

THE ROLE OF THE INTELLECTUAL IN EAST AND WEST GERMAN SOCIETY
AND ITS REFLECTION IN THE NOVELS OF THE 1960s AND 1970s.

by

H A R M A N N A B L E E K E R

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A B S T R A C T

This thesis examines selected East and West German novels in which the resources of prose fiction are used in a variety of ways to explore imaginatively the role of the intellectual in a liberal-democratic and a socialist society.

After a brief examination of the European conception of the 'intellectual', the literary presentation, through plot, character, language and narrative structure, of the experiences, perceptions, insights and conflicts of a wide variety of intellectuals, principally writers, publicists and teachers, is analysed, and related to a brief survey of social, cultural and literary developments in the two German states.

East and West German literary presentations of the intellectual are compared and contrasted. Recurrent topics are: the conception of the intellectual as 'conscience of the nation'; the claims, attractions and relative virtues of social involvement, detachment or withdrawal; the importance of individual integrity and responsibility; the dependence of intellectual freedom in both East and West on social and economic factors; the interdependence of the intellectual's private and public life; the tension between commitment to fundamental social values, whether liberal-democratic or socialist, and critical awareness of specific social evils.

Both the East and the West German novelists discussed use the figure of the intellectual as a focal point for a highly critical view of their society. In the Federal Republic novelists committed to a liberal tradition which allots paramount importance to the individual, increasingly stress the importance of collective social values; novelists in the Democratic Republic, committed to the fundamental ideals of socialism, increasingly struggle to assert, within the limits imposed by official cultural policy, the vital importance of the individual's intellectual and moral integrity. Thus, despite the still considerable differences in approach, an increasing convergence of Eastern and Western conceptions of the social role of the intellectuals can be observed in the novels studied.

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Abbreviations and Editions.

The following abbreviations will be used in Chapters 3 and 5 in references to the novels under discussion. Quotations are taken from the editions indicated below.

- H - Martin Walser, Halbzeit.
1st ed., Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt a.M. 1960.
- E - Martin Walser, Das Einhorn.
1st ed., Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt a.M. 1966.
- S - Martin Walser, Der Sturz.
1st ed., Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt a.M. 1973.
- GK - Martin Walser, Die Gallistl'sche Krankheit.
1st ed., Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt a.M. 1972.
- FP - Martin Walser, Ein fliehendes Pferd.
1st ed., Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt a.M. 1978.
- Ef - Alfred Andersch, Efraim.
1st ed., Diogenes Verlag AG, Zürich 1967.
- öb - Günter Grass, örtlich betäubt.
1st ed., Hermann Luchterhand Verlag GmbH, Neuwied & Berlin, 1969.
- Tb - Günter Grass, Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke.
1st ed., Hermann Luchterhand Verlag GmbH, Neuwied & Darmstadt, 1972.
- Vb - Siegfried Lenz, Das Vorbild.
1st ed., Hoffmann und Campe Verlag, Hamburg 1973.
- GH - Christa Wolf, Der geteilte Himmel.
17th ed., Mitteldeutscher Verlag, Halle (Saale) 1974.
- CT - Christa Wolf, Nachdenken über Christa T.
Sonderausgabe der Sammlung Luchterhand, Neuwied & Berlin, 6th ed., 1975.
- A - Hermann Kant, Die Aula.
Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, Frankfurt a.M., 10th ed., 1975.

- I - Hermann Kant, Das Impressum.
Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, Frankfurt a.M., 2nd ed., 1978.
- Pv - Günter de Bruyn, Die Preisverleihung.
1st ed., Mitteldeutscher Verlag, Halle (Saale), 1972.
- IB - Jurek Becker, Irreführung der Behörden.
Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt a.M., 3rd ed., 1978.
- ST - Jurek Becker, Schlaflose Tage.
Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt a.M., 2nd ed., 1979.
- G - Rolf Schneider, Das Glück.
2nd ed., VEB Hinstorff Verlag, Rostock, 1977.

Introduction

This thesis is an investigation of the presentation, in selected West and East German novels of the 1960s and 1970s, of the figure of the 'intellectual'. It is concerned with ways in which various writers from the two German States have used the resources of prose fiction to explore the nature, role and experience of a wide variety of intellectuals. The subject was chosen on the grounds of its intrinsic interest and importance and of the fact that it has not previously been investigated in the form and manner chosen.

The role of the intellectual is a subject of fundamental importance within any attempt to explore and understand human experience in an advanced industrial society, a society in which crucial importance attaches to the education system, the mass media and a many-sided cultural life: in all these spheres intellectuals play a central role. Literature, itself to a considerable extent the product of one group of intellectuals -- though not all writers are intellectuals, a point which will be discussed further below -- has been a major vehicle for the investigation, using the resources of the creative imagination, of the experiences of the intellectual. In recent West German literature one can observe a marked predominance of characters with a high level of formal education, many of them occupied in intellectual professions, notably writers, publicists and teachers. In East German literature also, despite official cultural policy and considerable pressure on writers to choose working-class characters for their literary works, novelists have, especially after the initial 'Aufbau' period, increasingly placed intellectual characters at the centre of their works and have emphatically defended this practice.

All the novels selected for examination have intellectuals as their principal character or characters. The West German novels are, furthermore, all works of major importance which have attracted widespread critical attention. With regard to the East German novels selected, these criteria are certainly met in the case of the novels of Christa Wolf and Hermann Kant; those of Jurek Becker, Günter de Bruyn and Rolf Schneider are possibly of lesser literary value or importance; it is not the intention of this thesis to offer critical evaluations (though some aesthetic value-judgements are suggested in the course of the investigation): such evaluation would necessitate an entirely different investigation. The latter works have been included because they exemplify an important tendency of very recent East German fiction to use the intellectual as a focal point for an explicit and forceful criticism of East German society. They appear to have been widely read, even if they have attracted less

critical comment than the novels by more established writers.

Since the investigation entails close analysis of texts, only a limited number of novels could be dealt with. However, no major novelist who has primarily concerned himself with the theme of the intellectual has been omitted. The novels selected are in some, but not all, cases the major works of their respective authors; they are in all cases those novels from within a writer's oeuvre which are most clearly concerned with this theme. The individual novels are related to their authors' other works and overall developments where, and to the extent that, this helps to provide a critical focus for the individual work, which remains however the prime object of analysis. Nor is it the intention of this thesis to offer comprehensive interpretations of the selected novels, but to examine the theme of the intellectual in detail. At the same time this focus of attention has not been allowed to become unduly restrictive. In many of the novels the central intellectual character and his experiences are in any case of such predominant importance that a full analysis of this element necessitates a scrutiny of most of the novel's other themes also.

Although most of the novels chosen have been widely discussed, no attempt has been made hitherto to analyse, compare and contrast them with regard to their presentation of the theme of the intellectual. Detailed examination of this aspect not only gives profile to a theme of intrinsic interest and importance, it also in many cases adds substantially to a general understanding of the works concerned. This thesis takes issue throughout with existing critical and scholarly investigations, and in a number of cases attempts to resolve differences of opinion regarding the interpretation of the works concerned, and to remedy inadequacies in existing accounts of them. It is further hoped that a comparative and contrastive treatment of this subject may contribute usefully to the debate about the question of whether there are now, in essential respects, two German literatures or one, that it may in fact provide a modest corrective to the increasingly widespread view that two entirely distinct literatures have developed and are continuing to develop on German soil. Indeed, the fictional presentation of the intellectual constitutes what is very possibly one of the most marked common features of novelists in the two Germanies.

In keeping with this comparative and contrastive approach, the intention has been to examine novels which present as wide a range as possible of attitudes adopted by intellectuals and their experiences, conflicts and problems. In the West German novels the range encompasses the conversion to Communism of Martin Walser's Gallistl, the emphatic

liberal anti-Communism of Grass's self-portrait in Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke, and the complete withdrawal from social involvement of Andersch's Georg Efraim, along with the variety of conservative, liberal, progressive and radical attitudes embodied in the various characters of Lenz's Das Vorbild. In the East German novels selected, the attitudes of the characters range from the complete and unquestioning Party loyalty of Hermann Kant's characters to the almost apolitical subjectivism of Christa Wolf's Christa T., and the highly critical attitudes of the characters of Becker, de Bruyn and Schneider.

The analysis of the presentation of the intellectual treats each novel as a work of literature should always be treated: as a unique personal utterance, not to be properly 'explained' by relating it to a social, historical or political 'background'. It is in no way the intention of this thesis to reduce works of imaginative literature to discursive statements of a socio-political nature. But since the theme selected for investigation is a social theme of great importance, it was deemed both necessary and valuable to place the authors concerned and their fictional characters in their social, historical and cultural context, the proper understanding of which necessitated a brief examination of social and cultural developments in occupied Germany from 1945 to 1949 and in the two German Republics since 1949. Chapters have hence been provided on this background. In addition, Chapter 1 attempts to provide a definition and explanation of the term 'intellectual', and both this chapter and the Excursus appended to Chapter 4 briefly outline wider historical perspectives which proved useful when examining the individual novels.

The selection of texts was restricted to the two decades 1960-1979 because it is in the 1960s that a new generation of post-war writers may be said to have emerged who can be thought of as genuinely belonging to the post-war era, that is to say can in essential respects be considered contemporary. They were all born in the pre-war period and experienced the war years, but they did not begin their literary careers until after 1945. Of course the writers chosen are not wholly representative of contemporary German literature. The choice of an intellectual as central character implies by definition -- as will be seen in Chapter 1 -- a critical concern with contemporary society. But to be a literary writer does not necessarily mean to be an intellectual in this sense. There has always existed a literature concerned with themes other than man in society, and it is no part of the intention of this thesis to suggest that this literature is of less importance or value than what we may loosely but conveniently describe as littérature engagée. The novels

chosen are however representative of the intellectual writers in the two German states. They all deal directly with the position of the intellectual in society and the private and public conflicts arising from that position. (For this reason novels which deal with the experience and problems of intellectuals but are not set in contemporary society were not selected for consideration, for example Günter Grass's Das Treffen in Telgte or Stefan Heym's Der König David Bericht.)

The method of investigation adopted, as befits the subject-matter, is primarily that of thematic analysis. Plot, characterisation and narrative structure are also accorded considerable attention as they are the novelist's principal resources for embodying the relationship of a character to his society, past and present. Use of imagery, metaphor, symbolism and other literary devices are examined where these are relevant to the author's presentation of his theme, but it has not been the intention of this thesis to provide a full account of these formal aspects of the novels under discussion.

The topic of the intellectual is a complex topic, and one which has of course invited a great deal of scholarly investigation, principally in the field of sociology. This thesis does not, of course, raise any claim to contribute to the field of sociology, but it does draw gratefully on the findings and insights of the sociological literature. Its concern is with the ways in which imaginative literature explores the nuances, subtleties and ramifications of the unique individual manifestations of those human experiences which it is the concern of sociology to describe and classify in very general abstract terms. It is the tacit premise of any study such as the present thesis that the novel remains a major and indispensable vehicle for exploring, through imaginatively realized individuals, the significant experience of man in society. Writers -- themselves intellectuals -- are engaged in a peculiarly intimate process of self-exploration by means of the creative imagination when they embody their perceptions, tensions and conflicts in the imaginary characters and situations of a novel. It is for this reason that a novelist can scarcely ever be solely concerned with his characters' social and political attitudes and experiences, with the intellectual qua intellectual, but will almost always be concerned to portray a whole human being, in his intimate private life as well as his professional, social and political activities and relationships. At a time when the novel -- indeed imaginative literature in general -- finds itself frequently under attack as having been rendered obsolete by the emergence and development of the human and social sciences, which have at their disposal not only highly sophisticated theories and models but also a formidable mass of empirical

data with which to attempt to shed light on the condition of modern man, any analysis of the use of literary resources for the comprehensive, multi-faceted exploration of an important human type such as the intellectual, implicitly asserts the value of the creative imagination.

Chapter 1. The concept of the 'intellectual'

The concept of the 'intellectual' with its present-day connotations was first used at the end of the nineteenth century in France.¹ It was intended as a term of abuse for Zola and his supporters in the Dreyfus case, but they accepted it as an apposite description, proudly pointing to its origins in the words 'intellect' and 'intelligence'.² The French term 'les intellectuels' was adopted by the German press as 'die Intellektuellen', initially with reference to the dreyfusards, but soon also to denote their German sympathizers.³ It is important to note that the term originated in a political context, because it has retained both these political associations and some of its original derogatory intent.⁴ In twentieth-century German usage two forms of the word have emerged: 'der Intellektuelle' and 'der Intelligenzler'. The former is currently used to describe, without any implied value judgement, an individual belonging to a particular social stratum⁵, the latter is unequivocally derogatory. A number of studies, both linguistic and sociological, have attempted to define the terms 'Intellektuelle', 'Intelligenz' and 'intelligentsia', and have proposed a number of fine distinctions.⁶ For the purposes of this thesis it will

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1. See D. Bering, Die Intellektuellen. Geschichte eines Schimpfwortes, Stuttgart 1978, pp.32ff. and O.W. Müller, Intelligencijs. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte eines Schlagwortes, Frankfurt a.M.1971, pp.50ff.
 2. For the development of the word 'intellectual' from its Latin roots to its present-day meaning, see Bering, "Die Entstehung des Wortes," op.cit., pp.32-93; Müller op.cit., pp.27-50; M.Malia, "What is the Intelligentsia?", Daedalus 89, 1960/3, pp.441-458 (esp. p.458 for the Russian contribution to the modern concept.); K.M. Michel, Die sprachlose Intelligenz, Frankfurt a.M. 1968, pp.51-53 & 78f.
 3. See Bering op.cit., pp.69f.
 4. R. Aron, The Opium of the Intellectuals, New York 1962 (first published 1955), Chapter 7, pp.208-236; points out that this derogatory implication is stronger in Germany than in France, where the intellectuals have always enjoyed higher social prestige. See also T.M. Bottomore, Elites and Society, Penguin 1977 (first published 1964), p.74.
 5. As the class origins of intellectuals vary widely, they are usually described as a social stratum rather than a class. G. Lichtheim, A Short History of Socialism, Fontana paperback 1975 (first published 1970), p.72, describes them as 'a stratum with a corporate consciousness and a sense of mission'; see also J.A. Schumpeter, Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy, 5th ed. London 1976, p.146; and F. Trommler, "Intellektuelle und Intellektuellenkritik in Deutschland", Basis V, 1975, p.128.
 6. See for example T.B. Bottomore, op.cit., p.70; T. Geiger, Aufgabe und Stellung der Intelligenz in der Gesellschaft, Stuttgart 1949, pp.12ff.; M. Malia, loc.cit., p.442; R. Pipes, "The Russian Intelligentsia", Daedalus, 1960/3, p.439; H. Vormweg, Die Wörter und die Welt, Neuwied/Berlin 1968, p.116.

however suffice to establish a common denominator. After a brief examination of the main characteristics of the intellectuals, the terms 'intellectual' and 'intelligentsia' will be used synonymously and denote merely the distinction between the individual and the collective.

Long before the emergence of the modern intelligentsia there were groups of educated people who shared intellectual concerns and interests, for example the Humanists. Arnold Hauser¹ has however rightly pointed out that they consciously saw themselves as a detached elite, whose 'aloofness' was a sign of complete 'social indifference'. The first real intellectuals, although of course not known by that name at the time, were the philosophes of the eighteenth century. Because the majority of them were French, this term has been used to describe all these European men of learning, who despite individual differences -- in some cases very substantial -- had a number of very important qualities in common. As one of the most important of these qualities George Rudé sees the fact that:

They all questioned the basic assumptions which their contemporaries had inherited from the past, whether these were philosophical, theological or political. (2)

A recent investigation concludes that this basic scepticism and doubt is still one of the main characteristics of the modern intelligentsia.³ A further trait of the philosophes which is shared by their present-day successors is their interest in politics, their concern with social affairs and their self-imposed didactic task. Rudé comments:

. . . while not practising politicians . . . they were not armchair philosophers who engaged in abstract or metaphysical explanations: their 'philosophy' was practical and empirical and they used it as a weapon of social and political criticism and tried to persuade others, whether governors or governed, to think and act the same. The philosophes themselves were well aware of this empirical, didactic and crusading element in their thinking and behaviour and took pride in it. (4)

From the beginning of this century onwards, a very substantial literature has come into being concerning the nature and function of the intelligentsia; no conclusive definition of either has been established, but all attempted definitions and descriptions have a number of points in common. Stephen Spender has summed the term up as follows:

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1. A. Hauser, The Social History of Art, London 1951, vol.II, p.74.
 2. G. Rudé, Europe in the Eighteenth Century. Aristocracy and the Bourgeois Challenge, CARDINAL edition London 1974 (first published 1972), p.197.
 3. M. Greiffenhagen, "Die Intellektuellen in der deutschen Politik", Der Monat, 20, 1968/233, pp.33-43 (p.34).
 4. G. Rudé, op.cit., p.198.

The term 'intellectual' . . . has come to mean: "a thinking person, often a writer, who has a sense of social responsibility to which he wants to give voice. (1)

Joseph Schumpeter accepts this definition in principle, but makes an important addition:

. . . intellectuals are in fact people who wield the power of the spoken and the written word, and one of the touches that distinguish them from other people who do the same is the absence of direct responsibility for practical affairs. (2)

This criterion of non-involvement in practical affairs is also included by Jenö Kurucz in his description of intellectuals as

die Personen, die von einer mehr oder minder praxisfernen Position aus unser soziales Dasein sinnkritisch auslegen und damit das geistige Orientierungsbedürfnis der Gesellschaft zu befriedigen suchen. (3)

For Martin Malia likewise the guiding principle of the intellectuals when voicing their views is 'the primacy of general ideals over immediate interests'.⁴ Schumpeter goes on to reject the uncompromising nature of the intellectuals' criticism, with the argument that it is much more difficult to provide a working solution to a given problem than to judge it from an inflexible standpoint. He points out that a successful politician, for example, does not cause the government embarrassment or difficulty whenever he could, if he wished, do so. This is of course perfectly true, but what Schumpeter leaves out of account is that there is a fundamental difference between the task which the intellectual sets himself and that of the politician, or for that matter any other professional person entrusted with a specific responsibility. When employed in a particular function, the individual has committed himself to put his expertise at the service of his employer; Max Weber⁵ saw a person in such a position as bound by 'Verantwortungsethik'. The intellectual on the other hand is not primarily concerned with specific occupational responsibilities; Karl Mannheim has indeed pointed out that it is precisely this lack of direct involvement which constitutes the intellectual's chief advantage, because 'it helps him to escape the optical limitations of particular occupations and interests.'⁶

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1. S. Spender, "The English Intellectuals and the World of To-day"(1951), in G.B. de Huszar (ed.), The Intellectuals: A Controversial Portrait, Chicago 1960, (pp.470-476), p.470.
 2. J.A. Schumpeter, op.cit., p.147.
 3. J. Kurucz, Struktur und Funktion der Intelligenz während der Weimarer Republik, Cologne 1967, p.8.
 4. M. Malia, loc.cit., p.449.
 5. M. Weber, "Politik als Beruf", quoted from A. Gehlen. "Das Engagement der Intellektuellen gegenüber dem Staat", Merkur 18, 1964/195, p.408.
 6. K. Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia, London 1936, p.159.

Politicians, managers and specialists in various fields are responsible for the proper functioning of society, the intellectuals are the 'conscience of the nation'. This term was used by Julien Benda¹ and has been taken up by many since; it indicates that the intellectuals are responsible only to themselves and to society as a whole, and are guided not by pragmatic interests but by ethical criteria. They are bound, in Max Weber's term, by 'Gesinnungsethik'.² Benda describes their function in such terms:

. . . sie standen als Moralisten über den Kampf menschlicher Egoismen gebeugt und predigten . . . die Übernahme eines 'Menschlichkeit' oder 'Gerechtigkeit' genannten abstrakten Prinzips, das jenen Passionen übergeordnet und entgegengerichtet ist. Gewiß, das Wirken dieser Intellektuellen trat meist nicht aus der theoretischen Ebene heraus . . . Sie konnten nicht verhindern, daß der weltliche Stand die ganze Geschichte von Haßgeschrei und Schlachtenlärm widerhallen ließ; aber sie haben ihn davon abgehalten, diesen triebhaften "Anwendungen bekennerschaft zu huldigen und aus der Arbeit an ihrer vollen Entfaltung noch Größe beziehen zu wollen. Ihretwegen läßt sich von der Menschheit sagen, daß sie über zwei Jahrtausende hin zwar Böses tat, aber das Gute verehrte. (3)

This is, of course, a highly idealized account of the intellectual's role in society, but in essence it is the role which has continued to constitute their main social function until the present day. Benda considered the intellectuals' commitment to party-political causes to be a betrayal of their true function. It can be seen, however, that political -- though not necessarily party-political -- commitment is always entailed when intellectuals see the need to oppose injustice or abuse of power. But as soon as the political aims which they support have been achieved, they revert to their position of critical, detached observation.

Combining the common elements of the various definitions offered by the above authors, we can describe the intellectuals as a social stratum consisting of well-educated and well-informed individuals, who, although they share basic moral premises for their intellectual activities, are ultimately accountable only to themselves and their own moral judgement. Peter Ludz has pointed out that their awareness of there being others in a similar position to themselves leads to 'some group feeling or some -- although latent -- solidarity'.⁴ From this sense of

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1. J. Benda, La Trahison des Clercs, Paris 1927, p.111.
 2. Max Weber, quoted by A. Gehlen, loc.cit., pp.408ff.
 3. J. Benda, op.cit., quoted from the German translation Der Verrat der Intellektuellen, Munich/Vienna 1978, p.112 (italics in the original).
 4. P.C. Ludz, "Experts and Critical Intellectuals in East Germany", in E.J. Feuchtwanger (ed.), Upheaval and Continuity. A Century of German History, London 1973, (pp.166-182),p.176.

solidarity, such as it is, they derive additional strength -- increasingly so in modern society; they now recognize it as an important factor for both economic reasons¹ and reasons of morale.²

The function of the intellectual has been as much discussed as the definition of the term. Using 'the intelligentsia' in its widest sense, comprising both technical-scientific and cultural intellectuals³,

Theodor Geiger has listed the intellectuals' functions as follows:

1. Sublimierung des Daseins (Künste, Bildungswissen).
2. Schaffen der theoretischen Voraussetzungen für die Rationalisierung des Daseins (anwendbares Leistungswissen).
3. Kritik und Bändigung der politischen und wirtschaftlichen Machtfaktoren (Sozialwissenschaft, Philosophie, Zeitkunst). (4)

Of these, points 1 and 2 relate to the professional occupations of the majority of intellectuals, point 3 -- the voicing of criticism and the exercise of resistance to social and political powers -- transcends the professional sphere; this is a self-imposed task, a 'Berufung' rather than merely a 'Beruf'. Indeed the intelligentsia's sense of mission has been compared by some critics to religious fervour.⁵ Arnold Gehlen wrote cynically of this fervour:

Es gehört zu den rätselhaften Dingen, daß man -- nach 2000 Jahren christlicher Erfahrung vom Gegenteil -- von der Glücksfähigkeit des Daseins überzeugt ist. Anscheinend ist dem Verfall des Glaubens an Gott der Verfall des Glaubens an die Ideale nicht gefolgt . . . (6)

Sartre explicitly described commitment to such a mission as an alternative to religion, saying that it gives a person the hope of being able to die without the illusion of a hereafter, but with the knowledge of leaving behind the seeds of a better world and therefore participating

1. In this context see H. Schwenger, Das Ende der Unbescheidenheit. Intellektuelle auf dem Wege zur Gewerkschaft. Frankfurt a.M. 1974; and M. Walser, "Für eine I.G. Kultur", in Wie und wovon handelt Literatur? Frankfurt a.M. 1973, pp.62-75.
2. P.C. Ludz, loc.cit., pp.176f.
3. For a detailed discussion of the distinction between the 'technisch-organisatorische' and the 'kulturtragende Intelligenz', see H. Stieglitz, Der Soziale Auftrag der freien Berufe, Cologne/Berlin 1960...
4. T. Geiger, "Intelligenz", in Handwörterbuch der Sozialwissenschaften. Band 5, Stuttgart/Tübingen/Göttingen 1956; quoted by E. Wiehn, Intellektuelle in Politik und Gesellschaft, Stuttgart 1971, p.53.
5. E. Shills, "Intellectuals", in D.L. Sills (ed.), International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences, Vol.VII, pp.399-415; speaks of the 'apocalyptic tradition' of the intellectuals. See also E. Bloch, Das Prinzip Hoffnung (written 1938-1947, first published Frankfurt a.M. 1959), 3rd ed. 1976, which gives emphasis to the optimism and the faith of the intellectuals in the changeability of the world; and A. Salomon, "The Messianic Bohemians", in G.B. de Huszar, op.cit., pp.19-27.
6. A. Gehlen, loc.cit., p.408.

in that world which will exist after one is oneself dead.¹

In their criticism of social wrongs intellectuals are guided by absolute ideal norms, against which they measure reality. Erhard Wiehn, quoting Marx, defined the intellectual as being continually in opposition to the social authorities:

Die grundlegende Funktion der Intelligenz liegt in "einer permanenten Kritik der sozialen Ordnung im Hinblick auf Werte und Ideale". (2)

C.C. O'Brien likewise saw permanent opposition as central to the activity of the intellectual:

It would not be adequate to say that the intellectual has the duty to resist . . . the pressures of power. The point is rather that the nature of the intellectual's activity -- in thinking and imagining and in saying and writing about what he thinks and imagines -- is inherently resistant to the pressures of power. (3)

It follows from this inherent tendency to oppose those in power and authority that the intellectual will not easily meet the demands of all professions. Stieglitz⁴ has discussed in detail the difficulties faced by the technical-scientific and the administrative intelligentsia in reconciling their professional obligations with the independent exercise of their critical powers. He has concluded that the true critical oppositional function of the intellectuals, can be exercised only by the 'freie' or 'freischwebende Intelligenz'. This term, used by Deneke⁵, refers to those intellectuals who are economically independent. Such independence is rare in our age; most intellectuals are obliged to devote at least some of their energies to earning a living. Theodor Geiger points out:

. . . geistige Freiheit ohne ein Mindestmaß wirtschaftlicher Daseinssicherung kann es nicht geben. (6)

Deneke expresses the same view, but instead of a 'Mindestmaß wirtschaftlicher Daseinssicherung' speaks of the 'Sicherung eines angemessenen Lebensstandards', defining 'angemessen' in terms of the specific needs of the intellectual with regard, for example, to travel, further education, purchase of books and access to various intellectual and cultural pursuits. As only very few intellectuals can live from their pen, most have additional employment which tends to restrict their independence; a compromise may be difficult to achieve. Furthermore, their involvement in a

1. J.P. Sartre; P. Gavi & P. Victor, On a raison de se révolter, Paris 1974, transl. Der Intellektuelle als Revolutionär. Streitgespräche. Hamburg 1976, p.145.

