agent in just the convoluted world he attempts to flee from within it. Just as in the poems, the autonomy of the perfect order is undermined by its failure to sustain life: it lacks the quality of vitality inherent in the imperfect, even threatening, social and political construct from which it is a refuge. Becket considers trying to marry his daughter to one of Henry’s sons, but cannot bring himself to do so: it seems more important to him to protect her from the vulgarity of the court, to preserve her perfection. She is not integrated into the social world in any way: and the figurehead of that imperfect but vital world

eventually invades the perfection of Becket’s estate and devours her; tellingly, in death she is described as an “überirdische Schönheit”: she never was of the real world. Becket’s servants prove corruptible; that is, they recognize the authority of the King as superior - in the real world - to that of their master. Becket’s refuge is shattered.

Baumgarten states that “Das Gewissen der Menschen Meyers ist Stilgefühl”.\(^{102}\) This seems quite particularly apt a description for the character of Becket. Yet this is not simply a naive expression of Meyer’s own obsession. Meyer does, it is true, see in art the potential for escape from all the unsatisfactory aspects of everyday life: it can offer a taste of perfect order. However, he does not believe that it is dynamic: it cannot engage with political reality. As Christine Merian-Genast observes of the figure of Michelangelo as he appears in Meyer’s work: “Offenbar verbindet ihn mit der Gesellschaft nur die praktische Seite seines Berufes. Er sucht sie nicht auf, sondern sitzt in seiner Werkstatt oder Arbeitstätte. Er spricht mit seinen Statuen oder mit Gott, was im Grunde nichts anderes als Selbstgespräche sind.”\(^{103}\) Moreover, in contrast to the work of Gottfried Keller, the “practical side” of the artist’s role - the whole public dimension of art - is not a theme in that of C. F. Meyer. When the relationship of an artist and an audience is touched upon, it is in order to show the helplessness of artist and art.

We have seen that Hans’s story will send out no ripples at all as it sinks into the gloom of the Chorherr’s room. Fagon’s story in \textit{Das Leiden eines Knaben} is received purely as an ornament, it does not cause the King to reconsider his intentions. Art, in Meyer’s work, is always malleable: it is reshaped by the eye of the beholder: the King in \textit{Das Leiden eines Knaben} and the Chorherr in \textit{Der Heilige} both refuse to accept what they are hearing as in any sense critical of - and therefore reformatory of - the practical, social world; Hans himself invests the statues he admires with life, injecting them with his own imagination. Thus the framework around Hans’s story is not a strengthening factor, but one which highlights the scope for interpretation inherent in the inner story and the fact that Hans’s whole “performance” will have no consequences. If art is associated with death in Meyer’s poetry, here, in its inability to negotiate with real life, is perhaps the reason.

Not only does art (as represented by the inner tale itself) appear useless in the real world, both in \textit{Der Heilige} and \textit{Das Leiden eines Knaben}, but Becket’s love for perfection, manifested in his appreciation of sculpture, is seen to be positively dangerous. In fact Becket’s lust for a perfect order is morbid. That is why, like Jenatsch, he dies with a smile on his face: he is departing the confusion of life for the absolute sphere at last. Just as in the case of Jürg Jenatsch, we may see that Becket has in fact been dying throughout the novel, their final, violent deaths are inevitable. The motifs which suggest this contribute to the gloomy atmosphere which has often been identified in \textit{Der Heilige}. Wiesmann remarks that “die Novelle ist eine einzige Todesmusik”, citing the “Sanduhr” which ebbs away as Hans narrates, the many references to death, things which die or fade, night and winter.\(^{104}\)

Becket is characterized as lacking in vitality and alien.\(^{105}\) He is described, over and over again, as pale, aloof (even his dying smile is a “Hohnlächeln”), other-worldly, deathly or dying: just the kind of

\(^{102}\) Baumgarten, p. 113.
\(^{103}\) Merian-Genast, p. 58.
\(^{104}\) Wiesmann, p. 213.
\(^{105}\) Cowen refers to him as a “Fremdkörper” (p. 260).
epithets attached to the personae of so many of the poems. As in the case of the hero of Jürg Jenatsch, these references multiply after the central character experiences the loss of a loved one through violence. Hans sees a flame extinguished in Becket’s eyes as he mourns his daughter; shortly afterwards he describes the Chancellor’s face at dinner: “dieses unkorperliche Antlitz, das im Ampelschein wie im Tageslicht gleich blauß war”. He identifies a “Todeszug”; as he watches Becket “so war es, als schlössen seine Lider und es sitze ein Gestorbener mit dem König zu Tische” (XIII, 72). Becket’s intellect makes him a supreme manipulator, but his instincts are revealed by the nature of his country retreat. Becket’s aesthetic principles are symptomatic of his thirst for unworldly perfection. Not for nothing does Meyer, via his narrator, give Becket another identity - that of Prinz Mondschein (the moon motif is closely associated with him): the moon is emblematic not just of an alien character, but of the cold clarity of perfect order. Hans notes that he seems to prefer statues to real women. The statues may be perfect, but they are also cold (“vor diesen kalten Geschöpfen” (XIII, 41; my emphasis)): they lead away from life. We recall the swiftness with which Giuliano, in the poem Il Pensieroso, fades away after expressing his envy of “leidlose” statues. The “imperfections” of existence - the emotions, the violence, the vulgarity - are actually of its essence, and to long for a perfection which excludes them is to retire from life. Hans observes tellingly that, in his political manoeuvring, Becket’s “schärfstes Schwert war der schöne evangelische Spruch: ‘Mein Reich ist nicht von dieser Welt’” (VIII, 67). For all Becket’s political adeptness, then, he cannot stomach the reality of the social world: he flees Cordova when the King there decapitates those who had conspired against him, and he is equally unhappy that Fauconbridge, who plots against him in England and France, should lose, as Hans unkindly puts it “sein Erbe und sein Haupt durch die langmiütige Barmherzigkeit des Kanzlers” (XIII, 79).

The crucial point, of course, is when the King ignores Becket’s objections and makes him Archbishop of Canterbury. Becket is clinging on to life by steeping himself in affairs of state; when the King mentions the possibility of his becoming Archbishop, he knows and states that this would finally sever him from the context of worldly affairs. His immediate master would no longer be Henry, but the godhead. The critical argument about whether Becket seriously attempts to dissuade the King or on the other hand actually steers him towards the appointment is in itself of little consequence: it is one of the ambiguities of the Novelle and must remain unresolved. The central issue is that Becket’s objections, half-hearted or not, constitute a particularly explicit treatment of the gulf Meyer perceived between the human world and the longed-for metaphysical one. There is no suggestion that Becket would rebel against the social power structure to take his revenge against Henry, had not the King in effect released him from that structure by “detailing him to God” as head of the Church. Becket is now free to operate without the constrictions which attach to the socially integrated individual and he either exacts revenge or acts as the agent of divine retribution, depending on one’s interpretation. Silz quite rightly observes that Henry’s insistence on thus promoting Becket - situated at the centre of the Novelle - is the Wendepunkt of Der Heilige.106 The reason it is so crucial a moment, however, is not simply that Thomas’s reaction to his daughter’s death has taken until now to manifest itself, but that Becket suddenly perceives himself to be given a new context, freeing him from the constraints of his previous role in the thick of social reality.

106 Silz, pp. 95 and 107.
Acting outside human society must however also prove fatal to Becket himself, for it dissolves the definition of his human identity.

Even the Church is actually presented in *Der Heilige* as an all-too-human, that is, all-too-social institution; the manoeuvrings of the Vatican and the Bishop of York make it clear that the church, like Becket after his death, is an instance of the transformation of absolutes into the currency of worldly narratives. Unworldly ideals are codified by society and rendered political entities. Thus the cleric to whom Hans is telling his tale instinctively sympathizes with secular authority: Herr Burkhard “war ein reichstreuer Waiblinger und darum auch in den Händeln anderer Nationen ein königlich gesinnter Mann.” (XIII, 105). The Church as understood by Burkhard and King Henry is a part of the social structure, which is why Becket’s warnings that as head of the Church he would no longer be beholden to Henry mean nothing to the King. Like Jenatsch, Becket attempts to impose a vision of order - one which involves the liberation of his own people - by means which involve him stepping beyond convention. Becket may or may not be a true Christ figure, but the ascetic identity he adopts is testimony to his having given up any attempt to remain integrated into conventional society. He offers reconciliation with Henry in return for improved conditions for the Saxons, and eventually his goal is achieved, but - again, as with Jenatsch’s liberation of his Bündner - only at the expense of his own life. Once again, quitting the context of society is fatal.

Hans actually shares the inclinations which are ultimately fatal to Becket. He too deplores vulgarity: he nearly kills the mischief-maker who induces him to pray to a brothel, weeping as he beats him “über die Bosheit und Schlechtigkeit der Welt” (XIII, 20) (although later there is no doubting his mirth when he thinks Becket is a cuckold!). He too is attracted to art: describing Becket’s liking for statues he admits that “nicht selten bin auch ich vor diesen kalten Geschöpfen stehengeblieben” (XIII, 41). He too strives for perfection: he is offended by poor craftsmanship and is keen to produce only the very finest crossbows. Hans, however, is rooted firmly within the real world of politics and business and social conventions. When he must choose between idealism and practicality he always chooses the latter. This trait is affirmed very forcefully in the framework to the story, in which Hans appears as a commonsensical, thrifty businessman. The colourful events he has witnessed may have left him with nightmares, but they have certainly not prevented him from settling down to pursue his own existence. We learn that “Hans der Armbruster war ein sparsamer Mann” (XIII, 10), that he took care to marry whilst his stock was still high after his return from England, and he is meticulous - although diplomatic - in his collection of debts from the Chorherr’s fellow clerics.

Hans may not be an altogether attractive character, but he is successful, just as Waser is in *Jürg Jenatsch*. They have chosen to exist within the imperfect reality they find before them, thereby affirming life. Those monumental characters who seek absolutes, who seek a perfect order beyond life, are doomed to pay for their idealism with their existence. Similarly, reading *Der Heilige*, we find that the authority we seek in the frame around the internal story is itself elusive: we cannot make absolute judgements about Meyer’s characters any more than they can about their world. Absolutes belong to an order which is perfect - but lifeless. History, as it is in *Jürg Jenatsch*, is presented as possibly the externally validated order for which Meyer longed - Becket the saint changes history as an agent of fate - but presenting

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107 Cf. Maync, p. 182: “ein Kirchenstaat ist als Staat stets mehr weltlicher als geistlicher Art”.
Becket as a character in any number of other, conflicting narratives undermines this possibility. Fritz Martini suggests that Der Heilige is the story of an introverted saint who transcends history; the text actually suggests that, on the contrary, he is a saint made by history.\textsuperscript{108}

Der Heilige is as rich in unresolved strands of possible signification as Jürg Jenatsch.\textsuperscript{109} The story presents us with an abundance of jostling, relativized texts - hagiography, political narrative, church and crown / Geist and Macht, psychological narrative, cultural narrative (Saxon / Moorish), philosophical narrative (carnality / spirituality). The plot promises to resolve these issues into a clarifying unity, but reveals itself instead to be simply a story, a sequence of events - a conspiracy of meanings in which the ideal of an order which is clear, calm and uniquely valid has no place. There is no order; there are only orders of possible signification.

\textsuperscript{108} Martini, p. 824.

\textsuperscript{109} There is a sense of this wealth in comments such as “Die gesamte Erzählung bleibt ein Gespinst aus Erinnerungen, Subjektivitäten und Perspektiven” (Jeziorowski, Klaus, “Die Kunst der Perspektive. Zur Epik Conrad Ferdinand Meyers”, Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift, 17 (n.s.) / 48 (1967) 398-416 (p. 403)), or “Der im ‘Jenatsch’ behandelte Gegensatz von Politik und Moral erweitert sich im ‘Heiligen’ zu den Gegensätzen: Staat und Kirche, Weltkultur und Religion, Zeitlichkeit und Ewigkeit, das irdische Machtreich und das Reich, das nicht von dieser Welt ist” (Maync, p. 182).
Part 3:

GOTTFIED KELLER'S

DER GRÜNE HEINRICH
3.1 INTRODUCTION

_Der grüne Heinrich_ has often been criticized precisely because it has been perceived to lack the quality of order. Lindsay for instance argues that although the novel seems to have “the raw material for a great novel [. . .] unless properly and economically used and manipulated, it need not result in a great novel. _Der grüne Heinrich_ is an important book in many respects, but undoubtedly misses being a great novel”.

Other critics have shared his opinion that there is simply too much digression, too little discipline. In this respect the novel seems to compare unfavourably with the _Novellen_ for which Keller is today rather better known: indeed, Louis Wiesmann complains that “die große Architektur, die das Epos in Prosa verlangt, ist nicht Kellers Sache. Er erzählt nicht monumental, sondern episodisch. Der ‘Griine Heinrich’ ist eine Folge von novellenartigen Kapiteln”.

Consummate though Keller’s mastery of the short form is, that very mastery can, on occasion, generate its own problems. Some of his short prose can feel a shade didactic, cut-and-dried even. (This is particularly true of the _Sieben Legenden_, whenever they lose the charm of self-conscious parody of the parabolic mode). In any event, order is not merely present in the form of the _Novellen_: it is itself a theme in many of them.

_Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe_ opens with one of the great set pieces of _Novelle_ writing, as the two farmers plough their parallel furrows in strict yet glorious symmetry. This is an expression of an existence suffused by order, and yet an element of threat is already apparent as the neighbours inch their way into the disputed plot of land between their fields and contribute to the mountain of stones there. In the course of the story their trim farms disintegrate and their families are ruined - and yet the suicides of their children in a sort of heathen wedding ceremony are a tragic expression of the imperative in both of them for the very order which prevents a less morbid union between them.

In another of the Seldwyla stories, Pankraz grows up without the experience of having to defer to the authority of external order - yet the response of the great sulker when his petty will is challenged and he runs away is to seek not total “freedom” but integration in the clear and authoritative structure of army life, and the moment which he believes transforms him is simply a radical encounter with an external force in the shape of the lion.

Wenzel Strapinski is introduced as an eccentric. He assumes the role of romantic, exotic outsider, but his happy destiny is located absolutely within bourgeois order:

_Dabei wurde er rund und stattlich und sah beinah gar nicht mehr träumerisch aus; er wurde von Jahr zu Jahr geschäftserfahrener und gewandter und wußte in Verbindung mit seinem bald versöhnten Schwiegervater, dem Amtsrat, so gute Spekulationen zu machen, daß sich sein

Vermögen verdoppelte und er nach zehn oder zwölf Jahren mit ebenso vielen Kindern, die inzwischen Nettchen, die Strapinska, geboren hatte, und mit letzterer nach Goldach übersiedelte und daselbst ein angesehener Mann ward.4

John Kabys’s final fulfilment is similarly the result of his exchanging his pretensions, with all his deceptive “Attribute und Kleinode”, for a prosaic, regimented existence as a nail maker, integrated in the social and economic order - an existence, albeit, which Keller presents with his characteristic irony:

Mit der Nagelschmiede, in der zwei oder drei Arten einfachen Nägel gemacht wurden, ging ein alter Geselle in den Kauf, von dem der neue Inhaber die Hantierung selbst ohne viel Mühe erlernete und dabei noch ein wackerer Nagelschmied wurde, der erst in leidlicher, dann in ganzer Zufriedenheit so dahinhämmerte, als er das Glück einfacher und unverdrossener Arbeit spät kennenerlerte, das ihn wahrhaft aller Sorge enthob und von seinen schlimmen Leidenschaften reinigte. (VIII, 112)

_Frau Regel Amrain und ihr Jüngster_ charts a smoother career: Fritz’s mother is concerned quite explicitly to educate her youngest son into a responsible and respected citizen - effectively to redeem in him his rather feckless father. Superficially the most didactic of the Seldwyla stories, there is nevertheless a subtext to _Frau Regel Amrain und ihr Jüngster_. Fritz has two brothers, both of whom are just the kind of responsible individuals Frau Amrain ostensibly desires. Yet neither she, nor the story itself, is much concerned with them: it is the potentially more troublesome Fritz, with his pronounced resemblance to Herr Amrain, who is the centre of attention. The nature of the affection between mother and son is manifestly coloured by emotions which would normally be directed towards the husband and father. The _Novelle_ thus deals not with a perfect scenario, but rather with the negotiation with and accommodation of potentially disruptive instincts within a stable order.

_Die mißbrauchten Liebesbriefe_ opens with an intact marriage, traces its dissolution through the whimsical literary ambitions of the husband and ultimately rebuilds a conventional marital order from the confusion, this time one based on a more secure foundation. Gritli and Wilhelm are set up as possible exiles from the social order - Wilhelm is dismissed from his job for his “affair” with her - but like Sali and Vrenchen in _Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe_ they can imagine happiness only within that order. Fleeing it is not an imaginable option. Unlike Sali and Vrenchen they are able to achieve togetherness within the terms of the social structure.

In _Dietegen_ Keller uses the formal symmetry of the story to help achieve the harmony of potentially divisive forces which is also its thematic preoccupation. Küngolt and Dietegen each rescue the other and each evolves as a character towards the other’s extreme. Again there are disturbing elements: Dietegen is ultimately described as being as ruthless as his contemporaries. Yet this may be seen as indicative of the true nature of Keller’s vision of order: not as a private ideal, but as reconciliation of individual instinct with a public reality; an order, therefore, which is locked into a time and place (the contrast between the rigid, brutal regime in Ruechenstein and the Seldwyla’s characteristic laxness reinforces this).

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In *Das Fühlein der sieben Aufgerechten* Keller - as we shall see also in *Der grüne Heinrich* - interprets a festival as a means of heightening and expressing communal identity and uses it as an appropriate setting for the resolution in a public sphere of private tensions: by proving himself as an orator, marksman and in terms of his physical strength, Karl not only convinces his elders that, despite the apparent contrast between the generations, he represents the potential for continuity of the kind of order in which they believe (we shall see that the acknowledgement of continuity on a basis of evolution is fundamental to Keller’s vision of order), but also achieves his marital ambitions.

The framing narrative of the *Zürcher Novellen* explicitly deals with individual potential, but limits that potential to locate it within an ordered existence. Jacques’s godfather explicates the potential of the unremarkable self: the potential, that is, for fulfilment within an external context as opposed to a scintillating career as an original. Even Hadlaub, in the first tale, emerges as a creative figure not by sheer original force, but through the experience of working through a whole tradition of literature by others: his creativity is from the very outset set within an external structure. Moreover, his success is a social and economical as well as an artistic one: just as in many of the Seldwyla stories, a career which seems to offer the promise, for good or ill, of romantic individualism culminates in an entirely bourgeois fulfilment: Hadlaub and Fides are the bourgeois household incarnate. *Der Narr auf Manegg* ridicules dreams which go beyond personal capacity and integration: which threaten to break the limits which constitute order.

*Eugenia*, the first of the *Sieben Legenden*, intimates a theme which is recurrent in Keller’s work: the falsity of asceticism and personal isolation, of withdrawal from the material and social worlds. It also, of course, tells the archetypal Keller story of personal pretensions building up into an impossible edifice before tumbling to reveal a truth rooted in social function. It is Keller’s penchant for treating potentially grandiose issues in prosaic terms which informs the tales which follow *Eugenia*, in which the Virgin Mary and the Devil are demystified and implicated in very worldly affairs.

The framing story of *Das Sinngedicht* seems initially to set up an opposition between order and life: Reinhart quits a life dedicated to researching (scientific and philosophical) order to pursue a romantic ideal. Yet his ideal proves ironically to exist not in opposition to but within order. Lucie is not a symbol of pure, hermetic order like the daughter of the *Pfarrfamilie* whom he encounters before her; but neither is she the “natural” manifestation of pure, unreflected instinct which is the alternative pole. She is presented as a figure who stands for an ordered existence within the practical world. She orders the garden, she is a competent manager of the household, she believes in social order. The eventual rapprochement between herself and Reinhart is set firmly within the social context of their families.

This framework is emblematic of the fact that the *Novellen* themselves are “ordered” not only by their internal structures, but also by partaking of an order deriving from their place in a cycle. This external order can be more or less prominent, making the individual *Novelle* more or less dependent on that context: the Seldwyla stories are like stones in a drystone wall, whereas those in *Das Sinngedicht* are bricks firmly cemented together by the Reinhart - Lucie narrative. Clearly, however, both forms of construction prove durable and lend an extra dimension to their components. This framing dimension is lacking in *Der grüne Heinrich*. It is a novel which tells the story of a life. It has, then, to exist in its own
right and to manifest its own order. To this novel - and it is, of course, Keller's life's work - I now wish to turn, after the brief and I hope not excessively schematic survey of the Novellen.

It is my principal aim to argue that on a thematic level, *Der grüne Heinrich* shares with the Novellen a preoccupation with the motif of order. In the novel, of course, Keller has the scope and structural potential to define and explore in greater depth the range of orders which he identifies and to examine in more detail how they work in relation to each other as well as to the individual.

I would argue that far from lacking order itself or being unconcerned with it as a thematic issue, *Der grüne Heinrich* - above all in its second edition, which is the one treated in this study - owes its greatness precisely to the sophistication of its own structure, and moreover that the story of Heinrich Lee's life is essentially the story of his fraught relationship with the various kinds of order which together constitute the human world. Indeed, one of the fundamental truths of the novel is that order is a human instinct. One thinks of the ironically down-to-earth ambitions of Heinrich's mother and uncle, born into a feckless, pseudo-aristocratic clergyman's family. The son effectively becomes a farmer, while the daughter, whose care of the household displays "treffliche Ordnungsliebe" (III, 8), marries a working man, Rudolf Lee, rather than a clergyman, thereby opting for a more practical existence. We shall see that even Heinrich seeks order: it is, however, his failure to comprehend the nature and implications of order which leads him astray.

Whether one categorizes *Der grüne Heinrich* as a Bildungsroman lacking the ultimate "graduation" of its hero, or whether one considers that it is not a Bildungsroman at all, the failure which it depicts is not just the failure of an artist because he has no talent, but rather the general failure of an individual, caused by his inability to participate fruitfully in the order in which he must exist.

"Order" here does not just designate the social order, for that is not the only form of order at issue in *Der grüne Heinrich*. Keller insists that all forms of humanly created order constitute more than singular, self-explanatory phenomena. Heinrich fails as an artist not just because he lacks talent, nor just because his introversion cripples him with the subjectivity which alienates him from the things he is trying to represent. He fails because his brush is, as it were, on a pendulum swinging between intense subjectivity on the one hand and the ideal of disinterested replication on the other. In Keller's novel, these are both failings, since "reality" exists only as a fusion of the given and the perceived. The reality of social order is in this respect no different from any other sort of order. It is real, and it is omnipresent, certainly: but its reality is a complex structure drawing on other sorts of order - economic, fictional, psychological, even semantic. These orders, we shall see, are in turn all related to one another.

*Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe* as we have noted, is an example of a Novelle in which order is quite clearly a central concern, a concern which manifests itself powerfully even in the opening description. That *Der grüne Heinrich* is no less concerned with the question of order is equally apparent in the description of Heinrich's father's village with which it begins: the astonishing "Lob des Herkommens".

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The continuity of communal order is emphasized: the first sentence takes us back to the age of the Alemmani, and we are told that the same surnames have dominated the village for centuries. However, we also learn something of the nature of this prevailing order and discover that it is a fusion of different categories: solid though the order undoubtedly is, there is no suggestion of an external guarantor. The reference to "göttliche Unordnung" (III, 2) is ironic, for there is order here, the history of the village vouchsafes that; and it is one which is profoundly human - and therefore organically alive.

Certainly there is a natural order, but it is not an enveloping natural order: the village is not so much a subsidiary part of nature as intertwined with it. The "Riesengeschlechter(n)" (the forests) in the surrounding mountains are "as old" ("ebenso alt") as the "Geschlechter" of the village: the careful vocabulary relates, and even equates, the two. This intertwining is developed into the conceit of the very earth of the churchyard being composed of the bodies of men and women, of the coffins they have made (from timber from the mountains) and the shrouds they have woven (from cotton grown in the fields). The reality of the very earth itself, then, is influenced by the history of the human population, and vice versa.

Moreover the human population, despite its long history, does not define itself simply in terms of that history, but rather in terms of a common mythology. In fact, we learn that although all the villagers are convinced that they have an unbroken lineage going back thirty-two generations, they are less interested in tracing that ancestry than in carrying it forwards. Moreover, they steep themselves in their mythical rather than family heritage: "So kommt es, daß sie alle möglichen Sagen und wunderlichen Geschichten ihrer Gegend mit der größten Genauigkeit erzählen können, ohne zu wissen, wie es zugegangen ist, daß der Großvater die Großmutter nahm" (III, 3).

Thus, already in the first two paragraphs of the novel we find a community which is ancient but vital, a thriving order, therefore - which is introduced to us as a historical, a natural and a human phenomenon - and finally (and importantly) as a complex of fictions. We also learn that the very vitality of the community relies on exchanges, via marriage, of fresh blood - and land - with neighbouring communities: the whole structure thus overlaps with similar structures that surround it.

In Heinrich we have a hero who is almost a serial experimenter with order. One by one he encounters the orders which can constitute reality, but fails to allow them to interact within his own psychological order and, in consequence, he condemns himself to live in a condition of diminished reality. When he does step into the economic or artistic orders, he refuses to surrender his rigid understanding of order as something almost tangible, something he can grasp instantly, and thereby misses the opportunity to see the particular order (like the tree he tries to paint as a child) as it really is - in negotiation with its context. Thus, as we shall see, he is reluctant to consider the implications of money outside of the economic order and within the order of art, that is, to concede that the professional artist participates in the system of buying and selling and must take cognizance of the price his output can command in the economic world. The "pure" art to which Heinrich dedicates himself seems a stable order by virtue of its being his alone. When a price is put on the artistic product, it suddenly destroys the artist's

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6 Cf. Swales, Martin, "Reflectivity and Realism: On Keller's Der grüne Heinrich", in Flood, John L., and Martin Swales, eds, Gottfried Keller 1819-1890: London Symposium 1990 (Stuttgart, 1991), pp. 41-52 (pp. 48-49). Swales's account of the description of Frau Margaret's junk shop in the novel also shows how rich a diversity of elements contribute to the whole of a Keller description: reality is not just material.
serene isolation: because of the factors which govern the relativity of the value of art (the taste, fashions, wealth, sophistication of the market), the social order as well as the economic order engulfs him.

In what way, then, is this novel more than a confession of an introverted individual's failure, and in what way is it a novel which reaches beyond that individual's internal refuge to deal with the world? The answer is inherent in the role of the individual psychological order as a decisive element in shaping reality.

This means that the individual mind becomes more than something which must be manipulated into conformity with social norms; it becomes a meeting ground for the different kinds of order which coexist and interact to constitute reality. All kinds of order are represented in the mental life of the individual, and their interaction there propels that individual into a social existence. This is a crucial point well made by Martin Swales:

It is the measure of the thematic resonance of the second version [of Der grüne Heinrich] that we are confronted not with a simple dualism of imagination versus reality, but with their dialectical interaction and interpretation. Imagination can be an escapist compensation, but it can also be the vital agent by which the contingent facts of a social environment are rounded out into the density of an embracing human reality.7

It is when the individual, as in the case of Heinrich, makes his imagination a discrete category that he impoverishes his selfhood. By fencing in his imagination, he prevents the kinds of order which would potentially integrate him from interacting within it. He treats economic order, linguistic order, artistic order as separate realms and thus blinds himself to the way in which they interact with each other and with the individual imagination to create that network of signification which, for Keller, is reality.

In this very fallacy lies the novel's method of analysing external reality. As we follow Heinrich's errant path, one kind of order after another is held up to the light, as it were: Heinrich unwittingly dissects a potential reality as he encounters each of its external elements. It is the function of the novel as a work of art to achieve what Heinrich himself cannot: to comprehend and intimate how these orders work in interrelationship to constitute a whole. In doing so it necessarily becomes more than a conventional Entwicklungsroman, does more than simply trace Heinrich's mistakes.

Der grüne Heinrich itself, because of the role of imagination in constructing the whole from the elements of reality, is a representation and an analysis of a reality which is not susceptible to the "pure" objectivity which has sometimes been assumed to be the goal of realist writing. It is a many-stranded fictional evocation of a reality which is itself woven to a similarly intricate pattern. Far from being unconcerned with order, it is in fact an investigation of the plurality of orders - together constituting reality - with which Heinrich, the experiencing self, is unable to deal, but which Heinrich's retrospective narrative brilliantly succeeds in evoking, thus creating the tense structure of Keller's novel.

It is on account of this all-important structure that the second rather than the original version of the novel concerns me here. Perhaps it will be helpful if I indicate in greater detail why it is that, for my purposes, the second version is the definitive one. There are no very great differences between the two versions in plot, except in their conclusions (Heinrich dies in the first version but survives to renew his

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friendship with Judith and survive her in the second). Keller's major revision was to couch the later version entirely in the first person. Clearly, in his handling of Heinrich Lee as both actor and commentator, Keller was at pains to capitalize on the perennial possibility of a friction between the experiencing and the recollecting self. Indeed, he goes a stage further, in that he splits the recollecting agent into a double persona: on the one hand there is the youthful narrator - the voice of the young, impetuous, aspiring artist of the Munich years - and on the other there is the voice of Heinrich the old, remorseful, resigned civil servant who has long since relinquished his dreams - artistic, romantic or otherwise. Yet what is noteworthy is that, although one can distinguish between two narrative voices, there is relatively little cognitive distance between the two narratorial personae.

There are two texts, certainly, in the second version of the novel, but the tension cannot really be said to lie in the contrast between the naivety of the first and the wisdom of the second. Rather it lies in the contrast between what is apparent to the experiencing Heinrich and the two narrative selves on the one hand, and what is made apparent by the novel as a whole on the other. This is clearly not the same as the contrast between the experiencing self and the narrating self - although this ironic distance does frequently make itself apparent. Laufhütte points the way for such an interpretation in his discussion of the first part of the novel:

Hier wird durch Ernstnehmen der Erzählerfiktion ein reizvolles Spiel mit der Autorenrolle getrieben, die Heinrich übernommen hat. Er kann reflektierend sein frühes Verhalten als in bestimmter Weise charakteristisch erkennen und darstellen. Eine weitere Verständnisebene aber erschließt sich erst, wenn der Leser das mit begrenzter Verständnismöglichkeit kommentierte in Zusammenhang bringt mit früher Berichtetem, wenn er kommentarlos hier und dort Gesagtes in die nicht ausgesprochenen Verbindungen stellt.

Where Heinrich only glimpses aspects of reality in isolation - the natural order, aesthetic order - and thereby highlights them for us, the novel as a whole shows how each of these components interpenetrate with the others to form a framework for existence.

It is this tension which gives the novel what Kaiser calls its "objectivity". As he points out, the second version of the novel, precisely in switching to the apparently more subjective mode of an exclusively first person narrator, thematizes that narrator and effectively gives the novel a second voice. This is not objectivity in the straightforward sense of a single commentator attempting to avoid bias, just as the novel is not realist in the sense of providing a mimetic record of nineteenth century Switzerland and Germany. It is objective in that its interpretative act is made into an integral issue, and it is realist in that it deals with a reality which is completed only by the interpretative act: again the imagination is seen to have a vital role.

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8 A point overlooked by Roy Pascal in his discussion of the merits of the first person narration (The German Novel (Manchester, 1956), p. 46).
10 Cf. M. Swales, "Reflectivity and Realism", in Flood and Swales, eds, p. 46 and Preisendanz, Wolfgang, Keller: Der Grüne Heinrich, in Der deutsche Roman. Vom Barock bis zur Gegenwart. Struktur und Geschichte, ed. by Benno von Wiese, vol. II, (Düsseldorf, 1963), pp. 76-127 (pp. 78 and 120ff); see also Heckendorn, Thomas, Die Problematik des Selbst in Gottfried Kellers "Griinem Heinrich" (Bern, 1989), pp. 28ff.
11 Laufhütte, Hartmut, Wirklichkeit und Kunst in Gottfried Kellers Roman "Der grüne Heinrich" (Bonn, 1969), p. 86.
Kaiser’s notion of “objectivity” is allied to what Wolfgang Preisendanz in his earlier study terms “humour”: the distinction between what is said by the narrator and what is apparent within the aesthetic dimension; the tension between the mundane and the aesthetically transformed:

Wir bekommen immer wieder in einem Zug zwei Perspektiven angeboten, wir fassen die Vorgänge und Situationen und Umstände in ihrer Eigengesetzlichkeit auf, nehmen sie innerhalb der Ordnung wahr, die für das prosaische Weltverständnis maßgeblich und gültig ist, und wir werden doch gleichzeitig über eine Bedeutsamkeit verständigt, die sich nicht innerhalb der prosaischen Ordnung herstellt.13

This gives the novel an extra voice, allowing it to present to the reader a possibility invisible to its central character.

The point is brought further into focus by Martin Swales when he contrasts the experiencing self and the recollecting self in the novel:

The recollecting self celebrates precisely that modest human wholeness that is the interaction of world and self, of facts and imaginative allegiance. The novel intimates, in other words, that the prose of narrow circumstances can interlock with the poetry of the individual imagination, that human reality is an existential category in which the limited world of practical affairs can come alive with inward validation.14

The arguments of these commentators underpin the present attempt to suggest how a series of orders explored and integrated into a whole within a novel which is ostensibly the story of an individual whose outlook is irredeemably fragmented: they liberate the novel from the limited horizons of its central character.

A most striking example of the novel’s capacity to reflect upon itself and achieve an extra level of significance is the way in which the first section of the autobiography is turned into a physical item within the circumstances dealt with in the second section. Heinrich’s misunderstanding with the binder means that his reminiscences are bound so expensively (and, symbolically, in green) that they leave their author virtually destitute. Here we see Heinrich’s inwardness, and the art which emerges from it, negotiating disastrously with the economic order. Instead of earning the writer money, his writing bankrupts him. The art of the autobiographer, as a tangible item, is thrust into the overlap between two forms of order - economic and aesthetic - to reflect upon a relationship which its creator, as we shall see, prefers to deny altogether.

The episodic nature of much of the novel is a function of the reflectivity which is all important to the structure of the novel, giving it its extra dimension. As we noted above, the novel’s fondness for the Novelle has been seen as its greatest defect - although it should be stressed that the recognition of the illuminating function of stories such as that of Zwiehan is well established in the critical literature. Thus Emil Ermatinger observes that the insertion of Novellen and poems is a tradition of romantic novels which Keller continues but with “eine größere Natürlichkeit”: “Keller schiebt Novellen ein als ‘Beispiele’

13 Preisendanz, Keller, p. 116.
14 M. Swales, The German Bildungsroman, p. 103.
Laufhütte, whose insistence on differentiating between what is said by the narrator and what is to be inferred by the reader has been noted above, shows, for instance, how the *Schlangenfresser* and Zwiehan stories function in the novel in such a way as to achieve a significance in their reflective relationship to Heinrich’s own story, beyond the comprehension of the experiencing Heinrich, but which, argues Laufhütte, shows the hand of an insightful and adept creative voice belonging to the elder narrator. Laufhütte sees a greater gulf between the styles of the two narrators, young and old, than I have suggested to be apparent in the novel. The *Schlangenfresser* and Zwiehan episodes seem to me to work in just the same way as the Meretlein story of the first part of the novel, narrated by the young Heinrich in Munich. Meretlein’s story, quite clearly, reflects upon Heinrich’s instinctive resistance as a child to religious convention, thereby bringing into focus issues with which he is not capable of dealing - the role of religion in society’s relationship with its constituent individuals, the responsibility of the adult world to the imaginative world of the child. This is why, in contrast to Laufhütte and Martin Swales (quoted above), I prefer to discuss the potential which exists in the tension between four possible sources of signification: the consciousness of the experiencing self, the consciousness of the two narrating selves, and, above all, the consciousness of the novel itself as a totality.

Gerhard Kaiser explains the closeness of the styles of two narrators so distant from one another in years by his observation that - contrary to the assumption of most previous commentators, who work on the basis that whatever Heinrich’s status at the end of the novel in terms of success or failure, he has at least “developed” - in fact Heinrich the “writer” both in his youth in Munich and in his maturity in Switzerland is carrying out an identical exercise. (Whilst agreeing with this I shall argue that Heinrich does develop, but this very development ironically prevents him from achieving a contented present existence.) Instead of writing about his past life in an attempt to achieve orientation for a potentially more dynamic future, he is wallowing in nostalgia and avoiding his present reality - the first part of the novel is written in utter physical seclusion as a way of avoiding Heinrich’s miserable circumstances in Munich; the latter part is explicitly represented as the older Heinrich’s stroll through a past which appears more verdant than his present existence, now that Judith has vanished from his life for a second time and for good. For Kaiser, Heinrich’s sentimental, escapist motivation means that the real world is not a self-explanatory phenomenon in his reminiscences: “Realität in diesem Werk [bleibt] ein Grenzwert”: his autobiography is not reality, but fantasy:

Die grünen Pfade der Erinnerung, auf denen er wandelt, sind nicht Straßen realer Erfahrung von Realität; sie sind mit Tinte geschriebene Zeilen auf Papier, der neuen Welt der alten Phantasie, in die er sich aus der Misere seiner Gegenwart flüchtet. Die Lebensgeschichte des grünen

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Heinrich ist das Protokoll einer Wanderschaft im Zwischenreich. Der phantastisch lebende Heinrich ist das Produkt des phantasierend schreibenden Heinrich.18

Reality, argues Kaiser, is merely indicated by the description of the situation of the writer and is perceived in Heinrich's text merely as contours in a “Decke des Schweigens”, and thereby demands a specific critical effort of the reader. It is the aim of the present study to build on the work of previous commentators by investigating those contours to show how astonishingly complete a map they provide in the context of the novel as a whole.

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It is the fantasizing, introverted aspect of Heinrich's narration which explains why there has been such uncertainty about whether Der grüne Heinrich is a realist novel, a Bildungsroman, or simply a thinly disguised autobiography. It seems too realistic to be a Bildungsroman, too self-conscious to be truly realist, too much of a novel to be mere confession. It is, I hope to show, a realist novel, quite profoundly so, but it responds to the challenge of a very sophisticated vision of reality, one which is not an inviolate natural order, or an inescapable social order, but rather a structure comprised of interlocking orders with which the individual is in constant, mutual negotiation. It not only enables Keller to draw on and adapt more than just the tradition of mimetic realism, but positively demands that he do so. Keller achieves a subtle, intricate reflectivity, dissecting reality via a flawed central experiencing figure, but presenting it as an entity by means of the truly encyclopaedic scope of the novel and its internal cross-referencing. As has been observed above, this was Keller's life's work, and it is its encyclopaedic scale which has often been mistaken for authorial self-indulgence and digression. It is also the reason why I have chosen to base my treatment of Keller on this one work, with only cursory references to the novels, Novellen and verse which, I would contend, can amplify aspects of Der grüne Heinrich but never emulate its amazing scope.

Whereas Meyer's poetry and prose speak with distinct voices, and Gotthelf's novels are, at least ostensibly, programmatic attempts to deal with particular issues (public health, education and so on), Keller's final version of Der grüne Heinrich - the only of the works dealt with in the present study to have a genesis lasting virtually throughout its author's whole creative career - is a work singularly and comprehensively representative of its author's vision.

Inevitably, the present study will be unable to emulate Keller's complex structure; in order to analyse the jostling orders of the novel, violence must be done to the delicate embroidery of the work, and examples of those orders discussed separately. The problem is that each potential structure reveals itself to be composed of other structures: there is no indivisible atom in Keller's world. The headings of this and the following sections are not meant to imply that psychology, language, nature, art, economy and society are discrete or unique building bricks; rather I have taken them as sufficiently broad but manageable units to show the way in which each contributes, through its interrelationship with the others, towards the generation of human reality, but only by itself drawing on similarly relative sub-orders. Political and religious order, for instance, could as easily be examined in separate sections rather than as elements within social order, as I have chosen to do. In focusing on any particular form of order in the novel, the reader of Der grüne Heinrich must avoid Heinrich's error of imagining it to be absolute. In looking at psychological order in the novel, one of my main purposes is simply to illustrate that any such examination is impossible without reference to the other types of order which affect and are affected by it.

However, if one form of order in Keller's novel is the centrally important one, then perhaps the psychological order is it. In this important respect Keller differs from most of his realist contemporaries. Elsewhere, the social order is the chief arbiter of the fate of the individual. He or she must recognize the imperative for conformity or resign themselves to failure. In Keller's work, the social order is still crucial, but the act of participation is not an act of resignation in the way that it is for so many nineteenth-century protagonists. Where it is such a gesture, it is a futile one - which is why Heinrich's position at the end of the novel is not the resolution which we might have expected of a conventional Bildungsroman. Behind this lies Keller's conviction that society is more than a simple administrative or categorizing system. It

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19 I am however encouraged by the precedent of Emil Ermatinger's cohesive treatment of Der grüne Heinrich based on and structured by the assertion that "fünf Lebensmächte hat der Dichter zu Bildnern seines Helden bestellt: Der Umgang in Haus, Nachbarschaft und Schule. Die Religion. Die Liebe. Die Kunst. Die Politik" (p. 278); Kaiser similarly introduces the latter sections of his study with the observation that "die Lebendigkeit Heinrich's besteht zuletzt darin, daß er mit seinem Leben Fragen stellt und an ihnen scheitert, die vernünftige Leute vergessen, weil sie ihnen unbeantwortbar sind. Diesen Fragen im Hinblick auf die Bereiche Kunst, Ökonomie, Gesellschaft und Staat gilt es nachzugehen" (Gottfried Keller. Das gedichtete Leben, pp. 180-81).

20 Cf. Imboden, Gabriel, Gottfried Kellers Aesthetik auf der Grundlage der Entwicklung seiner Naturvorstellung: Studie zur Begründung der geometrischen Struktur in der Novellistik (Bern, 1975). Imboden points out that "jeder Teil, welcher Schicht es auch immer zugehören mag, assoziiert immer auch die umfassende Totalität, sei es ein Baum, ein Wald, ein politischer Vorgang oder eine ganze Gemeinschaft" (p. 110).

21 Cf. Hillebrand, Bruno, "Der Garten des Grünen Heinrich", Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte, 45 (1971), 567-82 (p. 568): "Nichts wird so sehr angestrebt in diesem Roman wie ruhmvolle oder zumindest doch ehrenhafte Einordnung in der Gesellschaft." This is true - but it is doubtful whether the conclusion to the second version of the novel represents the end of Heinrich's failure through his integration. Rather, I would contend, his resignation is just that: there is nothing to suggest that it is a triumphant volte face, and much to suggest that Heinrich's existence is a dour one - one from which he explicitly takes refuge in nostalgic trips through his memoirs. Cf. Martini, Fritz, Deutsche Literatur im bürgerlichen Realismus, 1848-1898, 4th edn (Stuttgart, 1981), pp. 598-99 for a typical treatment of "Verzicht" in Keller's work.

22 Cf. Lukács, Georg, Deutsche Literatur in zwei Jahrhunderten, Werke, vol. 7 (Neuwied, 1964), p. 398: Lukács argues that an "Erziehungsroman" such as this one can arise only "wenn die 'Sitten' den Individuen noch als lebendige Resultante der Wechselbeziehungen der Menschen erscheinen und nicht als fertige, tote, amoralische 'Spielregeln'."
is the product of individual minds; it shapes those minds, but is also shaped by those minds. This is the crucial role of the imagination as a completing, unifying factor in reality.23

Why is Heinrich’s relationship to exterior order so problematic? The answer becomes apparent only when we look at his psychological background and acknowledge that, just as Heinrich’s psychology is affected by external factors, so it bears on his attitude towards the external world. I hope to show that Heinrich, far from being hostile to the concept of order - a putative explanation for his alienation from society - is characterized by an overriding need to clutch at order, and that his problems emerge from the unreflected way in which he does this. Lying beneath this is the psychological issue which dominates Muschg’s account of Gottfried Keller and Heinrich Lee: the early loss of the father.24 Lucie Karcic expresses this fundamental truth most succinctly, and in a way that implies the intimate links between it and social and economic order:

As a consequence of his father’s early death, not only is Heinrich’s and his mother’s standard of living reduced to the bare minimum, but Heinrich’s life has become “disorderly” in that it lacks the paternal guidance necessary for regular development. Heinrich senses this even at an early age. When he begins his collections, his aim is to emulate sons of well-to-do families who collect all kinds of natural objects under the direction of their fathers and teachers.25

The child’s initial integration into an order beyond his or her self is into the family - the structure, incidentally, which I have referred to as the critical “initial unit” of Gotthelf’s “overall order” - but that initial step is denied Heinrich. His father, as has been abundantly documented (by Muschg, Kaiser et al) becomes a model, but one from which Heinrich is immediately separated by his consciousness that the order within which his father operated so energetically is one from which Heinrich himself is excluded by the combination of the absence of a paternal sponsor and his mother’s social and economic situation.

She has been left to bring up Heinrich according to the dead father’s principles, but without the economic resources and associated social status which existed in his lifetime. Moreover, the mother is made to stand for an introverted way of being which stands in opposition to the father’s. With the father is associated a public existence - at school (Heinrich attends the paupers’ school because of his father’s championing of it), in politics, as a productive part of the economic order. With the mother is associated a private existence - the home, reticence, parsimony. Kaiser describes the modern family as an isolated unit, from which the father alone acts as an agent to usher the child out into the public sphere.26

Heinrich, however, grows up with a father who is present only as a symbol. It is a symbol which Heinrich both resents and eulogizes, and which thereby contributes to the oedipal situation which is fundamental to the studies of Adolf Muschg and Gerhard Kaiser. Above all, though, the father simply is not there to guide Heinrich into external order. As Muschg points out, Keller himself saw private order - if we accept that the private world is where reality is ultimately constituted, in interpretative response to

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23 Thus I cannot accept Beddow’s contention, pp. 223-29, that in Heinrich’s eventual setting aside of his artistic aspirations Keller is guilty of a “betrayal of the claims of the imagination”. On the contrary: the novel shows that imagination is the motor for private and communal life and not just the perogative of the artist.
24 Muschg, Adolf, Gottfried Keller (Munich, 1977).
25 Karcic, Lucie, Light and Darkness in Gottfried Keller’s “Der grüne Heinrich” (Bonn, 1976), p. 42.
26 G. Kaiser, Gottfried Keller. Das gedichtete Leben, p. 121.
external stimuli - as the only possible ticket to participation in external order.\textsuperscript{27} Herein lurks Heinrich’s lifelong problem.

Heinrich simply does not have the internal psychological order which would make it possible for him to cope with the scale of external order as an immense, interacting whole. He responds in two ways. First, he attempts to construct his own orders (for example in his art) in which he can emulate his father’s authority and flee from the outside world: a response to a need for order, then, which necessarily prevents Heinrich from ever achieving integration in an external order. Second, he responds by fragmenting external reality, but because he then clings on to each fragment as an easily digestible autonomy, the elements of the whole do not introduce him to that whole, but are rendered impotent.

Heinrich’s fragmented outlook is perhaps most memorably emblematized in the psychological split which characterizes Heinrich’s two early loves: Anna and Judith. It is important to recognize that Anna and Judith do not simply represent alternatives in the novel. It is too simple to suggest that in favouring Anna over Judith, Heinrich subordinates wholesome physicality to ethereality and aestheticism. Certainly Heinrich comprehends the two women in these terms - but in doing so he mistakes both their realities. In this way they represent the way in which his inability to see the interrelationship between orders blinds him to the nature of reality in general. Anna is consistently characterized as pale, slight, almost insubstantial. Her home is surrounded by “ein duftendes Rosen- und Nelkengärtchen”, and inside its “Reinlichkeit und Aufgeräumtheit” make it echo (III, 239). This setting will subsequently provide the ideal setting for the “Kultus des Todes” (V, 63) which accompanies her demise. Her growing intimacy with Heinrich is associated with death: it begins in the vicinity of Heinrich’s dying grandmother, whose funeral is the occasion of their first dance; their first kiss is in a graveyard, and their “romance” culminates in a gloomy gorge, where the chill in the air seems to impregnate their kisses. Anna’s death is the death, it seems, of a figure too pure for this world. Indeed her death seems calculated to contribute to an interpretation of her as an unreal symbol of an aesthetic ideal.

Yet within the overall economy of the novel Anna is a real person, and it is Heinrich who transforms her into something more - or less - than this. It is true that she is not robust, but this is the physical manifestation not of her unreality, but of the way in which she has been brought up. Her over-protective father is a recluse, a refugee from physicality and society, from phenomena which he sees as merely crude. No wonder then that a bond should develop between him and Heinrich! Anna’s death is necessary not because she is unreal, but because she is not allowed to develop, to ripen, by those around her. The liveliness she exhibits in the company of her ever merry cousins shows that there is no lack of human potential within her. The way in which Heinrich is taken aback when confronted with evidence of her vivacity is unmistakable in the description of her in the “Bohnenromanze”, a scene in which she breaks the adult constraints which generally circumscribe her behaviour and acts like the child she really is:

“Gilt nicht, gilt nicht!” rief Anna so laut und sprang so ausgelassen im Zimmer umher, wie man es gar nicht hinter ihr vermutet hätte. [. . .]

\textsuperscript{27} A. Musch, p. 98.
Sie war jetzt überhaupt so lebendig, laut und beweglich wie Quecksilber und schien ein ganz anderes Wesen zu sein als am Tage. Die Mitternacht schien sie zu verwandeln, ihr Gesichtchen war ganz gerötet, und ihre Augen glänzten vor Freude. (IV, 26-27)

Even the phenomenon of growth itself discomforts him, belying as it does Anna’s animate, not to say feminine, reality. Back in the town, he tries to imagine how Anna’s voice must have developed in the two years since he has seen her, and reacts with eloquent ambiguity as he realizes that she must also have changed in ways other than the merely audible: “Darauf bedachte ich ihre Größe, und da ich selbst in der Zeit rasch gewachsen, so konnte ich mich eines kleinen Schauers nicht erwehren, wenn ich mir die Gestalt sechzehnjähriger Mädchen unserer Stadt vorstellte” (IV, 85).

When Anna dies, Heinrich is curiously “detached” about the event.28 He has for so long characterized her to himself as an angel, too good for this world, that the real event, the physical death of a flesh-and-blood girl, is not accessible to him. Indeed, even in her lifetime he has preferred Anna the symbol to Anna in person: when it seems that she and her father are to move to the city, Heinrich admits that “ich hätte mir Anna doch lieber für immer als das Kleinod jener grünen entlegenen Täler gedacht” (IV, 132).29

In effect, Heinrich stylizes Anna into his divided general schema in just the way he stylizes her in his art.30 In his portrait of her she is surrounded by beautiful accessories - flowers, birds and jewellery - and appears herself as an idealized figure: “wie das Bild einer märchenhaften Kirchenheiligen” (IV, 127). This is the second of Heinrich’s paintings to hang in the schoolmaster’s house, and it shows how the split in his mind between aesthetic, spiritual order on the one hand and animate, physical order on the other has deepened since his naive but basically life-like painting of flowers, which is described as “dieses blühende Bild des Lebens” (IV, 28). Even after her death, when he is helping to construct her coffin, Heinrich modulates Anna’s physical actuality. The glass he chooses for the aperture above her face was formerly part of a picture frame, and has become impregnated with the forms of three engraved angels. This combination of art and spirituality appears to him “die schönste Gabe, welche ich in den Sarg legen konnte” (V, 84). Of course it does - for it turns Anna from a corpse into a part of an ethereal picture - and indeed the echo of the Grimms’ tale of the same event in Snow White adds to the idealized, fantastic impression.

Heinrich is the only person to label his attachment to Anna as love - “weil mir einmal alles sich zum Romane gestaltete” (IV, 33). Again, he is himself consigning Anna to an unreal order.31

Judith, by contrast, is portrayed in terms of warmth, sensuality and potency. Her home is surrounded not by a flower garden, but by an apple orchard. She gives Heinrich milk to drink and allows him to explore her feminine contours and luxuriant hair. For Heinrich she is physicality personified, and therefore spiritually barren. Touch is perhaps the foundation of his intimate relationship with Judith - the descriptions of his combing her hair or wrestling with her are suffused with eroticism - but touching her appears to him to degrade his relationship to Anna, whom he desires in a way which has nothing to do with physicality. Yet the novel shows us another Judith - a sophisticated character of quite exceptional

29 Cf. ibid., p. 95.
31 Cf. Karcic, pp. 82-94, for a similar assessment of Heinrich’s refusal to contemplate Anna as a living person.
moral steadfastness, by no means the corrupting influence perceived by Heinrich (in his polarization of the two girls).

As in the case of Anna, critics have perhaps tended to be rather too eager to collude in Heinrich’s caricature of Judith. Over and over again she appears in the critical literature as “nature personified”, 32 or “pure sensuality”, labels which create a symbol at the expense of a real personality. Lee Jennings, for instance, states explicitly that “Heinrich, torn between Judith and the angelic Anna [. . .], recognizes that the two women represent different phases of himself - Anna the spiritual (geistig) aspect, Judith the sensual”.33 It would be truer to say that he mistakes them for such representative entities. Even Emil Ermatinger describes Judith in such terms: “So steht sie vor uns als die Verkörperung des sinnlich treibenden Lebens in der Natur, holde Schönheit und nährende Fülle zugleich. Eine ‘Naturmanifestation’ hat Keller sie selber genannt.”34 Judith is indeed a “Naturmanifestation”, in that she is at home in the natural order - but this does not make her a romantic, asocial figure. Far from it: Judith’s place within the social order is as secure as her place within nature: in America, it is she who organizes the whole community; she proves equally sure-footed in the economic order. Certainly Judith evolves between the time Heinrich first meets her and her return from overseas, but she evolves in and through negotiation with the external orders with which Heinrich is unable to come to terms. She is an excellent example of Keller’s refusal to treat nature in romantic terms as something fundamentally opposed to society. Instead, Judith’s understanding of how nature functions as an integrating and integrated whole means that she can also comprehend and operate in the social and economic spheres with which nature interacts. The greatest change is surely in Heinrich’s perception of her - that, after all, is what is presented to us. By the end of the novel, Heinrich can sense Judith as a whole person, as he was unable to as a child.

Lucie Karcic, on the other hand, draws on the work of Preisendanz, to make a thoughtful examination of the figures of Anna and Judith, recognizing that they both have “two perspectives” - their realities and Heinrich’s imagination.35 She notes that the narrator regularly appears to distance the characters from the young Heinrich’s view of them (there is a plethora of words such as “scheinen” and “dünken” which draw attention to the interpretative input of Heinrich Lee).36

The implication of Heinrich’s attitude towards the pair is not that Heinrich favours “art” (Anna) over “life” (Judith), but that he fails to see how mind and body, art and life, are interwoven to create a whole. At the end of the novel, Judith’s physical opulence has faded - she is as grey as the mountains - and it is her sternness which denies Heinrich the comfort of seeking absolution through self-pity and insists instead that he acknowledge that his sins can never be undone. It is the difference between the personification of wholeness who emerges for the reader and what she for so long represents to Heinrich - physical temptation - which constitutes her true significance in the novel. This is a central aspect of how the novel works: Heinrich pulls reality apart, and the novel offers a contrasting, integrated vision.

34 Ermatinger, p. 284.
35 Karcic, pp. 68-115; cf. Preisendanz, Keller, pp. 91 and 97.
Much important work has been done on the psychological basis of *Der grüne Heinrich*. The substantial autobiographical dimension to the novel has frequently been seen either as its burden or its sole *raison d’être*. It has been suggested that Keller is too bound up with his material to retain the overview needed to create a successful aesthetic structure - that is, not merely that his novel is unduly subjective, but that its very form is dictated by considerations other than those of a true novelist.

Of course, no writer becomes a disembodied - or depersonified - function in the act of writing: writing may be an aesthetic exercise, but the generation of a novel is inevitably also a psychological process. As Kaiser’s treatment of *Der grüne Heinrich* shows, resting heavily as it does on this aspect of the novel, Keller’s “Mutter-Sohn-Roman” is heavily laden with jetsam from its author’s psychological history. Nevertheless, in the same study Kaiser points out that this by no means precludes order in the novel - in fact it actually offers an order of its own. He notes that the first version, in his terms, takes the form of a circular progression from the moment of leaving the mother to a reunion with her beyond the grave; the internal story illuminates the frame. In the second version:

\[\text{Während der Kreis um die reale Mutter aufgebrochen ist, unterstreicht das Rotieren der ersten und zweiten Schreibsituation in einander das doppelte Kreisschema der Handlung im Zeichen der Idealmutter Judith, bei dem die Realmutter zurücktritt. Nach dem ersten Gewinn und Verlust Judiths die erste Schreibsituation; in der Gemeinschaft mit ihr die Vatermordbeichte [= Römer]. Nach dem zweiten Gewinn und Verlust Judiths die andere Schreibsituation; in der zweiten Gemeinschaft mit ihr die Muttermordbeichte. Dazwischen der Tod der realen Mutter als Bindeglied: Also immer noch ein Mutter-Sohn-Roman, aber nun höherer Ordnung.}\]

This circular order is not, however, a hermetic one. Kaiser’s study, like that of Adolf Muschg, also shows - cannot but show - how (within the novel) the psychology of the author-hero is influenced by factors other than the oedipal implications of the constellation of son, mother and dead father. Very clearly, for instance, it is coloured by Heinrich’s place within and relationship to economic order. Heinrich’s characteristic sense of *Schuld* is not just “guilt”, but also “debt”. That his complicated relationship to his mother is powerfully influenced by economic factors is illustrated by the strikingly detailed account of his mother’s existence which Heinrich constructs whilst he himself is absent, in Munich. His absence means that this is a fiction within the fiction of the novel, albeit one informed by Heinrich’s intimate acquaintance with his mother: it therefore allows his subconscious preoccupations scope to develop. It is an account which is founded on his horror of her exceedingly straitened economic circumstances, dwelling on the hardness of the bread which she ekes out for so long, the blackness of her gruel, the barrenness of every aspect of her lonely routine. It brings out the masochistic way in which his mother seems almost to revel in this life of sacrifice, and simultaneously reveals a streak of masochism in Heinrich himself, for in his elaborate description he may fairly be said to be both wallowing in and exorcizing his sense of guilt.

Even before this, economic factors (and the issue of *Schuld*) have clearly had a decisive impact on Heinrich’s psyche: he builds a false self by stealing from the savings which his mother has kept for his

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future; his friend Meierlein becomes his enemy, and will remain a hate figure even after his premature
death, by calling in Heinrich’s flippantly made debts. Heinrich’s background is affluent enough to make
him conspicuous in one school, but too poor for him to feel that he belongs in another. Here of course we
encounter the social order, and political philosophy, for his inability to feel unselfconscious in either the
poor or the bourgeois environment is coloured as well by his father’s energetically liberal legacy, and his
mother’s efforts to live up to it. His psychological condition leads to his oscillating between extreme
introversion and exuberant over-participation. In the former condition, Heinrich seeks order within
himself, in the latter, he seeks to impose it on the outer world by snatching at and simplifying some
aspect of it.

Heinrich is expelled from the education system because of just a snatch at the external world. A
perennial outsider among his schoolmates, he suddenly springs into their midst during a riot. In doing so
he ignores all other considerations - social convention, his own humanity, and not least the political and
philosophical legacy of his father which should make him, if he is to participate in the spat, a natural ally
of the victim (a liberal and rather pitiable teacher) rather than the schoolboy rabble. In ignoring all these
factors, Heinrich is effectively undermining his own quest for integration, for his posing leaves his real
self isolated. His act of participation is, as it were, in disguise:

Wir Knaben waren allzumal gute Aristokraten, mit Ausnahme derer, die vom Lande kamen. Auch ich, obgleich meines Ursprunges halber auch ein Landmann, aber in der Stadt geboren, heulte mit den Wölfen und dünkte mich in kindischem Unverstande glücklich, auch ein städtischer Aristokrat zu heißen. (III, 182)

Ironically, his sudden urge to participate in the social group brings about the expulsion which so
exacerbates his problematic relationship with the social order.

Heinrich’s art reflects these social and psychological factors in the way in which it becomes an
escape from, rather than a bridge to, external reality - hence his choice of landscapes as a genre and the
rather fantastic, subjective nature of those landscapes. The difficulties he has represent an encounter with
the order of nature. Inevitably, though, Heinrich’s very escape, the alternative order of his art, leads him
back into the economic order. Not only does he have to negotiate (with his mother and then with the
village elders) the means for him to pursue an artistic career in Munich, but even before he gets there he
encounters art itself as a commodity, in Habersaat’s factory. This motif will be developed in Munich:
there is the production line in Lys’s studio, Erikson’s calculated exploitation of a “niche” in the art
market, as well as Heinrich’s own attempts to sell his paintings, and his eventual employment as a
painter - of flag-poles. It would be possible to continue pursuing the various strands *ad infinitum* (the
flagpole painting brings us back to the political order, for Heinrich is a Swiss republican profiting from a
royal celebration . . . ); it is the very intricacy of the totality which is significant, and it is this which
Heinrich fails to grasp.

On the other hand, it is the intricacy of that totality, as I have suggested, that the novel as a
whole reproduces by means of a reflective structure which delves deeper than Heinrich is capable of doing
himself.
Heinrich's grappling with the linguistic system are among the earliest of the experiences he selects for his narration. His encounters with language are instructive for two reasons, both of which stem from the dual role of language: on the one hand it is an order in itself; on the other, it is merely a facilitator, by definition referential, which mediates between the human being and the external world.

First, because language is one of the ways in which the individual interacts with the outside world, Heinrich's difficulties in coming to terms with it anticipate his future, problematic relationship with the world beyond his self. Second, precisely because Heinrich does not see how the order of language locks into a broader structure, the reader is alerted to Keller's concept of how significance is generated through a universal relativity dependent on the interrelationships between different kinds of order.

The process begins when Heinrich's mother labels the apparently disembodied items in the distant sky "mountains". He, however, remains convinced that they are clouds. He also transfers the label to other pale phenomena which he finds pleasing, such as a girl in a white dress. A church on the other hand, he denotes as a mountain, and the weather cock on it as God - an honour he subsequently transfers to a tiger in a picture book. When he starts going to school he finds himself in trouble when his nomination of "Pumpernickel" as the word for the letter "P" is deemed mischievous. These incidents have generally been seen as the beginning of Heinrich's dangerously idiosyncratic Weltanschauung. They illustrate the beginning of the divorce of (as Preisendanz puts it) "Geltung" and "Wirklichkeit", of the "Kontrast von innerer Vorstellung und Eigentlichem". That they are described in such detail because they mark the dawning of a perception which will develop a dangerous fracture is indisputable. I would suggest, however, that these incidents are not significant only because of what they show happening to Heinrich, but also because of what they imply to be the nature of the reality of which Heinrich is a part.

In fact at this stage Heinrich's perception of reality is hardly more eccentric than that of a typical young child. The point at which he begins dangerously to favour his own, vivid fantasy world over the corporate world comes slightly later. Heinrich's mistaken assumption that the snowy mountain tops belong in the sky is understandable enough, in the circumstances: more interesting is the way that he transfers labels from one phenomenon to another. This may, as has been argued, mark the start of Heinrich's poetic inclinations. However, its significance is not confined to our understanding of the character: it also shows that what is generally accepted to be reality is not necessary or self-explanatory, but rather the result of semantic chance becoming endorsed by general usage.

To call the church "Berg", or a girl "Wolke" is not to mistake the fundamental nature of the phenomena. It is a mistake only in terms of the semantic order accepted by Heinrich's community: there is no inherent reason why the word for "Berg" should not be "Berg", or that for a girl in a pale dress "Wolke". "Pumpernickel" would make a memorable signifier for the letter "P" - and the letter "P" itself is of course an entirely intangible phenomenon, a facet of a reality which is bound to a particular (local) culture. Only within the "reality" of a given culture, within its structure of semantic and of course

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40 Preisendanz, Keller, p. 80.
theological significance, is there less reason for a weather cock or an image of a tiger to be called God than a sacred hamadryas baboon or an image of Christ on the cross. Heinrich’s problem with reality is not so much that “Geltung und Wirklichkeit der Erscheinungen [treten] auseinander”,\(^{41}\) at least not in the sense of his interpretation not matching “die Positivität des für sich Notwendigen und Gesetzlichen”;\(^{42}\) but rather that, crucially, his “Geltung” does not match that of his community. For the individual who must exist within a particular society, the “Wirklichkeit” of an item is actually only definable in terms of its “Geltung” within the specific terms of that society.

Ruth Kessel makes a perceptive analogy between language and money to show how the linguistic order functions:

> Mit der Zuordnung von “P” und “Pumpernickel” verstoßt Heinrich gegen die herrschende Diskursordnung. In den Augen der Gesellschaft macht er sich dadurch ebenso schuldig wie ein Falschgänsenvor, denn “ein neues Wort” - und als solches darf man wohl auch diese ungewöhnliche Benennung des “P” betrachten - “wird gleich einer Münze geprägt. Das Münzrecht hat aber nicht der einzelne, sondern die Sprachgemeinschaft”.\(^{43}\)

Similarly, Hart discusses “the schism between the child’s subjective realm of letters and the socially determined content assigned to the same figures”.\(^{44}\)

Linguistic order in fact works only when the imagination of the individual fulfils the function of interpreting material reality in the light of an assent to a set of communal evaluative principles: in other words, when the social order and the natural order are integrated within the psychological order. Bruno Hillebrand describes a fallacy, which he sees reflected in the novel, giving rise to the young Heinrich’s eccentric interpretation of the view from his window:

> Die Wirklichkeit konstituiert sich nach Maßgabe personal bedingter Perspektiven - die innere Dimension des Menschen erst erschafft die Welt in ihrer Vollständigkeit. [. . .] Die Problematik des Romans kehrt stets zu diesem Ausgangspunkt zurück; erst ganz zum Schluß der zweiten Fassung läßt die Spannung nach, tritt Resignation ein. Heinrich Lee wird Beamter. Zuvor aber durch das ganze Buch hin der Versuch, die Welt nach eigenem Gesetz zu formen.\(^{45}\)

He argues that *Der grüne Heinrich* would be a typical *Künstlerroman* if it were not for the “resistance of the environment” guaranteeing the realist moment.\(^{46}\) This seems to me to misconstrue Keller’s realism. Material reality itself is not resistant: it is extensively malleable within the individual mind. Heinrich’s difficulties occur when he discovers that his interpretation is invalid when set against the model of his peers. So it is true that reality is constituted according to the view of the individual: but that reality only becomes a valid and operative one when the individual mind arranges the world according to the orders which operate in a particular community: that is, when the psychological order is indeed the meeting

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41 Preisendanz, *Keller*, p. 80.
42 Hegel quoted in ibid., p. 80.
46 “Die Widerstände der Umwelt”, ibid., p. 568.
ground of the internal and external orders. Eccentricity is otherwise inevitable, for the letter “P” in itself is not in the least resistant to being called “Pumpernickel”.

Seen as an independent order, language is bereft of expressivity. It is only when it is allowed to interact with the social and cultural order that it can work, and it is Heinrich’s preference for a linguistic order of his own which is the source of his problems.