2. E. Wiehn, op.cit., p.55.

3. C.C. O'Brien & W.D. Vanech (eds.), Power and Consciousness, London/New York 1969, p.12.

4. H. Stieglitz, op.cit.

5. J.F.V. Deneke, Die freien Berufe, Stuttgart 1956.

6. Th. Geiger, op.cit., p.109.

particular professional sphere may impair their detachment and objectivity. Deneke warns of this risk of 'Verberuflichung', hence his distinction between 'Berufsintelligenz' and 'freie Intelligenz'.

This thesis will demonstrate that this problem, with regard to both the loyalties and, especially, the financial/economic factors involved, are seen by the novelists whose works are under discussion as a very real problem for intellectuals in the present age. Earlier in this century Alfred Weber had gone so far as to conclude that the economic restrictions of all modern intellectuals meant in fact that an intelligentsia as such no longer existed.¹ This view has, however, proved excessively pessimistic. Nevertheless it must be conceded that some professions are more compatible with independent intellectual activity and freedom of expression than others. Wiehn has singled out the prime areas where such activity and freedom are best sought:

. . . die deutschen Intellektuellen sind und waren vor allem in drei Bereichen zu finden: in den Einrichtungen des Bildungswesens, in künstlerischen Einrichtungen und bei den Massenmedien. (2)

As we shall see in the following chapters dealing with selected novels by writers from the two German Republics, these have indeed been precisely the professional spheres chosen by the writers for their literary characters. Their use of these intellectual characters as a focus for a highly critical view of their society, whether in West or East Germany, accords with and confirms the conception of the critical intellectual which has been outlined above. It is also significant that in the novels dealt with, the intellectual is portrayed in a very critical light if he does not fulfil this critical function. This is particularly evident in the works of Martin Walser, Jurek Becker and Günter de Bruyn, but it can be seen to some extent in all the novels dealt with, both from West and East Germany.

What has been said above applies primarily to a traditional European conception of the intellectual that may appropriately be described as 'liberal'; it is part of a tradition of socio-political thought in which freedom of expression is, at least in theory, regarded as an absolute value not to be a priori subordinated to a pre-determined social goal. In the tradition of socialist thought there is, of course, a quite different conception of the social role of the intellectual. The tension between this relatively recent socialist conception, and the older and more deeply rooted liberal tradition is at the heart of the conflict

1. A. Weber, "Die Not der geistigen Arbeiter", in Schriften des Vereins für Sozialpolitik, Bd. 163, Munich/Leipzig 1923, pp.165-185.

2. E.R. Wiehn, op.cit., p.42.

experienced by intellectuals in the East European socialist countries, who struggle to reconcile their commitment to socialism with a conception of individual intellectual and moral integrity with which that commitment does not always easily coexist. Various manifestations of this conflict are to be seen in the East German novels selected for discussion.

Marx and Engels saw the role of the intellectual as being to provide the leadership of the Communist Party; while the driving force of the revolution was to come from the proletariat (its 'heart'), the intellectuals were to guide its course (as its 'head'). The illiteracy of the bulk of the Russian population made this an appropriate metaphor for the situation before, during, and for some time after the revolution of 1917. Lenin was highly mistrustful of the Russian bourgeois intelligentsia, but knew that:

. . . without the 'dozen' tried and talented leaders (and talented men are not born by the hundreds), professionally trained, schooled by long experience, and working in perfect harmony, no class in modern society can wage a determined struggle. (1)

A prime task was thus the training of a truly Communist intelligentsia drawn from the working class. His conception of the specific role of the cultural intelligentsia is discussed in the Excursus appended to Chapter 4.² In Europe however the situation was different, there was a much higher level of literacy and general education amongst the working class than in Russia, and views on the role of the intellectual within the socialist movement were not so clear-cut. The Social Democrats, whose main theoretician at the beginning of the twentieth century was Karl Kautsky, shared the Marxist-Leninist view that the place of the intellectual was at the head of the Party. The revolutionary Left, on the other hand, led in Germany by Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, believed in a truly proletarian revolution and saw the place of the intellectual as being in the Party, but not at its head: their function was to inform and instruct, but not to lead. The proletariat, for its part, remained sceptical of intellectuals in general; Bebel spoke for many with his admonition:

Seht euch jeden Parteigenossen an, aber wenn er ein Akademiker ist oder ein Intellektueller, dann seht ihn euch doppelt und dreifach an. (3)

That this mistrust of intellectuals has not disappeared from the Communist movement was amply confirmed by Leonid Brezhnev's recent advice

1. V.I. Lenin, "What is to be Done?" (1902), Collected Works, Vol. 5, Moscow 1961, (pp.347-529); p.461.

2. See pp.196f.

3. A. Bebel, Akademiker und Sozialismus, 2.Aufl. Berlin 1906; quoted from H. de Man, Die Intellektuellen und der Sozialismus, Jena 1926, p.15.

to the leaders of East European socialist states in the wake of developments in Poland, advice which included a reference to the necessity of strict control over the activities of intellectuals.

Marxist-Leninists were -- as they remain to this day -- convinced that intellectuals owed the Party absolute allegiance and obedience; Liebknecht and Luxemburg however took the view that intellectuals rendered a service to the Party whilst remaining independent individuals. But in whatever form intellectuals supported the Communist cause, they had, in the eyes of those who upheld the liberal view of the intellectual's role, betrayed their mission. Julien Benda spoke of 'trahison', Raymond Aron of 'opium'.¹ But as the European Communist movement grew, many intellectuals came to feel that the menace of Fascism justified the subordination of their individual freedom to the discipline of the Communist Party as the only political force with the will and ability to combat Fascism. The involvement of intellectuals in the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) marked the high-water mark of this tendency.

In Germany the 1930s witnessed a mass exodus of left-wing intellectuals from Germany, and after 1945 it was men and women of this generation -- among them Brecht, Anna Seghers, Johannes Becher and the exiled Party leadership under Ulbricht -- who returned to Germany with the firm conviction that after the immense struggle to defeat Fascism they would proceed to build a new socialist state. They were well aware that this too would be a difficult and lengthy task. They supported both the Party's aims and its conception of the role of the intellectual. Although the great majority of them were of middle-class origin, they agreed with the Party's insistence that a new working-class intelligentsia needed to be trained as speedily as possible, and put their skills at the service of the training programme. (Hermann Kant's Die Aula gives a vivid critical account of that enterprise and its achievements.) Differences of opinion amongst intellectuals in the GDR in the early post-war years arose from differences in ideological matters rather than class differences. Their conception of the socialist intellectual corresponds to the opinion expressed by L.G. Churchward in relation to the Soviet Union:

I would suggest . . . that the fundamental difference between a socialist and a capitalist intelligentsia rests less on differences of class origin than on the fact that socialist intellectuals in all their roles are set clear social obligations and purposes by the political culture to which they belong. (2)

However, once the socialist foundations of the GDR were established,

1. J. Benda, op.cit.; R. Aron, op.cit.
2. L.G. Churchward, The Soviet Intelligentsia. An Essay on the Social Structure and Role of the Soviet Intellectuals during the 1960s. London/Boston 1973, p.90.

the intelligentsia tended increasingly to revert to its more traditional position of critical observers rather than directly involved Party members. The Party however has not modified its Leninist demands for obedience and conformity. Hence tensions between Party and intellectuals are unavoidable. In East as in West Germany, intellectuals have become self-appointed critics of the authorities; the motto for both could be taken from Günter de Bruyn's Renata: 'Jeder ist verantwortlich für das, was er nicht zu verhindern sucht.'¹ Notwithstanding this critical stance it must be stressed that intellectuals in both German states are -- as far as the great majority are concerned -- in fundamental agreement with the basic principles on which their society is founded. This is true even of so radically oppositional a writer as Martin Walser. Martin Greiffenhagen² points out that this feature distinguishes present-day intellectuals from those of the Weimar Republic, who were genuinely revolutionary in their opposition to the State. Greiffenhagen is referring to West German intellectuals, but the same is also true of their East German counterparts, the great majority of whom do support the basic principles of socialism.

In both Germanies however there have been highly significant developments away from the earlier conceptions of the liberal and the socialist intellectual respectively. West German intellectuals insist still on the significance of the individual, but they have begun also to insist on the importance of shared social values and social commitment. East German intellectuals, for their part, have moved in the other direction: whilst still firmly committed to socialist values, they have begun to emphasize that socialism is ultimately concerned with the welfare and self-fulfilment of the individual, and cannot progress towards its goals without the exercise of independent individual critical judgement. Further points of convergence will be noted in the Conclusion to this thesis. This convergence -- to the extent that it exists, and it is not the intention of this thesis to over-state it -- is one of the most interesting conclusions to be drawn from the material studied, especially in the light of the current tendency to emphasize the increasing divergence between the two Germanies in respect of their societies, cultures, literatures and even languages.

1. In NDL VIII, 1960/7, (pp.73-102), p.99.

2. M. Greiffenhagen, "Die Intellektuellen in der deutschen Politik", Der Monat 20, 1968/233, pp.33-43 (p.40).

Chapter 2. Developments in the position and attitudes of writers
in the Federal Republic of Germany after 1945.

The writers who returned to the Eastern zone of Germany in and after 1945 had a clear programme in mind for new literary developments: they intended to continue the tradition of the Bund Proletarisch-Revolutionärer Schriftsteller¹ and of Soviet literature written since 1917. Those who returned to the West, on the other hand, and started their writing careers there, had neither a recent tradition nor a specific programme to guide them. They were, however, united by strong sentiments, namely their revulsion from National Socialism and their hopes that a new, independent and democratic Germany would come into being. This chapter will give a brief outline of developments from 1945 until the late 1970s. Broadly speaking, it is possible to divide the post-war writers of the Federal Republic into three generations: those who experienced the war as adults, i.e. were born during the first two decades of this century; those who were children or adolescents during the Third Reich, i.e. born in the late 1920s and early 1930s; and finally those born after 1940 or thereabouts. One cannot of course speak of a uniformity of literary techniques or style: every writer worth taking at all seriously is of course sui generis in this respect; nevertheless writers of the first two generations may up to a point be considered as having formed one literary movement inasmuch as they shared the same moral premises.² This sense of a common purpose may be said to have persisted throughout the 1950s and the first half of the 1960s. Changes may be discerned however in the late 1960s, not only because this was a period of acute political disturbances, but also because by this time the third generation of writers had begun to publish: writers who had no direct experience of the war, and who approached contemporary problems with different attitudes from those of their elders. By the time the political upheavals had subsided in the mid-1970s, whatever awareness of writing within a specific social framework or literary movement there had been, no longer existed. The intellectual writers had once again come to see themselves as individuals, non-conformists, as men concerned with political developments but not directly involved in them, hoping to influence public opinion -- and thus contribute to social change -- by addressing themselves to the individual reader, not to instigate direct social activity on a mass scale. Both the early engagement and the later stance of individual

1. See Chapter 4, Excursus, pp.200ff.

2. The notion of a literary group was, however, stronger in the minds of critics and Germanists than amongst the writers themselves. See section A below, especially the discussion on the Gruppe 47.

protest and appeal are clearly reflected in the novels of the different periods.

A. The late 1940s and 1950s.

Without entering into a discussion of the validity or otherwise of describing 1945 as a Nullpunkt in the history of German literature -- and the description is undoubtedly open to question, as both the Exilliteratur and the writings of the 'innere Emigranten' provided some degree of continuity¹ -- one may accept that those German writers who began to publish after 1945 intended to make a complete break with the past and to create an entirely new German literature.² The works of their exiled compatriots remained unknown to them for a number of years to come, as did contemporary foreign works, and they were understandably sceptical towards recent German publications, even where these appeared untainted by the ideas of National Socialism. In the first place they considered literature of an apolitical nature, written at such a time, to be amoral if not positively immoral. In the second place they were aware that the very language of these works was, albeit unknown to the authors, not free from the debasing and distorting effects of National Socialist usage.³ Their intentions were therefore twofold: they wished to cleanse the German language of these corrupting influences and to reveal in their writings the truth about German society as it was and has been.

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1. This issue was the subject of a protracted and acrimonious public debate in the pages of Die Zeit during October/November 1979 (no.42, 12.10.1979, to no.48, 23.11.1979).
 2. Wolfgang Weyrauch coined the term Kahlschlag for this situation in his anthology Tausend Gramm (1949). The term is acceptable as long as it is understood to refer to a situation created by the post-war writers themselves rather than by the era of National Socialism and the war. As a description of the latter, it has been found both historically incorrect and too apologetic. This has been discussed at length by literary critics, cf. F.Trommler, "Der 'Nullpunkt 1945' und seine Verbindlichkeit für die Literaturgeschichte", Basis I, Frankfurt a.M.1970, pp.9-25, & H.Vormweg, "Deutsche Literatur 1945-1960. Keine Stunde Null", in M.Durzak (ed.), Die deutsche Literatur der Gegenwart, Stuttgart 1971, pp.13-30. These two critics reject the concept. V.Ch.Wehtking, Der Nullpunkt. Über die Konstituierung der deutschen Nachkriegsliteratur (1945-1948) in den amerikanischen Kriegsgefangenenlagern, Stuttgart 1971, on the other hand, accepts it.
 3. Cf. V.Klemperer, LTI. Notizbuch eines Philologen, Leipzig 1978 (first published 1946; LTI = Lingua Tertii Imperii); also U.Widmer, "So kahl war der Kahlschlag nicht", Die Zeit 26.11.1965, and in R.Lettau (ed.), Gruppe 47, Berlin 1967, pp.328-335; and U.Widmer, 1945 oder die neue Sprache, Düsseldorf 1966. Widmer demonstrates that even the language of Der Ruf shows the influence of National Socialist language, both of the 'Umgangssprache' of that period and of the language of the bourgeois press of the time.

These aims were of course primarily moral and political rather than aesthetic in nature, and it is therefore not surprising that one of the first journals to be founded, Der Ruf, was mainly concerned with the socio-political situation in Germany. Although the founding editors, Hans Werner Richter and Alfred Andersch were socialists, they emphasized that their aims were broadly anti-fascist and democratic rather than dogmatically socialist. They called for a 'demokratische Staatsform und sozialistische Wirtschaftsordnung',¹ as a means to enable Germany to form a bridge between East and West rather than become a mouthpiece for either one or the other.² They warned against both the 'Churchill model' and the 'Stalin model', and sharply criticized both the thesis of 'collective guilt' and the denazification and re-education procedures of, in particular, the American military government, procedures which they regarded as being based on prescriptive ideology, and to which they were as vehemently opposed as they were to the dogmatic Marxism professed by the military government of the Soviet zone. It is thus small wonder that Der Ruf was banned by the American authorities after only sixteen numbers had appeared³, despite its popularity in all four zones: it had a total of 100,000 subscribers⁴, who may fairly be assumed to have been attracted by its socialist stance.⁵ Such opposition from the governing powers did not however deter the intellectuals: they had not expected to be popular in that quarter. In 1948 Andersch wrote:

Die Aufgabe des Intellektuellen ist also eine zweifach unpopuläre: er muß im Namen der wahren Demokratie die Heuchelei derjenigen enthüllen, die heute die Demokratie durch ihre Politik gegenüber Deutschland diskreditieren, und er muß den Geist der Demokratie verteidigen gegen alle, die aus der Diskrepanz zwischen Theorie und Praxis, an der wir leiden, bereits wieder ihre faschistischen Schlüsse ziehen. (6)

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1. H.W.Richter, "Deutschland -- Brücke zwischen Ost und West", Der Ruf, H.4, October 1946; DTV-reprint (ed. H.Schwab-Felisch), Munich 1962, (pp.46-49); p.48.
 2. See also A.Andersch, "Das junge Europa formt sein Gesicht", Der Ruf H.1, 15.8.1946; DTV pp.21-26, esp.p.22; and A.Andersch, "Grundlagen einer deutschen Opposition", Der Ruf H.8, 1.12.1946; DTV pp.94-99.
 3. This is the most widely accepted interpretation of the cessation of the journal. Cf. H.W.Richter, introduction to Almanach der Gruppe 47. 1947-1962, Reinbek 1962,p.10; Richter's letter to A.Andersch on his 65th birthday, in Merkur 33, 1979, pp.199-202; Walter Heist in an article on Andersch in Merkur 24, 1970, p.450; H.Kesting in Text + Kritik 61/62 (1979), p.11; S.Mandel, Group 47. The Reflected Intellect, London and Amsterdam 1973,p.3; R.Lettau (ed.), Die Gruppe 47, Neuwied/Berlin 1967, p.21. W.D.Graf, The German Left since 1945, Cambridge/New York 1976, p.76 merely states that "Der Ruf folded in early 1948". (It was in fact published until September 1948.)
 4. See S.Mandel, op.cit., p.3.
 5. Cf.W. Abendroth, "Bilanz der sozialistischen Idee in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland", in H.W.Richter, Bestandsaufnahme, pp.232-263, esp. p.251.
 6. A.Andersch, Deutsche Literatur in der Entscheidung, Karlsruhe 1948, p.27.

In search of an alternative vehicle for their views, the former editors of Der Ruf organized a meeting of young writers and artists with the purpose of discussing their political and professional interests. At this meeting a new journal, Der Skorpion, was proposed, but publication ran up against licencing problems -- the American authorities considered the proposed contents of the new journal 'too nihilistic' -- and after the currency reform of 1948 the plan became financially unviable. Thus deprived of the opportunity of publishing their works, the writers concerned decided to continue their meetings on a regular, approximately half-yearly basis, in order to provide a forum for discussion and criticism. This group came to be known in retrospect as the Gruppe 47.¹ It soon came to be regarded by outsiders as an elitist clique, and was throughout its existence the target of much criticism, frequently of a polemical kind, on this score. Yet the Gruppe 47 was never a formal organisation, it had no membership regulations, participants at the meetings were invited by Richter personally and included creative writers, journalists, critics, Germanists and publishers. They constituted a 'group' only during the days when they actually met. The aims of the meetings were to encourage 'young' writers to give them help and advice and to put them in contact with publishers. 'Young' referred here not merely to the age of the writer; the category included all those who had not been able to express their views during the Third Reich and had thus not begun their literary careers until after 1945. Furthermore the epithet 'young' undoubtedly carried echoes of Jungdeutschland, implying a spirit of opposition in an era of restoration and stagnation. The Gruppe 47 did indeed soon become a focus of opposition: its members were brought, and held, together by their political views. In principle all opinions were given a hearing, but it was clear from the outset that nobody was invited whose views were considered suspect. Thus both the extreme Right and the dogmatic Left were excluded. Richter himself never made any secret of the political orientation of the Gruppe 47:

Der Ursprung der Gruppe 47 ist politisch-publizistischer Natur.
Nicht Literaten schufen sie, sondern politisch engagierte
Publizisten mit literarischen Ambitionen. (2)

Circumstances in Germany immediately after the war certainly appeared favourable to the emergence of a democratic socialist order. There was widespread popular support for socialism,³ and even the newly founded CDU

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1. Heinz Friedrich, "Das Jahr 47", in H.W.Richter, Almanach der Gruppe 47, p.19, attributes the name to Hans Georg Brenner; it refers to the first meeting of the group at the Bannwaldsee.
 2. H.W.Richter, Almanach der Gruppe 47, p.8.
 3. See p.24.

explicitly condemned capitalism in its Ahlerner Programm of 1947.¹ But the tide soon turned, partly as a result of pressure brought to bear by the American authorities; more conservative ideas ousted the initial enthusiasm for radical change, and by 1949, on the eve of the constitution of the Federal Republic, the CDU had rejected its socialist policies and espoused the ideology of the 'soziale Marktwirtschaft'.² This ideology rapidly gained widespread public support, aided by the tension between East and West with its concomitant overt anti-Communism in the West. With Adenauer's election victory in 1949, the success of the Marshall Plan and the heavy anti-Communist propaganda of the 1950s, as the world moved into the era of the Cold War, the majority of West German citizens were sufficiently satisfied with the rapid improvement of their economic situation to lose their only recently awakened political consciousness. 'Ohne mich' became the catchword of the day, and whatever impact phrases like 'unbewältigte Vergangenheit' or 'Restauration' may initially have had, they soon lost their power to impress. Wolfdietrich Schnurre's general advice: 'Man sollte dagegen sein'³ had no effect. It was acknowledged, man war dagegen, and life continued contentedly. The constant tension of the Cold War and the 'negative example' of the 'other' Germany continued to play their part in strengthening the position of the government. Only a small intellectual minority remained aware of and protested against the increasing infringements of democratic principles which were committed by the Adenauer government.⁴ It must be emphasized that during the 1950s the greater part of the intelligentsia developed towards conformism and the political Right: not only the technical and administrative intelligentsia, but also large numbers of writers, teachers and journalists. The criticism and polemics published in the national and local Press against the Gruppe 47 give ample evidence of this.⁵ Furthermore the bulk of West German literature produced in the 1950s consisted of pseudo-realistic 'affirmative' Kriegs- and Zeitromane of a complacent or escapist nature; among the most successful were the novels of H.H.Kirst and H.Habe.

1. Cf. R.Hiscocks, Democracy in Western Germany, OUP 1957, pp.75f.

2. Ibid., p.76.

3. W.-D.Schnurre, Man sollte dagegen sein, Olten/Freiburg 1960.

4. See for example H.M.Kepplinger, Rechte Leute von Links. Gewaltkult und Innerlichkeit, Freiburg i.Br. 1970, p.78; C.Wighton, Adenauer -- Democratic Dictator, London 1963, esp. pp.191-205; and R.Hiscocks, op.cit. pp.120-128.

5. During the 1950s and 1960s the Gruppe 47 was fiercely attacked by Friedrich Sieburg, Rudolf Krämer-Badoni, Günther Blöcker and many others, in the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Die Zeit and Die Gegenwart. A number of these polemical articles are quoted in H.W.Richter, Bestandsaufnahme. Eine deutsche Bilanz 1962 and in the Almanach der Gruppe 47. Cf. also U. Johnson's Begleitumstände. Frankfurter Vorlesungen, Frankfurt a.M. 1980, esp. p.271.

Such novels tended to deal principally with the virtues and merits of individual characters in an apolitical fashion, even where the war was their subject.¹ In many of them, individual soldiers with their qualities of solidarity, friendship and love are idealized without reference to the historical context. After the ideological writings of the National Socialist era this predilection for an apolitical literature of entertainment is no doubt understandable. Compared with the vast sales of such works, the intellectual writers captured but a small part of the literary market, and although it is true to say that all the most prominent writers of the Federal Republic were associated with the Gruppe 47, in numerical terms they constituted only a small minority. Indeed when this is taken into account, the influence which they managed to exercise on public opinion was remarkable. Even when their works were not read, they were read about; the public knew and took issue with their views.

The reason why the Gruppe 47 for all that had little influence on social developments is to be found not in its minority status, but in the approach of its members to their creative work. The first generation of post-war writers wrote predominantly about the past -- to the point indeed of obsession. National Socialism and the war had been traumatic experiences, with which they felt they now had to come to terms. They set out to explore the causes of fascism and the nature of individual guilt and complicity. Most of them had seen active war service, and death, too, figured as a main theme in their works. Whether we look at the works of Wolfgang Koeppen, Hans Werner Richter, Alfred Andersch or the early novels of Heinrich Böll and Hans Erich Nossack, we find similar themes and attitudes: these writers are concerned with the moral nature of events, they warn against the evils of fascism and emphasize the crucial importance of personal integrity, but they offer no advice with regard to the problems of the present. It is noteworthy, for instance, that the disturbances of June 1953 in the GDR, although the West German media ascribed to them a significance far in excess of their actual import², found no reflection in literature until several years later.³ M.Reich-Ranicki has pointed out

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1. See H.L.Arnold, "Anmerkungen zur literarischen Entwicklung in der BRD", in H.L.Arnold & T.Buch (eds.), Positionen im deutschen Roman der sechziger Jahre, Munich 1974, pp.9-39; W.R.Langenbacher, "Unterhaltung als Märchen -- Unterhaltung als Politik. Tendenzen der Massenerliteratur nach 1945", in W.Kuttenkeuler (ed.), Poesie und Politik, Stuttgart/Berlin/Cologne/Mainz 1973, pp.236-258.
 2. For a detailed account of the events of 17 June 1953, in East Germany see D.Childs, East Germany, London 1969.
 3. Cf. Peter Hutchinson, The Chronicling of the last German Revolution: 17 June 1953 in the literature of East and West, paper delivered at the University of London, 12.5.1977; also S.Bock, "Der 17.Juni 1953 in der Literatur der DDR. Eine Bibliographie (1953-1979)", in P.G.Klussmann & H.Mohr (eds.), Literatur im geteilten Deutschland, Bonn 1980, pp.141-159.

that the West German writers of this first generation presented their characters primarily as victims of history.¹ Their stories are often largely autobiographical; they articulate the emotions, confusion and despair felt when the war, and with it Germany's aspirations, came to an end, leaving the terrible legacy of awareness of the atrocities committed by the National Socialist régime and the burden of guilt borne by those who had been involved with that régime.

The second generation was less personally involved in these experiences. Whilst aware that they owed their innocence to the lucky chance of their birth dates, they could look back on the war and the preceding years from a more detached position and attempt to judge the past in its totality, as a social phenomenon rather than as an individual fate. Their characters were observers, able to analyse their situation and draw from it conclusions regarding the present. They took the view that it would not be sufficient to change the individual, but that it was the social system which needed to be changed. With these young writers radical criticism of post-war German society becomes a major concern. In 1957 Hans Magnus Enzensberger published verteidigung der wölfe, a collection of poems sharply critical of the restoration of a capitalist social order and the resultant consumer society. Grass's Die Blechtrommel, the third section of which gives a mordantly ironic view of West Germany's post-war recovery, followed in 1959. These two works introduced a new era in West German literature more definitively and thoroughly than the older generation had done in 1945, and it is from the early 1960s onwards that writers began to reflect on their role in society as intellectuals with a responsibility going beyond the sphere of the merely personal.

B. Writers in the 1960s and 1970s.

As H.W. Richter pointed out, the founding members of the Gruppe 47 were first and foremost politically-minded intellectuals who also had literary ambitions; their increasing interest in literature was largely due to a lack of any opportunity to exert a direct political influence. At the same time other writers regarded literature as an autonomous sphere: if they had political interests, they kept them entirely separate from their literary work. These writers concentrated their attention on literary forms and the use of language rather than on themes as such. Such literature has of course continued to be produced down to the present

1. M.Reich-Ranicki, "Statt eines Nachworts: Die deutsche Schriftsteller und die deutsche Wirklichkeit", in Literatur der kleinen Schritte. Deutsche Schriftsteller heute, Munich 1967, p.320.

day, and the writers considered in this thesis are thus not representative of German literature as a whole.¹ They are, however, representative of the West German intelligentsia, with its concern and sense of responsibility for society.² They are furthermore well aware that to be a professional writer does not of itself confer the status of an intellectual:

Wir müßten erst mal untersuchen, ob der Schriftsteller an sich schon ein Intellektueller ist. Ich würde dies verneinen. (3)

To be an intellectual and a writer implies a conscious determination to attempt to influence society through one's writings. The intellectual writers since the war have shared this determination, although its extent and the manner of its implementation have varied. To generalize, we can say that the function of literature was seen by these writers as:

a) a moral corrective to the National Socialist past and the capitalist restoration of the 1950s. This resulted, in the novel, in an emphasis on the psychology of the characters, who tended to be seen as victims of history.

b) a moral and political corrective during the late 1950s and early 1960s: emphasis began to be placed on the individual in a social context, and the aim gradually became political -- rather than simply moral -- re-education.

c) an explicit attempt to bring about socio-political change in the 1960s. As will be shown, the crisis of the late sixties caused a division amongst the intellectuals. All recognized the need for political change, but opted for a variety of responses to the situation; these may be grouped into three main categories:

i) consistent support for the SPD despite disappointment with its increasingly pragmatic policies; the principal champion of this course was Grass, who expounded his reasons in political speeches and in Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke.⁴

ii) detachment and (temporary) withdrawal from political involvement. This did not mean a turn towards apolitical, individualistic writing, but

1. A number of intellectual writers have strongly protested against acquiring any such representative status and have for that reason refused to follow the Gruppe 47 on its visits abroad (e.g. Martin Walser). Objections have of course also been raised by writers not associated with the Gruppe 47.

2. Cf. Chapter 1.

3. G.Grass in a seminar on political science held in Bonn on 23.1.1973, quoted from G.Cepl-Kaufmann, Günter Grass. Eine Analyse des Gesamtwerks unter dem Aspekt von Literatur und Politik, Kronberg/Ts. 1975, p.188.

4. See Chapter 3, pp.145-154.

rather a wait-and-see attitude. This course was adopted by some of the older writers -- for example Alfred Andersch, who imaginatively explored the implications of social withdrawal in his novel Efraim¹ -- as well as by those whose political convictions were derived primarily from humanist principles -- for example Siegfried Lenz -- or who were not prepared to compromise their socialist principles by adopting a pragmatic stance -- for example Martin Walser.

iii) radical opposition and the demand for revolutionary change. On the whole, writers who opted for this course rejected literature as ineffective and chose direct political agitation instead. Of the established writers only Enzensberger took up this attitude, whose appeal was largely to the youngest generation.

d) the attempt in the 1970s -- after the failure of attempts to effect change in the late 1960s and in the absence of further scope for direct political action -- to offer enlightenment to the reader by means of clarifying the self or the individual character; readers were thus to be helped towards a clearer understanding of themselves and their environment. This was still conceived as an explicitly social function, not as a retreat into inwardness. It was indeed a reversion to the function of the intellectuals as understood by their earliest forerunners, the philosophes², who had seen their main task as the destruction of popular misconceptions. Hence in the novel of the 1970s one may discern a renewed emphasis on the individual and his psychological development; the social context is presented by implication in a critical light, but any change which is to be effected must, these novels imply, be made by and through the individual.

During the Adenauer era, certainly until 1959, the majority of the intellectuals associated with the Gruppe 47 had aligned themselves politically with the SPD, which provided a vehicle for democratic opposition to the conservative government. After the Bad Godesberg Conference in 1959, when the SPD -- after ten years in opposition -- finally abandoned what little was left of Marxian socialism in its programme and publicly committed itself to non-doctrinaire policies, quite a number of intellectuals were disappointed, considering the SPD's amended policies to be a betrayal of its principles. They decided nonetheless to support the SPD in its election campaign of 1961, when for the first time since 1949 success for the Social Democrats appeared a possibility. A 'Wahlkontor' was set up in West Berlin, where writers produced election slogans and other propaganda material. Martin Walser edited Die Alternative oder brauchen wir eine neue Regierung?,³ a collection of articles by such

1. See Chapter 3, pp.115-129.

2. See Chapter 1, p.13.

3. Reinbek bei Hamburg 1961.

eminent authors as Richter and Schnurre as well as the younger generation of Grass and Lenz. Although it was of course ultimately ineffective, as far as the election was concerned, 75,000 copies of Die Alternative were sold -- a clear sign that there was at least widespread interest in what these intellectuals had to say.

There was no direct reflection of this political activity in the novels of these years, which is not of course to say that the authors' aims did not include a critical scrutiny of contemporary society. In the early sixties documentary literature also began to emerge, but like the literature of the fifties this tended to be concerned predominantly with the past, a past which the writers concerned felt had been concealed rather than adequately investigated. The success of works such as Hochhuth's Der Stellvertreter (1962), Peter Weiss's Die Ermittlung (1964) or Heiner Kipphardt's In der Sache J. Robert Oppenheimer (1964) showed that the choice of subject-matter was timely, but like the works of the fifties these dramas did not offer constructive suggestions for the future. (Die Ermittlung does, however, include a fiercely polemical condemnation of the alleged unbroken continuity of political attitudes from the National Socialist past to the writer's present.)

Although the SPD lost the 1961 election, the intellectuals continued to support it. Factors which contributed to this support appear to have been the increasing unpopularity of the CDU (especially after the Spiegel affair of 1962), and the growing antipathy amongst the European intelligentsia towards the political Right in general in the wake of the McCarthy era in the USA, an antipathy that was very evident during the Cuba crisis of October 1962. Increasingly, however, the intellectuals began to feel that their commitment and its implicit expression in literature were not sufficient. They began to express their views more directly, in critical essays and speeches, although for the time being their views and suggestions did not go beyond the framework of social-democratic reform as represented by the policies of the SPD. Hans Magnus Enzensberger, who five years later was to become one of the most extreme radicals amongst the intelligentsia, was in 1963 still explicitly arguing that the intellectuals' criticism was not destructive but aimed at encouraging constructive change and reform:

Kritik, wie sie hier versucht wird, will ihre Gegenstände nicht abfertigen oder liquidieren, sondern dem zweiten Blick aussetzen.

Es gehört weder zu den Aufgaben noch zu den Möglichkeiten der Kritik, ihre Gegenstände abzuschaffen. Wer ihr zutraut, sie werde Herrschaft liquidieren, Machtverhältnisse aus den Angeln heben, verschwendet seine Hoffnungen oder seine Besorgnisse.

Kritik meint nicht gewaltsame Veränderung der Welt. . . . Was sich von innen her nicht verändern läßt, daran muß sie verliegen [sic]. (1)

A few years later Enzensberger had come to the conclusion that the problems of West German society could not be solved 'von innen her', and hence that revolution was the only way of effecting real change. In 1963, however, his aim, like that of most of his fellow writers, was 'Revision, nicht Revolution'.²

Despite the political involvement and concern that arose in the early 1960s, the older generation was disillusioned by the development of the political Left away from socialism towards more liberal pragmatic policies. Although the Gruppe 47 still met, its character had changed. It had become a straightforward literary forum, its meetings an opportunity for contact between writers and publishers, with a strong commercial orientation and hence with none of the uninhibited discussion between authors that had characterized its meetings in earlier years. Acceptance or rejection at these meetings could now make or break a writer's career. In 1962, surveying the developments of the previous fifteen years, Richter disappointedly wrote:

Auch dieses junge Deutschland . . . geboren aus einem politischen Impuls mit revolutionären Zielen und weiträumigen europäischen Aspekten, wurde in das Gebiet der Literatur verwiesen oder abgedrängt, oder begab sich selbst aus Ohnmacht und frühzeitiger Resignation freiwillig in dieses Gebiet. (3)

A similar sense of powerlessness was to take possession of the majority of writers before the end of the decade. But in the early years they were on the whole optimistic and dedicated to their task.⁴ They persevered because they had faith in the democratic system and were confident that they could convince the German people by appealing to their common sense and by showing them the true character of the people in power. This confidence was badly shaken, and for some entirely destroyed, when the SPD entered into the Grand Coalition with the CDU in 1966. This development broke the last ties which had held the West German intelligentsia together. Straightforward identification with the SPD was no longer possible for most of them, who thus lost their democratic channel of opposition. The intellectuals, without exception, protested against the Grand Coalition. Grass, then and later one of the staunchest of SPD supporters, protested vehemently in open letters to Kiesinger and Brandt⁵, arguing that the

1. H.M. Enzensberger, Einzelheiten, Frankfurt a.M.1962, 5th ed.1969, p.102.

2. Ibid.; also "Nachbemerkung", op.cit., p.207.

3. Almanach der Gruppe 47, p.11.

4. Cf. H.M. Enzensberger, "Klare Entscheidungen und trübe Aussichten" (1967) in J. Schickel, Über Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Frankfurt a.M.1970, pp.225-232, esp. pp.225-226.

5. Die Zeit, 9.12.1966, p.17.

appointment of Kiesinger as Federal Chancellor was morally unacceptable in view of Kiesinger's membership of the National Socialist Party from 1933-45 and his activities as a high-ranking civil servant during that period (which included providing a detailed commentary on the Nuremberg Laws of 1935), and that whatever political abilities Kiesinger might possess could not outweigh this moral objection. With Kiesinger as Chancellor Candidate of the CDU any cooperation with that Party on the part of the SPD would, Grass maintained, be equally objectionable. Grass's views on this matter never changed, but he decided nevertheless to continue his support for the SPD, partly because of his personal friendship with and admiration for Willy Brandt, partly because from a pragmatic point of view no alternative stance appeared more likely to prove fruitful. In an election speech in 1969, the Rede von den begrenzten Möglichkeiten¹, Grass explained that he had always been against the Grand Coalition, but emphasized that it had some useful achievements to its credit: the SPD had succeeded in modifying the economic policies of the CDU and the legal system, and had helped to alleviate unemployment.

The majority of the intellectuals, however, did not feel able or willing to compromise on matters of principle. Siegfried Lenz reluctantly supported the SPD's election campaign in 1966, in the hope that it might prove to be a first step towards the re-assertion of the Party's socialist principles. When this did not turn out to be the case, Lenz withdrew his support.² The reactions of those disillusioned with the SPD ranged from complete resignation, especially amongst the older intellectuals -- though as regards literary engagement this was in most cases only temporary -- to the search for affiliations further to the Left -- Martin Walser for example, although never joining the Party, from then on supported the Communists -- and to radical extra-parliamentary opposition, organized in the self-styled 'APO'.

The political crisis came to a head with the student demonstrations in Berlin in 1967 and was further inflamed by the unrest in Paris and the Vietnam war. It brought the end of the Gruppe 47. The actual cause of its demise was the fact that Richter had convened the next meeting of the group for August 1968 in Prague, but before the meeting could take place Soviet troops had invaded Czechoslovakia and Richter vowed that the group would not meet again until it was possible to do so in Prague. However,

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1. In Der Bürger und seine Stimme, Darmstadt/Neuwied 1974, pp.53-66.
 2. See the interview with M.Reich-Ranicki (1969) in S.Lenz, Beziehungen, Hamburg 1970, p.291. However, as soon as the SPD began to fight the elections as an independent Party again, Lenz resumed his support and continues this to the present day. See H.Wagener, Siegfried Lenz, Munich 1976, pp.12-14.

at the 1967 meeting in Princeton the differences amongst the members of the group had become so pronounced that there seemed to be little to keep them together any longer. This meeting coincided with a symposium held at Princeton University on the subject of "The Writer in the Affluent Society", which a number of German authors had been invited to attend. Here the question of engagement was again discussed. It had never been possible to define 'engagement' in such a way as to do justice to the views and attitudes of all writers who considered themselves 'engagé', for each held views differing considerably from those of others. Walter Jens, although applying himself in his work to social issues, had written in 1963:

Eines scheint gewiß: Alles ist in Fluß, und der Schriftsteller tut gut daran, nicht vorschnell nach neuen Bindungen zu suchen, sondern die Isolation, in die er sich gedrängt sieht, zu tragen und die Einsamkeit nicht zu verachten -- eine Einsamkeit, die umso größer ist, als er sich in der einmal gegebenen Lage weder als ein Sprecher einer Klasse noch als Repräsentant der Nation fühlen kan. . . . der deutsche Schriftsteller unserer Tage . . . von keiner Klasse beauftragt, von keinem Vaterland beschützt, mit keiner Macht im Bund, ist in der Tat ein dreifach einsamer Mann. Doch gerade diese Stellung inmitten der Pole, die Bindungslosigkeit eben läßt ihn -- eine ungeheure, einzigartige Chance! -- so frei sein wie niemals zuvor. (1)

In other words, Jens advocated the traditional position of the free intellectual: detached, observant, responsible ultimately only to himself.

Peter Weiss, on the other hand, defined engagement as a conscious decision by the author to commit himself to the replacement of the existing capitalist social order by a socialist order.²

At the same conference the leader of the discussion asked whether it was possible for any writer not to be 'engagé', suggesting that engagement was a kind of passive condition, inherent in the very fact of being a writer at all. Günter Grass took up this issue in his speech Vom mangelnden Selbstvertrauen der schreibenden Hofnarren unter Berücksichtigung nicht vorhandener Höfe.³ In this speech Grass compared the social position of the writer to that of the court jester: an outsider in 'normal' society, tolerated, indeed welcomed as an entertainer but not taken at all seriously. The jester might even, Grass suggested, be considered of more consequence than the writer, 'denn Narren haben ein Verhältnis zur Macht, Schriftsteller selten.' To some extent, he maintained, this is the writers'

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1. W.Jens, "Der Schriftsteller und die Politik" (1962), in W.Jens, Literatur und Politik, Pfullingen 1963, p.15.
 2. Cf. P.Weiss, "10 Arbeitspunkte eines Autors in der geteilten Welt" (1965) in Pinkerneil/Žmegač, Literatur und Gesellschaft, pp.241-246.
 3. In G.Grass, Über meinen Lehrer Döblin und andere Vorträge, Berlin 1968, pp.67-72.

own fault, because they lack the self-confidence to demand greater respect, no doubt as a reaction to the 'Olympian' conception of the great writer current in the nineteenth century, most notably in its image of Goethe. Literature should, Grass continued, provide entertainment in the first instance, but the German writer mistrusts this function and aspires to be taken more seriously, forgetting that 'Narren, die ihren Zirkus verleugnen, wenig komisch sind.' Taking Peter Weiss as an example Grass argued that a writer is admired by the public for his literary achievements; the moment he begins to give himself labels such as humanistischer or engagierter Schriftsteller he makes himself ridiculous: Grass asked rhetorically: 'Ist ein Schimmel mehr Schimmel, wenn wir ihn weiß nennen?' A writer is not a personal adviser to those in power; to imagine that he could be is a pleasing but entirely Utopian fantasy. Grass went on with heavy irony to say that the issue of engagement had become a cult in Germany, fostered by critics, Germanists, students and trade unionists, all demanding that writers should 'engage' themselves:

Nicht etwa, daß man von ihnen verlangt, sie sollten angesichts Parteien Partei ergreifen, etwa für oder gegen die Sozialdemokratie sein, nein, aus Schriftstellers Sicht, gewissermaßen als verschämte Elite, soll protestiert, der Krieg verdammt, der Frieden gelobt und edle Gesinnung gezeigt werden. (1)

Yet writers are known to be eccentric, individualistic beings, who, though they may meet at conferences, can only follow their own minds: even, Grass added, if they are communists, they all read their own Marx. Literature cannot do anything for society, at least not intentionally. The writer is a subjective individual, with his own specific talents. That does not mean, however, that he cannot do anything. But if he does do something, it is as a citizen, not as a writer. Literature is absolute, 'Das Gedicht kennt keine Kompromisse'; politics, on the other hand, is based on compromise. The writer might occasionally lend a helping hand in politics, but this must be clearly recognized as an activity separate from his literary work: it is what Grass calls 'gelegentlich den Schreibtisch umwerfen':

. . . es gibt auch die Menge Schriftsteller, bekannte und unbekannt, die weit entfernt von der Anmaßung 'Gewissen der Nation' sein zu wollen, gelegentlich ihren Schreibtisch umwerfen -- und demokratischen Kleinkram betreiben.

Grass himself has done this regularly and intensively, but he has always insisted that this was part of his duty as a German citizen, not his function as a writer. He has admitted that his fame as a writer has helped him to reach a wide audience with his political utterances, and he has

1. G.Grass, loc.cit., p.72.

gratefully acknowledged the advantage which this entails, but it does not fundamentally affect the issue. All this does not mean, however, that Grass entirely rejects the notion of engagement in literature: what it does mean is that literature is, in his view, implicitly engagé rather than explicitly. Grass confirmed this in a discussion with H.L.Arnold:

Daß [die Literatur] engagiert ist, ist für mich eine Selbstverständlichkeit, die völlig verschlüsselten und dunklen Gedichte von Paul Celan ebenso wie die politisch gemeinten Gedichte von Enzensberger. (1)

Grass is indeed convinced that literature will in the long run be socially effective. (He has for example spent much time and effort on establishing good libraries for the army.)² But the intellectual can and must do more as a short-term commitment. In Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke Grass explains in detail why he has chosen to devote a considerable part of his time and energy to political activity and insists that this does not interfere with or corrupt his literary work; he simply disappears occasionally from the socio-political arena in order to devote himself to his writing.³ It is the responsibility of the intellectual to do what he can towards the creation of a better society, for his own and future generations, and although this does not oblige him as a writer to produce pamphlets and propaganda, it does mean that he must express his beliefs publicly:

. . . denn die verstiegene Meinung, der Schriftsteller . . . dürfe sich nicht in die Niederungen der Politik herablassen, ist mir immer fremd und in ihrem elitären Anspruch zutiefst zuwider gewesen. . . . Ein Schriftsteller muß sich durch Wirklichkeiten, also auch durch politische Wirklichkeit in Frage stellen lassen; solches kann nur geschehen, wenn er seine Distanz aufgibt. (4)

In one respect, however, Grass has never departed from the traditional intellectual's role: he has not become a member of the SPD and he has not compromised his integrity for pragmatic motives. Although he campaigned for the election of the SPD, he has never turned a blind eye to their shortcomings and failures. Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke emphasized the moral basis of Grass's political choice and involvement; as he pointed out in Athens:

Ich will Ihnen keine falsche Hoffnung machen. Wer gelernt hat, daß moralische Appelle meist jenen helfen, die sie wohlformuliert aussprechen, wer keinen neuen blitzblanken Glauben zu verkünden weiß, der kann und darf nur Skepsis bieten. (5)

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1. H.L.Arnold, "Gespräch mit Günter Grass", in H.L.Arnold, Gespräche mit Schriftstellern, Munich 1975, pp.74-108.
 2. Cf. G.Grass, "Was lesen die Soldaten?", speech delivered to librarians in Bremen 1969, publ. in Der Bürger und seine Stimme, Darmstadt/Neuwied 1974, pp.46-52.
 3. The matter is arguably much more complex than this distinction suggests: this issue is discussed fully in Chapter 3, pp.145ff.
 4. G.Grass, "Rede gegen die Gewöhnung" (Athens 1972), in W.Kuttenkeuler (ed.) Poesie und Politik, Stuttgart 1973, (pp.396-403); p.398.
 5. Ibid., p.402.