Heinrich may have pseudo-romantic leanings, but it would be quite wrong to suggest that his difficulties in coming to terms with his environment are the result of its bourgeois greyness compared to his anarchic inclinations. His inclinations are by no means anarchic: he is as profoundly imprinted with the desire for an ordered existence as Sali and Vrenchen are in Romeo und Julia auf den Dorfe. Indeed, his urge for order is at times so overpowering that it results in a kind of desperation which, ironically, leads him astray. His short-lived geological collection is an expression of this need for instant order, which ultimately estranges him from the complex of orders within which fruitful existence is possible. He does not take the trouble to learn about the stones - their names and values - which are collected by other boys. Instead he rushes to construct an altogether idiosyncratic collection - and although it is painstakingly arranged and labelled, the fact remains that the labels the items are given, and their putative values, are fabricated by Heinrich and have no relevance for anybody but him.47

Again, however, it is too easy to see this simply as an instance of Heinrich’s subjectivity carrying him away from objective reality, and to forget to look at the nature of the reality away from which he is being carried. For the names and values he allots the stones and fragments of glass in his own collection are not inherently wrong. The value of gold itself is of course purely symbolic (a theme which will later be developed through the example of “revalenta arabica”, a powder which in itself is as worthless as gold - or sand - but which within the community’s set of evaluative principles becomes a valuable commodity). It is simply that the other boys draw on a conspiracy of significance validated by their culture, whereas Heinrich does not. Again we see the way in which orders collide to give “reality”: the other boys’ collections are underwritten by a complex of semantic, economic, cultural and aesthetic orders, supported by a kind of communal consent. The very strength of Heinrich’s desire for order - to give things names, for instance - means that he has not the patience to address this complicated system - the way in which language interlocks with other forms of order - and constructs an alternative one instead. Throughout his life, however, his attempts to exist within private orders or incompletely understood fragments of the external order are doomed, like plants in too small a pot.48

Heinrich’s lust for order manifests itself over and over again: there is a zoological collection as well as the geological one; there is his weird collection of molten wax forms, to each of which he gives a name. At Frau Margaret’s junk shop he finds, “in einer verrückten Theosophie” (III, 109), two appealing models of order. The first is the idea of representing the world by placing oil (fire), sand (earth), water and air in a test tube. The ironic tone of the narrator belies the significance beneath an apparently harmless childhood activity: “Ich schüttelte sie tüchtig durcheinander, daraus entstand das Chaos, welches sich wieder aufs schönste abklärte, und ich saß sehr vergnügt vor der höchst gelehrten Erscheinung” (III, 109).

This is the kind of instant, facile order which is exactly what Heinrich craves: the gentle irony of
the narration points up its banality. In the same book he finds instructions for a more intricate, universal
order:

Dann nahm ich Bogen Papier und zeichnete darauf, nach den Angaben jenes Buches, große
Sphären mit Kreisen und Linien kreuz und quer, farbig begrenzt und mit Zahlen und
lateinischen Lettern besetzt. Die vier Weltgegenden, Zonen und Pole, Himmelsräume, Element,
Temperament, Tugenden und Laster, Menschen und Geister, Erde, Hölle, Zwischenreich, die
sieben Himmel, alles war toll und doch nach einer gewissen Ordnung durcheinandergeworfen
und gab ein angestrengtes, lohnendes Bemühen. (III, 109-10)

Heinrich populates each sphere with stars representing his relatives and acquaintances. He naturally
elevates himself and his mother to the pleasantest zone, subordinate only to the Holy Trinity and his
father - and consigns his enemies to Hell. Other persons move from zone to zone depending on their
behaviour (towards Heinrich, we may safely assume), and Heinrich the creator takes great pleasure in
forcing incompatible characters to share isolated regions, and in separating those who are fond of one
another, with the intention of reuniting them after many trials. In this game Heinrich not only makes
the universal order easily comprehensible: he makes it amenable to his slightest whim. We shall subsequently
see that throughout his life Heinrich experiences terrible frustration when the world does not correspond
to his private blueprints.

Even his enthusiasm for his precarious role of God atop the “barrel theatre” must be seen in this
light: the barrel becomes a mini order, easily accessible but temporary. That it is isolated, signally
failing to draw on the cultural or theological order of the community, is demonstrated by Goliath’s victory
within it - and it is literally too unstable to support Heinrich, who is ejected from his heaven when the
barrel topples over. Of course this, like the pleasure Heinrich takes in his ability to dictate individual fates
when he assists the teachers at school - an opportunity to steer individual fates in just the way he
imagined doing in his model universe - is an example of a sort of megalomania, which may indeed be a
result of Heinrich’s lack of a father figure, but it is a megalomania which has much to do with
Heinrich’s sense that power offers a shortcut to order.

Throughout his life, Heinrich will find that when he seizes on an order such as language,
however pleasing the realm which he creates, it is impotent for as long as it is a private construct without
the life-giving, validating links beyond its self which would necessarily wrest it away from his absolute
control. It is no accident that language should be chosen as an ideal illustration of this so early in the
book: for when language is private, communication is of course impossible, and isolation inevitable.

51 This point emerges in Gail Hart’s discussion of Heinrich’s dealings with language: “words are used to create fanciful relations without
regard for their ego-external functions, and these created relations, a pleasing world of idiosyncratic sense-making, form an effective
substitute for the world beyond them. Like the biblical creator, Heinrich generates his own world on a verbal foundation; like the biblical
Adam, he is master of all that he names” (Readers and Their Fictions, p. 21). We shall later again see Heinrich playing God when, in his
art, he imagines that he can emulate Creation.
Heinrich's collections of found objects show the importance of the overlap between several forms of order - natural, linguistic, aesthetic and economic. He is unable to negotiate successfully with the natural order directly; his attempts to master it by imposing his own taxonomy upon it founder. By trying to isolate the natural order, he mistakes it.

The chapter ironically entitled "Flucht zur Mutter Natur" develops this theme further. The title is resonant of just the kind of desperate snatch at a reassuring, singular, sustaining order which is so characteristic of the novel's impatient hero. However, the opening description of the novel, presenting Heinrich's father's village as a structure which is complex precisely because it is so organic, has prepared us for the reality Heinrich now finds there: not an unadulterated, benevolent order presided over by Mother Nature, but rather a community, and one whose relationship to nature is complex and far from serene. Martin Swales notes the ironic distancing of the narrator from the young Heinrich's gushing affirmation of his closeness to nature. Müller interprets the same kind of narratorial interpolations slightly differently, suggesting that they show that Heinrich himself is actually unable to overcome the divide between him and unreconstructed nature: the individual is alienated by "Mittelbarkeit". I would argue that in Keller's novel there is no such thing as an immediately accessible natural order. It is by participating in the human social and economic orders that the natural context is approached and becomes tangible. I hope to show, therefore, that Mittelbarkeit does not necessarily entail alienation; it means rather that because of the way in which orders interlock, assent to natural order alone, for instance, is impossible: it is a fallacy for the individual to believe that nature can be approached whilst other forms of order, such as the social order of the village, are shunned. It is precisely by fulfilling their social roles that the villagers are able to take their places in the natural landscape.

Heinrich arrives at his uncle's house to find him sitting outside it beneath a flock of doves. Suddenly he fires a shot and a raptor falls to Heinrich's feet. Next morning he awakens to find himself surrounded by all manner of tame animals: "Menschen und Tiere [. . .] jagten sich durcheinander" (III, 202). This tumult is characteristic of a household which is - apparently - in a state of irredeemable disorder:

Seine frisch blühenden Töchter folgten ihm, um nach der Ursache des Geräusches zu sehen und uns zu Frühstück und Ordnung zu rufen, mußten sich aber bald ihrer Haut wehren, da ein Krieg allgemeiner Neckerei sich gegen sie entspann, an dem sogar die Hunde teilnahmen. (III, 203)

We see that the family is both a happy and a functional one: above all, its vigour represents a stark contrast to the subdued atmosphere of the mother-son household in which Heinrich has been brought up.

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52 Cf. Hillebrand, “Der Garten des Grünen Heinrich”, pp. 571 and 579. Hillebrand is right to characterize the village not as paradise, but as a dream of paradise. However, outside Heinrich's imagination it is a working community and therefore whilst it may be a "polares Gegenbild" of "Schule und Exerzierplatz, Berufsnote" for the central character, it should not be accepted as such by the reader. This is an instance of the kind of distinction which is fundamental to the novel.

53 M. Swales, "Reflectivity and Realism", in Flood and Swales, eds, p. 46.
54 D. Müller, pp. 165ff.
hitherto, where nature was represented only by a distant view of the mountains. In fact, however, there is order in the village household, albeit (despite the warmth he senses in it) not yet the transparent, almost tangible framework which Heinrich craves.

Far from living in the bosom of a benevolent Mother Nature, the uncle’s family - and the rest of the village - are constantly transacting with nature, taming some animals and shooting others, using the stream to power the mill which rattles gently outside Heinrich’s window, and uniting in an effort to stem the flood when the same river threatens their home. The contrast between a passive observation of nature as something complete in itself and a negotiation with it is underlined later in the novel, when Heinrich the narrator, in a passage somewhat reminiscent of Adalbert Stifter, observes how affected he and his fellow schoolboys are by the majesty of a mountain landscape:

[. . .] und das um so mehr, als wir mit unsern Freudenzuge eine würdige Staffage in der Landschaft bildeten, selbst handelnd darin auftraten und daher der empfindsamen Sehnsucht untätiger Naturbewunderer enthoben waren. Denn ich habe erst später erfahren und eingesehen, daß das müßige und einsame Genießen der gewaltigen Natur das Gemüt verweichlicht und verzehrt, ohne dasselbe zu sättigen, während ihre Kraft und Schönheit es stärkt und nährt, wenn wir selbst auch in unserm äußer Erscheinen etwas sind und bedeuten ihr gegenüber. (III, 150-51)

Moreover, as the novel’s opening description suggests, nature is just one element in the complex of influences which define the village community. It is a community to which Heinrich never truly belongs - he is never quite one of the family, he is unable to participate in the struggle against the floods. He does not draw on the order which sustains his relatives and the other villagers, latching instead on to mere elements of that order and misconstruing them.55

Heinrich’s urge to capture a simpler kind of order leads him beyond the village into the surrounding landscape with his box of paints. Even outside the village though, nature refuses to be reduced into the manageable, singular phenomenon which he seeks:

Mit einer Mappe und Zubehör versehen, lief ich bereits unter den grünen Hallen des Bergwaldes hin, jeden Baum betrachtend, aber nirgens eigentlich einen Gegenstand sehend, weil der stolze Wald eng verschlungen, Arm in Arm stand und mir keinen seiner Söhne einzeln preisgab; die Sträucher und Steine, die Kräuter und Blumen, die Formen des Bodens schmiegen und duckten sich unter den Schutz der Bäume und verbanden sich überall mit dem großen Ganzen, welches mir lächelnd nach sah und meiner Ratlosigkeit zu spotten schien. (III, 227)

This attempt by the young would-be artist to find a “manageable” tree to isolate from its context and represent is in stark and significant contrast to the apparently effortless success of the young autobiographer beginning his account, as we have seen, by presenting those same trees of the mountain forests as elements of a “great whole” which is greater even than nature itself. Preisendanz memorably describes this challenge: “Ein Gegenstand kann erst zum wahren Bilde werden, die dem Bilde eigene

Totalität haben, wenn die nachahmende Hand der realisierenden Kraft und Ordnung des großen Ganzen gerecht wird, aus dem heraus der Gegenstand begegnet.56

The identity of the tree as a part of a forest is crucial and Heinrich’s failure to see this is characteristic. Wieser (who describes the tree as rooted in earthy reality and soaring towards the intangible firmament, an apt symbol of the duality which Heinrich fails to achieve) notes in this connection that “die Einordnung wird bei Keller ein Element in der Bildung der Individualität. Der Jüngling sucht nicht nur den ihm angemessenen Ort in der Welt, sondern fügt sich dort tätig der umgreifenden Ordnung der Natur und Nation ein.”57 This gives a sense of the importance of context: by participating in the order of the forest, the tree participates in the order of nature in general, and this order in turn interacts, as we have seen, via the economic order with the human order.58 Heinrich is not a part of the economic order, and here we see him singularly failing to comprehend the natural order.

When a suitable tree is eventually found, Heinrich is dismayed to find that it is not a static subject: the sun shining through the canopy constantly presents the tree in, literally, a new light:

Bald lächelte ein grauer Silberfleck, bald eine saftige Moosstelle aus dem Helldunkel, bald schwankte ein aus den Wurzeln sprosendes Zweiglein im Lichte, ein Reflex ließ auf der dunkelsten Schattenseite eine neue mit Flechten bezogene Linie entdecken, bis alles wieder verschwand und neuen Erscheinungen Raum gab, während der Baum in seiner Größe immer gleich ruhig dastand und in seinem Innern ein geisterhaftes Flüstern vernehmen ließ. (Ill, 228)

Here Heinrich is frustrated as a painter by precisely the “Dauer im Wechsel” which the novel as totality magnificently conjures up.59 In the opening description we saw how the very constancy of the village and its landscape is guaranteed by unremitting change - tree felling, harvesting, the comings and goings which invigorate the blood of the villagers.

It is Heinrich Lee’s reluctance to come to terms with the complex mutability of nature and the village’s relationship with it that makes the schoolmaster’s house so appealing to him. The contrast between its calm seclusion and the opulence of the natural surroundings of the village have been well documented60 - but we should not be too quick to accept Heinrich’s instinctive assumption that Anna and her father have achieved order whereas the villagers have not. It is rather that the schoolmaster’s order is a transparent one, simplified by its refusal to negotiate with external orders. Whilst the uncle and his family, together with the other villagers, are constantly involved in dealings with the natural order which reach beyond the home - hunting, fighting the floods, forestry - the schoolmaster and his daughter exist in an order which negotiates only with itself. Of course this is emblematized in the reflections in the lake which are so prominent a part of Heinrich’s descriptions of the homestead. The lake reflects the

57 Wieser, p. 120.
58 Rothenberg, p. 80, notes the importance of nature as a harmonizing context. Keller’s “best” characters, he claims, see nature in this way rather than in terms of simple beauty - but though he suggests that “Liebende Gemeinschaft öffnet den Sinn für die Schönheit, sprich das harmonische Ganze der Welt”, he does not show how this understanding also smoothes the way for their comprehension of and participation in other orders.
59 Cf. Rothenberg, pp. 60-62: “Dauer als Wechseldauer”. Rothenberg also notes how Keller’s houses tend to be the results of a mixture of past styles and purposes: like the trees, and like the village community, they shift according to transitory factors, but acquire a permanent, characteristic reality by virtue of their mutability. The process of adaptation may be defined as the capacity to interact with external reality - a principle which is fundamental in Keller’s world.
immaculate mini-order back to itself, reassuringly reminding its inhabitants of the mountains which surround and isolate it. Similarly, as Lucie Karcic points out, this zone is characterized by echoes, underlining again its complete autonomy.\textsuperscript{61} Even the descriptions of the interior of the house imply its isolation and stillness: Wieser points out that just as Anna’s home is framed by the landscape, so the descriptions of its interior are characterized by the many frames which define and isolate the pictures on the wall.\textsuperscript{62} There is a striking similarity between this mountain retreat and the perfect, peaceful Alpine world of so many of Conrad Ferdinand Meyer’s poems, and we can go further and suggest that Keller, from his very different standpoint but like Meyer, imbues these situations with the whiff of morbidity. The accessibility of the schoolmaster’s order is the result of its self-absorption - a characteristic close to Heinrich’s heart - and its absolute stillness. It is utterly static because of its refusal to deal with the external world. The village, we have seen, is a constant, but its very durability is founded on constant mutation. If its inhabitants were not prepared to look beyond its confines to marry “strangers” from other villages, it would stagnate. The schoolmaster’s world is indeed a stagnant one, and the contrast between its utter stillness and the movement so characteristic of descriptions of the village and its surroundings are impossible to overlook. Not a ripple disturbs the water of Anna’s lake, whereas the village in which Judith dwells is built beside a rushing river which - significantly - powers its mills, but also on occasion threatens to overwhelm the community.\textsuperscript{63}

The other kind of order, a potent one of constant renewal, constantly takes Heinrich aback. When he returns to the village after a prolonged absence it seems to him initially that he finds his uncle’s house “in alter Ordnung” (IV, 85) - but then he notices a change: “Doch nur die älteren Personen waren sich eigentlich ganz gleich geblieben; das junge Volk führte einen etwas veränderten Ton in Scherz und Reden” (IV, 85-86).

The younger generation is now engrossed in Liebesangelegenheiten to the exclusion of its previous, naive concerns. In fact of course the very survival of the “order” which is Heinrich’s uncle’s household depends on such changes - just as nature depends on the progress of the seasons. It is no accident that Heinrich’s return to the village and his encounter with these changes in his cousins should take place in spring and that the passages just quoted should follow shortly after a description of nature which makes similarly ironic allusion to the superficial mutations and apparent chaos which guarantee stability and continuity. Spring has come, but “noch war es hell und geraumig, wie in dem Hause eines Gelehrten, dessen Liebste dasselbe in Ordnung gebracht und aufgeputzt hat, ehe er von einer Reise zurückkommt und bald alles in die alte tolle Verwirrung versetzt” (IV, 83).

The painting of the mighty beech tree which Heinrich eventually produces is not only inaccurate in detail, but is hopelessly untrue to the whole. By concentrating on each section individually, Heinrich has neglected to take into account the overall proportions, and he runs out of space for the top of the tree. He tears the monstrosity up - a reaction which recalls his response to his ultimate frustration with his “geological” collection. In both cases, his attempt to garner elements of an external order and reconstruct

\textsuperscript{61} Karcic, p. 184.
\textsuperscript{62} Wieser, p. 117: “Alles ist in dieser Welt durch Rahmen und Spiegel gehalten - gerahmte Bilder spielen im Hause des Schulmeisters eine große Rolle - und schneidet so die Gewalt und strömende Kraft des Lebens aus.”
\textsuperscript{63} Cf. Rothenberg, pp. 49-54. Rothenberg shows, in a section aptly entitled “Bewegungslandschaft”, how much movement Keller builds into his descriptions, notably by the plethora of verbs. (He also notes that these landscape descriptions, full of movement though they may be, also emphasize the basic order which characterizes the landscape, through a preponderance of “organizing” prepositions. The movement is therefore never anarchic.)
them fails to satisfy him because they remain implicated within a system over which his authority does not extend.

Once again, a superficially not atypical childhood experience reflects Heinrich’s general problems. He is unwilling to negotiate with the complexity of reality: he wants to find a simpler recipe to follow. He wants to see the tree and only the tree, and is too impatient to consider that light and movement and context are decisive elements in its true appearance. He even tries to divide the tree into autonomous components, ignoring the interaction between the parts which makes the whole.

Here we have an instance of one of Keller’s fundamental tactics in Der grüne Heinrich: the use of failure to point up what is necessary for success. Richartz suggests that the hero’s errors give Keller’s novel its structure, and that these errors—each of which allows him to avoid reality—grow in significance along with his insight and age.64 Heinrich dissects nature, and thereby distorts it—real natural order is the sum of the interaction of its parts, and of its own interaction with other, human kinds of order. Dislocation from this must inevitably distort any element of that order. By default, as it were, instances of such distortion collectively imply a picture of reality, and Heinrich’s failures in the novel add together to produce a narrative which captures and explores the whole.

An awareness of this tactic brings with it a receptivity to Keller’s true profundity—for it is this tactic which turns Heinrich from a merely pitiful hero into an experiencing and reflecting consciousness which is symptomatic of the complex processes that sustain human reality.

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64 Richartz, pp. 16 and 17.
Heinrich’s early paintings serve to investigate the order of nature, but of course artistic order itself becomes a crucial element in his narrative. Art and the role of the artist have often been treated as the central themes of the novel. My contention is that art represents one of the forms of order which interlocks with others to construct human reality - and that this reality is the true concern of Der grüne Heinrich. The order of art therefore belongs in the novel alongside the others. Like linguistic order, it represents, for Keller, a mediating order, a bridge between the individual and the external universe. More, since the individual is in constant negotiation with that universe, it actually shapes reality for human beings, much as we have seen linguistic order shapes reality in a way which Heinrich never quite grasps. In the same way, the aesthetic order of the novel itself reflects the world, and also reflects upon it.

Heinrich’s experiences as an artist very much follow the pattern of his earlier experiences encountering language. Again he attempts initially to snatch an element from the external universe and master it. This is not a symptom of romantic self-expression, but of a need for order. Instead of collecting stones, he now collects individual trees in paint. When he realizes that his painting of the beech tree has little to do with the tree he perceives in front of him, his disgusted reaction is, as I have indicated, akin to his discarding the collection of stones when he finds that they, and his labels, have no basis in any external order.

His response as a child is to create his strange collection of wax figures, a collection which does not attempt to negotiate with external reality, but rather to give substance to entirely internal impulses - the names he gives the figures are not borrowed from real people, but are entirely fictional. It is no accident that this collection is housed in the dingy recesses of his mother’s attic, for it represents Heinrich’s attempt to create a private, alternative order which he can govern more easily than he can come to terms with external reality. Of course the whole thing is illusory and baseless and, as I have indicated, it takes only a stray cat to expose it as such and shake little Heinrich to his core.

As an artist, Heinrich’s reluctance to engage with the complexity of natural order engenders a similar response. Rather than struggle for long, he begins to draw less on external reality than on his imagination. He creates scenes which defy physical possibility, and which thereby declare the lack of any communication between the painter and the natural order. Just as with the story he concocted in “Kinderverbrechen”, when he used language to construct an alternative reality rather than interact with external reality, and found that there was a market for his construction, his “fraudulent” landscapes pass muster with his master, Habersaat.

We should not be surprised to find him using art in this way, for it is hinted at already in the rather high-falutin oration in which he describes and tries to justify to the schoolmaster his ambition to be a landscape painter. First he argues that it would be wonderful indeed to sit before God’s creations and represent them. Already then, he is simplifying his subjects: his landscapes will deal not with a fluid, contemporary world, but with God’s pristine creations, determined only by the “Gesetzen des Schöpfers”

Moreover, this phrase acquires an uncomfortable ambiguity when the young tyro goes on with extraordinary and perhaps unwitting frankness:

[Ill, 245]. Moreover, this phrase acquires an uncomfortable ambiguity when the young tyro goes on with extraordinary and perhaps unwitting frankness:

... wenn man endlich dergleichen aus seinem Innern selbst hervorbringen kann, ohne Vorbild, Wälder, Täler und Gebirgszüge, oder nur kleine Erdwinkel, frisch und neu, und doch nicht anders, als ob sie irgendwo entstanden und sichtbar sein müßten, so dünkt mich diese Kunst eine Art wahren Nachgenusses der Schöpfung zu sein. Da läßt man die Bäume in den Himmel wachsen und darüber die schönsten Wolken ziehen und beiden sich in klaren Gewässern spiegeln. Man spricht, es werde Licht! und streut den Sonnenschein beliebig über Kräuter und Steine und läßt nachher die Sonne in Purpur untergehen! Und dies alles, ohne sich mit schlechten Menschen vertragen zu müssen; es ist kein Mißton im ganzen Tun! (Ill, 245)

The laws of the creator have become the laws of the artist, for the artist has deposed the creator.66 Once again, Heinrich's deep-seated need for order, and his impatient refusal to come to terms with the complex order of reality - a reality irrevocably entwined with "schlechten Menschen" (as the greatest landscape in the novel, its opening description, makes clear) - drives him to become the creator of his own "unsullied" order. In his hubris Heinrich is of course merely slipping gratefully into the niche afforded to him by the popular romantic fallacy of the artist as a figure whose feet are off the ground, implicit, for instance, in his uncle's description of the gentleman painter who used to visit him as "geschickt, trotz einem Künstler!" (III, 217). It is no wonder that Heinrich adopts Göhner as his prophet, on the basis of a biography which moves even our - still young - narrator to the sardonic observation: "Es war in dem Werklein viel von Genie und eigener Bahn und solchen Dingen die Rede, von Leichtsinn, Drängsal und endlicher Verklärung, Ruhm und Glück" (III, 225). Laufhütte differentiates between art itself and that to which Heinrich is attracted: its associated "Nimbus".67

The same ironic comment is inherent in the Munich pageant, when Heinrich eulogizes a generation of medieval craftsmen whose practicality and integration within society is unquestioned, whilst he himself stands for an understanding of art which prefers to represent itself as separate and superior to the rest of the world. The irony is heightened of course by the fact that Heinrich's father stood energetically for the tradition of the craftsman and for the role of art within society: "So wurde er zwar kein akademischer Künstler mit einer allseitigen Durchbildung, aber doch ein Mann, welcher wohl den kühnen Vorsatz fassen durfte, in der Hauptstadt seiner Heimat ein wackerer Bau- und Mauermeister zu werden" (III, 12).

Heinrich's father worked hard and then used his leisure hours to pursue and promote learning and amateur dramatics. Heinrich praises the generation to which his father belonged for its "rastloses Suchen nach dem Guten und Schönen" (III, 15) - but his own search follows a path diametrically opposed to everything for which that generation stood. He describes fondly how his father and his comrades managed to satisfy their hunger for art and philosophy whilst strictly refusing to allow it to interfere with their day-to-day business of bread-winning: Heinrich's whole ambition is built on the premise that art and "real" work are incompatible. The description in "Auch Judith geht" of his daily postponement of his own work as he buries himself in books illustrates the difference between father and son. In Munich, however, Heinrich discovers that even members of the young set of artists are not necessarily the anarchic,

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romantic figures of his imagination: Erikson for instance takes meticulous care of his paints and brushes and, on seeing that Heinrich has cleaned his brushes properly he observes “Sie haben eine ordentliche Mutter, oder ist sie tot?” (V, 157). Lys criticizes Heinrich’s preference for spiritualism over nature as laziness: “weil der Geist Wunder tut und nicht arbeitet!” (V, 175-76).

Later in his career Heinrich’s painting becomes even more introverted when he gives up representation altogether, and turning his back on the outside world, spends hours doodling, producing a vast, intricate web. My interpretation of the recurrent “spider web” motif in Der grüne Heinrich differs from that of Kaiser. Kaiser notes that Heinrich’s existence is characterized by webs: the web of lies, the web of moral obligation, the web of debt and so on. Lurking behind them all Kaiser sees Heinrich’s mother: “die schweigende lauernde Spinnerin”. Heinrich is indeed - thanks to the psychological events of his childhood - caught up in a series of webs - but he attempts to negotiate with each one in turn, to make the web his own. By doing so he is unable to see that each web is in fact merely a part of a greater web, one over which he has no jurisdiction, but which would offer him the chance to conquer his introversion and participate in the world. In the instance of Römer, for example, we see Heinrich applying the rules of the “web of debt” without simultaneously taking into account the “web of moral obligation”: he demands back the money lent to Römer without regard to Römer’s human right to pity or even to Heinrich’s own “moral debt” to the artist who has helped him. Were he to take such matters into account, Heinrich would find that his personal authority, his sense of almost tangible order, within the “web of debt” is lost: he would be forced to negotiate with more complex issues in a more sophisticated manner and in a wider context. He would, by that token, find himself firmly in the real, human world. So whilst I acknowledge the truth of the claustrophobic webs within which Kaiser sees Heinrich trapped, I would argue that he misses an extra ironic dimension to the web motif: the fact that the very webs within which Heinrich traps himself offer the possibility of escaping beyond himself, if only he would acknowledge their interrelationship.

This irony is nowhere more poignant, or more characteristic of Keller, than in the instance of Heinrich’s “abstract” painting. At this moment of his utter and most manifest estrangement from external reality, of withdrawal into a chaotic private existence, Heinrich unconsciously conjures up an image of what is implied to be the very structure of that reality, an image of order incarnate. This image of order, of course, is utterly impotent: it is Heinrich’s own domain, without any point of contact with the outside world. Yet within Keller’s novel, its irony achieves for it a resonance reaching beyond Heinrich’s private dejection: similarly, the novel as a whole achieves a scope, and an articulacy which extend far beyond the inward-looking exercise in nostalgia which its narrator apparently believes his memoirs to be (“um noch einmal die alten grünen Pfade der Erinnerung zu wandeln” (VI, 325)).

When his friend Erikson arrives and destroys the canvas, he is emulating the cat who destroyed the young Heinrich’s similarly idiosyncratic wax collection. Yet neither the painting, nor the wax figures, are romantic or anarchic, but rather attempts to create order - a private, escapist order, which affords Heinrich a refuge from the complexities of external order.

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69 Ibid., p. 63.
Keller's argument is not so much that art should negotiate with the external world rather than being used as a refuge from it, but rather that it inevitably does so. This is illustrated with superb irony (in an incident referred to above) when Heinrich's autobiography - nothing other than an attempt to recreate his own experience as an aesthetic order of his own - backfires on him by, as soon as it leaves his bedroom, interacting with the economic order and ruining the autobiographer. In the context of the novel as a whole, this "speaks volumes" about the nature of Heinrich's reminiscences.

It is the responsibility of the artist to attempt to make the negotiation between the aesthetic and the external world an honest and therefore a constructive one. Art cannot be a purely aesthetic phenomenon. It is a bridge between the inner and outer worlds, a bridge which allows traffic in both directions and art which is insincere or which is hijacked by an escapist audience can therefore distort reality and the relationship of the individual to it. This negative potential is illustrated in the episode of the "Leserfamilie". Gradually the family retreats into an unreal world of cheap popular novels. The dangers emerge precisely from the fact that art is in fact not a separate category from life: the act of escaping into romantic fiction has real effects on the daughters of the family. Inevitably the facile formulae of the books they read impinge on their everyday conduct: they are measuring reality by a false yardstick. In a typically astute description, Keller presents causes and effects together, and with a relish which is veritably Gotthelfian, makes the physical condition of the books (the "foul smelling library") representative of their degrading influence:

Die Alten sahen mit seltsamer Freude zu, wie die armen Töchter immer tiefer in ein einfältig verbühntes Wesen hineingerieten, Liebhaber auf Liebhaber wechselten und doch von keinem heimgeführt wurden, so daß sie mitten in der übelriechenden Bibliothek sitzenblieben mit einer Herde kleiner Kinder, welche mit den zerlesenen Büchern spielten und dieselben zerrissen. Die Lesewut wuchs nichtsdestominder fortwährend, weil sie nun Zank, Not und Sorge vergessen ließ, so daß man in der Behausung nichts sah, als Bücher, aufgehängte Windeln und die vielfältigen Erinnerungen an die Galanterie der ungetreuen Ritter, wie gemalte Blumenkränze mit Sprüchen, Stammbücher voll verliebter Verse und Freundschaftstempel, künstliche Ostereier, in welchen ein kleiner Amor verborgen lag, und dergleichen. (III, 139-40)

The ironic borrowing of the vocabulary of romantic fiction ("die Galanterie der ungetreuen Ritter") in this description of such squalid circumstances is an evocative suggestion of the way in which art and reality, which should interpenetrate, pull apart when cheap escapist fiction is in evidence.

Just before this, Heinrich's own problems in respect of the complex relationship between art and life are shown up in his dream-like participation in a production of Goethe's Faust. The boy is captivated by the world of the theatre, but not because the play illuminates his reality for him. Rather, it appears to him to offer a more comfortable, alternative order. The fall of the curtain seems to him to mark an absolute divide between two separate zones:

Die Menschen führten ein doppeltes Leben, wovon das eine ein Traum sein mochte; aber ich wurde nicht klug daraus, welches davon der Traum und welches für sie die Wirklichkeit war. Lust und Leid schienen mir in beiden Teilen gleich gemischt vorhanden zu sein; doch im innern Raume der Bühne, wenn der Vorhang geöffnet war, schien Vernunft und Würde und ein heller Tag zu herrschen, und somit das wirkliche Leben zu bilden, während, sobald der Vorhang sank, alles in trübe, traumhafte Verwirrung zerfiel. (III, 121-22)
Heinrich’s problem, then, is not just, as has so often been suggested, that he confuses art and life, but rather that he separates them. Having done this, he naturally prefers the nobler-seeming, more clearly structured of the two zones. The act of separation, however, means that he misconstrues both art and life. Reality might seem more comprehensible to him if he were to contemplate it in the light of the play rather than averting his gaze from it; in simple contrast to the play however, life inevitably appears to be dowdy and chaotic. The play itself is stripped of its truth and its force because he refuses to apply it to the external reality with which it is inextricably linked. The image of young Heinrich scaring himself with his own drumming in the night, literally locked into the world of the play (he awakens in the theatre to find all the doors fastened shut) is an eloquently pathetic one.

However, the way in which artistic order interlocks with other kinds of order is perhaps most memorably explored in the two great popular spectacles in the novel: the *Tellspiel* in the village, and the pageant in Munich.

Heinrich takes an enthusiastic interest in the preparations for the *Tellspiel*, partly because his appointment as a designer marks the first “public” recognition of his artistic ambitions. However, the day is spoiled for him when he is party to a dispute during lunch between two rival businessman, over the proposed route of a new road. One of them is the man playing Wilhelm Tell himself, and Heinrich is appalled that he should sully his role by pursuing his own interests.

Heinrich’s idealism is, however, undermined by his own manipulation of Schiller’s play and his role in it. He has concealed from Anna the romantic scene involving their respective characters, omitted in the version performed by the villagers. When the little “philosopher” mocks them and hands Anna a copy of Schiller’s play, Heinrich the narrator observes that “die Schlinge kam nun an den Tag, welche ich ihr so harmlos gelegt” (IV, 200). Harmless the ruse may indeed be, but it represents a calculating application of art for entirely personal ends, and it is potentially far more sinister than the entirely spontaneous behaviour of the innkeeper playing Wilhelm Tell. The *Statthalter* points out that in his vigorous defence of his own business, the innkeeper is demonstrating the kind of energy and ambition without which the community, and not just the individual, would be the poorer: “wer seinen Vorteil nicht mit unverhohlener Hand zu erringen und zu wahren versteht, der wird auch nie imstande sein, seinem Nächsten aus freier Tat einen Vorteil zu verschaffen” (IV, 191).

These words are lent weight not least by the lack of enthusiasm with which they are greeted by Heinrich and the schoolmaster (“Ich war indessen nicht überzeugt worden, so wenig als dem Schulmeister die Wendung des Gespräches zu behagen schien” (IV, 192)): despite their high, patriotic ideals, the latter has physically withdrawn from the community to become a morbid recluse, whilst Heinrich is in the early stages of a career which, it may fairly be said, will be marked by absorption – self-absorption, and the absorption of his mother’s modest means. Both the schoolmaster and Heinrich are marked by a listlessness which is far more selfish than the self-interest of the innkeeper.

The innkeeper, in fact, is neither exploiting nor demeaning the myth of Wilhelm Tell. Rather, at the simplest interpretative level, in exercising his freedom to pursue his own interests he is making Tell’s heroism worthwhile. His opponent, despite his different philosophy (the innkeeper has a taste for ostentation altogether lacking in the rich but austere timber merchant), is doing the same thing; their very conflict guarantees the vigour of the community. That they should cross swords “an diesem Tage und in
so bedeutungsvollem Gewande” (IV, 190) is not a desecration of the play, but a reflection of a literary and historical text in the “here and now”, thereby invigorating it and achieving precisely the kind of veracity, significance and potency which Heinrich fails to achieve in his own artistic endeavours. It is he who, in preferring to separate the ideal from the actual, in refusing to see the umbilical link between the historical play and the present community, does art a disservice. Kaiser’s suggestion that festivals such as the Tellspiel “die Konflikte und Spannungen des Alltags überdecken und vergessen lassen” is hardly borne out by the text. He also suggests “daß sie zum kollektiven Traum des kollektiven Träumers Volk werden”. This is true insofar as the collective identity is built on the basis, as I have suggested, of a shared fiction - but since that shared fiction contributes to the construction of a shared reality, everyday issues are by no means excluded.

Self-interest might inform the positions of the innkeeper and his rival, but their whole argument is a public one: it takes place in public, it involves a public amenity, and it will be decided one way or the other by the public will. This stands in contrast to Heinrich’s own hijacking of the play to further his romantic inclinations: for his “scene” with Anna takes place in private, and is as strongly characterized by unreality and atrophy as the argument is by dynamism:

Wie ein unendlicher Kranz schien sich die weite Welt um uns zu drehen, bis sie sich verengte, als wir allmählich bergab jagten, dem Flusse zu. Aber es war uns nur, als ob wir im Traume in einen getraumten Traum traten. (IV, 202)

Anna is characterized as a fairy tale figure; the atmosphere beside the river is dank, and their kisses end in frigidity. Heinrich’s scheme for bringing about a real or imaginary tryst with Anna depends on the freedom from their conventional characters afforded them through the “disguise” of their respective roles. The result, however, is constrained rather than liberating. By contrast, those still participating in the communal event adopt the same tactic with more positive results: one of the most exuberant of the “Fratzgestalten” still dancing later that night, so energetically that Heinrich takes him to be a youth, eventually reveals himself to be a grey-haired old man.

The innkeeper and the timber merchant conflate art and life to achieve a fruitful reflectivity, whereas Heinrich attempts to shoehorn life into a template conveniently borrowed from art, thereby rendering both art and life moribund. Far from art here legitimizing Heinrich’s and Anna’s love and enabling Heinrich to transcend his social confines to achieve “eine höhere und reinere Form seines Menschseins” as Karl Fehr suggests, Heinrich’s tryst with Anna, depending as it does on a pedantic deference to the script, produces a result which is simply lifeless. By contrast, the robust attitude of the villagers to the niceties of Schiller’s drama makes that drama live - and live on, for instead of concluding as it was written, it merges seamlessly into a spontaneous celebration:

Hier ging auch die Verherrlichung des Tell vor sich, statt vor seinem Hause, doch nicht mehr nach der geschriebenen Ordnung, sondern infolge einer allgemeinen Erfindungslust, wie der Augenblick sie in den tausend Köpfen erweckte, und der Schluß der Handlung ging unbestimmt in eine rauschende Freudenfeier über. (IV, 209-10)

71 Fehr, “Das Spielelement bei Gottfried Keller”, p. 122.
The order of the play has reached out to become an animating and coalescent one - but by doing so it is no longer amenable to Heinrich as an individual in the way that it is in its "pure" form. Whereas Laufhütte, who links Heinrich's experience of the Tellspiel closely to his subsequent encounter with the writings of Goethe, suggests that Heinrich in the Tellspiel finally finds himself participating in a communal (aesthetic) event, thereby venturing beyond his private order, I find it hard to avoid the ironic suggestion of his inability to participate unselfconsciously, that is, to assent to a living order rather than a detached, purely aesthetic one. Nor do I sense like Laufhütte that the experiencing Heinrich draws on the lessons of his experience at the Tellspiel (and of his uselessness in the next day's battle against the flood) and is thereby left open to Goethe's healing influence. The whole setting of his Goethe reading - forty days of absolute seclusion - suggests that he has in no way learned that art and life are intimates rather than alternatives.

The Tellspiel is a memorable example of why, although Gail K. Hart is undoubtedly right to suggest that the "socialization of the imagination" is a fundamental aspect of Der grüne Heinrich, I do not concur with her assertion that "ultimately a socialized imagination is an oxymoron for Keller". Heinrich may be unable to participate (and Keller himself may share his hero's resistance), but the village's version of Schiller's play is nothing if it is not the expression of a corporate imagination, one which is inextricably bound up with the identity of that society and the individuals who constitute it.

Typically, Heinrich's plunge into the communal action, when he joins the celebrations in the evening, reveals him once again to be ignorant of how complex the chaotic-seeming event really is. He ignores his peers and attaches himself to a rustic band of farmers' sons. His intoxication - not just with the purple wine, but with the adrenaline of the occasion - recalls his disastrous over-participation in the schoolboy riot which led to his expulsion from school. Once again, Heinrich is in love with the idea of belonging, but does not understand the deeper unifying factors which really hold social structures together.

He explicitly revels in the contrast between this coarse environment and the rare one of the schoolmaster's house: his eclectic, collector's attitude towards social order prevents him from putting down roots in any one. This is made clear when, the next morning, Heinrich observes the revellers of the previous evening unite in an efficient effort to save the village and the land belonging to its inhabitants from rising flood waters. This is the practical expression of the community spirit articulated and reinforced by the Tellspiel and its subsequent festivities. Heinrich can only look on as an outsider, still unable to accept that art can be so intimately linked to the consciousness of the community and thereby to the practical world.

Martin Swales has pointed out the difference between the communal effort of the Tellspiel and the "self-regarding archness" of the pageant in Munich, arguing that the scenes in the latter "come close to specious 'artiness'". Tellingly, the only element of the village celebration which is described like the

\[73\] Hart, Readers and Their Fictions, pp. 17 and 18.  
\[74\] Cf. Pascal, p. 42.  
\[76\] Cf. also Beddow, pp. 216-17.  
Laufhütte (Wirklichkeit und Kunst, pp. 253-57) offers a contrasting interpretation of the pageant: "und wieder soll die Einbettung der Kunst in das Gefüge des je Wirklichen sichtbar gemacht werden" (p. 257).
section of the pageant in which Heinrich and his friends take part, as a dream within a dream (V, 181), is Heinrich’s and Anna’s aberrant “love scene”: the rest of the Tellspiel is altogether vital. This contrast is another instance of the difference between an understanding of artistic order as an aesthetic ideal of which reality must inevitably fall short, and as a dynamic element in a reflective relationship with reality. Real art, for Keller, draws on real life, but also, because of its veracity, infiltrates, underpins and shapes real life. Sautermeister contends that the Tellspiel is “entzaubert” by the intrusion of “Wirtschaftsordnung”: the Tellspiel is a relic of a bygone age, and it is threatened by the aggressive selfishness of the timber merchant. It is certainly true that the timber merchant is characterized as a representative of a new, selfish capitalism: yet the Tellspiel is manifestly not “entzaubert” by him for anybody but Heinrich. Unlike the Munich pageant, its fictive or historical aspect is in imaginative negotiation with changing economic and political circumstance to create a reality rather than an exercise in nostalgia, and it is therefore not vulnerable to “exposure”.

During the Munich pageant, Heinrich again demonstrates his failure to comprehend this relationship. Keller uses the ironic situation of romantically inclined, insular, self-styled artists celebrating the art of an age in which art was closely associated with artisans. In his sometimes nostalgic description Heinrich dwells on the art inherent in the work of illiterate craftsmen, but he himself is unable to make the artistic and practical worlds go hand in hand. Once more he attempts to use art to construct an artificial reality, this time casting himself as a cavalier and defender of the honour of the fair Agnes. Just as in the Tellspiel, his own romantic inclinations are given the opportunity to run riot. The moment of enlightenment (not for Heinrich, but for his opponent), which stops the fiasco of his duel with Lys from becoming a tragedy, is in itself an instance of the mutual negotiation between true art and life. It is when Lys catches sight of the “audience” in one of his own paintings that he realizes the absurdity of the situation and withdraws his challenge: bloodshed is averted by the intervention of valid art in the destiny of reality.

It is a moment wonderfully emblematic of Keller’s insistence that artistic order is not a separate category - as it so often is for Conrad Ferdinand Meyer - but rather an interacting component of the human existence. Art is a medium in which human imagination and external reality interact - at a personal level, but also, as we see in the Tellspiel at a communal level. In one of Heinrich’s extraordinary dreams the history of a country is represented in paintings, but the paintings are not just passive objets d’art:

Das ganze abgeschiedene Volk war sozusagen bis auf den letzten Mann, der soeben gegangen, an die Wand gemalt und schien mit dem lebendigen, das auf der Brücke verkehrte, eines zu sein; ja manche der gemalten Figuren traten aus den Bildern heraus und wirkten unter den Lebendigen mit, während von diesen manche unter die Gemalten gingen und an die Wand versetzt wurden. (VI, 125)

76 Sautermeister, in Denkler, ed., p. 105.
The talking horse in the dream, moreover, observes to Heinrich on the subject of national identity: “wisse, wer diese heikle Frage zu beantworten und den Widerspruch zu lösen versteht, der ist ein Meister und arbeitet an der Identität selber mit” (VI, 327).

Art, certainly, is only one of the issues at stake here; yet quite clearly it is more than just an expression of national identity. It is a means by which the popular and individual imaginations can define and contribute to that identity, a way in which heritage and present can interpenetrate. The artist - an artist such as Schiller - who can identify the pulse of a nation thus joins the pantheon of its defining factors.

Much of what Der grüne Heinrich has to say about art is encapsulated in a single sentence in the passage dealing with Heinrich’s first, intense encounter with the collected works of Goethe. The narrator observes that the artist, necessarily an observer, is nonetheless implicated in the world:

Dieser ist darum nicht überflüssig oder müßig, und der Seher ist erst das ganze Leben des Gesehenen, und wenn er ein rechter Seher ist, so kommt der Augenblick, wo er sich dem Zuge anschließt mit seinem goldnen Spiegel, gleich dem achten König in Macbeth, der in seinem Spiegel noch viele Könige sehen ließ. (V, 6)

Art is not complete without life, and life is not complete without art, for life exists only as an interpretation; art draws on the imagination, private and collective, which defines reality.

The novel wryly implies how the source of this insight is itself not aloof from the general rule, but exists in negotiation with interlocking orders: even the mighty Goethe is not secure in the aesthetic domain, but is subject to economic exigence. Heinrich has read his works on approval, and when he is unable, and his mother reluctant, to buy them, the peddler who brought them bundles them up and takes them away to another customer. Over and over again in Der grüne Heinrich, as here, we encounter art manifesting itself not as something pure and untouchable, but as a commodity. This often dismays the young Heinrich, but the implication of the novel is not that art is besmirched by having a price put on it, but that this is simply one level on which it negotiates with the human world.