Since Grass's involvement in the sixties was based, nonetheless, on substantial optimism and confidence in the persuasive power of reason, it was almost inevitable that he should be disappointed by subsequent developments. Although he still supported the SPD in 1972, he did not immediately campaign again after Willy Brandt's resignation in 1974. He has remained loyal to the principles of social democracy, but never uncritically. In an interview with Fritz Raddatz in April 1980 Grass confirmed that he still supports the SPD because it still seems to him the only viable alternative to the CDU; but he added: 'in dieser Situation halte ich Kritik für das beste Zeichen von Loyalität', and to Raddatz's suggestion that his present approach seemed to be that of a writer rather than that of a politician he replied:

Ich setze auch bewußt literarisch an, auch mit dem Selbstbewußtsein des Schriftstellers, der diese Negativ-Utopie vielleicht genauer mit unserer gesellschaftlichen Wirklichkeit konfrontieren kann als ein auf persönliche Wahlerfolge erpichteter Politiker. Ich bin ein unabhängiger Mann. (my italics) (1)

It is this last statement that identifies Grass as an intellectual before all else. His stance has changed with the times in respect of specific issues: he has assessed situations and drawn conclusions according to circumstances, and his guiding criteria have always been his own moral principles, never a theory of how a writer or intellectual should behave. It is such underlying principles that define the stance of the intellectual, principles shared by the German writers of the post-war era notwithstanding the substantial differences in their particular responses to the moral challenges with which the post-war era has confronted them.

Whereas Grass chose consistently to apply his political convictions to social reality, a large number of other writers could not do this because they did not accept the alternative offered by the SPD at that time. Nevertheless they accepted the concept of engagement for themselves. Peter Handke, for example, had rejected engagement both on principle and for personal reasons: in principle, he maintained, literature should deal with reality as subjectively experienced by the author and thus extend the reader's consciousness of reality.² In another essay³ Handke insisted even more radically than Grass on the distinction between writer and private citizen, denying that literature as such could be at all 'engagiert':

Eine engagierte Literatur gibt es nicht. Der Begriff ist ein Widerspruch in sich. Es gibt engagierte Menschen, aber keine engagierten Schriftsteller.

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1. F.J.Raddatz, "Kritik ist Beweis von Loyalität. Ein ZEIT-Gespräch mit Günter Grass", Die Zeit No. 18, 25.4.1980, p.46.
 2. P.Handke, "Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms" (1967), in P.Handke, Prosa Gedichte Theaterstücke Hörspiele Aufsätze, Frankfurt a.M.1974, (pp.263-272); p.263.
 3. P.Handke, "Die Literatur ist romantisch" (1969), op.cit., (pp.273-287), pp.275f.

Handke also rejected engagement for himself personally on the grounds that he had no political message to offer:

Ein engagierter Autor kann ich nicht sein, weil ich keine politische Alternative weiß zu dem, was ist, hier und woanders. . . . Ich weiß nicht, was sein soll. (1)

This refusal to identify himself with any social philosophy brought Handke into conflict with Martin Walser, who sharply criticized Handke's professed neutrality, asking:

Was heißt das: "zu dem, was ist"? Ist denn was ein für allemal? Das verändert sich doch andauernd, und man selber hat gar keine Chance, sich etwa bewegungslos und nichtswissend zu stellen. . . . Genügt es, sich aus methodischer Keuschheit nicht einzulassen mit dem Prozeß, der auf jeden Fall im Gange ist? (2)

Walser rejects Handke's claim that a writer can and should cultivate and articulate his individual perceptions independently of any socio-political perspective, on the grounds that all men are part of a specific social order, their perceptions conditioned by it, and forced by the nature of things either to accept or to dissent from that order. If a writer does nothing to oppose the status quo he will be identified, rightly, as a supporter of it. Walser accepts that Handke may not know of any political alternative, but blames him for his indifference towards that ignorance, which he relates to what he perceives as a new mood in Western society in general, a withdrawal from society into the self -- observable, for example, in both the adherents of pop-culture and those of autonomous art -- which may be perceived by the individuals concerned as a form of protest but is in fact a form of inwardness and egocentricity which will absorb and exhaust a man's energies without ever posing a threat to the established social order and hence without ever contributing to social change. Walser asserts that nobody has the right to pursue only his own personal liberation, but that everybody has the obligation to work towards the liberation of the whole of society. He draws parallels between the writers of engagement and those of inwardness with the writers of the 'äußere' and 'innere Emigration' respectively during the Third Reich, and insists that inwardness leaves the way open for a revival of fascism:

Befreiung des Menschen von der Gesellschaft, in der irrsinnig hoffnungslosen Hoffnung, daß da in uns neuro-physiologische Kapazitäten schlummern, die uns für alles gesellschaftliche Ärgernis entschädigen. Eine solche Gesellschaft ist nicht schwer zu haben. In ihr stirbt mit jedem Ausflug ins Innere eine demokratische Möglichkeit ab und die Möglichkeit zum Gegenteil -- und das heißt Faschismus -- nimmt zu. (3)

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1. P.Handke, op.cit., p.270.
 2. M.Walser, "Über die neueste Stimmung im Westen" (1969), in M.Walser, Wie und wovon handelt Literatur. Aufsätze und Reden, Frankfurt a.M. 1973, (pp.7-41); p.26.
 3. Ibid., p.33.

Walser agrees with the radical opposition that all literature in Western society is in essence bourgeois. He acknowledges that although the ruling classes claim that the writer is classless and enjoys complete freedom of speech, they in fact welcome the opposition of the intellectuals because it appears to confirm their own tolerance, whilst remaining in fact entirely harmless and ineffective. This 'repressive tolerance' in the form of freedom of speech is, Walser maintains, no more than a fetish, and is indeed increasingly recognized as such:

Der Fetisch Meinungsfreiheit hat sich ohnehin selbst entmythologisiert und zu erkennen gegeben als ein einfaches Herrschaftsinstrument. (1)

What writers in fact do, the argument is, is produce works of entertainment with which others pass their leisure time. They are adjusted to society's demands, and indeed could not exist otherwise. Indeed they have for a long time enjoyed a privileged special existence. When we consider Goethe, Walser says, and compare his self-indulgence with the standard of living of ordinary people in his society, we can only regard him as anti-social and cynical. This does not of course apply only to Goethe, but:

Brecht war sich dieser schneidenden Trennungslinie bewußt. Nach Brecht kann man nicht mehr so tun, als wüßte man nicht davon. (2)

Moreover, Walser continues, the privileges accorded to the intellectual impose severe restrictions on him: he is entirely dependent on the good will of the society which tolerates and supports him -- a dependence which ought to be reflected in his work:

Unsere Angepasstheit, unsere Abhängigkeit und die Funktion, die wir erfüllen, sollten reflektiert als Bewußtsein in unseren Produkten auftreten, sonst sind unsere Produkte blind und nur geeignet, andere in Blindheit zu erhalten. (3)

Here again, the writer's task is seen as that of enlightenment, the raising of consciousness. Walser thus argues that the non-committed writer harms both himself and society. By merely entertaining -- even if this is done in the role of non-conformist and enfant terrible -- he allows the reader to identify with him temporarily whilst passively acquiescing in his own situation. The privileged position of the intellectual then entails a breach of integrity, which Walser condemns as a form of decadence:

Vor allem kann man jetzt fragen, ob es wirklich im Interesse des sgn. freien Schriftstellers ist, wenn er die von der Gesellschaft angebotene und honorierte narzißtische Existenz praktiziert. Er praktiziert eine untergehende Lebensweise. Und er ist im darwinischen Sinne monströs. Darwin beschreibt das so: "Der Federbüschel auf der Brust des wilden Truthahns dürfte keinerlei Nutzen haben,

1. loc.cit., p.38. This is one of the main themes of Das Einhorn, see Chapter 3, pp.74-85.

2. loc.cit., p.40.

3. loc.cit., p.32.

und es ist zweifelhaft, ob er in den Augen der Henne als Zierde gilt. Hätte sich dieser Büschel erst im Zustande der Domestikation gezeigt, so würden wir ihn zweifellos eine Monstrosität nennen." Der Schriftsteller, der eine gesellschaftliche Lizenz zum Narzißmus ausbeutet, ist auf die feinste Weise domestiziert, deshalb ist seine scheinbar wilde oder bizarre oder verachtungsreiche oder feindselige persönliche Aufführung samt seinen privilegierten Freiheitstänzen nichts als monströs. (1)

Walser's call for engagement is worded much more strongly than that of Grass; although Walser has always made it clear that he admired the consistency with which Grass took the decisions that were right for him, he disagrees fundamentally with them. For Walser the SPD has betrayed its principles, as did those intellectuals who, after their short-lived revolt in the late sixties, soon re-adjusted to the status quo, and whom Walser sharply attacked in Heimatbedingungen:

Die Intellektuellen, die sich in den Sechzigerjahren in der Zeit und im Spiegel als Linke vernehmen liessen, treten jetzt wieder furchtlos als Liberale auf . . . unsere führenden Intellektuellen scheinen damit einverstanden zu sein, daß unserer Entwicklung zur Demokratie die Grenzen gesetzt werden, die der Kapitalismus einer Demokratie setzt. (2)

This is a violation of the principles which the SPD had upheld until 1959, and Walser insists that it is not the task of the intelligentsia to go along with the Party in this violation but to reassert the original principles as a yardstick by which to measure actual developments and achievements. Although Walser approaches the issue from a Communist point of view, his attitude in itself is the traditional one of the intellectual. Indeed, it will be demonstrated in Chapter 6 that the behavioural patterns of the intelligentsia in capitalist and communist countries are not fundamentally different: differences exist with regard to specific issues, but the commitment to individual integrity and principled detachment is the same.

Walser argues that in the long run the SPD would also be better served if the intellectuals were to adhere to their proper functions:

Wäre nicht uns und der SPD besser gedient, wenn wir uns der schnellen Versöhnung und Teilhabe widersetzen, wenn wir draußen blieben bei denen, die unter minderem Recht existieren? Nicht gleich als deren "externe Avantgarde" oder Ehrenproletarier. (3)

Walser here rejects the demand of the Communist parties that intellectuals should demonstrate solidarity with the working class by assuming leadership of their cause, along with the vulgar-Marxist notion that intellectuals and workers belong to the same exploited class since both are modern proletarians who live by selling their labour. Walser's support for the socially

1. loc.cit., p.40.

2. In Wie und wovon handelt Literatur?, (pp.89-99), p.91, 93.

3. Ibid., p.96.

disadvantaged has moral rather than ideological grounds. In the short poem 'Begründung' he wrote:

Mein Auftraggeber sei der, dem es schlechter geht.
Die Sprache hab ich von meiner Angst.
Mir fällt ein, was mir fehlt. Ich schreibe
nicht aus Übermut. (1)

Although he never joined the Party, Walser's sympathies turned to the Communists because he felt that the SPD no longer offered a genuine socialist alternative. This did not mean, however, that he had departed from his democratic principles. The defence of democracy remained in his view the chief concern of the contemporary intellectual: 'Wir haben die Aufgabe, andauernd das demokratische Manko auszurufen.'² He became increasingly embittered by developments in the SPD, especially after it accepted the view that the DKP was a party of the radical Left and ought to be banned for reasons of national security, which led, not to an actual ban, but to the 'Radikalenerlaß' of 1972, which Walser denounced as an act of dishonest opportunism:

Die SPD hat sich dazu verführen lassen, die realdemokratische Bewegung als linksradikal zu diffamieren und diffamieren zu lassen. Das hat die SPD natürlich nicht getan, weil sie das glaubt. Die SPD weiß sehr genau, daß etwa die DKP alles andere als eine linksradikale Partei ist. (3)

Walser drew practical consequences from his situation. He did not, like Grass, become involved in political campaigning, but he did become involved, like the latter, in practical issues. Whilst Grass participated in a number of 'Bürgerinitiativen', Walser took an interest in working-class literature. He felt that intellectuals could only write about the reality they knew and were thus not qualified to depict the reality of working-class life. Therefore he encouraged the movement of worker-writers, which had started in 1961 with the Gruppe 61 in Dortmund and had culminated in the Werkkreis 70. The Gruppe 61 had set out with clear political aims: it intended to deal with themes from the industrial world in works of genuine literary quality as a vehicle for a critique of the West German political system. Literary standards were to be rigorously upheld: the Gruppe 61 explicitly rejected the tradition of 'Arbeiterliteratur' on the model of the BPRS⁴ or as practised in the GDR. Nevertheless, little of the work produced by members of the Gruppe 61 has literary merit, except perhaps for some of the writings of Günter Walraff and

1. In A.Voigtländer and H.Witt (eds.), Denkzettel. Politische Lyrik aus den 60er Jahren der BRD und Westberlin, Reclam, Leipzig 1977, p.456.

2. "Heimatbedingungen", loc.cit., p.97.

3. "Wahlgedanken", in Wie und wovon handelt Literatur?, (pp.100-118);p.111.

4. See Chapter 4, Excursus, pp.200ff.

Max von der Grün. These latter were however soon claimed by the Werkkreis 70, a group of worker-writers who rejected the fictional approach of the writings of the Gruppe 61 and opted instead for documentary writing. Walser encouraged these writers to produce a genuinely un-bourgeois literature of a kind of which bourgeois writers such as himself were in the nature of things not capable.¹ In fact, in the documentary writings of the Werkkreis 70 the role of the 'author' was reduced to the assembling of recorded interviews and other documentary material -- an editorial function, albeit one which allows for a degree of subjectivity with regard to selection, presentation and commentary.

As for himself, Walser has never tried to describe any world other than the one he knows, which is that of the bourgeois intellectual. Although all his novels show most strikingly the alienation which modern man experiences in Western society, where survival demands continuous adaptation and suppression of non-conformist aspirations, and where material affluence and the escape into illusions provide only inadequate compensation, Walser does not attempt to create any alternative world in his fiction. Like Grass he feels that the most he can offer is scepticism. Whenever he discusses the possibility of a communist alternative he does so with cautious irony. The 'Tendenz' in his works is nonetheless undeniable, and Walser admits this, but argues that it is the natural outcome of his experience, not a preconceived premise for his writing: literature has a 'Vermittlungsfunktion'² and by communicating his own experiences, articulating them through literary language and forms, he discovers his own 'Tendenz':

Voller Tendenzen zeigen sich, wenn du sie aufschreibst, deine Erfahrungen. Aufmerksam geworden, machst du neue Erfahrungen, die du aufschreibst. Als dein Leser entdeckst du deine Tendenz zum Sozialismus. (3)

With the exception of Die Gallistl'sche Krankheit⁴ the 'Tendenz' remains implicit. Rather than create a fictitious better world Walser prefers to point out the dangers of the real world, the ways in which it suppresses individuality and enforces conformity, a conformity which ultimately destroys the individual personality. His implicit advice is therefore that the individual should defend his integrity and independence against the encroachments of society: advice which the majority of intellectuals were offering in their writings during the 1970s.

Another major writer disappointed with the SPD in the 1960s was Siegfried Lenz. From 1961 to 1966 Lenz campaigned actively for the SPD,

1. See Walser's Preface to Erika Runge, Bottroper Protokolle, Frankfurt a.M. 1968, p.9.
2. "Hölderlin zu entsprechen", in Wie und wovon handelt Literatur?, (pp.42-66); p.62.
3. "Arbeitsprogramm", in Denkzettel, p.456.
4. See Chapter 3, pp.94-104.

but his objections to the Grand Coalition prevented him from doing so in 1969. In 1972, however, he campaigned again, explaining his renewed support in terms not of ideology but of very specific social issues:

Ich halte die gegenwärtige Gesellschaft für reformbedürftig, von der Mitbestimmung am Arbeitsplatz bis zu einer gerechteren Vermögensverteilung; vom Mieterschutz bis zur Chancengleichheit in Bildung und Ausbildung, von einer Steuerreform bis zu einer unauf-schiebbaren Bodenrechtsreform; hier sind Änderungen nötig, Verbesserungen. Für diese Verbesserungen trete ich ein, indem ich am Wahlkampf teilnehme, redend, schreibend. (1)

Lenz has consistently made it clear that he desires reform, not revolution; his interests are practical and humanitarian. Like Grass, he never actually joined the SPD, on the grounds that the intellectual must retain his freedom and detachment to comment on social matters, but from a position securely within his society, not an elevated position of privilege:

. . . ich war jedesmal beunruhigt bei der Feststellung, daß man dem Autor einen sozusagen erhöhten, womöglich schwebenden Drehsessel zudachte, von dem aus er die Untauglichkeit der Welt kommentierte. Denn der angestammte, der ordentliche Platz eines Autors -- so ist es mir zumindest immer vorgekommen -- ist der Platz zwischen den Stühlen. Freiwillig, von keinem eingeladen oder berufen, auf niemandes Schoß, eher dem Argwohn ausgesetzt als durch Vertrauen ausgezeichnet, sollte ein Autor mit dieser Unbequemlichkeit einverstanden sein. Er sollte, meine ich, keinem verpflichtet sein. (2)

Detachment and independence are thus for Lenz moral obligations; only if he defends this position can he perform his task, which Lenz goes on to define as the stimulation of fruitful discontent and self-examination as a means of opening the way to change:

schließlich enthält die Literatur doch ein (heimliches oder offenes) Plädoyer für Veränderungen, und daß man auf Veränderungen unwillig reagiert, sollte uns nicht verblüffen. Wie der unbequeme Sitzplatz eines Autors dazu geeignet sein kann, gewisse Empfindungen -- sagen wir: ein kleines Schmerzgefühl -- wachzuhalten, so kann in der Tatsache, daß die Rolle der Literatur nicht übereinstimmend festgelegt ist ihre ausgemachte Chance liegen: sie animiert uns zu Spruch und Widerspruch. Sie stimuliert uns zur Selbstüberprüfung. (3)

For Lenz, as for Walser, writing is not simply a means of communicating political views to his readers -- and certainly not of attempting to impose these views on them -- but a process of self-exploration and the exploration of other people's behaviour and circumstances:

. . . Weil das Schreiben für mich unter anderem auch eine Möglichkeit zur Selbstbefragung ist, wobei man sich zwangsläufig einigermaßen kennenlernt . . . Schreiben ist eine gute Möglichkeit, um Personen, Handlungen und Konflikte verstehen zu lernen. (4)

Lenz's aim is thus both to learn and to impart what he has learned, through the act of writing: he frankly admits to a didactic element in his work,

1. In E. Rudolph, Protokoll zur Person, Munich 1971, p.104.
2. S. Lenz, "Der Sitzplatz eines Autors", in Beziehungen, Hamburg 1970, p.48.
3. Ibid., p.49. The metaphor of 'Schmerzgefühl' is used by Grass as one of the central metaphors of örtlich betäubt, in Starusch's toothache.
4. Beziehungen, p.41.

but hopes to legitimize this element by establishing a 'pact', a working relationship with his readers, rather than by means of shock or provocation. What is to be explored and communicated is not limited to the sphere of personal psychology, moreover. In a speech in Bremen in 1962 Lenz professed his social commitment and spoke of the writer's moral obligation to use his freedom -- a very real freedom, as he insisted -- to socially productive ends. The writer, he said, should explore and reveal common concerns, 'eine gemeinsame Not, gemeinsame Leidenschaften, Hoffnungen, Freuden, eine Bedrohung, die alle betrifft.'¹ The writer's responsibility is not to create artifacts of beauty that are merely decorative, but to articulate the concerns of common humanity, that has no medium of its own to voice those concerns:

Mein Anspruch an den Schriftsteller besteht nicht darin, daß er, verschont von der Welt, mit einer Schere schöne Dinge aus Silberpapier schneidet . . . Es scheint mir, daß seine Arbeit ihn erst dann rechtfertigt, wenn er das Schweigen nicht übergeht, zu dem andere verurteilt sind. (2)

The one thing which a writer must not do, Lenz insists, is to confirm his readers in a complacent acceptance of the status quo:

. . . vieles kann man von der Literatur verlangen, aber unter keinen Umständen dies: daß sie irgendjemandem zu einem guten Gewissen verhilft. (3)

In his own work Lenz addresses himself to the conflicts of modern society from a moral, humanist rather than an ideological position. Hence his interest (e.g. in Deutschstunde) in the psychological and ethical rather than the political aspects of National Socialism. He shares the older generation's rejection of dogmatism and fanaticism, and prefers to instill doubt rather than offer ready-made solutions to problems. He poses questions without claiming to know the answers: this is particularly clearly the case in Das Vorbild.⁴ Like Grass in örtlich betäubt Lenz sets before the reader not conclusions but complex thought-processes which challenge the reader's preconceptions. Moral rather than political concepts are at the centre of gravity of his work: freedom, power, tyranny, cruelty, humanity.⁵ In this, as in his insistence on detachment, Lenz stands in the mainstream of the tradition of the intellectual.

Alfred Andersch went further than other intellectuals in his withdrawal from direct political involvement. Although immediately after the war he was one of the first intellectuals to concern himself with political issues, he had during the 1950s increasingly withdrawn from political

1. "Der Künstler als Mitwisser", Beziehungen (pp.278-286); p.281.

2. Ibid., pp.281f.

3. Ibid., p.284.

4. See Chapter 3, pp.155-170.

5. Cf. H.-J.Greif, "Das szenische Werk", in J.W.Schwarz, Der Erzähler Siegfried Lenz, Berne/Munich 1974, pp.93-127.

activity. From 1955-58 he edited the magazine Texte und Zeichen which self-consciously addressed itself to a small élite of intellectuals.¹ By the sixties he had come to share Richter's disillusionment. In his novel Efraim (1967), as in the earlier Die Rote, he explored in fictional terms the possibility of a thoroughgoing withdrawal into a life exclusively devoted to personal concerns. It would, however, be wrong to identify the author with his creation: as Andersch pointed out in Winterspelt: 'Geschichte berichtet, wie es gewesen. Erzählung spielt eine Möglichkeit durch.'² Although the eponymous hero of Efraim turns his back on society -- possibly only temporarily -- Andersch himself has not done so. But it was some considerable time before he entered the political arena at all. Throughout the radical upheavals of the late sixties Andersch preserved the cautious moderation to which he had committed himself in his first published work, the autobiographical 'Bericht', Die Kirschen der Freiheit:

Ich werde es hoffentlich stets ablehnen, Menschen überzeugen zu wollen. Man kann nur versuchen, ihnen die Möglichkeiten zu zeigen, aus denen sie wählen können. Schon das ist anmaßend genug, denn wer kennt die Möglichkeiten, die der andere hat? Der andere ist nicht nur der Mitmensch, sondern auch der ganz andere, den man niemals erkennen kann. (3)

Although a socialist and one-time member of the Communist Party Andersch never accepted any Marxist simplification of human nature which sees man as a purely social being whose personal needs can be fulfilled only within the collective; he has always given great emphasis to the great variety and often unsocial nature of individual needs and aspirations. But at the same time, as a writer and intellectual Andersch sees his place firmly within society, not beyond, above or outside it. Max Bense⁴ has argued that whilst one of Andersch's main themes is that of flight, it is never a question of flight from the world, but rather flight into the world, into society, away from a system that has been rejected. In Andersch's short story In der Nacht der Giraffe the narrator is advised by a friend to go away for a while:

Fortgehen, um zu erkennen, daß Freiheit nicht bedeutet, irgendeine Ideologie wählen zu können, sondern das Unrecht zu zerreißen, wo immer man es trifft. (5)

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1. See the review by H.M.Enzensberger, "Was die Deutschen leider nicht lesen wollten. Zum Reprint der von Alfred Andersch 1955-1958 herausgegebenen Zeitschrift", Die Zeit No. 6, 2.2.1979, p.35.
 2. A.Andersch, Winterspelt, Zürich 1974, p.22.
 3. A.Andersch, Die Kirschen der Freiheit, Frankfurt a.M. 1951; paperback edition Diogenes Verlag Zürich 1968, p.78.
 4. M.Bense, "Portrait Alfred Andersch 1962", in H.L.Arnold, Geschichte der deutschen Literatur aus Methoden, Frankfurt a.M. 1972, Bd. 1, pp.205-216.
 5. In A.Andersch, Geister und Leute (1958); paperback edition Diogenes Verlag Zürich 1974, pp.118f.

When in this story, written in the 1950s, the characters discuss the topic of violence, Pierre advises the narrator that violence may sometimes be necessary, but the narrator later gives up his struggle after the death of an opponent, deciding that this is too high a price to pay, even in the quest for justice. When in the late sixties violence became a real issue, Andersch did not support or condone violent measures, although he reacted extremely bitterly to the autocratic measures taken by the government. Andersch abstained from the debates of the sixties and held fast to his moral premises; but when in the mid-seventies the majority of the radical Left had accepted a more moderate approach to the problem of social change, Andersch became again more outspoken, indeed almost programmatic in his play Tapetenwechsel¹ and extremely aggressive and bitter in the poem Artikel 3(3) (1976)² which openly equated the 'Radikalenerlaß' with neo-Nazism, caused a scandal in the Federal Republic and triggered off violent polemics in the press which continued for several months.

Amongst the younger writers there was little enthusiasm for oblique criticism: they desired immediate results and called for direct action. The following poem by Richard Limpert is typical of many in the bitter sarcasm with which it views the established intelligentsia:

'Der Engagierte'³

Er dünkt sich fortschrittlich,
gibt sich im vertrauten Kreise
progressiv und bewußtseinsstark.
Ein charmanter Polit-Plauderer,
ein theoretischer ...-ismus-Strategie.
Im Vertrauen auf die Entscheidungsfähigkeit
seiner Frau verbindet er Taktik
und Strategie auf seine Weise,
um jedes Risiko hinsichtlich
seiner beruflichen Position auszuklammern.
Aber
Picassos Friedenstauben durchflattern die Wohnung,
Ernst Busch und Gisela May
kreisen auf dem Plattenteller,
Wladimir Majakowski, Bertolt Brecht und andere
belasten die String-Regale
(seine Frau hat Geschmack).
Was solls und wem nützt es? Das war die Frage.
Die Post des aufrichtigen Freundes
beantwortet er nicht.
Der Brief begann mit der Anrede:
Lieber Onanismus.

A few of the older intellectuals shared the radicalism of the youth movement. Enzensberger in 1967 drew up a balance of the preceding five

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1. In H.L.Arnold (ed.), "Alfred Andersch", Text+ Kritik 61/62, Munich 1979, pp.71-92.
 2. In A.Andersch, empört euch der himmel ist blau, Zürich 1977, pp.109-114.
 3. In Denkzettel, pp.306f.

years¹ in which he concluded that the political situation in the Federal Republic had deteriorated considerably since 1962. With clear reference to Grass's Princeton speech² Enzensberger wrote, in language much more pessimistic than that to be found in many of his fellow writers:

Wieder einmal scheint es, als ginge Deutschland finsternen Zeiten entgegen. Es wird nicht das Schlimmste an dieser Finsternis sein, daß die deutsche Literatur aufhört, ein Narrenparadies für oppositionelle Schriftsteller zu sein. (3)

In 1962 he had still believed that the intellectuals could make a social contribution through literature, but now that faith had been lost:

Heute liegt die politische Harmlosigkeit aller literarischen, ja aller künstlerischen Erzeugnisse überhaupt offen zutage . . . Ihr aufklärerischer Anspruch, ihr utopischer Überschuß, ihr kritisches Potential ist zum bloßen Schein verkümmert. (4)

Whilst still counting himself as belonging to the rationalist intelligentsia, Enzensberger became convinced that rational argument was powerless and that radical action was necessary.⁵ In the face of this dilemma Enzensberger proclaimed the death of literature.

Other writers did not accept this bleak conclusion. Some of them attempted to draw up a specific programme of political activity for the literary intelligentsia, notably support for the Trades Unions by way of political analysis and formulation of concrete demands, and exposure of the manipulative function of popular culture.⁶ It is difficult to speculate how successful these writers might have been in the Federal Republic if they had approached their task in an organized manner. . . Certainly there can be no doubt that the student movement initially found more support and sympathy amongst the German population than had seemed likely. But a large number of intellectuals, whilst sympathetic to the cause and willing to write for and about it, were not willing to become actively involved. Enzensberger for one rejected 'konkrete Politik [als] Stumpfsinn und mit produktiver Intelligenz nicht vereinbar'⁷, a stance which led critics to comment that his views were a mixture of anarchism and utopia. Reinhold Grimm⁸ went even further and accused Enzensberger of retreating into an utterly impotent solipsism:

1. H.M.Enzensberger, "Klare Entscheidungen und trübe Aussichten", loc.cit.
2. See pp.34f.
3. loc.cit., p.231.
4. "Gemeinplätze, die neueste Literatur betreffend", in Kursbuch 15, 1968, (pp.187-197); p.194.
5. See "Berliner Gemeinplätze", Kursbuch 11, 1968, pp.151-169, and "Berliner Gemeinplätze II", Kursbuch 13, 1968, pp.190-197.
6. J.Mader, "Parabase auf einen traumatischen Zustand", Kürbiskern 1, 1965, pp.146-155, esp. pp.153f.
7. "Versuch von der deutschen Frage Urlaub zu nehmen", in H.M.Enzensberger, Deutschland, Deutschland unter anderm, Frankfurt a.M.1967, (pp.37-48)p.42.
8. R.Grimm, "Bildnis Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Struktur, Ideologie und Vorgeschichte eines Gesellschaftskritikers", Basis IV (1973), pp.131-174.

Denn was bei Hans Magnus Enzensberger zunächst übrigbleibt, ist ja nicht einmal mehr jene punktuelle Revolte, in der blinde Anarchie und leere Utopie zusammenfallen, sondern wirklich nur noch jenes punktuelle Ich: die um sich kreisende, in sich verfangene res cogitans des kritischen Intellektuellen. (1)

Other writers opted for direct political activity to the extent of abandoning literature altogether, such as Peter Schneider, who wrote: 'Was wir sehen und erleben, ist überhaupt nicht mehr zu beschreiben, sondern nur noch zu ändern'² and turned his energies to writing and distributing political pamphlets.

When it became evident that political pamphleteering was no more effective than creative literature as a means of effecting social change, a small number of writers resolved to make common cause with the terrorist fringe, that drew support principally from student circles.³ They proclaimed the situation between the oppositional Left and the State to be one of civil war and called for revolutionary violence. Peter-Paul Zahl, who was convicted of incitement to violence and imprisoned, had conceded that there was no reason for writers to abandon their writing, which was neither more nor less than an occupation like any other, but had exhorted them to embrace revolutionary violence as well:

ist er [the intellectual] jung genug, kann und muß er sich; anderen jungen revolutionären gleich, üben in den künsten des steine- und molotowcocktailwerfens, der subversiven aktion, der waffenkenntnis, der chiffrierung, des bombenbauens, der funkerei, karate, boxen und judo, der illegalen flugblatt- und zeitungsverbreitung, des rufmords, der verunsicherung -- in der vorbereitung auf den bewaffneten kampf. (4)

The wave of urban terrorism which began in the early seventies and which found support in verbal radicalism such as Zahl's contributed substantially to discrediting the political Left in the Federal Republic and was to a large extent directly responsible for the subsequent increased repression of left-wing movements. For such advocates of direct action literature was reduced to a very subordinate function indeed, and for the time being the young radicals abandoned it entirely.⁴ For a number of years indeed fictional literature lost its popularity with a large number of readers, whilst book sales showed a phenomenal increase in the demand for non-fiction. Literature during these years was enjoyed by the young primarily in the

1. Loc.cit., p.159.

2. Quoted from Michael Schneider, Die lange Wut zum langen Marsch. Aufsätze zur sozialistischen Politik und Literatur, 1968-1974; Reinbek 1975, p.317.

3. Cf. J.Roberts, "Terrorism and German Intellectuals", Journal of Area Studies, No.3, Spring 1981, pp.21-25.

4. P.-P.Zahl, "literatur und revolutionärer kampf", in Pinkerneil/Žmegač, Literatur und Gesellschaft (pp.269-278); p.277. Zahl was born in 1944 and became a writer and publisher of anarchist-revolutionary literature in West Berlin; he edited the journal spartacus and wrote a novel, Von einem, der auszog, Geld zu verdienen. (1970).

form of protest songs or poems, either in book form or on gramophone records.

Another aspect of the youth movement of the 1960s was the pop culture¹ which spread all over Europe from the United States, where it has been strongly influenced by Herbert Marcuse. The members of the 'Frankfurter Schule', however, did not advocate, as did other Marxists, the solidarity of the intelligentsia with the working class. On the contrary, they saw in the distance between the two the most favourable situation for the intellectuals to instruct the proletariat and thus help to effect social change. They were well aware of the role played by culture in the social process, but unlike orthodox Marxists they rejected the concept of prescriptive, well-ordered and explicitly political art. Theodor Adorno argued that the problems of present-day society arose largely from the rigidity of the social hierarchy and hence that: 'Aufgabe von Kunst heute ist es, Chaos in die Ordnung zu bringen.'² Adorno suggested that since the trend in modern society was towards a mass culture, art could combat this trend best by adherence to its own values and principles, not by political agitation or even the choice of explicit political themes:

Kunst heißt nicht: Alternativen pointieren, sondern durch nichts anderes als ihre Gestalt, dem Weltlauf widerstehen, der den Menschen immerzu die Pistole auf die Brust setzt . . . Die rücksichtslose Autonomie der Werke, die der Anpassung an dem Markt und dem Verschleiß sich entzieht, wird unwillkürlich zum Angriff. (3)

For Marcuse, however, this was not enough: he argued that because art had been for so long an established component of bourgeois culture, the creation of a counter-culture would lead to the destruction of bourgeois values in art. Since art had always been élitist, he argued, there was no point in making it available to the masses in its bourgeois form, because it would then only function as a form of compensation, temporarily blinding people to their true social condition. In 1937 Marcuse had written that the separation of the cultural life offered to the masses from their material base served the manipulative purpose of reconciling them to the inequalities that were an essential part of that base. Now, in the 1960s, he advocated that art should encourage the masses to reject these inequalities. In practice, however, the subject-matter of American

1. See Jost Hermand, "Pop oder die These vom Ende der Kunst", Basis I, 1970, pp.94-115; Paul Konrad Kurz, "Beat--Pop--Underground", in Über moderne Literatur, Vol. III, Frankfurt a.M. 1971, pp.233-279.
2. Th.Adorno, Minima Moralia, Frankfurt a.M.1978, p.298 (first published 1951); also in Gesammelte Schriften Bd. 4, Frankfurt a.M.1980, p.251.
3. Th.Adorno, "Engagement", in Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. 11, Frankfurt a.M. 1974,(pp.409-430); p.413f.

pop culture consisted largely of violence, pornography and science-fiction. In 1969 Brinkmann and Rygulla edited a German anthology of American writings under the title of Acid, in the wake of which a number of German novels and poems were written which adopted a similar approach. Martin Walser took issue with this trend¹ maintaining that the self-indulgent and escapist nature of this counter-culture rendered it entirely ineffective: he even rejected as inadequate what he saw as the one positive aspect of that culture, the hippie cult of love. Whilst conceding that the adherents of this cult were justified in pointing out the shortcomings of bourgeois relationships, Walser predicted that their protest would remain ineffective because of the form it took: the rejection of any identification with society and the concomitant retreat into inwardness, whilst understandable as a reaction to the hypocrisies displayed by people on both the Left and the Right, could, he asserted, lead only to temporary liberation, since true liberation required more than the mere satisfaction of individual personal desires. Adherents of the pop culture had rejected Marxism on the grounds that it was no more than one rationalist system of thought among many, and had advocated mysticism enhanced by psychedelic drugs and music -- a position trenchantly dismissed by Walser with the words: 'man kann durch Wahn das Bewußtsein nicht erweitern'.² The majority of intellectuals agreed with him³, and continued to regard the main function of literature as the articulation and communication of significant experience.

With Brandt's election victory in 1972 the political situation was stabilized. Günter Grass described the situation, at the end of Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke, as a 'Stillstand im Fortschritt'⁴ and accepted this termination of the intellectual's role in politics with no more than his customary melancholy. In an interview with Heinz Ludwig Arnold⁵ he denied that he had lost his interest in or commitment to politics, but did admit to occasional moods of resignation. He intended, he said, to regard the immediate future as a period of stock-taking: having devoted himself for some time to literature and politics simultaneously, he had decided that for the time being literature would be his prime concern. As for other intellectuals, because they had maintained their detachment despite their engagement and had preserved a sceptical attitude, they found it easier to adjust to the new situation; their position did not

1. M. Walser, "Über die neueste Stimmung im Westen", loc.cit.

2. Ibid., p.23.

3. See for example Lenz's description of the pop-concert and the violent youths who attack Pundt in Das Vorbild, Chapter 3, p.162.

4. Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke, Neuwied/Darmstadt 1972, pp.355 & 368.

5. In Berlin, on 28.11.1970; published in Text+Kritik 1/1a, 5th. ed., 1978, pp.1-26.

fundamentally change. As has been seen, Grass and Lenz continued to express their own basic attitudes in their works and stayed with the SPD in matters of practical politics. Walser also remained faithful to his principles, although he was inevitably more disillusioned than Grass or Lenz -- disillusioned too with his fellow-writers: whereas at the beginning of the decade he had evinced admiration for Grass's consistency in political matters, his later comments were heavy with irony:

'Ergänzung einer Allegorie'¹

Daß du langsam bist, Schnecke, hätte uns
so ausführlich kaum gesagt werden müssen,
das schätzen wir doch. Nur daß du so rasch
nach rechts kriechst, wundert uns.

But for the young radicals it was harder to come to terms with their disappointment. Enzensberger's Mausoleum (1975) was deeply pessimistic, and the same can be said of a number of novels published in the early seventies which attempted to describe the experience of the revolt of the late sixties and the hopes of the young communists. At the same time some younger writers² took up a suggestion made by Reinhard Baumgart³ in 1970:

Wäre nicht denkbar, daß künftig eine politische Literatur weniger
Kritik liefern, als utopische Phantasie befreien und vermehren
könnte?

Meanwhile the political climate had changed. The end of the Vietnam war did much to relieve international tensions, while the economic recession made the SPD's pragmatism more palatable and led to a strengthening of State influence on public life. Partly as a result of the numerous clausus in the higher education system, partly of the unemployment situation -- particularly the shortage of civil service posts, including of course all posts in the teaching profession -- the younger generation became more subdued and left-wing literature forfeited a considerable part of its market. The 'Radikalenerlaß', for all the vehement protest which it elicited, contributed to this chastened mood. Whilst a considerable amount of political literature continued to appear in the 1970s, it differed from that of the 1960s in being chiefly directed towards specific issues of national rather than international politics, and not any longer concerned with reform of the political system per se. Just as there were civil demonstrations against nuclear power and unemployment, pollution and other environmental issues, so literature tended to deal

1. M. Walser, Der Grund zur Freude. 99 Sprüche zur Erbauung des Bewußtseins. Düsseldorf 1978, Spruch 72.

2. These authors published in the 'Autorenedition' of the Bertelsmann Verlag.

3. R. Baumgart, "Sechs Thesen über Literatur und Politik", in W. Kuttenuke (ed.), Poesie und Politik, (pp. 358-366), p. 361.

with specific topics. For example Gerd Fuchs, Beringer und die lange Wut (1973) and Peter Schneider, Schon bist du ein Verfassungsfeind... (1975) dealt with the effects of the 'Radikalenerlaß': interrogation and dismissal on political grounds of teachers, which was the subject also of Heinrich Böll's article Zur Gesinnungslage der Nation (1975); Böll's Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum (1974) and Franz Josef Degenhardt's Brandstellen (1975) dealt with abuses by the mass media and the issue of terrorism.

Feminist literature also flourished in the 1970s. The feminist movement had initially seen itself as part of the revolutionary movement of the 1960s, but it was soon discovered that even within that movement the problems between the sexes remained. Their participation helped however to increase women's consciousness and strengthen their organisation: they demanded to be heard, and in 1976 the public dispute between Alice Schwarzer, one of the leading feminists in the Federal Republic and the author of Der kleine Unterschied und seine großen Folgen (1976) and Esther Villar aroused more interest in the Press and amongst the general public than the general election of that year. The feminist movement became increasingly radical and attempted to exert political influence in 1980 by the threat of an election boycott by women.

The phase which started in literature towards the middle of the 1970s has been described as one of the 'new sensibility', indicating a renewal of interest in psychological and emotional rather than social subjects. Reich-Ranicki has pointed out that a number of the titles of new works are indicative of this trend, for example Hans J. Fröhlich, Im Garten der Gefühle (1975), or Nicolas Born, Die erdabgewandte Seite der Geschichte (1976).¹ At the beginning of the seventies Grass had called the years ahead a period of stocktaking, and there were indeed a large number of writers who attempted a retrospective analysis of their evolution and an assessment of where they currently stood. A veritable spate of autobiographical writings appeared, and a related trend was a predilection for artists' biographies, for example Peter Härtling, Hölderlin (1976), Dieter Kühn, Ich Wolkenstein (1977), or Adolf Muschg, Gottfried Keller (1977). These writers' interest lay in the psychology of their characters rather than in their social problems. The intellectual qua intellectual disappeared from the novel, to reappear as the intellectual as an individual with emotional problems and psychological insecurities. It would, however, be an over-simplification to interpret this trend as a move away from engagement and towards an apolitical literature. Much depends on

1. M. Reich-Ranicki, "Anmerkungen zur deutschen Literatur der siebziger Jahre", Merkur 33, 1979/2, pp.169-179 (p.173).

how the concept of engagement is understood. M.Reich-Ranicki, who had always been sceptical of engagement and had emphatically rejected its more explicit literary expressions, noted, perhaps somewhat complacently:

Man war der Literatur überdrüssig, die von vorgegebenen Einsichten ausgeht und sie zu exemplifizieren oder gar zu beweisen sucht. (1)

He went on to speculate:

Wahrscheinlich verbirgt sich hinter der Tendenz zum Autobiographischen unter anderem auch die Resignation der Schreibenden, nämlich die Einsicht in ihre nur beschränkten Möglichkeiten, die Gegenwart zu begreifen. (2)

But this view did not go unchallenged: Heinrich Vormweg, commenting on the emphasis on autobiographical authenticity to be seen in much that was being published at the time, argued that many of these apparently personal confessional works succeed in fact in giving 'objektive Muster sozialer Programmierung'.³ Vormweg concluded that the aim of at least some of the writers concerned was not just to record private experience but also to shed light on social phenomena:

Kaum oder gar nicht beachtete gesellschaftliche Realitäten und Abhängigkeiten öffentlich zu machen, ist eine zentrale Funktion neuern autobiographischen Erzählens. Alltagsrealität verschiedenster Art minuziös und individuell zu spiegeln, zu reflektieren, eine andere. (4)

If we accept this view, then these writers' intention remains that of communicating socially relevant experiences and insights with the intention of stimulating the reader to undertake a similar process of self-analysis. This would presuppose not a reader reflecting on his position as an intellectual, but a reader as an individual reflecting on his personal circumstances, which however he knows to be affected by his position as an intellectual. The individual remains, even in exceptional circumstances, a member of society and thus representative of at least some aspects of that society. Walter Jens expressed this view in 1961:

Wenn auch der Held kein Kollektiv . . . repräsentiert . . . so bleibt das Individuum doch auch in einer disparaten Welt so lange ein soziales Element, als es sich zu etwas verhält, ja, sich überhaupt auf etwas bezieht. (5)

Reich-Ranicki complained in the autumn of 1975 that German intellectuals always went from one extreme to another.⁶ Thus, he claimed, they were now

1. Loc.cit., p.173.

2. Loc.cit., p.174.

3. H.Vormweg, "Noch kein neuer morgen. Literarische Neuerscheinungen Herbst 1975 und Frühjahr 1976", Jahresring 76/77, Stuttgart 1976, (pp.239-247); p.242.

4. Ibid., p.243.

5. W.Jens, Deutsche Literatur der Gegenwart. Themen--Stile--Tendenzen, Munich 1961, pp.108f.

6. Referred to by M.Reich-Ranicki in "Anmerkungen zur deutschen Literatur der siebziger Jahre", loc.cit., p.177.

interested only in introspective self-analysis without any concern for society at large. This view is refuted in the first place by the intellectuals' involvement in local politics and their critical writings. In the second place, in the well-ordered and governed society of the 1970s, Adorno's conception of art as silent resistance has acquired a specific validity. Dieter Wellershoff wrote in 1975:

Ich versteh nicht, wie Leute die glauben, daß sie progressiv sind, gegen Literatur als Medium der Ichfindung und der Subjektivität polemisieren. Ein Ich zu haben ist heute ein Potential des Widerstandes. Die Gesellschaft steuert auf ein Kollektiv psychisch planierter und verwaltbarer Fachidioten und Konsumenten zu. (1)

This indictment of society: that it shapes, through various kinds of pressure, the psychology of the individual, imposing upon him a conformity which can be compensated for only by excellence in socially acceptable spheres, such as career or sport, and which in the long run destroys all true individuality, is the subject of Martin Walser's Ein fliehendes Pferd (1978).² Walser has consistently refused to spell out any social alternative, but he suggests that such conformism in bourgeois society is not only destructive, it is in the long run self-destructive. He also makes it clear that help can come only from the individual himself, who must resist the pressure put upon him if he wishes to preserve his integrity and achieve any degree of happiness. In our society it is not possible to make changes on a collective scale: there is no genuine collective, and no specific social movement. This means that the writer too finds himself alone again, once more in the position of the detached intellectual, his engagement dictated only by his moral commitment. But it is this isolation that has always been the guarantee of his integrity. Adorno had pointed this out back in 1944:

Für den Intellektuellen ist unverbrüchliche Einsamkeit die einzige Gestalt, in der er Solidarität etwa noch zu bewahren vermag. (3)

It is this advice which the intellectuals in the Federal Republic have taken to heart in the 1970s. Free from social ties and from any form of patronage, they are nonetheless firmly bound by their own principles and commitment. This commitment is apparent in their literary writings.

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1. "Literatur ist Widerstand mit vielleicht veralteten Mitteln", in Tintenfisch 8, 1975, p.84.
 2. See Chapter 3, pp.105-114.
 3. Th. Adorno, "Minima Moralia", Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. 4, Frankfurt a.M. 1980, p.27.

Chapter 3. The Intellectual in selected West German novels of the 1960s and 1970s.

- A. Martin Walser: The 'Kristlein Trilogy':
 Halbzeit (1960)
 Das Einhorn (1966)
 Der Sturz (1973)
 Die Gallistl'sche Krankheit (1972)
 Ein fliehendes Pferd (1978)
- B. Alfred Andersch: Efraim (1967)
- C. Günter Grass: örtlich betäubt (1969)
 Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke (1972)
- D. Siegfried Lenz: Das Vorbild (1973)

Introduction

Having outlined the socio-political experience and attitudes of the four authors of the works selected for discussion, we now proceed to examine their uses of the forms and resources of prose fiction to articulate and explore that experience, to create an imaginative embodiment of their vision of the personal and social world which they inhabit. The novels selected all reflect, in a general way, the socio-political stances of their authors as these can be deduced from the public statements and activities of the authors. Novels, however, rarely comprise no more than a direct presentation of the author's views which he holds as a private citizen. The novel is essentially an exploratory form, its purpose is to search for the meaning of experience rather than simply to state it. In portraying a wide range of intellectuals and their experiences both as private and as public men and women, the authors are using the creative imagination to illuminate, clarify and articulate as precisely as possible the world in which, as members of society, they are often obliged to respond in less complex terms. Thus the political campaigner Grass reveals in his novels a deep irony and scepticism regarding any political activity, and explicitly dissociates himself from the character who clearly embodies so much of his inner tensions and ambivalences, Starusch in örtlich betäubt; Martin Walser, the self-styled Communist, presents Gallistl's conversion to Communism as a tentative and uncertain step; Alfred Andersch's Efraim displays a far greater degree of pessimism and resignation than could ever be ascribed to his creator; Siegfried Lenz, who actively committed himself, like Grass, to the support of the SPD, presents in Das Vorbild a world of such intricate moral com-

plexity, where all moral judgements are built on shifting sands, that any such simple and unequivocal commitment would appear to be precluded. Thus all the novels in question not only confirm, but also extend, deepen and modify our understanding of their authors' standpoints as social beings. It is this enriched understanding of the complexities which underlie the apparent simplicities of active decisions which is the principal contribution that the novel can make to our perceptions of the world. It will be the purpose of this chapter to examine and formulate those complexities.