Art - in nineteenth century novels most particularly - reflects the world. Der grüne Heinrich, however, is concerned to show how art also participates in the world, and its cash value - art in the economic order - is an instance of this no less than the comprehension and remorse which art induces in Lys - art in the psychological order.

Even the “art” which Heinrich dismisses as devoid of all aesthetic merit - the products of Habersaat’s factory, for instance, or even the flag poles which are the anticlimax to his artistic career in Munich - does nevertheless have value in the entirely real sense of being worth money. In this way it interacts with reality. Although the sentimental appeal of Habersaat’s landscapes to a certain section of the population, and the patriotic emotions which inspire the demand for the flag poles, may represent significant insights into the reality of contemporary society, it is only the economic mechanism of supply and demand which calls such art into existence, not individual inspiration. The reflection of the world

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Gerhard Kaiser, Gottfried Keller. Das gedichtete Leben, pp. 26ff, notes the difference in this respect between Heinrich the painter and Heinrich the “author”; as an autobiographer, Heinrich is writing for himself, but as a painter he, like his creator, Keller, is confronted by the realities of creating for an audience, of selling to a market.
offered by such “art” thus has little (in the case of Habersaat’s atrocious landscapes) or nothing (in the case of the flag poles) to do with mimesis, and everything to do with art’s potential to engage with the other orders - in this case via the economic order - which together constitute reality.

Moreover, art such as the Habersaat pictures is validated in much the same way as the value of the “magical” powder, revalenta arabica. Both a landscape and revalenta arabica are spurious in that they are not, in themselves, functional. Even in purely artistic terms, the landscape has no merit. Yet when they are placed in context, as they are in Der grüne Heinrich, we see that they provide real food for real people who undertake real work in order to produce them. The difference is that important art reflects upon as well as simply reflecting, thereby acquiring an aesthetic rather than a merely economic validity.

Heinrich’s failure ever to negotiate with the marketplace - to acknowledge, in other words, that his art does not exist in a vacuum - and derive an income from his career (the Graf”s generosity is that of a character dwelling in a secluded, “unreal” zone) is predictable. Laufhütte’s discussion of Heinrich’s biting description of the “Höllenhierarchie” of Habersaat’s workshop shows how it goes beyond simple hostility to the institution and its proprietor. It suggests a hostility to the society which sustains them:

“Die böse Ironie welche hier dem Autobiographen die Feder führt, richtet sich nicht nur gegen Habersaat, sondern gegen die Gesellschaft, welche seine Praxis trägt und lobenswert findet.”

I suggest that, more specifically, it betrays Heinrich’s subconscious resentment, even fear, of the scale of a reality comprised of interacting orders. It is abundantly obvious that Habersaat’s pictures are worthless as art even if they have an economic value: it is a measure of Heinrich’s insecurity as an “artist” that instead of simply registering this, he appears threatened by the fact that a picture’s value can be measured in terms which are other than purely aesthetic. To acknowledge the reality of art’s participation, via the economic order, in the social order would have a series of implications for Heinrich: it would strip him of the conviction that art offered an order of its own, one which he can manipulate autonomously and hence participate in effortlessly. It would force him to look beyond his self.

It is my contention, therefore, that Heinrich’s naive vision of art - his fierce attachment to the “nimbus” rather than the practice of art - stems not so much from a romantic inclination per se, as from the intuition that only such an interpretation of art leaves it amenable to him as an isolated order. A less pretentious understanding of the role of the artist demands of that artist a comprehension of, and readiness to negotiate with, a set of economic and social issues which strip his realm of its self-sufficiency. The impotence of Heinrich’s vision of art is illustrated by his whole, fruitless career. Indeed, in immediate contrast to Habersaat’s efficient output, we are presented with an image of Heinrich’s playing the role of artist without actually painting: he creates his own, “aesthetic” world in his mother’s house and casts himself as a most profound individual - but “in diesem Atelier braucht kein Bild mehr gemalt zu werden”.

The revalenta arabica story which illustrates the functioning of the economic system is adumbrated, and the issues it raises are related specifically to art, during the description of the Munich pageant. One of the characters in the parade is Veit Stoß, a “Mann von seltsamster Mischung” (V, 201).

81 Ibid., p. 124.
82 Cf. Laufhütte, Wirklichkeit und Kunst, p. 123 (cited above) and p. 139: Laufhütte notes that Heinrich is hostile even to the notion of a paid day’s work as a workshop “artist”.
83 Laufhütte, Wirklichkeit und Kunst, p. 142.
He is a sober, hard-working man and a gifted carver of figures for church altars - "aber des Nachts machte er eifrig falsche Wertpapiere, um sein Gut zu mehren" (V, 201). Artistic endeavour seems here to find no dichotomy between service to art and to Mammon.

Moreover the participation of art - of whatever quality - in the economic order guarantees its relevance, for if the artist is not to starve he must take into account the fashions and priorities of his or her audience. As a picture dealer says to Heinrich in Munich, in rejecting his work, "Man muß mit der Zeit leben und vorwärts schreiten!" (VI, 54). Ironically, even when our narrator describes his enthusiastic response to the idealistic vision of art which he encounters in the writings of Geßner and Sulzer he unwittingly acknowledges how very worldly ambitions go hand in hand with ostensibly ethereal priorities: "Es war [. . . ] viel von Genie und eigener Bahn und solchen Dingen die Rede, von Leichtsinn, Drängsal und endlicher Verklärung, Ruhm und Glück" (III, 225).

He also notes how these lofty tomes are tied into the popular mood of their time: "Dies Buch muß seinerzeit eine gewaltige Verbreitung gefunden haben, da man es fast in allen alten Bücherschränken findet und es auf allen Auktionen spukt und für wenig Geld erstanden werden kann" (III, 226). The implication is that in Heinrich's day such writers have little influence, and their works are not worth much money. Here - how many of Keller's contemporaries would have made so bold? - it is the book's current niche in the economic order which is the measure of its artistic relevance. Yet Keller is no simple philistine. Der Grüne Heinrich explores the intriguing irony of Schiller fleeing his environment, only to crystallize in his subsequent career an ideal which lay within him - and that very environment ("und seiner Zeit"). Moreover, his stature too is underlined by the popularity of his published work: "Soweit die deutsche Sprache reicht, sind in den Städten nicht viele Häuser, in welchen seine Werke nicht stehen" (VI, 41).

Painting and artistic theory are presented as manifestations of the mood of the times: again, art reflects human reality without necessarily resorting to mimesis. The quality of originality, on the other hand, means that the artist is an active element in the process of change, not just a measure of it.

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3.6

ECONOMIC ORDER

The constant emphasis on its simple economic value as one of the ways in which art participates in the wider world, as well as the way in which artistic and economic issues fruitfully reflect upon one another in, for example, the Tellspiel, make it clear that in Der grüne Heinrich, money matters (after all, the career which is at the heart of the novel fails on account of Heinrich’s inability to make his art lucrative).\(^{85}\) In fact it matters hugely: Jeziorkowski’s claim that the attention the novel devotes to the means of its characters wins for it a special place in German literature is by no means exaggerated: “Dennoch und deshalb kann man in Deutschland vielleicht erst von Keller an sagen, daß in der Dichtung peccunia non olet. Bei ihm jedenfalls glänzt es.”\(^{86}\) Adolf Muschg similarly observes that:

Ich vermute, daß die deutsche Literatur des 19. Jahrhunderts kein Werk kennt, in dem “das Ganze” als anthropologisches Heil reicher und strenger von der ökonomischen Bewahrung abhängig gemacht würde, als den “Grünen Heinrich”. [. . .] Ökonomie als sittliche Praxis und persönliches Pathos - das ist das Thema dieses Romans; ihm beugt sich allemal die Form.\(^{87}\)

Der grüne Heinrich is the autobiography of an occasionally rather precious would-be artist, but the lofty disdain for economic affairs expressed by our hero during the Tellspiel is far from being endorsed by the novel. Money, moreover, emerges as a philosophically complex phenomenon of enormous positive and negative potential. As Jeziorkowski points out, it over and over again physically reflects the sun to create a bond between the material and inspirational worlds which is unthinkable in most contemporary writing\(^{88}\) - Goethe's is the extraordinary exception.

The fundamental importance of economic order, and its integration in other forms of order, is announced at the start of the novel. In “Lob des Herkommens”, the description of the village and its natural context includes the observation that “Ein großes rundes Gebiet von Feld und Wald bildet ein reiches, unverwüstliches Vermögen der Bewohner. Dieser Reichtum blieb sich von jeher so ziemlich gleich.” (III, 3). However, the situation is not so stable as it would seem. Bits of the land are exchanged with surrounding communities; moreover, the division of the whole is a variable:

Die Einteilung des Besitzes aber verändert sich von Jahr zu Jahr ein wenig und mit jedem halben Jahrhundert fast bis zur Unkenntlichkeit. Die Kinder der gestrigen Bettler sind heute die Reichen im Dorfe, und die Nachkommen dieser treiben sich morgen mühsam in der Mittelklasse umher, um entweder ganz zu verarmen oder sich wieder aufzuschwingen. (III, 3-4)

Here we see Keller firmly locating economic order within the framework which sets the scene, as it were, for his novel. The wealth of the village is more or less a constant, like its social cohesion and its natural setting with which its wealth is here so intimately linked. Like them as well, though, it is a constant

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\(^{85}\) Lukács notes that “Heinrichs Scheitern ist unmittelbar wirtschaftlich bedingt” (p. 403) and that “Keller gestaltet den Zusammenhang zwischen dem jeweiligen Budget seiner Menschen und deren höheren Lebensproblemen ebenso exakt wie Balzac” (p. 400).

\(^{86}\) Jeziorkowski, Klaus, “Eine Art Statistik des poetischen Stoffes’: Zu einigen Themen Gottfried Kellers”, Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift, 45 (1971), 547-66 (p. 552).

\(^{87}\) A. Muschg, p. 152

\(^{88}\) Jeziorkowski, “Eine Art Statistik des poetischen Stoffes”, p. 552.
which is maintained by inner movement. The ebb and fall of family fortunes has a veritably organic rhythm to it in this description: once again an order reveals itself to be something altogether other than static.

Economic order in Der grüne Heinrich is significant in two principal respects.

First, as one of the orders which constitute the human world, it represents in itself a means of engagement in that world. It interacts with other kinds of order and thus becomes a window on the overall system. We have already seen how this operates with respect to art: the artist’s prosaic-seeming need to participate in the economic order for his livelihood is a factor which lifts artist and art out of seclusion and into a (possibly invigorating, possibly destructive) relationship with their time and place. Similarly, the relationship between human beings and nature is partially regulated by economic considerations: the natural landscape in which the village exists has been shaped by agriculture and the timber industry. The minerals collected by Heinrich’s peers are categorized in terms of their worth. It is easy to see, also, how economic factors are intimately intertwined with the social structure. Heinrich’s protracted refusal to participate in the economic world is certainly one of the factors which alienate him from his society - a rupture which is anticipated in his school days. Heinrich’s widowed mother’s position in a financial and social oxymoron, instilled with the experience of life in the intellectually ambitious class from which her lack of resources now excludes her, means that Heinrich is neither one thing nor the other in social terms - his background is too affluent and certainly too genteel to allow him to feel at home among the paupers at his first school, but in his second school he suddenly finds himself to be the odd one out by virtue of his relative poverty. His entire career is characterized by the fact that he is unable to turn his hand to the profitable activity which would then reintegrate it, and him, into the external world.99

Second, economic issues are invested with a complex symbolism, a symbolism which spills over into real psychological phenomena. This symbolism shows how powerful and how intricate Keller’s vision of the relationship between individual psychology and external structures really is. The central motif in all this is the one of Schuld with its well documented ambiguity, or rather dual meaning, of debt and guilt, the motif which is so central an issue to Adolf Muschg’s study of Keller and his hero.

At the heart of the first of these aspects of economic order in the novel is the issue of how significance is generated. Economic order can be a conduit to the external world, but this potentiality is dependent on the links between the economic and other kinds of order, both internal and external. These are exemplified in the way meaning is arrived at.

When he is utterly penniless in Munich, Heinrich is driven to start selling off his possessions to a junk shop dealer. He parts with his first few paintings, and the narrator makes the following observation:


derselben, sondern gegen die Not des Augenblickes ab, und da erschien mir der ärmliche
Handelsgreis mit seiner kleinen Kasse noch als ein schätzenswerter Gönner; denn er hätte mich
ja auch abweisen können. Und das wenige, was er mit gutem Willen und drolligen Gebärd
hab, war so viel, als wenn reiche Bilderhändler größere Summen für eine unsichere Laune ihres
zweifelnden Urteiles hingaben. (VI, 76-77)

This passage underscores the relativity of value which is central to Keller’s system of interacting
orders. Heinrich initially assesses his paintings in terms of their significance as art, and as mementoes of
his past. At the moment of their sale, however, they suddenly acquire a new significance: their monetary
value. This may seem a stable significance, for the sum Heinrich is paid for the paintings has a concrete
relationship to sums bigger and smaller than it. This would indeed be the case if economic order really
were a simple, hermetic system. It is not, however, for as Heinrich points out, in his present straitened
circumstances the small sum he receives is worth as much as a much larger one might have been in a
different situation. This important point is reiterated when Heinrich awakens at the castle on his hesitant
journey home, relieved to have presentable clothes to don: “So gibt der Augenblick den Dingen stets ihren
besondern Wert: der geringe Ertrag meiner Arbeit erschien mir jetzt in Gestalt eines anstandigen Kleides
willkommener, als mir die doppelte oder vierfache Summe zu anderer Zeit gewesen wäre” (VI, 172).

The meaning, then, even of a simple sum of money cannot be judged simply in terms of its
immediate context. It depends also on the relationship between that context and the individual, and
between the individual and his time and place. Here we see how the reflectivity between inner and outer
worlds is crucial to achieving signification. An external order such as economic order is modulated by
that relationship, not absolute.

Similarly, the greater sum which, in the quoted passage, Heinrich imagines receiving from
wealthy art dealers would in any case have been due to a fickle “Laune ihres zweifelnden Urteiles”: here
again, value within the economic scale is seen to be in negotiation with the priorities of the individual.

If the interpenetration of economic order with other kinds of orders is not acknowledged, there is
no valid context for asserting value. The novel contains a tragicomic example of how economic value
alone is meaningless. Frau Margaret’s junk shop seems initially to be an aberrant world, one which exists
independently of the real world. Her shop is crammed with esoteric items, and she lives in a fantastic
imaginative zone, populated with heathen gods and coursing with magic. However, even though she has
never been observed upon the street, she is not completely at odds with the society around her. Her
imagination colours her reality, but she has incorporated into it, and somehow mastered, the economic
order; her calculations are eccentric in their method, but unerring in their accuracy. This is her bridge to
the real world, which sustains her private domain and allows her to support her munificent habits and an
ageing husband.

Her husband has an imagination as lively as hers, and he enchants Heinrich with projected
flights around the locality upon a broomstick. However, as is the case with his wife, his dream world
negotiates with reality:

Auf diese Weise ergänzte er trefflich das phantastische Wesen seiner Frau, und ich hatte so die
Gelegenheit, unmittelbar aus der Quelle zu schöpfen, was man sonst den Kindern der Gebildeten
in eignen Märchenbüchern zurechtmacht. Wenn der Stoff auch nicht so unverfänglich war wie
This is in fact the definition of art which underlies the novel: the stories distort reality, perhaps, but in such a way as to point up certain truths. We are reminded also that the shop - like the novel itself - is stuffed full of tangible items which relate the imaginative world to the physical one, and that for every fairy tale another tale is told, drawing on the real life experiences of the old people.90

The colourful “order” which is Frau Margaret’s world is founded on the interrelationship of the real and imagined worlds - and when that balance is disturbed, the whole structure tumbles. The husband is persuaded that he should finally assert himself and claim his share of the fortune which his wife has accumulated virtually single-handedly, and a bitter dispute begins. Suddenly the economic order is torn from its place among the other frameworks of significance governing the household: monetary value loses its relativity and becomes their be-all and end-all. In promoting the economic order in this way, Margaret and her husband destroy its function as a bridge between them and the real world, and their outlook, previously merely eccentric, becomes dementedly self-destructive. The death of the old man symbolizes the impossibility of a life sustained by any one order, by money alone:

Er lebte noch drei Jahre und starb gerade an dem Tage, wo das letzte Geldstück gewechselt werden müßte.

[. . .]

Endlich ging er aus wie ein Licht, dessen letzter Tropfen Öl aufgezehrt ist, schon vergessen von der Welt, und ich, als ein herangewachsener Mensch, war vielleicht der einzige Bekannte früherer Tage, welcher dem zusammengefallenen Restchen Asche zu Grabe folgte. (III, 87)

Perhaps the most remarkable treatment of economic order in the novel is the passage dealing with “revalenta arabica”.

Revalenta arabica is a money-making ruse, and although Keller goes on to dissect it in astonishingly perceptive detail, at first glance it seems utterly straightforward. A worthless flour is accorded properties it does not have and achieves a huge popularity simply because nobody admits that the whole thing is a swindle. It is “ohne innere Wahrheit, ohne notwendigen Zweck, ohne Idee” (VI, 37). Its only genuine significance appears to be for the bank accounts of its instigators. Yet, as Keller shows, the swindle gives rise to a whole structure which is based on exactly the same precepts of “Ordnung, Fleiß und Betriebsamkeit, Um- und Übersicht” (VI, 38) which underlie a conventional company.91 The flour and the tins must be produced and processed and distributed; the product must be advertised and sold by local agents. The work which goes into this is, in itself, as genuine as any other kind of work. Heinrich imagines the founder of the company, his fortune made, becoming part of the social elite, celebrating the marriage of his daughter to the most respected family in the district.

90 Preisendanz (Keller, p. 82) notes that it is Heinrich’s inability to grasp the reality on which the fantastic world of Frau Margaret and her husband draws which is symptomatic of his outlook and a reason for his future problems: “Aber für die suchende Phantasie des Kindes ist das Verhältnis zwischen den phantastisch verzerrten Formen dieser Welt und ihrem Gehalt an menschlicher Wahrheit nicht erkennbar.”

91 Cf. A. Muschg, pp. 172ff.
The implications of this are far-reaching, but clearly uncomfortable for Heinrich. The narrator is tempted to conclude that the whole construct is fundamentally flawed and to compare it unfavourably to a nobler example of a popular product: the writings of Friedrich Schiller. The great author he describes as a recluse ("mit Respekt zu melden, ein gelehrter Stubensitzer" (VI, 41)) whose legacy is nevertheless of profound significance for the Germanic peoples. Quite apart from the spiritual aspect of his work, it is of economic significance, providing livelihoods for "eine Menge von Papiermachern, Druckersleuten, Verkäufern, Angestellten, Laufburschen, Lederhändlern, Buchbindern" (VI, 41-42). This economic structure, he implies, is "genuine" whilst the one built on revalenta arabica is not.

Is this distinction a valid one? In fact the narrator does not and cannot show in what way the livelihoods of those involved in the Schiller industry effectively differ from those of the people dependent on the revalenta arabica. The mechanics of the market are identical, whether the product is a fraudulent powder or inspired words, and the labour of those workers assiduously producing revalenta arabica surely merits its reward no less than the labour of those involved in the Schiller industry. Both structures, in a sense, are real economic and social edifices, built on fictions, even if one fiction is monumental and the other merely expedient. More: both fictions are born of the communal psyche. As our narrator constantly emphasizes, Schiller, for all his reclusive habits, is a man of his time and place; if he were not, his writings would not have such a resonance for his compatriots and therefore not bear such startling economic fruit. Revalenta arabica - for different ends, to be sure - also trades on the psychology of a community. Its fiction is embraced with an enthusiasm which attests to the chord that it, too, has struck.

Again, significance and value are shown to depend not on the innate identity or worth of an item, but on its relationship to the minds of men and women. The flour, which is, in empirical terms, worthless, acquires economic value by virtue of a sort of social conspiracy to believe in its effectiveness. Fraudulent it may be, but once it has taken its place in the economic order, its effectiveness in economic, if not medicinal, terms, is indisputable. As we have seen, art - even the questionable art of Habersaat's factory - is "justified" in just the same way. Such pictures find an echo in the imaginative worlds of the populace, and thereby gain economic value.

Because of the way orders interpenetrate in the novel, so do the values which are dependent on them. Thus the inventor of revalenta arabica (in our narrator's imagination) not only makes his fortune because of his product's economic success, but he also acquires social status, takes on board the values of society and becomes thoroughly integrated.

Heinrich's own contacts with economic order serve frequently to illuminate his general failure to achieve any such integration. Participation in the economic order, whatever the initial impulse, necessarily has real effects beyond the self. Economic order, like any other kind of order, consists simply of operative interrelationships, and the price of participation in it is the public responsibility which external effect necessarily brings in its train. Such a sense of responsibility, however, requires the capacity to admit that one is participating in an order which, despite one's own contribution to it, takes one beyond the self and cannot simply be "unmade" in the way that the purely imagined world can.

92 Cf. M. Swales, "Reflectivity and Realism", in Flood and Swales, eds, pp. 50-51 and Epochebuch, pp. 131-32: revalenta arabica demonstrates how a fiction can nourish people in reality.
Heinrich is singularly unprepared or unable to admit any such thing. This is the fundamental truth which lies behind the economic symbol of *Schuld*.93

One thinks, for instance, of his boyhood encounter with Meierlein. Heinrich gradually accumulates a considerable debt to the other boy, without giving any thought to the consequences of this. His friendship with Meierlein and the system of indebtedness which underlies it seems to him, characteristically, to be a closed system without implications outside of their relationship. When, suddenly, Meierlein demands repayment, Heinrich is utterly unable to come to terms with the sudden exposure to an external system which this represents, and his only response is to avoid the issue. Once again, Heinrich’s private order disintegrates when it is exposed to the light of a more complex, general reality. For Muschg the integrating effect of participation in the economic order is associated with the absent father, the demolisher and the builder, the model of dynamic activity within the social and economic orders.94 By contrast, Heinrich’s tendency to avert his eyes from the reality of money comes from his mother, who hoards it rather than exchange it and yet never even counts it, who is so enigmatic about it as to seem - in Muschg’s interpretation - to accord money a magical aspect.

The fight against Meierlein, argues Muschg, is Heinrich’s victory for his mother, for the introverted refusal to allow monetary exchange to force him out into the world. As Laufhütte notes, Heinrich’s response to the Meierlein “crisis” constitutes a physical withdrawal from the outside world (he cowers inside his home) and also coincides with his first painting.95 Thus we see him fleeing the economic order and taking refuge in an artistic order which he sees as private and secure rather than a negotiation with the world: preferring a make-believe order to one which has real and potentially painful consequences.