The term 'intellectual' is used with a certain degree of flexibility, to include not only such intellectuals who fit the definition and description outlined in Chapter 1, but also those who withdraw from the critical responsibility which is an essential part of that definition (notably Andersch's Efraim and various characters in Walser's works). In the case of Martin Walser it was deemed appropriate to include his presentation of characters such as Blomich and Frau Frantzke, members of the cultured upper bourgeoisie, as well as the wide range of literary and cultural figures in which he embodies his perceptions of the role of the intellectual in his society, since it was clearly his intention to give a broad panorama of intellectual life in a moral general sense.

An important aspect of the investigation of these novels will be the attempt to determine whether common attitudes and values are to be discerned between the various authors with their widely differing political standpoints: the former Communist Party member Andersch, the Communist Walser who is not a member of the DKP or any other political Party, and the liberal socialists Grass and Lenz, with their varying degrees of support for the SPD, and their rejection of left-wing radicalism.

Particular attention will be paid to their presentation of the economic position of the intellectuals whom they portray, their view of the interaction of private and social life, the problems which they face in asserting their individual integrity as intellectuals, and the extent to which they give basic assent to the values of their society, its notions of freedom and democracy, and the extent of their scepticism towards the practical realisation of those values.

The novels are accorded a varying degree of coverage. In the case of Martin Walser's long and intricate Kristlein novels, one strand has been isolated from a complex web of themes; the novels of Grass and Andersch, on the other hand, have been treated more comprehensively since the theme of the intellectual and his social role is much more clearly dominant in their novels; these writers have treated other themes in other works, but in the works selected for examination they clearly set out to make the

theme of the intellectual their central concern. An even fuller account of Lenz's Das Vorbild will be necessary, since that novel is concerned with little else than the social role and responsibility of the intellectual. Martin Walser's Kristlein novels are considered at some length -- though, as stated above, without any attempt to give an exhaustive critical analysis of them -- because they have been widely recognized as among the most significant and comprehensive literary reflections of life in West Germany in the 1960s and early 1970s. The shorter prose works Die Gallistl'sche Krankheit and Ein fliehendes Pferd have been included in the investigation because of their intrinsic interest as a continuation and elaboration of the themes explored in the Kristlein novels. Walser interrupted work on the Kristlein trilogy to write Die Gallistl'sche Krankheit, which constitutes an essential pendant to the trilogy. Ein fliehendes Pferd, although not a novel and hence, strictly speaking, falling outside the purview of this thesis, was considered worthy of inclusion both on the grounds of its outstanding literary merit and of its relevance to the subject of this thesis.

A. Martin Walser: The Kristlein Trilogy, Die Gallistl'sche Krankheit
and Ein fliehendes Pferd.

As demonstrated in the previous chapter¹, Martin Walser sees the task of intellectuals in general as pointing to those aspects of society which are in need of change -- and of that need he is not in the slightest doubt -- and contributing to such changes wherever possible. In his essay Über die neueste Stimmung im Westen he declares it to be an important function of literature in particular to assist in this social process. However Walser, along with a number of other authors, also has grave doubts regarding the social effectiveness of literature: on the one hand he is convinced that all writers have an obligation to become involved in social issues through the medium of their writings; on the other hand he fears that this will serve no purpose other than to create an illusory role for writers, which, since the writers themselves take the role seriously, has the effect of confirming, rather than casting doubt on the liberal-democratic image of their society:

. . . das Gebell des Engagierten bewirkt nichts. Lediglich das Klima wird erträglicher . . . Das Komische: uns ist es sogar ernst bei diesem Spiel. Wir sind gar nicht imstande, wenn wir willkürlich oder unwillkürlich Laut geben, gleich zu durchschauen, daß wir gerade wieder einen Beitrag zu einem notwendigen Gesellschaftsspiel liefern. Gerade unser Ernst macht ja den gewünschten Effekt. (2)

This uncertainty in Walser's position is evident throughout his novels. Most critics agree in detecting a discrepancy between the author's intentions as expressed in his essays and interviews, and the actual effect of his novels. Although the majority agree that his novels contain an element of social criticism, views vary with regard to the degree of Walser's success in communicating his critical views to his readers. Much depends of course on the premises of the reader. Herbert Ahl points out that Walser does not offer solutions to the problems which his novels pose:

Walser predigt nicht: so ist die Gesellschaft, und so könnte sie sein, wenn sie sich aus ihrem Nichts, ihrer Leere, ihren erstarrten Formen löste, sondern er verharret auf seinem Standpunkt: "Ich kann das nicht ändern." (3)

The author as an individual can indeed do nothing to change society; he can however demonstrate the need for change. Critics in the GDR, whilst accepting that this is a positive contribution, have predictably objected that Walser fails to point out sufficiently explicitly that the capitalist

1. See pp.38-42.

2. M.Walser, "Engagement als Pflichtfach für Schriftsteller", in Heimatkunde. Aufsätze und Reden, Frankfurt a.M.1968, (pp.103-126); pp.104f.

3. H.Ahl, Literarische Porträts, Munich/Vienna 1962, p.21.

system is the origin of all social problems, that he is content to describe surface reality in minute detail rather than attempt to expose its underlying structure, thus obscuring rather than illuminating its essential nature. Thus Josef-Hermann Sauter challenged Walser:

Sie registrieren. Meinen Sie nicht, daß die Absicht literarischer Deutung den Leser bewußter machen könnte und ihm tiefere Einsichten vermittelt? Ich denke dabei an die Klärung von Ursächlichkeiten, die das Durchschauen des Problems erleichtern. Sollte der Autor aus der Vielfalt der Erscheinungen nicht das Wesentliche auswählen, geistig ordnen, um bestimmte Bezüge deutlich zu machen? (1)

Walser however emphatically rejected this recommendation of a Socialist Realist approach, replying that he did not feel competent either to offer an image of the world as it should be, or to provide for his readers an analysis that should properly be the result of their own critical reflection. He maintained nevertheless that his detailed account of reality as he perceived it would implicitly communicate his socio-political views.

The rich profusion of detail in Walser's novels was initially the main stumbling block for West German critics also, although they were later acclaimed by most critics for their linguistic inventiveness. Reich-Ranicki, however, did not change his view of Walser as a highly talented writer who unfortunately produced only artistic failures, until the publication of Ein fliehendes Pferd, which he praised without reservations.² His verdict on the Kristlein novels was that because Walser failed to show the causes for the malaise which he depicted, they remained superficial, for all their length and intricacy; this view was shared by Peter Chotjewitz.³ Thomas Beckermann came to the similar conclusion that because Walser did not aspire to a 'Transformation der Wirklichkeit' the Kristlein novels were affirmative rather than critical in their essential import.⁴ Herbert Ahl, on the other hand, whilst lamenting the absence of the author's guiding hand, was nevertheless prepared to accept the novels as at least 'der erste Schritt zur Therapie'.⁵ Karl Korn likewise maintained that Walser had fulfilled his political obligation as a writer by

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1. J.-H.Sauter, "Interview mit Martin Walser", NDL XIII, 1965/7, pp.99f.
 2. Reviews in FAZ and Die Zeit, reprinted in M.Reich-Ranicki, Deutsche Literatur in West und Ost, Munich 1963; Literatur der kleinen Schritte, Munich 1967, and Lauter Verrisse, Munich 1970. Reich-Ranicki's laudatory review of Ein fliehendes Pferd, "Martin Walsers Rückkehr zu sich selbst", appeared in FAZ, 4.3.1978.
 3. P.Chotjewitz, "Martin Walser: Das Einhorn", in Literatur und Kritik I, 1966/9-10, pp.109-113.
 4. Th.Beckermann, Martin Walser oder die Zerstörung eines Musters. Literatursoziologischer Versuch über 'Halbzeit', Bonn 1972, p.160
 5. H. Ahl, op.cit., p.17.

presenting his experience and perceptions of society and leaving it to his readers to reflect on the moral implications of his novels.¹ Heike Doane went a step further in her thorough study of the socio-political aspects of the trilogy, arguing that notwithstanding the absence of any specifically political dimension, there is 'trotzdem eine Intensivierung der politischen Aussage in diesen Werken festzustellen'², with the result that 'der Roman allmählich ein Werkzeug zur politischen Auseinandersetzung, und das Dasein der Romanfiguren zuletzt als das Produkt ihrer Umwelt vorgeführt wird.'³ Rainer Nägele likewise does not consider the absence of a party-political element grounds for rejecting a political interpretation:

Diese Unterordnung der Politik im engeren Sinne hängt einerseits mit den ästhetischen Prämissen Walsers zusammen . . . aber auch mit seiner gesellschaftspolitischen Perspektive, die die eigentlich politisch relevante Macht im Wirtschaftssystem sieht, nicht in den politischen Parteien. (4)

It is indeed the economic system of West European society and its influence on individual character and behaviour which Walser explores at length in his novels. One of the most striking features of the imaginative world of those novels is the complete absence of genuine friendship and solidarity. Even people who call each other friends or loved ones, are seen to manipulate and exploit one another, in patterns of behaviour which Walser has explicitly explained as the product of economic conditions:

Leute, die sehr lange unter Konkurrenzbedingungen sich haben entwickeln müssen, sind in ihrer Entwicklungsfähigkeit ganz sicher negativ beschränkt . . . das ist eine Art Gesetz; Konkurrenz holt nicht das Beste aus uns heraus, sondern erzwingt Konvergenzen auf schlechterem Niveau. (5)

In these novels the intellectuals do not constitute a special social category. They have none of the detachment ascribed to the intellectual by some sociologists;⁶ on the contrary, they are subject to the same pressures and influences as all other social groups. With the exception of Gallistl, who at least attempts to repudiate the value-system of capitalist society, Walser's intellectual characters are an integral part of that system, which they indeed help to sustain, even if reluctantly. They are motivated by self-interest rather than social responsibility. Walser's aim however is to reveal that they in fact fail to recognize their

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1. K.Korn, "Satirischer Gesellschaftsroman", in Th.Beckermann (ed.), Über Martin Walser, Frankfurt a.M.1970, pp.28-32.
 2. H.Doane, Gesellschaftspolitische Aspekte in Martin Walsers Kristleintrilogie, Bonn 1978, p.10.
 3. Ibid., p.11.
 4. R.Nägele, "Martin Walser. Die Gesellschaft im Spiegel des Subjekts", in H.Wagener (ed.), Zeitkritische Romane des 20. Jahrhunderts, Stuttgart 1975, (pp.318-341); p.329.
 5. "Martin Walser im Gespräch mit Dieter Zimmer. Die Überanstrengung, die das pure Existieren ist", Die Zeit, 18.5.1973, p.26.
 6. See Chapter 1.

true interests, for if they were able to see their lives in a wider context, they would realize that social change would be to their benefit. As things are, their acceptance of the conditions under which they suffer permits these conditions to be perpetuated. Since no individual can bring about the necessary change single-handed, the preliminary goal must be solidarity. Only Gallistl realizes this and is prepared, albeit reluctantly, to venture a step in that direction. Helmut Halm can possibly also be seen as taking a tentative first step towards solidarity when he resolves to confide his problems to his wife, but the implications of this resolve are left uncertain. Even Gallistl's attempt is presented with pronounced irony. Thus on the whole Walser appears highly sceptical regarding the potential for fruitful change of the intellectuals whom he portrays.

Halbzeit

Anselm Kristlein is both the central character and the narrator of the entire trilogy; it is in the latter function that he is presented by the author as an intellectual, reflecting with a high degree of consciousness on the experiences which he articulates. After failing to obtain a University degree he is obliged to support himself first by working as a travelling salesman for a variety of companies, and subsequently in advertising; but the circles in which he moves are primarily intellectual circles. Towards the end of Halbzeit he begins to write a novel, and in Das Einhorn he has become a professional writer; he fails, however, in this *métier*, with the result that Der Sturz sees him once again in a dependent position. But whether as salesman or as writer, Kristlein's remarkable powers of observation and his insights into the nature of the society in which he lives -- even though he neither puts forward any general analysis nor any value-judgement on that society -- justify the description of him as an intellectual. K.H.Kramberg regards him thus on the grounds of his reflective consciousness, passivity and irony:

Keineswegs der Typus des branchekundigen Businessman . . . Ein Intellektueller steht vor uns, einer dieser hochreflektierten, reizbaren -- ein Individuum, das seinem Autor wohl nicht nur sympathisch, sondern auch wahlverwandt ist. Ein leidendes Bewußtsein, frei von Naivität und Spontaneität, ironisch, selbstironisch, wenig Wille, viel Vorstellung. (1)

Walser himself has added a further dimension to this 'Wahlverwandtschaft' by pointing out the similar socio-economic situations of the intellectual

1. K.H. Kramberg, quoted from G.Uhlig, Autor, Werk und Kritik, Vol.II, Munich 1969, pp.90f.

and the sales representative:

Mir ist dieser Beruf zehn Jahre lang aufgefallen . . . Mir ist aufgefallen, was für eine schlimme Sache es ist, wenn ein Mensch dauernd etwas verkaufen muß, ohne daß seine Partner eigentlich etwas brauchen. Zumindest können sie das, was sie bei diesem Vertreter kaufen oder bestellen, genauso gut bei einem anderen kaufen oder bestellen. Es gibt also keinen Beruf, der einem Menschen das Gefühl seiner Überflüssigkeit so aufdringlich klar machen könnte, wie das des Vertreters. Das hat mir diesen Beruf sympathisch gemacht, er erinnerte mich eigentlich fast an den des Schriftstellers . . . (1)

Walser goes on to pursue the parallel at some length: both sales representative and writer employ verbal skills as a means of influencing others; both enjoy relative freedom of movement, are not bound by fixed working hours, and are thus well placed to observe their environment. Both also lack economic security since their incomes depend directly on their own short-run achievements with no guarantee of a regular salary, despite the fact that they both fulfil a specific social function. Walser has pointed out that the over-production which is an essential feature of a free market economy has made the persuasive skills of the salesman more important than the productive skills involved in the manufacturing process.² Walser's view of the persuasive function of the intellectual differs however in one all-important respect from his view of the salesman: the intellectual is free to choose either to serve or to oppose the social system. Of Kristlein's associates only Edmund Gabriel, a self-styled Left-winger, seriously considers the latter option, but even he prefers in practice to indulge his selfish personal predilections.

The other intellectuals in the novel include the writer Dieckow, the painter Lambert, the actress Anna, and Frau Frantzke, the educated wife of an industrialist, who considers herself as an intellectual and cultivates artistic interests. Her salon, where she gives regular parties for both her husband's business associates and her own intellectual friends, provides a milieu which demonstrates both the close connections which exist between the intellectuals and the industrial upper classes (Herr Frantzke is awarded an honorary degree in recognition of his business success), and the general mediocrity of the intelligentsia: these latter are presented as ill-informed and dependent for their opinions on the mass media which Walser fiercely satirizes, particularly with regard to their blatant anti-Communism, and denounces for their hypocrisy concerning the National Socialist past. Beside these intellectuals' lack of political consciousness, Walser also exposes their materialism: for them as for other groups at all levels of society, wealth and status have replaced ethical qualities

1. H.Bienek, Werkstattgespräche mit Schriftstellern, Munich 1962, pp.194f.
 2. op.cit., p.195.

as the norms by which people are judged. The intellectuals are thus fully integrated into the social system; their ostensible non-conformity is merely a fashionable façade which serves to sustain the liberal self-image of those social groups which wield real power and influence.

In Halbzeit Walser demonstrates that social success, indeed social survival, depends on the ability and willingness of the individual, including the intellectual, to play the social roles expected of him. In the first section, headed Mimikry, Anselm Kristlein adopts numerous roles, changing easily from one to another depending on the situation and the company he is in; his associates behave similarly, an extreme example being Josef-Heinrich, formerly a Nazi pilot, now a prosperous businessman, who celebrates his eleventh engagement and of whom we are told that he adapts himself completely to each successive fiancée: he even changes the products he manufactures in accordance with the girls' preferences. Anselm is more aware than the others of his role-playing, which he sees as a means of manipulating others, including his wife and various mistresses, to his own advantage. He sometimes has scruples and feels the need to justify himself, like his precursor Hans Beumann in Ehen in Philippsburg, who jettisons all the ideals and illusions of his student years, takes up a career which holds little interest for him, marries a woman he does not love but who is useful to him in his career, and in time completely loses his earlier capacity for self-criticism. It has been pointed out that Beumann is by no means an unusual individual,

sondern der Wirtschaftswunder-Durchschnittsbürger, der durch die Konsumgütergesellschaft zwangsläufig in eine Konsumhaltung gedrängt und damit zum Emporsteigen getrieben wird . . . (1)

This compulsive 'Aufsteigermentalität' is the guiding principle of all Walser's characters, and their outwardly visible success is the criterion by which society judges them. Thus Anselm feels ashamed of his old car when he has to park it alongside his friends' gleaming new vehicles, just as when visiting the Frantzke's modern villa he reflects 'daß ich doch in eine Art Korobotschkasches Gut einfuhr . . . ' (H 567). Class distinctions are pronounced, even amongst the intellectuals themselves, as is the sense of moral superiority which the wealthy derive from their possessions and status. At the lower end of the social scale this can be seen in Anselm's uncle Gallus, a landlord who treats his tenants with suspicion in the conviction that 'Ein Mensch ohne eigene Haustür ist zu allem fähig' (H 205). Likewise Frau Frantzke regularly admonishes the factory girls to remain chaste, assuming for herself both a superior morality and the right to impose it on those of lower social standing --

1. R. Möhrmann, "Der neue Parvenü. Aufsteigermentalität in Martin Walsers Ehen in Philippsburg", Basis VI, Frankfurt a.M.1976, pp.153f.

who indeed accept the admonitions in silence, conditioned as they are to defer to their superiors. This theme recurs in Der Sturz, where Anselm finds himself in the position of having to enforce the views of the property-owning class -- in this case Blomich, Frau Frantzke's brother and the proprietor of the convalescent home where Anselm works -- against the resistance of a group of people to which he in fact himself belongs, being, like them, one of Blomich's employees. Der Sturz is in fact much more explicitly concerned than Halbzeit with the ways in which moral authority is sustained by economic and social dependence. The self-righteousness of those who consider themselves intellectuals, on the other hand, is to be seen in the sharply satirical account of the festivities following the award of Herr Frantzke's honorary degree: the vulgar merry-making of the cultured guests is applauded for its wit and sophistication, but when the 'Arbeitsdirektor' Hühnlein is moved by his admiration for Frau Frantzke to kiss her hand somewhat over-vigorously, he is severely reprimanded for the 'zügellose Lust' (H 554f.) of his class, whilst his evident pleasure in food and drink is deprecated as vulgar. His superiors and those belonging to their class have in fact no appetite, it being the chief task of the Frantzke business to produce delicacies of sufficient quality to tempt their jaded palates: as Anselm observes, they produce superior food for 'den Satten, ja sogar den Übersättigten' (H 576).

Anselm describes the social phenomena in a highly critical manner, creating at least initially a striking discrepancy between the observations which he retrospectively reports and his consciousness of the phenomena observed at the time of observation. In some instances this discrepancy between an original experience and its intellectualized interpretation is so great that the reader has the impression that the author has momentarily replaced his narrator in order to address the reader with didactic intentions. One such instance occurs during the scene in the school yard, where the author attempts to convey a moral indignation which Anselm himself evidently does not feel.¹

Anselm believes that his recognition of the role-playing necessary for social survival gives him an intellectual superiority and freedom, but he is in fact imprisoned in his own roles even in his intimate personal life, as he discovers when he finds himself attracted to Josef Heinrich's Jewish fiancée Susanne. He realizes that he can approach her only with the manipulative vocabulary of the competitive salesman, trying to persuade her to regard him in a favourable light by means analogous to sales techniques. The language of persuasion has been, for him, commercialized and debased. Thus later, in Das Einhorn, Anselm feels that in order to commu-

1. See p.68.

nicate his love to Orli he must invent an entirely new language. In Das Einhorn Anselm begins to realize that it may be impossible to combine his genuine personal interests with the demands made upon him by society. But in Halbzeit he as yet still believes that the two are compatible, hence he does his utmost to climb the social ladder by disguising his real feelings in order to ingratiate himself in the Frantzke circle, suppressing the sceptical observations which he makes as retrospective narrator.

The characteristic of the intelligentsia which Walser condemns most vehemently is their lack of political awareness and the uncritical acceptance by the majority of the anti-Communism which pervades public life in the Federal Republic. Walser's principal weapon here is caricature, and his purpose is two-fold. On the one hand he ridicules anti-Communism by exposing it as illogical, hysterical or self-righteous, while on the other hand, by thus discrediting the ostensible rationale of anti-Communism, he aims to make Communism itself appear less dangerous. Thus the reader is repeatedly reminded that the majority of intellectuals in this novel do not refer to the GDR by its proper name, but as 'die Zone' or 'die sogenannte DDR'¹, a manipulative use of language on the ultimate futility of which Anselm comments:

Immer wenn ich dieses volkspädagogische Sogenannte höre, ergreift mich ein tiefes Mitgefühl mit den ministeriellen Erfindern dieses Wäffchens; ist es doch unserem Musiklehrer nicht einmal gelungen, einer vierundzwanzigköpfigen Primanerklasse einzubleuen, daß sie gewisse Mozart-Serenaden als Sogenannte Wiener Sonatinen zu bezeichnen habe, und die wollen jetzt einem ganzen Volk, ja sogar der ganzen Welt das überflüssige Wörtchen einpauken! (H 570)

The spectre of Communism is invoked whenever something is to be rejected or warned against, as Walser illustrates with malicious wit: Frau Frantzke even invokes it when urging her employees to preserve their maidenhood:

Denkt, wenn ihr eure Schlüpfer von euch streift, an die Oder-Neiße, dann vergeht euch der Spaß. (H 528)

All the intellectuals are quite ignorant of actual social and political conditions in Eastern Europe; self-righteousness and complacency take the place of knowledge: the East European countries and their inhabitants are considered morally inferior to the West, but at the same time their inferiority is pitied and they are thought to deserve compassion and help, where these are profitable: thus the Frantzkes start a project with the motto 'Deutsche helfen Deutschen', making up parcels of food and delicacies which can be ordered for direct posting to addresses in the GDR. They profess ethical motives: 'Ein Konzern wie der unsere hat eben nicht nur

1. In "Ein deutsches Mosaik", Erfahrungen und Leseerfahrungen, Frankfurt a.M., p.17, Walser points out that during the early 1950s the term 'die Zone' was the more commonly used; later it gradually gave way to 'die sogenannte DDR'.

wirtschaftliche Aufgaben' (H 570), but their real motive is unmistakably profit. A savagely polemic detail in Walser's account of this episode is that the advertising of this project is undertaken by Dr. Fuchs, who worked with Goebbels on propaganda during the war.

With these attitudes the intellectuals concerned play their part in sustaining the irrational anti-Communist prejudices of the general public, which are illustrated in a number of episodes. When a group of schoolboys in the town hide away in a country house belonging to one of the parents, public hysteria initially accuses Communists of having kidnapped them, subsequently other long-standing scapegoats are suspected, first Jews and then homosexuals. The fundamental affinity between all forms of prejudice, whether anti-Communism, anti-Semitism -- which contrary to popular belief has, the novel suggests, by no means disappeared from West German life -- or more general xenophobia, all of which constitute the same fundamental betrayal of intellectual integrity, is also indicated in a number of episodes, for example Anselm's anecdote concerning his uncle Dietrich's marriage to a Bohemian woman: the family knows little about the marriage, but are nonetheless certain that Dietrich was poisoned by his wife. Even the victims of prejudice are capable of prejudice in their turn: Susanne's sufferings as a consequence of National Socialist ideology do not prevent her from joining the witchhunt against the Communists, and she also contributes the story of an aunt in East Berlin who fled to Russia in 1933 and now hates her own brothers in the USA and the West, and is prejudiced against Negroes.

Walser also attacks in this novel the attitude of writers who talk of social responsibility and commitment -- meaning anti-Communism -- while leaving it to others to practise these supposed virtues. Dieckow is presented as a formalist writer, with the implication that his works serve no social purpose, yet he protests against the fact that the Frantzke firm promotes the sale of commodities for which there is no real need, not so much because this is objectionable in itself as because it lends support to communist arguments:

Bitte, ein Konzern wie dieser hat auch eine Verantwortung für die Gesellschaft, von der er lebt. Sie sind sich offensichtlich nicht bewußt, daß unsere westliche Gesellschaft in einem Kampf gegen eine Gesellschaft steht, in der buchstäblich jede Ganglie der Produktion des Notwendigen verpflichtet wird, während Sie sich hier, als wären wir allein auf der Welt, dem Überflüssigen verschreiben. Sie mißbrauchen die Freiheit. Noch leiden sechzehn Millionen Deutsche unter der Knute der Diktatur, und Sie spielen im Sand, arbeiten dem Kommunismus in die Hände. (H 424f.)

But notwithstanding these remonstrations Dieckow readily accepts a fee of DM 500 for his participation in meetings of the firm's advertising department. Dieckow is one of the many who are convinced that the West is

engaged in a fight to the death against Communism, and he suggests 'sacrificing' himself by moving to the bastion of West Berlin, where he feels that his presence will lend moral support to the beleaguered populace (H 823). During the funeral service for uncle Gallus the priest Burgstaller speaks of Communism as if it were nothing less than the Antichrist.

None of Anselm's intellectual acquaintances who lend their authority to anti-Communist propaganda -- with the possible exception of Edmund -- have any real knowledge of the Communist countries: 'Über die Russen weiß man soviel wie über Krankheiten, die man nicht selbst hat' (H 161). This ignorance is part of a more general political ignorance and apathy. The action of this novel takes place between 18 June 1956 and early 1957. Yet nobody discusses in any but the most superficial manner the momentous political events and conflicts of the mid-50s: the war over Suez, the Hungarian rising, West Germany's entry into NATO and the subsequent controversy over rearmament. An example of the frivolousness with which these intellectuals react to political developments is the single reference to the XXth Party Conference of the Soviet Communist Party in 1956, with its sensational revelations about the crimes of Stalin, which comes from Balsen, who welcomes the anti-Stalinist pronouncements because under Stalin Russian crosswords -- Balsen's passion -- had become unendurably boring (H232). Anselm comments on this ignorance and trivialisation of politics, as on the wilful blindness of the majority of his contemporaries to the past and its consequences, in a resigned and apologetic vein, seeing them as the result of a socialisation process that leads inevitably to apathy and complacency by conditioning people to regard material comfort and pleasure as the sole goals of life:

Man müßte uns dann schon anders erziehen, es müßte einer kommen, der der barbarischen Gemütlichkeit nicht verfällt, der keine Ahnung davon hat, wie es ist, wenn man einhundertsechzig fährt, einer, der einfach schreit, was er weiß, die Säuglinge müßte er anschreien und verhindern, daß sie sich an etwas gewöhnen. Aber wir, wir sind schon an dies und das verkauft. (H 192)

But the affluent society provides no basis for the moral education of the young. In Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke Grass writes of the difficulty of explaining to his children either the German past or the deprivations suffered in other parts of the world. Similarly Anselm asks in *Halbzeit*: '. . . wie soll diese Generation überfütterter Kinder je Asien begreifen?' (H 87). Walser is throughout the novel concerned to show the connections between the political and the economic system, the ways in which the means of the one can be used for the ends of the other. Not only does affluence produce moral apathy, sales techniques are used

to inculcate political attitudes. Anselm witnesses for example the demonstration of a new airforce weapon to a group of schoolchildren, and compares the young lieutenant's manner of speaking to that of a very talented salesman, a 'Werbekollege' (H 485): by making this product appear so attractive and interesting to the children he is helping to condition them to accept militarism and hence war as a 'natural' aspect of life (H 485f.). The incident in which Frau Möllenbruch mistakes the lieutenant for her son who was killed in the war (H 485), illustrates the author's view that there is very little difference between contemporary military attitudes and those of the National Socialist era. By means of propaganda for German rearmament the German people are being conditioned to accept the possibility of another World War. In a war memorial at Ramsegg Walser finds an eloquent image of this conditioning:

Auf der Vorderseite hatten sie ein großes Quadrat flach weißeln lassen und im linken oberen Viertel hatten sie aus schwarzem Stahl die Zahlen 1870/71 angebracht, im rechten oberen Viertel 1914-1918, im linken unteren Viertel 1939-1945, das rechte untere Viertel hatten sie in bewundernswertem Gleichmut geradezu einladend frei gelassen. Solange dieser Krieg nicht stattgefunden hat, ist die Symmetrie auf dem Ramsegger Kriegerdenkmal nicht hergestellt und das Auge jedes Besuchers bleibt unbefriedigt in der Leere des rechten unteren Viertels hängen. (H 109)

The citizens of the Federal Republic have accepted rearmaments without thought for its implications; they do not fear the next war because they have suppressed their memories of the last. Encouraged by the intellectuals, they have accepted the notion of a Cold War which divides the world into two camps and give automatic loyalty to the Western camp, a loyalty that finds visible expression in the Americanisation of their lives: the Frantzkes proudly explain that their firm was set up following an American model, they give cocktail parties in American style, and Frau Frantzke has so fully internalized her image of American life that she fears the ravages of urban violence in her own tranquil suburb: their house is protected like a fortress, yet she lives in perpetual fear that her son will be kidnapped, a fear which in no way detracts from her admiration of American culture and values.

The only intellectual who occasionally attempts to combat ignorance and prejudice is Edmund Gabriel. He is highly intelligent, but lacks the force of conviction needed for a sustained attempt to change either his environment or his own life. This is partly because he too is dependent on social prejudices and public opinion. Whilst highly critical of many of his acquaintances, especially those whom he knows to have been active supporters of the National Socialist regime, he also envies them their present success, particularly the success with women that is so vital for a man's standing in the eyes of his associates. The fact that

Edmund conceals his impotence by posing as a homosexual, because he thinks the latter affliction is in the eyes of society the lesser evil, provides a wry comment on the importance attached by society to a man's sexuality: homosexuality is considered perverse and morally objectionable (as shown by the suspicion of homosexuals when the young boys disappear), but it is nevertheless preferable to the absence of any sexuality at all. Edmund's outrage at the attitudes of the privileged classes does sometimes outweigh his inhibitions, however. During the party-game with Frau Pawel, for example, one of the labourers working on scaffolding across the street falls to his death, eliciting from the party guests not shock, horror or pity, but complacent discussion of the 'mangelhaften gesetzlichen Bestimmungen zur Unfallverhütung' and the 'Unvernunft der Arbeiter, besonders der ungeschulten Arbeiter' (H 564). When Herr Frantzke is enthusiastically applauded by his guests for his self-regarding offer of money to the widow, Edmund is provoked to a bitter denunciation of the exploitation of the working classes by such as Frantzke, thinly veiled by such isolated acts of private charity. Edmund reveals here a radical ethical revulsion from his society, which he divides into unscrupulous 'Wirtschaftskapitäne' and a 'vorwärtsgepeitschte Konsumentenmasse' (H 618). Nobody at the time comments that Edmund earns a generous salary as an employee of these immoral exploiters; as usual it is Anselm as narrator who draws the reader's attention to this fact. Since the implication of Edmund's sentiments is that only revolutionary change can alter the conditions which he deplures, these sentiments are immediately dismissed by a number of the guests as communist propaganda. Anselm, as yet unfamiliar with this circle of intellectuals, wonders why Edmund should risk social disapproval by showing his 'roten Pelz' (H 619); subtly, however, the situation changes: Edmund, rather than hold fast to his opinions is so flattered by the attention he has won for himself that he is flippantly prepared to change his political standpoint entirely, simply in order to attack his opponent Dieckow and demonstrate his superiority in this verbal tussle; the anti-Communist Dieckow proves to be equally flexible. All present are interested solely in verbal skills, not the actual subject of the argument; what is typically German, whether there is such a thing, and, if so, what implications this has for each of them personally. The issue as such interests nobody -- and this only some ten years after the end of the war. Intellectual debate, even on the most fundamental issues, has become merely a welcome entertainment, as Herr Frantzke exuberantly admits:

. . . bravo, bravo, rief er, so lieb ich meine Künstler, Herr Gabriel, auf Ihr Wohl, der böse Kapitalist dankt seinem Propheten

für die Lehre, ach Kinder, trinkt mit mir, was wäre der ganze Schwindel, wenn es euch nicht gäbe! (H 620)

Anselm observes that for the time being Edmund is happy again, having exchanged the role of 'the communist' for that of the 'König des Salons' (H 619). Nor is Edmund the only one present who uses his political views for self-adornment: Anna has joined the 'Komitee der Atomwaffengegner' (H 610) not out of any strong convictions but because her manager thought it might be good publicity. Such spuriousness of intellectual non-conformism is particularly evident at the popular club Kanabuh: its owner is a 'sozialdemokratischer Millionär' who profits from the political and social dissatisfactions of his clients by providing them with a meeting place. Walser had already satirized the trivialisation of political debate by ill-informed, if possibly altruistic, intellectuals in Ehen in Philippsburg, where Dr. Alwin intended to found a new political party embracing all oppositional elements in the Federal Republic under the name of the 'Christlichsozialliberale Partei'. Satirical mockery of pretentious self-styled left-wing sympathizers returns in Der Sturz, where all the successful academics and businessmen are members of the 'Bund Sozialdemokratischer Millionäre', or BuSoM. To be known as a regular visitor to the Kanabuh, where all political compromise is anathema, is enough to give one the reputation of belonging to the opposition. As a result, visiting the Kanabuh has replaced actual political activity:

Der Kanabuh-Stammgast hat seine ganze Aktivität an das Interieur, an den Kanabuh-Geist delegiert . . . (H 701)

Indeed, in Halbzeit not a single intellectual becomes involved in actual social or political activity. The nearest approach to such activity is the radio talk on 'Die Frau in der Sozialdemokratie' (H 691) given by Gaby Gerstacker, one of Anselm's mistresses. As Anselm does not listen to the talk, the reader learns no more about it.

Another major feature of the intellectuals presented in Halbzeit is their attitude towards the National Socialist era, which, like their other attitudes, is shown to be no different from that of the population at large. They reveal no greater awareness or sense of responsibility than anyone else. Whenever possible, they are happy to ignore the subject; when this is not possible, they attempt to deny all personal guilt or involvement. In Anselm's circle it is common knowledge that some of the leading figures were members of the SS: Dr. Fuchs refers openly to his contacts with Goebbels, whose propaganda techniques he praises without anyone protesting. Josef-Heinrich is able to boast freely of his exploits as a Nazi pilot, while uncle Gallus was an SA Sturmführer and welcomed the end of the war only because his large nose had caused doubt to be cast on his racial purity. Dr. Pinne talks of the time when he was in the 'Deutsche Arbeiter-

front'; Dr. von Ratow, on the other hand, is the son of a resistance fighter who was executed during the war, yet he and Fuchs now work in close collaboration: the past has been buried. Yet when Fuchs is exposed everybody turns against him for fear of what association with him might entail; nobody however is led thereby to reconsider the crimes of the National Socialist era:

Wenn Dr. Fuchs eine ansteckende Krankheit verschwiegen hätte, die Reaktion wäre nicht anders gewesen. Jeder prüfte, wie weit er mit Dr. Fuchs im Zusammenhang genannt werden und welcher Schaden ihm daraus entstehen könnte. Es war, als hätte es im ganzen Land und seit Menschengedenken nur einen einzigen Nazi gegeben und der hat heimtückisch verborgen unter uns gewohnt. (H 811)

The only character in the novel for whom the National Socialist past remains an immediate personal reality is Susanne. Whereas all the other characters are eager to assume a social role, she is still seeking an identity: after going into exile with her parents, she has lived abroad for over twenty years and has received no proper formal education; she has a failed marriage behind her and is emotionally exploited by both her fiancé Josef-Heinrich and Anselm, who attempts to seduce her. Her fiancé knows of her traumatic experiences, yet can callously comment on her years of exile: 'Es muß trotzdem schön sein, so in der Welt herumzugondeln' (H 334), whilst Anselm wishes only to use her for his own gratification and has nothing to offer her, as indeed post-war Germany has nothing to offer her: at the end of the novel she leaves Germany again, where little has changed for her and where she has found no understanding. Pezold¹ and Beckermann² express regret that Walser does not develop the figure of Susanne more fully. However, since her experiences are narrated entirely from Anselm's point of view, and since she soon disappears from his life, this is structurally acceptable. Her function in the novel is, of course, partly to speak for the persecuted Jews of the Third Reich, but more importantly it is to shed further light on Anselm's character. Prior to his involvement with her Anselm is entirely indifferent to the war and the National Socialist past; his initial reaction to the exposure of Dr. Fuchs's war crimes is likewise one of indifference. He can feel moral outrage -- and advocate severe punishment -- only when he thinks of the effects of National Socialism on Susanne's life: personal feelings motivate his moral judgements, not any general ethical conviction. Nevertheless it is to Anselm's credit that concern for another person, of however restricted a kind, does enable him to perceive a wider moral perspective. He becomes aware of collective guilt, but the awareness immediately

1. K.Pezold, Martin Walser. Seine schriftstellerische Entwicklung, Berlin DDR 1971, p.159.

2. Th.Beckermann, op.cit., p.181.

activates a self-protective mechanism:

. . . aber Susanne, verstehen Sie, Susanne, da kommt es mir vor, als sei ich auch eine Art Dr. Fuchs und ich bin froh, daß man ihn verhaftet hat und nicht mich, verstehen Sie, schließlich ist man ein bißchen egoistisch, aus der Nähe besehen. (H 817)

Anselm has sufficient self-irony to realize the weakness of his self-justifications, but his dominant characteristics remain apathy and resignation. He is prevented from undertaking any constructive activity by lack of faith in the possibility of change. Rather than adopt a positive position himself, he reproaches Edmund, who does have political convictions, for dissipating his energies in petty squabbles (H 491). He knows that Edmund, unlike himself, is a fighter by nature, who despite his scepticism and pessimism does have a conception of a better world and suffers from the lack of opportunity for fruitful political activity: 'Die Leute sollen sich für den Staat interessieren. Mir fehlt bloß noch der Staat' (H 431). Knowing that the Federal Republic is not the state for him, Edmund toys with the idea of living in the GDR, and in fact at the end of the novel Anselm learns that Edmund is planning to move with Sophie to East Berlin. (In Das Einhorn it transpires that he has not done so.) But this is not a viable alternative since Edmund's is not a choice for the GDR but merely a choice against the Federal Republic; he feels no positive enthusiasm for the other German state. As an artist he is indeed highly sceptical about his opportunities in the GDR, complaining to Anselm in terms which suggest that he has been influenced by Western stereotypes of socialist art:

Arbeiter malen, einer gibt dem anderen die Hand . . . Eine Mutter, die ihr Kind zur Jugendweihe führt. Ein Plakat für Sollerfüllung. Wenn das bloß nicht so lächerlich wäre. (H 431)

In Edmund's view the SED is not a home for intellectuals but has become no more than a social institution which confers a degree of status and respectability on its members, somewhat like the institution of marriage in the West (H 317).

Anselm, by contrast, continues to believe that he can achieve success and happiness within society as it is. Knowing that society is hostile to his real needs, he nevertheless opts for a passive and cowardly role-playing, concealed behind a façade of irony. Nevertheless, in the course of Halbzeit his political consciousness is gradually awakened and developed. The first day in the novel marks his homecoming after a three months' stay in hospital; the novel is written some months later when he has again taken to his bed with intestinal disorders which he knows are the result of psychological stress. Outwardly he appears successful: he has been promoted and sent to the USA to attend a course on 'psychologische Verschrottung', the technique whereby perfectly satisfactory commodities are given an image of obsolescence in the minds of consumers in order to promote

the sale of newer commodities. But a sceptical light is shed on Anselm's apparent success by the author by withholding details from the reader, who learns instead of the fate of Anselm's uncle Paul, who went to the USA in the 1920s but was less successful than his nephew: stress proved unendurable and he returned to Germany in a state of mental confusion, to die in a mental hospital under the National Socialist régime. After Anselm's return home from hospital Alissa writes in her diary the entry which gives the novel its title: 'Er ist da. Und wieder fort. Halbzeit. Aber er bemerkt es nicht' (H 375). Critics have interpreted the title as referring not only to Anselm's private life but also to developments in the Federal Republic. Referring to an essay by Erich Kuby, "Es ist Halbzeit in Westdeutschland", published in the Frankfurter Hefte in 1959, Werner Liersch wrote in his review of the novel:

In der Halbzeit richtet sich der Blick zugleich zurück und nach vorn, eine Bilanz wird notwendig. (1)

Hildegard Emmel, anticipating the sequels to Halbzeit, observed:

Der Titel Halbzeit weist darauf hin, daß eine letzte Entscheidung nicht gefallen ist, wohl aber schon vieles, was sie bestimmen könnte, sichtbar wurde. (2)

Alissa's remark, 'Aber er bemerkt es nicht' is important, and is of relevance to Anselm as an individual as well as a representative of the Federal Republic. Anselm could, if he chose, understand his social malaise as well as he understands the psychosomatic nature of his illness (H 888f.). In a discussion of his portrayal of Anselm³ Walser pleaded that one cannot expect a moral stance from people who are over-stressed by the mere struggle for survival; the blame, he argued, lies with the social system which compels them to be selfish and opportunistic. Anselm indeed feels that he cannot live differently, although he sincerely regrets the course his life has taken when he sees how his children are developing. In Halbzeit he does not, however, as yet locate the fault in the social system, but blames 'die graue Miese' (H 406f.) or, as he sometimes calls this unpredictable but usually hostile fate, 'der große Regisseur' (H 888f.). He still aspires to a life in harmony with his environment, and projects these aspirations through fantasies of the imaginary Melitta. He even tries occasionally to ascribe the qualities of this figment of his imagination to the real Melitta Flintrop, but soon discovers that there is no corres-

1. W.Liersch, "Halbzeit", NDL IX, 1961/4, (pp.153-156); p.153.

2. H.Emmel, "Zeiterfahrung und Weltbild im Wechselspiel. Zu Martin Walsers Roman 'Halbzeit'", in W.Paulsen (ed.), Der Dichter und seine Zeit, Heidelberg 1970, p.260.

3. Interview with Dieter Zimmer, Die Zeit, 18.5.1973, pp.26f.

pendence between fantasy and reality. He never entirely abandons his dreams, however, but continues to pursue them in Das Einhorn and Der Sturz. But in the two later volumes of the trilogy Anselm no longer seeks metaphysical causes for the state of the world; he recognizes the mechanisms of the social system, although he still finds no way of mastering them.

Das Einhorn

Although in this second novel of the Kristlein trilogy the central character has become a 'professional intellectual' (E 97) and has moved from Stuttgart to Munich, the circle in which he moves has changed but little. Instead of the Frantzkes that circle is now constituted by Blomich, Frau Frantzke's brother, and his friends in his villa beside Lake Constance. Anselm's progress on the social ladder is reflected in the greater affluence of his new friends; but the mentality prevalent in this new environment is indistinguishable from that in Stuttgart. There is symbolic significance in the fact that Anselm's circumstances when writing about the past year in his life are identical to those at the end of Halbzeit: some five years have passed, but he is once again ill in bed; as before, he is aware of the psychological origins of his illness; it is again an escape from and rejection of a social reality which he cannot master.

Das Einhorn is a complex novel, with numerous themes. Although as with Halbzeit attention will for the purpose of this thesis be concentrated on the intellectual characters and Walser's treatment of the theme of their role in society, other themes, such as love, the problems of writing and the art of memory will be briefly touched upon where relevant. In Das Einhorn all the intellectuals are creative artists: Anselm is now a writer, as are Basil Schlupp, Franz Wollensack and Karsch. The composer Nacke Dominick Bruut, known as NDB, is by far the most successful, and by far the most odious: whereas Walser shows at least a degree of sympathy and understanding towards the frailties of most of his characters, NDB is a caricature devoid of any likeable characteristics. NDB, who emphatically rejects the very notion of 'engagement', has developed a theory according to which society has for so long been dedicated to 'good', that art has had to come to the rescue of 'evil'. Furthermore he is a parvenu, cruel, snobbish and ferociously articulate. His sarcastic message to the world is a mocking double allusion to Goethe¹ and President Kennedy²: 'Edel sei der Mensch, hilfreich und ein Berliner. Auch ich bin ein Berliner' (E 277).

1. The first lines of the poem "Das Göttliche".

2. "Ich bin ein Berliner": President Kennedy in Berlin, June 1963.

NDB is the only character in the novel with strong political convictions, but these are based entirely on subjective considerations: he is an anti-Communist because the Communist countries refuse to permit performances of what they understandably regard as his 'decadent' works. His most recent fame rests on his opera Die Vatikinesen, eine Oper für sechs Kardinäle und einen Papst, a controversial work which has brought the composer into conflict with the Catholic Church, which objected to one aria in particular, whilst NDB's admirers have claimed that it can only be judged properly by 'Eingeweihte' and have covered it, as Anselm puts it, with a 'Bedeutungsschimmel' which withdraws it from the judgement of lesser mortals and intimidates them into paying lip service even when their aesthetic sense is outraged:

Man muß schon seine ganze Gebildetheit mobilisieren . . . sonst hält man diese Arie bloß für gemein und erträgt sie kaum. Ich selber fand, diese Arie sei niederträchtig und gemein. So sehr fehlt es mir offenbar an Feinsinn. Um diesen Mangel zu verbergen, habe ich bis heute meine Meinung über die Skandalerie für mich behalten. (E 53)

Anselm, it is evident from this passage, is gifted with a healthy dose of self-irony, a saving grace of which NDB is wholly devoid. He is, however, not the only character who recognizes NDB's despicable egocentricity and the spuriousness of the esoteric products and critical verbalisations with which intellectuals of his stamp -- who constitute a bête noire for Walser -- support their claim to constitute a cultural 'establishment'. Yet they all subject themselves to his verdicts and whims, not out of admiration, as they pretend, but out of fear of his vindictiveness. Professor Mack is accepted by NDB as a regular companion because his title flatters the composer's image of himself, and obediently endures being treated like a servant. NDB mercilessly humiliates Wollensack by a venomous denunciation of his poetry at Beumann's party, and attempts to destroy Wollensack's and Edmund's reputations by referring in the press to their recent attendance at a writers' congress in the GDR and describing them as 'fellow-travellers'. Likewise he aggressively attacks Karsch for his socialist sympathies. Whereas the ideological conflict between East and West was exploited for selfish material interests in Halbzeit¹, here it is reduced to a mere weapon, albeit a powerfully effective one, in personal quarrels. The word 'Kommunist' has become an indiscriminate term of abuse, used by the working classes and intellectuals alike. Although there are no discussions of communism in this novel, the boundaries of what is acceptable in public utterances are still as carefully drawn as in Halbzeit and writers feel obliged to defend themselves very strongly

1. See pp.65f. and 69f.

against the imputation of communist leanings. They have achieved fame with works of social criticism, but their criticisms, by remaining strictly within the parameters of West German ideology, in fact support that ideology.