This is the point which underlies Heinrich’s failure ever to achieve a “rebirth” in the course of the novel: such a moment would deny that his experiences, as Judith points out, have consequences beyond the self; for he is not an autonomous order unto himself, but rather a negotiating element in a complex system which he cannot himself control. His own metamorphosis would not undo the effects of his past actions, and his burden of guilt must therefore remain.

Of course Heinrich cannot evade the complexity of reality by retreating into his own mini-universe, and the accountability which is demanded of him finds him cruelly wanting - witness his treatment of his mother. It is this that explains just how ferocious his antipathy to Meierlein becomes following their contretemps, and the fact that it remains so ferocious long afterwards. It is not just that he feels duped by his friend - after all, Meierlein has done no more than call in debts of which he had openly and most diligently kept tally. Heinrich’s sense of betrayal and the extraordinary hatred which it breeds in him must be put down to the shock of suddenly finding himself adrift in a world with consequences he cannot control: a system, that is, of which he is not the absolute centre, when he had deluded himself into believing that he was secure in a transparent domain of his own making, one which he could at will impose on the external world. Art itself emerges in the novel as another such domain, in which Heinrich

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93 Cf. Stopp, p. 139, on the moral responsibility upon the individual within the “labyrinth”. Stopp’s “labyrinth” is here basically a label for the concept of external, interrelated orders; Stopp argues that Keller turns this construct into the definitive one for human experience and rejects any metaphysical dimension to it (cf. pp. 144-45).
94 A. Muschg, pp. 143-47.
95 Laufhütte, *Wirklichkeit und Kunst*, p. 79.
similarly fails to find refuge, because it too is locked into the external world through - among other connections - economic ties.

Economic debts cannot simply be written up and then ignored. They catch up with the debtor; he is beholden to his creditors. There is no such thing as self-sufficiency in an economic system like this. Similarly, Heinrich's guilt locks him into the external world, and his attempts simply to allow guilt and debt to accumulate indiscriminately and move on regardless are central to his experiences with Meierlein; the strength of his hatred for Meierlein, right through his life, emphasizes that his subconscious, at any rate, comprehends the analogy between particular debt and generalized guilt.

This connection is brought into focus in the matter of Heinrich's relationship to his mother. He owes his mother in every sense - material, moral, emotional. He flees to Munich where, despite his very vivid image of the life she is leading because of his leech-like dependency on her (as we have seen, Heinrich the narrator produces a memorable description of her circumstances) he prefers to avert his eyes and carry on. The superficial, experiencing self attempts to ignore a subconscious recognition of the mechanisms of interdependency between the self and the mother, and the impoverishment which is the result of the lack of a relationship between them; the recalling narrator is unable to resist dwelling upon it and the consequences of his previous denial of it. No wonder that his journey home is so long postponed and then so hesitant: to encounter his mother will be, effectively, the moment of reckoning, when he is presented with the bill he has been accumulating.

Moreover: the death of his mother, far from wiping the slate clean, merely underscores the indelible character of his debts - of the experiences he has made. His life, far from taking place in a vacuum, has affected those around him, and if a change takes place in Heinrich at this time, when he gives up his artistic ambitions and becomes the grey character who eventually narrates the latter half of the novel, it is not a rebirth, but rather an acknowledgement of the inexorable backlog of his life: his subconscious sense of guilt, for so long suppressed beneath the belief that somehow forgiveness will free him of his debts, is finally acknowledged. This, of course, is exactly what Judith means when she refuses to forgive him and yet assures him of her affection. His experience cannot be erased, his debts are a real part of him and will never vanish.96

These remarks of Judith's are made with regard to Römer, the painter who, after being Heinrich's mentor, becomes his albatross. Heinrich constantly carries with him the letter which reminds him of his unedifying part in the artist's downfall, unable to lay it to rest. Here once again Keller has carefully entwined the two meanings of "Schuld". The letter clearly symbolizes Heinrich's sense of guilt - but it was financial debts which lay behind that guilt. Heinrich's behaviour in demanding that Römer repay him the borrowed money is an instance of his suddenly diving into the practical world with disastrous consequences. In his relationship with Meierlein he had borrowed money as though unaware that this will have consequences; now he lends money and demands it back, pompous in his consciousness that he is now participating like an adult in the external economic order - but he still does not comprehend the effects his actions will have. Meierlein himself has behaved in just the same fashion: he too had the right to demand repayment of his debts, and thereby to breach the walls of Heinrich's egoism. Heinrich suffers from Meierlein's failure to modulate that right through patience, tact and

96 Cf. M. Swales, *German Bildungsroman*, pp. 92-102: Swales terms this the "finality of experience".
comprehension, but does not draw on that experience when he finds himself in the same powerful position over Römer. Perversely, Heinrich, that most imaginative of characters, lacks the imaginative capacity to enter the moral universe of another person, and to understand reality: for he has not understood that his imagination is not a safe, separate category from that reality. Ruth Kessel believes that Heinrich does learn from his experience with Meierlein, but that he learns how to behave mercilessly like his tormentor rather than drawing on his own discomfort to learn how to exercise humane restraint. The suggestion of Kessel's study is that Heinrich's fatherless childhood has meant that he learns only the "letter of the law" - that is to say, in terms of order, he learns the formal edicts of social interaction, but not the moral subtext to which it is allied to create the actuality of social order. This she believes explains not just his treatment of Römer, but also the "Lügenmärchen" of his schooldays:

In beiden Fällen ["das Lügenmärchen" and Römer's debt] wendet Heinrich die Ordnungssysteme an, die er nicht durch die liebevolle Anleitung eines Vaters, sondern durch leidvolle Erfahrungen kennengelernt hat: Beim Kinderverbrechen bedient er sich der Diskursordnung, deren Regeln ihm der Schulmeister am ersten Schultag buchstäblich einbleute, und beim Brief an Römer der Ökonomieordnung, deren Regeln ihm sein Freund Meierlein durch einen langen Streit und eine heftige Prügelei ebenso drastisch einschrieb.\(^{97}\)

Less convincingly, she goes on to argue that the two extremes are represented by Anna's father (who approves of his letter to Römer) on the one hand, as "Repräsentant gesellschaftlicher Ordnungen" and Judith (who disapproves of the letter) on the other, as "die Personifizierung von Mutter Natur". It is hard to see how the schoolmaster, Anna's father, can be a representative of social order when he has physically removed himself and his daughter from that society to live in virtual seclusion, and I have already suggested that Judith is mother nature only in the manifestly unreliable eyes of the young Heinrich (Kessel believes that Judith is transformed from the "natural phenomenon" of the first part of the novel into a more sophisticated figure only when she returns from America as "die Synthese von Naturhaftigkeit und Gesellschaftlichkeit, von schuldfreiem Handeln und öffentlichem Wirken"\(^{98}\)).

I should prefer to argue therefore that Anna's father approves the letter precisely because, like Heinrich himself, he has failed to come to terms with the reality of social order and therefore can understand it only as an unreflected set of edicts (his shallow understanding of social convention is also apparent in his hostility to dancing at wakes). On the other hand, Judith can see that rules operate in tandem with common-sense and humane morality: she can see beyond the letter to the spirit of the law. At any rate, the result is, as Kessel suggests, that "Heinrich gelingt es nicht, dieses natürliche Recht mit dem formalen Recht zu verbinden".\(^{99}\) This underpins my argument that Heinrich in every aspect of his life seeks order but that when he attempts to operate within any particular order the results are disastrous because of his failure to comprehend it as a totality which is interlinked with other forms of order. In the "Kinderverbrechen" he plucks elements of the socio-linguistic system - oaths - and uses them to create trouble. He has the feeling of manipulating an order without the responsibility which an inner assent to that system has as a concomitant. In the instance of his letter to Römer we see him applying the rules of

\(^{97}\) Kessel, p. 238.  
^{98}\) Kessel, p. 279. 
^{99}\) Kessel, p. 239.
economic order *without* applying the principle of humaneness with which those rules are modulated within the *reality* - rather than the schoolmaster’s and Heinrich’s simplification - of social order.
In looking at economic order in Der grüne Heinrich, we observed how it is initially introduced to us in the novel as a component of the great harmonic opening description. Social order, as we have already seen, is also present in that description, similarly presented as a permanent system founded on inner mutation - the land which is exchanged with neighbouring communities to maintain and invigorate the economic basis of the village is lost and acquired largely through intermarriage. This tradition, we are explicitly told, ensures the necessary freshening of the village’s human blood stock: “[…] daß die Gemütsanlagen und körperlichen Physiognomien der Gemeinde die gehörige Mannigfaltigkeit bewahren, und sie entwickeln hierin eine tiefe und gelehrtere Einsicht für ein frisches Fortgedeihen als manche reiche Patrizier- oder Handelsstadt und als die europäischen Fürstengeschlechter” (III, 3).

Social order is thus immediately introduced as a concomitant of economic order, and set within a natural order. Like both these orders, it is infused with movement which ensures its overall stability.

I have noted that, unlike many commentators, I do not think social order is a definitive order in Der grüne Heinrich - or at least, that it is definitive only inasmuch as it is one of the many forms of order which together constitute reality. None of them is uniquely important because none of them can sustain the individual independently of the others. In “Lob des Herkommens”, social order is inseparable from economic order and natural order. We shall see that this background of enmeshed orders is sustained throughout the novel.

When Heinrich decides to pursue a career as an artist he needs to persuade the village elders that they should make available to him the necessary funds. These are bound up in the form of a parchment certificate, left to him by his father in trust. This item is emblematic of how, for Keller - though not yet for his protagonist - orders interact to adjust meanings and create a complex reality.

First Heinrich and his uncle must persuade the committee responsible for the affairs of orphans that they should release the parchment to them. Laufhütte, whose study of Der grüne Heinrich of course concentrates on its artistic aspects, acknowledges in his description of Heinrich’s interview with the committee that Heinrich’s vision of art is here seen to be found wanting. It is bereft of any ability to negotiate with economic and social reality:

Die Argumente der Gesprächspartner lassen in der Vormundschaftsverhandlung eine Gestaltung der Konfrontation erscheinen in welcher sich die Kunst, die Heinrich vorschwebt, mit den Realitäten der ökonomischen Welt befindet, als deren legitime Vertreter die Bauern erscheinen. Sie verkörpern von der Gesamtwirklichkeit, in und vor welcher die Kunst sich zu bewähren hat, zwar nur einen Ausschnitt, den gesellschaftlichen, doch damit einen, der die sittliche Verpflichtung des Künstlers vor eben dieser Wirklichkeit deutlich zu gelten bringt.  

Heinrich, having decided on his ambition, is typically impatient with the whole procedure, and is anxious to have what is, after all, fundamentally his, and use it to fund his escape from what he is finding

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100 Laufhütte, Wirklichkeit und Kunst, p. 201.
to be an increasingly restrictive native environment. His father’s legacy is money, and that money, potentially, is his vibrant future.

For the village elders, however, the parchment has an altogether different significance: not simply its monetary value, but the significance of a historical document which is a manifestation of much of what they hold dear. This is not to deny its cash value, but for them it irredeemably colours that potential.

Here we see how the economic order and the social order interact in a way which draws from the past and projects forwards, guaranteeing continuity in a way which is invisible to Heinrich. For Heinrich, the parchment is simply an external means to finance his internal dreams of being an artist, something to devour (“um dasselbe flüssigmachen und aufbrauchen zu dürfen” V, 98). For the village elders, the parchment is an economic symbol of their society, a society which is built on history and mythology as well as on a dynamic attitude towards economic issues in the present. Just as in the lunch-time debate during the Tellspiel, we see that whilst a stable society naturally depends on interpersonal relationships, it does not depend exclusively on altruism. Each of the committee members is prejudiced by the feeling that he personally has been paying the interest brought in by the certificate; each has a pet project which he imagines realizing if only the parchment were his. Their respect for the document’s history does not blind them to its potential. The committee is a ponderous, blinkered institution: but imperfect though it is, it is the product of the interweaving of private dreams and a shared reality.

The way in which the parchment is lodged not just in the economic, but also in the social order of the village, is exemplified in the manner of its eventual production. The chairman, the treasurer and the clerk must all produce keys to open the box. “’Es ist schon viel Schicksal durch diese Lade gegangen!’” (V, 107), observes the clerk, as he sorts through similar documents relating to the widows and orphans, criminals and insane of the village. Here Heinrich (“’Lee, Heinrich, Rudolfen sel.’” (V, 107)) finds himself in a category, a social category, when he has hitherto always appeared at least to himself to be unique. Similarly, in his interview he is hampered by the physical presence of a precedent to his self - the Schlangenfresser, who grew up in the locality, pursued artistic ambitions similar to those of Heinrich himself and now resides in the poorhouse, deranged and without means. Heinrich’s discomfort is not just due to the negative effect the Schlangenfresser is liable to have on the deliberations of the committee. Moreover, Heinrich for his own part seems to ignore altogether the obvious significance of the half-wit as a representation of the real possibility of his own failure. His irritation perhaps stems rather from his reluctance to admit that he is not the first young would-be artist from the village with aspirations which draw him towards the outside world. Again, he is uncomfortable with the thought that he is not unique, and therefore not able to go about his life as though he were a law unto himself. Even in terms of historical precedent, he is reluctant to belong to an order of which he is not the absolute centre.

The parchment episode shows how the community is tightly welded to economic order, but also to the corporate imagination which is a product of the interpretation of shared history.

Certainly, as we have observed, Heinrich’s difficult position as a child, in which his and his mother’s economic circumstances collide with the legacy of his father to leave him outside any easily definable social category, subsequently makes it hard for him to participate easily in the social
structure.  

His expulsion from school stems from a disastrous desire to take a short cut to participation by ignoring any such issues. This is a direct collision with social order, but the trait of simplifying all sorts of orders by creating his own version of them is one which we have seen to be recurrent. Each time he does so, because of the way in which orders interact, he distances himself from society. Thus, the short shrift he gives linguistic convention in his early years has the effect of excluding him from the whole corporate Weltanschauung which is inherent in the system of language, dwelling in the system of value and meaning which language implies.

Later in the novel, in Munich, Heinrich again attempts to take a short cut into social order without paying heed to the true complexity of the relationship between individual and context when he persuades himself into a romantic attachment to a young working girl, Hulda. He pretends initially to be an artisan and finds himself in the unaccustomed position of being in gainful employment and “froh, nach langer Einsamkeit unter Menschen zu sein” (VI, 90). It is the very banality of his work which attracts him to it: his fascination with the fact that his monotonous activity can afford him a living is testimony to how naive his social and economic experiences have left him. Similarly, Hulda fascinates him by her very simplicity; with her he has none of the uncomfortable emotional and physical complications of his previous attachments to Judith and Anna.

To Heinrich it seems that he has discovered the key to an uncomplicated participation in life: “Die Geheimnisse der Arbeit”, as the chapter is called. This period has indeed been read as constituting a turning point in Heinrich’s fortunes: Seidler, for example, claims that “Hier aber vollzieht sich die Rettung. [. . .] In der ärgsten, auch räumlichen Enge erlebt er den Wert einfacher und im kleinen tüchtiger Arbeit”. In fact, though, he is once again evading the issues which he must confront if he is truly to escape his isolation. Society is more than a system which rewards labour and makes partners of individuals. It is also the product of the human imagination, and Heinrich’s imaginative life is singularly unengaged by his work for the junk shop owner or his new friends. He “infiltrates” Hulda’s group of friends “ohne meinen etwas höhern Rang zu verraten” (VI, 90). This uncomfortable phrase has less to do with banal conventions of social class than with associated issues of expectation and imaginative life. He is among people whose aspirations are fundamentally alien to him: their shared fiction is not his. Heinrich could never be as absorbed as they are by the tensions between them; similarly, the kind of work they do would never fully engage his imagination. It is not simply that they are insufficiently sophisticated for him, but rather that he genuinely does not comprehend their world. The degree to which he is mistaken is apparent when he is abruptly made aware that the romantic words of folk wisdom which he had accepted at face value from Hulda are in fact a formula, which she uses to snare any potentially eligible gentleman (just before leaving Munich he overhears her repeating them to another suitor). Hulda is naive, but not in the virginal way that Heinrich has deluded himself that she is. Her words, founded as they are on an imagination, a set of aspirations, which he does not share, have a significance other than

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101 Cf. Kessel, pp. 287ff. Kessel sees social order as male and natural order as female; Heinrich’s lack of a father denies him access to social orders and he takes refuge in natural order. Only when Judith returns from America can he unite the two (p. 292). Whilst agreeing that the death of his father makes it hard for Heinrich to enter the social order, I have argued that the natural order is a more complex phenomenon than a mere counterpoint to society. I believe that he mistakes both social and natural order because of his failure to see how they, like other orders, interact.

the one he had assigned them. Once again his effort to create an order with no independent, external impulses to complicate his own participation in it is revealed to be doomed to failure.

The same inability to resist an apparently easy entry into society is what explains the perhaps surprising attitude of the would-be painter towards his military training. For a romantic loner such as Heinrich, conscription might be expected to be a sort of purgatory. Instead, he relishes it: it allows him to take part in an utterly transparent order without having to engage his mind. His background and circumstances count for nothing here, the only ethos is the uncomplicated, immediately comprehensible one of obedience. Both the confirmation classes and the army place Heinrich among his peers, but the confirmation classes demand of him a spiritual and intellectual effort, an affirmation of the net of interacting orders, which he instinctively resists. The army clearly represents a much easier entry into society - but one, of course, which is only temporary.103

Because of Heinrich’s obvious exclusion from society, it is tempting for him to conclude that society represents the missing key to a successful existence. The way in which he ultimately forsakes art and self-consciously seeks to serve society as a civil servant - reminiscent of Jeremias’s career in Gotthelf’s Der Bauernspiegel - suggests a character who has realized the futility of going it alone and finally returns to the communal fold.

However, society is only one order among the many which interconnect to constitute real existence. Heinrich, as we have seen, cannot escape to mother nature (“Flucht zur Mutter Natur”), because nature itself is an order which contributes to and draws on the social phenomenon of the village in its midst. Giving up art is by no means a ticket into society: art at its best encapsulates the imaginative structure which underlies the community. One of the most extraordinary aspects of Der grüne Heinrich is surely its exploration of the truth that the society which is Heinrich’s family village would not be the same without the Tellspiel, and German-speaking society in general would not be the same without Goethe and Schiller. Nor is leading a selfless existence a way in: society is so intimately bound up with the economic order as to be inseparable from it, and the economic order is dependent on individual enterprise.

Apart from art, one of the ways in which the community digests its history and defines its present, and one of the ways in which the psychological life of the individual is integrated into a communal identity, is religion. This phenomenon is emblematized in a description of the village which could have come from any of Gotthelf’s novels: “Gegen Osten sahen die Fenster des Hauses in das Wirrsal von Obstbäumen und Dachgiebeln des Dorfes, aus welchem der erhöhte Kirchhof mit der weißen Kirche wie eine geistliche Festung emporgaßte” (III, 214). Once again, the narration implies more than the experiencing persona is capable of comprehending or accepting: Heinrich’s relationship to religion is characteristically difficult.

The course of this relationship is set early in the novel, when the young Heinrich refuses to say grace before a meal. His reasons for this are not made explicit, but they are explored through the story of Meretlein, a child whose similar refusal to obey religious convention is interpreted as so sinister that she

103 Gerhard Kaiser (Gottfried Keller. Das gedichtete Leben, p. 88) seems to overlook Heinrich’s positive attitude towards his military service in his eagerness to portray the army as (in Heinrich’s terms) a manifestation of the tyrannical face of a society into which Heinrich has no father to act as conduit. The army is indeed an “iron order” - but that is precisely its attraction for Heinrich. For all its pathos, there is in fact a remarkable lack of resentment towards the army in Heinrich’s description of how it literally marches him away from Judith, who passes the parade ground en route to America.
eventually dies in the “care” of a priest determined to exorcize the demon within her. In both her case and that of Heinrich, the child’s imaginative world is out of tune with that of the community. In both cases, too, those responsible for the children are unable to engage the inner child and see instead only stubbornness. One of the characteristics of *Der grüne Heinrich* which distinguishes it from much contemporary, radically realist fiction is the failure which it diagnoses on the part of the apparatus of society - the education system, for instance - to inspire and thereby integrate the individual. The novel is acutely sensitive to the intermutation between the individual and society, and particularly in the early part of the novel, it emphasizes that this confers a responsibility on society to appeal to the child’s imaginative life, as well as on the individual to respond to the psychological demands of social order. Heinrich’s mother, for instance, is a fundamentally virtuous figure, but she does not provide a trellis to which Heinrich’s imagination can cling:


Her son’s response, from early childhood onwards, is to prefer to this barren-seeming order the more colourful worlds which he misinterprets as alternatives to reality rather than ways of negotiating with it: art, the theatre, literature.

Similarly, at the root of the problems both Heinrich and Meretlein have with religion is the understanding of theology as mere formula. Religion as a system becomes significant only when it becomes more than mere rules and instead makes contact with the individual imagination. By wrenching them from their immediate, textual context, the passages to be learnt by rote are divested of the potential they would otherwise have to fire the imagination and thereby act in the extra-textual world. Once again, Keller’s novel recalls one of the central tenets of Gotthelf’s writing.

> Einzelne Psalmstellen und Liederstrophen, ebenfalls aus allen Zusammenhange gezerrt und deshalb unlieber einzupragen als ein ganzes organisches Gedicht, verwirrten das Gedächtnis, anstatt es zu üben. (III, 100)

> Für lange Jahre wurde mir der Gedanke Gottes zu einer prosaischen Vorstellung, in dem Sinne, wie die schlechten Poeten das wirkliche Leben für prosaisch halten im Gegensatz zu den erfundenen und fabelhaften. (III, 102)

For Heinrich life becomes the fantasy and God the dour reality - and they are utterly separate for him.

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104 Cf. Hillebrand, “Der Garten des Grünen Heinrich”, p. 568. Hillebrand claims that the problem is solely Heinrich’s, but there is abundant evidence in the novel to suggest that Keller sees shortcomings also on the side of society. Indeed Hillebrand quotes one himself (p. 569) - the narrator’s sharp criticism of a society which can create a pariah by expelling a child from the school system. Beddow, pp. 197-206, investigates society’s shortcomings in its relationship to Heinrich.

105 Cf. Neumann, p. 61. Neumann notes, in addition, that Heinrich’s wastefulness is also a reaction against his mother’s rigid parsimony.
It is this failure to animate religion which helps make Heinrich such an unenthusiastic confirmation student. Yet he still feels a sense of pride at the social status which confirmation brings with it - he wins the right to vote and to take his father’s place in church. The problem is that whereas legal participation in society is meant, through this double landmark, to be achieved by means of “confirmation” that the individual is also participating in the spiritual life of the community, this is not so for Heinrich. Laurenz Steinlin’s differentiation between the roles of “citoyen” and “bourgeois” - the distinction has been applied to *Der grüne Heinrich* by previous commentators such as Kaiser\(^\text{106}\) - shows how Heinrich’s legal “validity” is left in a vacuum by his failure to achieve a similar economic validity:

Mit achtzehn Jahren ist der grüne Heinrich zwar Citoyen geworden, aber keineswegs ein Bourgeois. Dieser Unterschied wird ihm schmerzlich bewusst bei den Wahlen [Steinlin is discussing the first version of the novel]. Juristisch ist er altershalber zugelassen als Stimmberechtigter, ökonomisch fehlt ihm die Grundlage des sicheren Erwerbs, um sich zugehörig zum Staat der Bürger zu fühlen. [Heinrich’s peers are all economically productive and integrated.]\(^\text{107}\)

Heinrich achieves his legal citizenship, but his refusal to enter a conventional career means that he has not the active role in the economic world which would enable him to become a properly functioning part of society. Here again we see the interdependence of orders, and how the failure to participate in one can exclude the individual from others. It also shows Heinrich’s incomprehension of the social structure. Again (as we have seen him do in the economic order, for instance, in relation to his loan to Römer) he seizes on the easily understandable “rules” of an order in preference to a more thorough-going affirmation of it: \(^\text{108}\) he fails to see that gaining his right to vote is not enough to integrate him into the social order - that requires more than a mere legal formality. For him confirmation marks not his entry into the community, but his escape from it: “und doch unterzog ich mich de Gebrauche oder mußte es vielmehr, da, abgesehen von dem Kummer, den ich meiner Mutter gemacht hätte, das endliche gesetzliche Loskommen darangeknüpft war” (IV, 130).

Later he exults that he will soon be as free as a bird “von allem geistigen Zwange” (IV, 150). Heinrich succeeds in learning by rote the requisite theology: but in his spiritual life he remains unconnected with any form of religious community.

The way in which the order of society and religion are intertwined is underlined by the social hierarchy which manifests itself within the confirmation class: far from the egalitarian ethos of the army which will so appeal to Heinrich, here the initial picture of a mixed class is deceptive, for a spontaneous structure emerges:

Wir waren Jünglinge, wie man uns nun nannte, aus allen Ständen; am oberen Ende, wo einige trübe Kerzen brannten, die Vornehmen und Studierenden, dann kam der mittlere Bürgerstand, unbefangen und mutwillig, und zuletzt, ganz in der Dunkelheit, arme Schumacherlehrlinge, Dienstboten und Fabrikarbeiter, etwas roh und schüchtern, unter denen wohl dann und wann

\(^\text{106}\) Gerhard Kaiser suggests that Heinrich’s father appears as “Synthese von Bourgeois und Citoyen” (*Gottfried Keller. Das gedichtete Leben*, p. 121).


\(^\text{108}\) Cf. Lukács, p. 417. Lukács observes of Heinrich’s treatment of Römer that it is “eine tiefe menschliche Unansänigkeit […] die um so schlimmer ist, als sie unter rechtlich und gesellschaftlich vollkommen korrekten Formen geschah.” Here surely, Keller - unlike his hero - differentiates between society as a formal construct and an order within which the individual has moral as well as legal responsibilities.
eine plumpe Störung vorfiel, während weiter oben man sich mit Anstand einer ruhigen Unaufmerksamkeit hingab. Diese Ausscheidung war gerade nicht absichtlich angeordnet, sondern sie hatte sich von selbst gemacht. Wir waren nämlich nach unserem Verhalten und nach unserer Ausdauer geordnet; da nun die Vornehmsten von Haus aus zum äußern Frieden mit der Kirche streng erzogen wurden und die meiste Sicherheit im Sprechen besaßen und dies Verhältnis durch alle Grade herunterging, so war dem Scheine nach die Rangordnung ganz natürlich, besonders da die Ausnahmen sich dann von selbst zu ihresgleichen hielten und durchaus nicht sich unter die anderen Stände mischen wollten. (IV, 132-33)

Heinrich’s exclusion from this socio-spiritual hierarchy is symbolized in his arrival at the confirmation ceremony itself, uniquely attired in green, having assured his mother that it is of absolutely no consequence to him whether or not he be counted among the “ehrbaren Bürgerskindern”, in their black suits (IV, 149).

His attitude towards his pew is indicative of this self-conscious non-conformity. On Christmas morning he locates the pew which “belongs” to his father’s house and claims it - but what is meant to be a symbolic entry into society actually has quite the opposite significance. He reveals that he understands, or is prepared to acknowledge, nothing of the true complexity of social interaction, for in forcing the landless man who has been using it for many years to vacate the seat, he is offending convention even as he exercises the right which convention affords him:

Ich hätte als grüner Junge fuglich dem bejahrten Mannchen Platz machen und mir eine andere Stelle suchen können; allein dieser Geist des Eigentums und des Wegdrängens mitten im Herzen christlicher Kirche reizte meine kritische Laune; auch wollte ich den frommen Kirchgänger für seine gemütliche Anmaßung bestrafen. (IV, 151)

Heinrich knows he is not a part of this community, and his behaviour here is his revenge upon it for his exclusion. Once again it is clear that however romantically independent he professes himself to be, Heinrich is always troubled by a deep-seated yearning to participate in a stable order.

Heinrich’s enthusiasm for reclaiming his birthright does not extend beyond the symbolism: he is conscious that in taking his proper place for the first time, he is also taking it for the last time: “und endlich tat ich dieses nur in dem Bewußtsein, daß der Abgewiesene alsobald wieder und für immer seinen gewohnten Platz einnehmen könne, und dieser Gedanke machte mir das größte Vergnügen” (IV, 151).

Even in emulating his father, Heinrich reveals how different he is from him; even as he wallows in the symbolism, Heinrich renders the symbolism void of significance:

Einmal aber wollte ich darin sitzen und stehen, wie es mein Vater getan. Derselbe besuchte an allen Festtagen die Kirche, denn alle hohen Feste erfüllten ihn mit heiterer Freude und tapferm Mute, indem er den großen und guten Geiste, welchen er in aller Welt und Natur sich erfüllen sah, alsdann besonders fühlte und verehrte. (IV, 151)

Heinrich notes that he has inherited his father’s “Vorliebe für Festtage” - but it is clear to the reader that whereas his father is inspired and sustained by the collective spirit which is expressed on such days, for his son they represent a beauty which he can admire only passively, from afar. He describes standing on a mountain on a Whitsun morning, listening to the distant church bells. Instead of participating in the community experience which these bells herald, however, Heinrich speculates idly about how it might be
possible to abolish the Church and nevertheless preserve the marvellous sound. This recalls his feelings about killing butterflies for his collection as a child. He hates the business of executing the insects, but his reasons have little to do with a general humaneness and more with an aesthetic sense which in Heinrich is separate from other issues: he can mistreat “mir widerwärtige oder gleichgültige Tiere” (III, 107) without compunction, but the colours of the butterflies endear them to him.

Just as was previously the case with regard to language, Heinrich’s instinct with the sound of the church bells is to separate the symbol from what it symbolizes, revealing that he does not draw on the order of significance shared by those around him. As in religion, so with art: Heinrich’s father, we can assume, would have shared his son’s enthusiasm for the Tellspiel, but would have been a part of the occasion in a way that Heinrich can never be. In both cases, the community is expressing and sharing its inner life, and Heinrich sees only fragments of the whole: the Schiller text, or the Catechism, instead of the larger orders with which these interlock to create social reality.
Although Heinrich does survive at the end of the revised version of Der grüne Heinrich (unlike the Heinrich of the original novel), he remains an awkward and unloveable figure, regarded, we learn, as morose and taciturn.

He has evidently not achieved the resolution which the novel does achieve: the welding of internal and external orders into a cohesive, significant and above all vital whole. His relationship to the outside world remains problematic. Fritz Martini is one of many commentators to relate this to what he sees as Keller's own loss of faith in the potential for "wholeness": in the second version, the author has lost his "Lebensvertrauen", and with it his belief in an organic and nourishing order.109

Much of the recent Keller criticism has continued to address the issue of whether Heinrich is a uniquely individual failure, or whether his fractured outlook is a post-industrial syndrome, a condition endemic to the inhabitants of a new age. Heinrich in the eyes of many recent commentators is no longer an exception in his estrangement, but rather the new rule. Thus Dominik Müller:


Kristina Sandberg Russell believes that "the novel deals with living in a world in which the human being has become homeless".111 Kaspar T. Locher identifies "Zerissensein" as the "Normalzustand".112 Gerd Sautermeister prefers the first version of the novel because he believes its conclusion to be a starker expression of a fragmented reality: "Im Spiegel des an der Gesellschaft verzweifelnden Individuums treten deren Widersprüche schroffer zutage als am überlebenden Bürger."113

Bernd Neumann sees the novel as fundamentally about - and structured in terms of - a recognition of the changing times and their alienating effect: the experience of this is, he argues, the central aspect of Heinrich's problematic youth:

Die [. . .] Erfahrung, daß gesellschaftliche Vernunft und individueller sinnlicher Glücksanspruch auseinandergefallen sind; daß ihre Synthese, verkörpert im Bild des strahlenden Ideal-Vaters, zeitgenössisch nicht mehr zu erreichen ist, bestimmt als organisierendes Prinzip alle Erfahrungen des Kindes Heinrich, gerade wo diese zu Episoden verdichtet erzählt werden. Hier liegt das Zentrum, von dem aus die Jugendgeschichte organisiert und strukturiert wird, über diese Mitte laufen alle thematischen Fäden, die die einzelnen Episoden untereinander und mit der fortlaufend erzählten Jugendgeschichte verbinden.114

109 Martini, p. 597.
110 D. Müller, p. 310.
113 Sautermeister, p. 120.
114 Neumann, p. 53.
Bernhard Schubert, by contrast, believes that the structure of the novel is harmonious but that this creates a dichotomy at the heart of the text. On the one hand there are the "Zirkularität" and "Zielgerichtetheit" of the novel’s symbolism and structure, which derive from the "harmonische Weltsicht" of the author, harking back to the model of the intact world of unalienated labour. In opposition to this he sees Keller’s own experience of a less harmonious world: "der Widerstreit zwischen den eigenen modernen Lebenserfahrungen des Autors Keller einerseits und seinem retrospektiv gerichteten epischen Formgebaren anderseits".\(^{115}\)

Clearly all these interpretations assume that Heinrich at the end of the novel remains an outsider. Has he, however, developed at all? The vexed issue of whether or not Der grüne Heinrich is a Bildungsroman is one which naturally depends largely on the definition of the development which Heinrich is, or is not, perceived to have undergone within the temporal scope of the novel.

Has Heinrich developed in terms of personal fulfilment? He may be wiser, more sophisticated - yet his ultimate mood is resignation, not contentment. Has he developed out of his pre-social childhood into an integrated member of society? Certainly he does finally achieve a social rank, as a functionary of his local community. Yet there is no sense whatsoever of an emotional or spiritual participation in the public sphere to complement his professional one. That the novel should end with his expressed intent to revisit his personal memories in preference to looking outwards and forwards speaks eloquently for itself. Has he developed as an artist? Clearly he has not achieved his stated ambition, having given up painting altogether - and yet his reminiscences constitute real artistry in the written medium.

In the terms of the present study, the central issue is how Heinrich perceives external order and how he relates to it. He has, it is true, surrendered himself to the reality of an external order in the very tangible shape of the social administration. He has however patently failed in the process to achieve a transition from moody introversion to good-humoured belonging. This, I suggest, is precisely because he now comprehends the nature of external order; but now is too late. Beneath the irony of the triumphant success of the autobiography of an unsuccessful individual there lies this other irony: that with insight into the reality of order has come the impossibility of Heinrich’s aspiring to anything more than resignation.

The key to this is what Martin Swales has termed the “finality of experience”.\(^{116}\) In terms of order this means the elemental characteristic of the inevitability of effect: that when the individual participates in external orders, effects occur which are real and irrevocable. We have observed with reference to the economic order that Heinrich is reluctant to admit the simple fact of the responsibility which a relationship within the terms of that order places upon him. He is appalled that his debts to Meierlein should suddenly manifest themselves as beyond his control. On the other hand, when he is owed money he fails to modify his behaviour by taking account of the effect of demanding its repayment on a vulnerable character such as Romer’s. He does not allow his imagination to fulfil its crucial role of looking beyond the self’s position within a particular order - the position of the lender within the


\(^{116}\) Cf. M. Swales, German Bildungsroman, pp. 92-102.
economic order - and comprehending the reality of another individual, and he cannot therefore modify his behaviour in the light of Römer's particular circumstances.

This is why the individual imagination, in its constitution of a reality from an interrelationship of internal and external orders must acknowledge the boundaries of the authority of the self, if it is not to drift towards a dangerous realm of fantasy. Heinrich is ultimately forced to come to terms with the real effects - on him and the external world - of his life hitherto, and is therefore forced at this moment of enlightenment to acknowledge that it is not a redemptive enlightenment: those effects cannot be undone.

In this respect the revised conclusion of *Der grüne Heinrich* remains faithful to the "non-momentousness" which is characteristic of the whole novel. There is a consistent reluctance to resort to grandiose epiphanies - one senses that Keller's wry humour would in any case balk at such devices. For instance, the forty days and nights spent locked away with Goethe's works teaches Heinrich, as we have seen, that "der Seher ist erst das ganze Leben des Gesehenen" (V,6). That an insight so sophisticated and so central to the significance of *Der grüne Heinrich* as a whole should be vouchsafed to its hero and yet not mark a watershed in his development is astonishing, particularly in the context of nineteenth-century German novels. The insight itself is perhaps what distinguishes *Der grüne Heinrich* from the tradition of the "mainstream" Bildungsroman, characterized by that momentousness altogether absent from *Der grüne Heinrich*. Keller's novel is concerned with the accumulation of experience, and with the indelible scars of that experience. Understanding may arrive in blinding moments, but it cannot overcome the reality of a lived life. Thus, Heinrich's philosophizing in the wake of his "Goethe-Krise" does not suddenly turn him into an artist. He is eager to put into practice his conversion to the idea that there is poetry even in the least exceptional of phenomena, but when he starts to sketch he discovers - ironically enough, for a disciple of Goethe - that hand and eye are not in unison: "So quälte ich mich mehrere Tage herum, in Gedanken immer eine gute und sachgemaße Arbeit sehend, aber ratios mit der Hand" (V, 9).

It is because of the central importance of experience that it is so significant in the revised version of the novel that Judith reappears in Heinrich's life. It is she who insisted on the wrongness of his behaviour towards Römer, and it is she who now returns to insist on the unavoidability of Heinrich's guilt. This guilt - not just towards Römer, but towards his mother (whose death, far from wiping the slate clean, merely underscores the indelible character of his debts arising from his experiences) and not least towards Judith herself (whose entire life is shaped by his rejection of her) - is not something which can somehow be overcome; certainly not by the forgiveness which Heinrich clearly wants from her. His life, far from taking place in a vacuum, has affected those around him, just as it has affected his own self. This, of course, is exactly what Judith means when she refuses to forgive him and yet assures him of her affection. His experience cannot be erased, his debts are a real part of him and will never vanish.

This is the point which underlies Heinrich's failure ever to achieve a "rebirth" in the course of the novel. Such a moment would deny that his experiences, as Judith points out, have consequences beyond the self; for he is not an autonomous order unto himself, but rather a negotiating element in a complex system which he cannot himself control. His own metamorphosis would not undo the effects of his past actions, and if a change takes place in Heinrich at this time, when he gives up his artistic ambitions and becomes the grey character who eventually narrates the latter half of the novel, it is not a

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rebirth, but rather an acknowledgement of the inexorable backlog of his life: his subconscious sense of
guilt, for so long suppressed beneath the belief that somehow forgiveness will free him of his debts, is
finally recognized as a part of his self and decisive in his relationship to the external world. It is Judith
who makes him revisit his sense of guilt and see that to live in the real world is to live with external
effects - to live, therefore, with guilt. This is the final step in his Bildung, such as it is. The closing
description of Heinrich's and Judith's final platonic relationship - Judith refers to their "sacrifice" -
ironically spells out that this is a Bildung which decrees the end of hope even as understanding dawns.
Finally Heinrich has learned how order functions - but at the price of his own potential.

In its implication that Heinrich's father was a man whose prodigious energy was not enough to
allow him to survive as an idealist in a new age of capitalist egoism, in its contrast between Stadt and
Land, in its depiction of the elaborate Munich pageant rendered hopelessly irrelevant by its nostalgia for
the bygone age of the Handwerker, Der grüne Heinrich acknowledges the reality of a changing world. It
is a world without the transparent, easily comprehensible "whole" of a previous generation, a world in
which Heinrich's ideal - the ideal of the all-embracing father figure - is simply inappropriate. Yet even
amid the pathos of Judith's surrender of personal emotional ambition and Heinrich's nostalgia, it
celebrates an alternative possibility. This is the potential of the human imagination to sense the
interaction between even superficially incompatible orders, to gather and participate in those orders, to
see beyond the self from within the self, and thereby to construct another, more cohesive reality: the
vibrant reality of a transformed materialism which is Keller's novel.
Gotthelf, Meyer and Keller each understand and deal with order in different ways. Gotthelf is always enthusiastically (sometimes judgmentally but sometimes more tolerantly) in the thick of human order which he tests against the tenets of Christian teaching. Meyer’s voice, by contrast, is much more fastidious. Often he looks down upon human affairs from a vantage point situated in aesthetic order, almost as though sharing Nietzsche’s dictum that the world is only to be justified as an aesthetic phenomenon. And Keller’s Heinrich Lee stands amid a complex web of orders but never quite achieves the integration which would take him beyond his selfhood. Yet for all the different guises it adopts, order is a central thematic and textual concern for all of them.

The orderliness of Switzerland is of course proverbial, and it is tempting to suggest that these three writers simply articulate a national obsession with such tenets as “Ordnung muss sein”. Yet this would be to overlook the complexity and differentiation of what all three writers have to say. Gotthelf certainly insists on the need for order - yet the order upon which he insists is not a constrictive one: the order of his novels is one which affirms physical reality and acknowledges deviancy from the ideal. Meyer, with his longing for aesthetic perfection, is perhaps the writer who comes closest to communicating a desire for order irreconcilable with life as it is really lived and to using his texts as a means to construct that alternative order. Yet his work too knows of a vital order with which the individual can and must negotiate - even if that order seems to lack the secure signification he seeks. Keller’s orders are many and complex in their interdependence, and the role of the individual as a meeting place for them is crucial to their successful negotiation. That achievement is not vouchsafed to Heinrich Lee as experiencing agent; but paradoxically in the act of psychological narrative recall, it is enshrined in the order of his text. None of the authors, then, deals with order as mere tidiness, as the praiseworthy antidote to chaos.

Even so, the Swiss dimension will not allow itself to be entirely banished. Switzerland is a small country, one moreover which is sub-divided into political, topographic, linguistic and religious units of extraordinary density. It is arguably part of Swiss cultural consciousness to be especially aware of the constituting boundaries of both a small national entity - and of the even smaller sub-communities within the national confederation, to be aware, in other words, of multiple orders of being. These small communities - Keller’s Seldwyla is one, just as are Dürrenmatt’s Güllen and Frisch’s Andorra - are microcosms of a societal mentality. In the same way, I would suggest, the textual orders of Gotthelf, Meyer and Keller pertain to ideas of order beyond themselves whilst being self-consciously of themselves. Order appears variously as something private and internal and as something external, as something oppressive and as an invigorating agency. It can serve to isolate the self, or it can integrate the self into the corporate human world. Like the country in which they were created, these texts have more to offer than mere orderliness - rather, they reflect on the modes and processes of orderliness. And in the quality and scrupulousness of that reflection the Swiss preoccupation becomes a European concern.
Himmelsnähe

In meiner Firne feierlichem Kreis
Lagr' ich an schmalem Felsengrate hier,
Aus einem grünerstarrten Meer von Eis
Erhebt die Silberzacke sich vor mir.

Der Schnee, der am Geklüfte hing zerstreut,
In hundert Rinnen rieselt er davon
Und aus der schwarzen Feuchte schimmert heut
Der Soldanelle zarte Glocke schon.

Bald nahe tost, bald fern der Wasserfall,
Er stäubt und stürzt, nun rechts, nun links verweht,
Ein tiefes Schweigen und ein steter Schall,
Ein Wind, ein Strom, ein Atem, ein Gebet!

Nur neben mir des Murmeltieres Pfiff,
Nur über mir des Geiers heisrer Schrei,
Ich bin allein auf meinem Felsenriff
Und ich empfinde, daß Gott bei mir sei.

(I, 113)
Michelangelo und seine Statuen

Du öffnest, Sklave, deinen Mund,
Doch stöhnest du nicht. Die Lippe schweigt.
Nicht drückt, Gedankenvoller, dich
Die Bürde der behelmten Stirn.
Du packst mit nervger Hand den Bart,
Doch springst du, Moses, nicht empor.
Maria mit dem toten Sohn,
Du weinst, doch rinnt die Träne nicht.
Ihr stellt des Leids Gebärde dar,
Ihr meine Kinder, ohne Leid!
So sieht der freigewordne Geist
Des Lebens überwundne Qual.
Was martert die lebendge Brust,
Beseligt und ergötzt im Stein.
Den Augenblick verewigt ihr,
Und sterbt ihr, sterbt ihr ohne Tod.
Im Schilfe wartet Charon mein,
Der pfeifend sich die Zeit vertreibt.

(I, 331)
Hohe Station

Hoch an der Windung des Passes bewohn ich ein niedriges Berghaus -
Heut ist vorüber die Post, heut bin ich oben allein.
Lehnend am Fenster belausch ich die Stille des dämmernden Abends,
Rings kein Laut! Nur der Specht hämmt im harzigen Tann.
Leicht aus dem Wald in den Wald hüpfet über die Matte das Eichhorn,
Spielend auf offenem Plan; denn es ist Herr im Bezirk.
Jammer! Was hör ich? Ein schrilles Gesurre: "Gemordet ist Garfield!"
"Bismarck zürnt im Gezelt!" - "Väterlich segnet der Papst!"
Schwirrt in der Luft ein Gerücht? Was gewahr ich? Ein schwärzliches Glöcklein!
Unter dem Fenstergesims bebt der elektrische Draht,
Der, wie die Schläge des Pulses beseelend den Körper der Menschheit,
Durch das entlegenste Tal trägt die Gebärd e der Zeit.

(I, 129)
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