Walser demonstrates, moreover, that these intellectuals do not live by the principles which inform their writings. Their criticism, like that of Edmund in Halbzeit, is merely verbal and serves personal rather than social ends: Basil Schlupp's novels castigate the rich with their 'schwitzende Villen' (E 323), yet he cultivates their company assiduously because of his liking for good food (E 323f.). When actually in their presence he speaks of them with blatantly cynical opportunism as the real, unappreciated victims of society, with their 'unverschuldete Appetitlosigkeit' (E 324) and bad digestion. He insists that he has nothing against millionaires, he merely regrets their occasional lapses of taste in artistic matters.

Anselm points out that their opportunism is largely the product of economic circumstances. He himself has written a successful novel which has brought him fame, though little money. However, the fame in its turn brings him invitations to participate in public discussions, so that he comes to consider himself as an oppositional intellectual by profession. He sees little difference between this and his previous occupation as a travelling salesman: he now travels in opinions, which he speedily fabricates on any topic required (E 96ff.)¹ The economic position of the salesman and the writer have likewise much in common: their economic motivation is more real than their ostensible social function:

Damals hieß es: die freie Marktwirtschaft, welche unserer Freiheit den Grund legt, braucht Dich. Anselm dagegen brauchte Geld. So kriegte jeder, was er brauchte. Jetzt heißt es: die Meinungsfreiheit, welche unserer Freiheit den Grund legt, braucht Dich. Anselm dagegen braucht immer noch Geld. So kriegt wieder jeder, was er braucht. (E 98f.)

One can still, as in Halbzeit, distinguish different levels of consciousness between Anselm as character and Anselm as narrator, but the gap has been considerably narrowed by the former's increased self-awareness. With this greater self-awareness Anselm has become more disenchanted, realizing that his social responsibility is now greater than before but that he is lamentably failing to fulfil it. His scruples are also stronger than they were in Halbzeit: although he attempts to justify his behaviour in terms of his material needs, he is forced to admit his unease:

[es] kommt ihm manchmal vor, als sei die Rechtfertigungsmusik der Wirtschaft harmonischer gewesen zum Geschäft als die Musik, die die Produktion freier Meinungen begleitet. Aber er muß doch jeden Tag leben. (E 99)

1. Cf. Walser's remarks quoted above, p.62.

Anselm is aware that intellectuals have greater obligations towards society than other citizens, but he constitutes an exception in feeling guilty for not discharging these obligations, and he does not openly reveal his bad conscience, as Edmund does in Halbzeit. He merely registers in silence the hypocrisy of his new upper-class friends, whose gestures of social concern are principally motivated by self-interest, for example Blomich's provision of a guesthouse for his employees with strict house rules, whose aim is to restore their health and physical well-being for the sake of his profit rather than their pleasure; the house also improves his tax position (E 234). The improved working conditions devised by the company psychologist -- another 'intellectual' who puts his skills entirely at the service of the monied classes -- are motivated by similar considerations (E 245f.).

For status reasons Edmund had preferred to work in advertising rather than sales in order to avoid contact with the actual products concerned and sustain the image of an intellectual occupation. Blomich likewise leaves the running of his factory entirely to his managers and keeps only a collection of small marzipan figures in a glass show-case, as if they were works of art, as a very oblique reminder of his source of income. He spends his time, however, in pursuits that can hardly be described as intellectual: operating the remote control system of his toy fleet, and wooing his moody mistress Rosa, who consorts with him only for the sake of material benefits. As is the case with all Walser's male characters, his sexual preoccupations reflect his dissatisfaction with life and alienation from his true self and his occupation. Blomich and others like him lack any genuine social responsibility; their discussions of political topics are superficial and easily degenerate into infantile or obscene games. Although conscious, in a frivolous way, of the danger of a nuclear war during the Cuba crisis of October 1962, most of them put their trust in President Kennedy and give little further thought to the matter. Blomich's nuclear shelter which he proudly displays merely proves a stimulus to further games, in which the egocentricity of these characters reaches extremes of absurdity: the American 'Author', like NDB a caricature of the wholly 'subjective' artist, is worried that the nuclear holocaust might leave him without an umbrella (E466). He also puts forward a similar personalized view of the real sources of American anxieties over Cuba, in an exuberant parody of the reductionist thinking that sees all human fears as the product of sexual complexes:

Gelänge es, Cässtrous Penis zu screenen, daß jeder Amerikaner sich zuhause überzeugen könnte, Cässtrou übertrifft ihn nicht oder doch nicht wesentlich, gleich wären jedem Amerikaner die Raketen auf Cuba egal. (E 465)

There is indeed an element of self-parody here: Walser mocks not only the widespread contemporary over-estimation of the importance of sex (which he also commented on in Über die neueste Stimmung im Westen¹), but also his own tendency to use the sexual activities of his characters as indicators of their general dissatisfaction, for which they fail to recognize the real social causes. Anselm also comments ironically that the 'Author's' reputation of being a left-wing intellectual is based on his unorthodox behaviour rather than any actual political convictions (cf. the Kanabuh and its members in Halbzeit). The 'Author' is an extreme example of those egocentric modern intellectuals whose thinking and writing are entirely conditioned by their own personal experience, but who are convinced that their 'Befreiungshilfe' (E 52) -- in NDB's words -- is of relevance to their readers.

The problem of social responsibility, of engagement, is one of the major themes of this novel. No responsible, realistic discussion of current affairs and international politics is to be found in the Blomich circle, despite the fact that his livelihood is directly affected by the economic consequences of political developments. Even his concern with the effects of the Cuba crisis on the international cocoa and sugar markets (E 240) is modish conversation rather than the expression of a genuine informed interest. Certainly what little concern he does feel goes no further than his own immediate financial interests. Anselm knows how superficial and insincere many intellectuals are in posing as 'the conscience of the nation'; they consider their activity principally as an occupation like any other, a role to which they are not fundamentally committed. They play their role of independent-minded critics of society for as long as they are in the public eye, offering a variety of viewpoints to their audience, but the fact that they all belong to the same privileged social group is of far greater importance to them than their ostensible differences of opinion. They know, of course, that they are merely playing a game, but they justify the game on the grounds that society needs this confirmation that it permits a democratic plurality of opinions: 'Die Bevölkerung braucht das Schauspiel der Auseinandersetzung' (E 133), and that the participants, whether sincere or not, do present a number of different viewpoints on any particular issue and hence help to clarify the situations for the audience. But the danger lies in the fact that the existence of public debate leads the listeners to believe that their views and interests are genuinely represented and protected by the intellectuals participating in the debate, to whom they can thus delegate their social responsibility. For this reason Walser, like Grass, rejects the concept of the intelli-

1. Cf. p.50.

gentsia as the 'conscience of the nation'. Since the interest of these intellectuals in social affairs ceases as soon as they are out of the public eye, leaving the audience in the illusion that their concerns are in safe hands, such public debate supports the status quo, regardless of how emphatically that status quo is verbally attacked.

Thus for Walser the real dividing line runs between social classes, not ideologies. The ostensible difference between intellectuals appearing on the same platform to argue with one another disappears when they dine together afterwards and travel home together in a first-class railway carriage; they are united by their economic privileges far more fundamentally than they are divided by their opinions:

Ob man . . . als CDU-Mensch oder als SPD-Mensch in der ersten Klasse reist, ist weniger wichtig als daß man überhaupt in der ersten Klasse reist . . . nachher, wenn man noch zusammensaß . . . würden die Standpunkte schmelzen, würde sich jene tiefere oder höhere Eintracht herstellen, die alle Meinungen hinter sich läßt, weil sie auf soliderem Grund ruht, nämlich auf gleichen Wagen, Wohnlagen, Käsesorten, Kurorten, Getränken, Werbegeschenken, auf gleichen Manschetten, Krankenhausbetten, Konten, Urlaubshorizonten, Daunendecken, Liebesverstecken, Auslandsreisen, Vorzugspreisen, auf der gleichen Urlaubszeit und Rostfreiheit. (E 133)

Anselm acquiesces in the pretence of responsible exchange of opinions because he knows that if he were to expose its falsity nobody would either believe him or wish to believe him, because the pretence allows those involved to enjoy their privileges with a clear conscience. Nor does Anselm wish to jeopardize his own chances of success within the strict hierarchy of the professional intelligentsia, which permits as little or less mobility than the hierarchy of social strata and within which Anselm knows that he belongs only to the second rank. To safeguard his position he must win the approval of those in the first rank, the 'Oberschriftsteller [die] nicht nur auf sich und die Zeit, sondern auch noch auf die anderen Schriftsteller aufpassen' (E 97). He is thus motivated by a blend of pessimism and opportunism and finds himself here too, as in the business world, under the stress of competition, as Walser conveys by a metaphor from the sphere of competitive gymnastics¹: Anselm's only chance of joining the first 'team' would, he realizes, be:

Wenn einer aus der ersten Riege plötzlich erkrankte oder selber einspringen durfte in der Weltriege in Perpignan oder Princeton, dann durfte A.K. auch schon mal in Riegen auftreten, in denen sonst nur die erstklassigen, die niet- und nagelfesten Denker, die wirklichen Meinungskönige auftraten . . . (E 102)

1. Walser uses the same image in connection with 'B' in Die Gallistl'sche Krankheit, who devotes much of his energy to training female gymnastics 'Riegen' (G 90ff.).

Parasitic and exploitative though these intellectuals are, it is Anselm's participation in their debates which has developed his interest in and understanding, however superficial, of socio-political matters. Obligated by his profession to inform himself about current affairs, he initially does no more than collect fragmentary items of information, but he finds himself taking a genuine interest in the civil war in the Congo, and forms a strongly held personal opinion in favour of Lumumba and against Tshombe (E 104); his strength of feeling does not, however, prevent him from being distracted by trivialities: while thinking about Lumumba during a train journey he simultaneously notices the green blouse of the woman opposite, and feels annoyance that his fingers are sticky from eating his lunch. Nor does the genuineness of his opinion inhibit him from exploiting it opportunistically to attract Barbara's attention during a public debate; his verbal brilliance sparks off an animated discussion, but he is interested only in seducing her.

On the public platform, however, Anselm puts forward whatever opinion he is being paid to represent. His allotted role becomes in fact that of the non-conformist who rebels against everything and everybody -- a role which, with a self-knowledge and self-irony that do him credit, Anselm admits suits him best, as he lacks the competence to positively support any view at all (E 136). In these public debates, recurrent topics are discussed in recurrent jargon; with frequent use words become comically contracted: 'Bunzreplik', 'Wahlbedaff', 'Demkратie', 'Unternehmerinzjative', 'Universalltät', 'Personaltät', 'Konsumsuffrätät' and many more (E 126). Foreign loanwords are also used freely, listed by Walser in exuberantly comic phonetic spelling: 'Hjumen Rileeschens', 'Üdukassiong-permanangt', 'Laiflong Lörning', 'Osteriti', 'Prescher-Gruubs', 'Puur-soa', 'Ang-soa' etc. (E 126). -- Walser's list is a comic tour de force of mockery of the pretensions to cosmopolitanism and superior understanding of the intellectuals who stud their vocabulary with such vogue-words.¹ Anselm realizes that such discussions are mere self-aggrandizing 'Scheinbewegungen', creating an illusion of the dynamism which is an essential component of the self-image of Western society. To the popular view 'Bewegung muß sein' (E 122) Anselm adds a bitter comment:

. . . und wir waren es, die die Bewegung auf der Stelle und im unbeschreiblichen Kreis herum erfanden und demonstrierten, zur Nachahmung für alle. (E 122)

The only effect of Anselm's public show of non-conformity is, as he knows, 'die Befestigung unseres Mionärsstaates [sic]' (E 122). For although he appears to enjoy complete freedom of speech and behaviour, he

1. Cf. M.Kretschmer, "Literarische Sprachbarrieren", in A.Rucktäschel (ed.), Sprache und Gesellschaft, Munich 1971, pp.230-259.

knows the limits which are set, tacitly but rigorously, to that freedom: 'Es gab eine harte Grenze. Von keinem gezogen, von vielen bewacht' (E 137). West German society may be liberal and tolerant, but it does not tolerate any questioning of its basic principles and it does not tolerate communism. Anti-Communism has by now been internalized by all social classes: a drunken labourer who abuses Anselm uses the terms 'Ithaker', 'Ausländer' and 'Kommunist' (E 66f.), all three reflecting equally irrational but equally firmly entrenched prejudices amongst the ordinary citizenry; in intellectual circles likewise the term 'Kommunist' is used readily and unthinkingly as a term of abuse: when during a discussion Anselm observes: 'Wer mehr Geld hat, ist freier, als wer weniger Geld hat' (E 131) he is immediately and sharply accused of 'Demagogie', 'Kounismus'[sic] and of holding a 'Büttenrede' (E 132).

Just as in Das Einhorn Communism as such is not discussed, as it was in Halbzeit, so also the topic of National Socialism no longer figures in the later novel. Whatever unease could still be observed in Halbzeit regarding the past has now entirely disappeared, although the National Socialist mentality has not: Dr. Fuchs can now joke about his war crimes (E 317); like so many others he has conquered his sense of shame but has learned nothing from the past.

Anselm is the only character in Das Einhorn who develops a political conscience, but his awareness of how easily he can be distracted from political matters, even where he holds strong views makes him wonder whether it is at all possible to make politics the centre of one's life. He comes to the conclusion that it is not, and this is a sincere conclusion, not merely a self-justifying rationalisation. Like Starusch in Grass's örtlich betäubt, who realizes that his toothache causes him more distress than the napalm used in Vietnam, Anselm realizes that his immediate personal life will always be of greater importance to him than events in the outside world, regardless of the nature or objective importance of those events. He reflects that 'Gleichzeitigkeit' in the individual's awareness is beyond the capacity of the human mind, and that nobody can genuinely subordinate his private interests to general socio-political concerns; it is the latter which are inevitably subordinated and postponed:

Wäre das anders, dürfte mir jetzt nicht die Märzsonne das Papier wärmen, sie müßte mich vielmehr aufscheuchen, daß ich endlich hinausrenne nach Pasing, wo sich sicher eine Familie mit Hilfe von zwei Messern ausrottet, bis auf ein nur in die Lunge zu treffendes Töchterlein . . . Aber ich werde warten, bis ich es aus der Zeitung erfahre, dann war es und ist es für mich so unerheblich, man glaubt es nicht. (E 107)

Where this view is taken to an extreme, the entire social world becomes trivial beside the individual's immediate concerns and eventually loses

all meaning for him. The privileged classes, including the intellectuals, of affluent society are depicted by Walser in this novel as wholly egocentric and indifferent to any real social issues. But eventually this egocentricity itself begins to affect them adversely; they begin to feel that their lives are devoid of content, and in order to break out of their apathy they resort to excesses such as the 'Nabelschau' organized by NDB at the Beumanns' party, and the numerous sexual games elsewhere; Anselm also escapes into fantasies, both pleasant and cruel.¹

Anselm's social awareness has been strengthened since Halbzeit; he now realizes, as did Edmund in the earlier novel, that a small minority are able to indulge themselves in this way by virtue of their exploitation of the working-class majority. Gradually he also begins to understand that although he moves in their circles, his lack of financial independence gives him more in common with the working classes of whom he knows much less. Even his secure contract with Melanie Sugg gives him no real freedom: he still writes for money rather than for genuine creative satisfaction; writing is for him not a superior occupation requiring inspiration or special gifts, but merely hard work. He produces, and modifies, his work to suit his publisher's requirements. His art never becomes autonomous, nor does it ever offer an escape from reality. Whether as writer or as salesman, Anselm's main concern has always been 'Was habe ich heute verdient? Wieviel haben wir heute verbraucht?' (E 237). The difference is only that he is now aware that this is a lamentable state of affairs, although he can imagine no other:

Es soll höhere Wesen geben, die arbeiten um der Arbeit willen. Wesen, deren Arbeit einen Sinn hat nicht bloß für sie selber. Wesen, die, was das Futter angeht, überhaupt nichts mehr tun müßten. Dafür wäre glatt gesorgt. Trotzdem tun sie noch was. Da beginnt wahrscheinlich der mir unbekannte Sinn. Der uns unbekannte Sinn. (E 237f.)

Anselm takes a major step forward at this point, in fact: for the first time he thinks 'uns', indicating his dawning awareness of himself as a social being who shares a common fate with other social beings. He lacks any conviction however that this shared fate can be changed. He compares his situation to that of Barbara, who has taken a rich lover 'um ihrer unveränderlichen Lage dann und wann ein wenig zu entkommen' (E 131). Just as she is paid for her 'affection', so Anselm in turn expects a reward from her for acting as her 'Seelenstreichler' (E 140), as he does with Melanie. Instinctively rather than rationally he senses a need for solidarity amongst all those who are exploited:

Der [Körper] erinnert sich noch an die Herde, die Horde, die Futterplätze, die Maiwiese, an die Notnachbarschaften, die

1. Fantasy and escapist play-acting are the themes also of Walser's play Überlebensgroß Herr Krott.

primitive Solidarität. (E 135)

But in the existing competitive system no solidarity is possible. After leaving a party disgusted with his 'friends' and their games, Anselm tries to convince the workers at the railway station of the need for solidarity; he likewise tries to persuade Barbara to give up her lover and seek solidarity with other women as a defence against exploitation (E 173). But his deepest conviction is that the individual's urge for self-improvement is stronger than any desire for solidarity:

Solidarität solange wir im Souterrain schuften, aber jeder weiß, daß jeder versucht, sobald als möglich unter allen Umständen, hinaus- und hinaufzukommen! Und dazu hat jeder nichts als seine angeborenen Talente! (E 163)

The problem as Anselm sees it is that nobody shows any vision or even concern regarding the future. He thus finds it impossible to envisage any real change: 'Die Zukunft stellt sich ein. Andauernd. Ein Mittelalter löst das andere ab' (E 94). All the existing visions of the good life have outlived their usefulness, and no new visions exist: 'Gebrauchte Utopien sind zu haben. Neue gibt es nicht mehr' (E 134). Yet the individual does at least occasionally feel a desire for action and a need to combat what distresses him. But because no social outlet exists for such urges, they can be expressed only through physical sickness or aggression: both Hans Beumann and Karsch are violently sick after their arguments with NDB, and Anselm is likewise nauseated by NDB's 'navel travesty' (E 53). After a frustrating encounter with his wife and children Anselm has to bite his fingers to control his anger. The problem for these individuals is that they have so far internalized the norms of the system that they cannot change their behaviour. This is true in the sphere of intimate personal relationships as well as professional life: Anselm woos Orli in the only way he knows: by competing with her present lover, with the result that although he wins her, he immediately feels insecure: what he has won by competition he can lose in the same way. Anselm desires a better life of love and harmony, but without any idea of how to achieve such a life; all he can do is to hopefully project his desires onto Orli.

The unicorn of the title symbolizes Anselm's conscious and subconscious expectations and aspirations, both sexual and social. According to one critic, the unicorn is 'Symbol der Erwartung und der sexuellen Sehnsucht';¹ it has also been taken as both a phallic symbol and a mythical creature symbolizing the creative vitality of memory.² Doane interprets the symbol in the most comprehensive way:

1. A. Waine, Martin Walser, Munich 1980, p.83.

2. Thomas & Van der Will, The German Novel and the Affluent Society, Manchester 1968, p.106.

Das Einhorn versinnbildlicht in diesem Roman alle unbewußten Erwartungen Anselms, ob sie nun sexueller, gesellschaftlicher oder politischer Natur sind. Gleichzeitig repräsentiert es . . . dynamische Kräfte in Anselm, die nur die momentane Daseins-situation verändern wollen. Als 'Einhorn Sklave' . . . kann Anselm deshalb die Anforderungen seiner Erwartungen weder lenken oder abwenden, noch beugt sich die Erwartung irgendeiner Rationalität: 'Sie will offenbar alles' . . . Obwohl es scheint, als ob das Einhorn meist nach sexueller Befriedigung sucht, bringt es doch ein allgemeineres Verlangen nach Glück zum Ausdruck. (1)

When Anselm meets Orli for the first time, the unicorn draws his attention to the importance of this meeting, and when for the first time ever Anselm is completely relaxed and happy in her company, the unicorn too is seen in a position of complete rest, its head in the lap of a maiden, safe from the huntsmen (E 408). His happiness is precarious, however, as it is located entirely outside the norms and framework of society, just as the unicorn is a mythical, i.e. unreal creature. No solution to the problems of the intellectual, or indeed of any man, is to be found by withdrawing into the sphere of mythical or Utopian fantasy. It is when this Utopian fantasy of complete unproblematic fulfilment breaks down, when Orli leaves, that Anselm takes to his bed again to begin once more a process of self-examination, this time in the form of remembering the past.

Some critics² interpret Anselm's attempt to take stock of his past as the main theme of Das Einhorn and see it as Walser's coming to terms with, or misunderstanding of, Proust's À la recherche du temps perdu. The East German critic Plavius, anxious as ever to give Walser credit for the 'progressive' aspects of his work, interprets the process of recollection as a first step towards 'die Änderung des Bestehenden'³, but this is a questionable interpretation, for as Doane⁴ points out, Anselm remains completely self-absorbed throughout, retreating increasingly into an inner subjective world, and even devising a new polyglot language as a vehicle for the expression of his intensely subjective experiences (E 422f.). But this 'raid on the inarticulate' (T.S.Eliot) provides no solution to Anselm's problems either. He is however left at the end of Das Einhorn with a greater awareness of the source of those problems than at the end of Halbzeit. He recognizes them as symptoms of a wider social malaise, and realizes that the first step towards a solution would lie in solidarity and political organisation. But he lacks the conviction, energy and self-confidence to attempt such a radical change of his life. If he were to pursue his insights to their

1. H.Doane, op.cit., pp.98f., footnote 68.

2. E.g. G.Blöcker, "Die endgültig verlorene Zeit", Merkur 20, 1966/222, pp.987-991.

3. H.Plavius, "Kritik, die am Bettuch nagt", NDL XV, 1967/1, (pp.142-154); p.151.

4. H.Doane, op.cit., p.107.

logical conclusion he would adopt the course which Gallistl adopts, and Walser interrupted work on the Kristlein trilogy to present that option in Die Gallistl'sche Krankheit. But Anselm turns instead away from social reality and opts for further retreat into a private world of unrealistic fantasies: towards the end of Das Einhorn he is dreaming of happiness with Orli and of a peaceful existence as a village school-teacher with Birga (E 487), fantasies which in no way constitute a serious intention but merely heighten his alienation from the real world. He is both culprit and victim at once. The inevitable result of his choice is shown in Der Sturz.

Der Sturz

In this final volume of the Kristlein trilogy, Anselm has lost the political awareness and insights which he achieved in Das Einhorn. There he had realized that a hostile society could be resisted only through solidarity, but now he reverts to his earlier truculent individualism. Anselm in Der Sturz and Gallistl in Die Gallistl'sche Krankheit are two sides of a single coin: Gallistl embodies the development of an intellectual who despite his doubts and scepticism resolves to attempt to change both himself and society; Anselm's fate demonstrates what happens to an intellectual who does not thus overcome his doubts and chooses the sickness rather than the possible cure: conformity is bought at the price of a self-alienation which, once conscious, paralyses the will and leads to self-destruction. Anselm once again attempts to make the social system serve his interests by conforming to its demands, but whereas in Halbzeit he had succeeded in this, in Der Sturz he fails. As his failures become increasingly distressing, Anselm's only response is evasion, flight and eventually suicide.

The majority of critics regretted this regression in Anselm's development. Wolfgang Werth¹ felt that in Das Einhorn Anselm had reached a 'Fast-Identität' with Walser, and regretted that it had not been maintained in Der Sturz. This 'Fast-Identität' was in fact perpetuated by Walser, but in the figure of Gallistl, not Anselm. Karl Heinz Bohrer² deplored the revival of Anselm Kristlein in the wake of Gallistl, the more so as Anselm reappeared in an unrealistic setting. Wapnewski³ also

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1. W.Werth, "Anselm nimmt Abschied", Deutsche Zeitung/Christ und Welt, Nr. 19, 11.5.1973, p.14.
 2. K.H.Bohrer, "Ein Sturz ohne Held"und Höhe", FAZ, 28.4.1973.
 3. P.Wapnewski, "Kristlein am Kreuz", Der Spiegel, Nr. 21, 21.5.1973, pp.156-158.

saw Gallistl as embodying the solution to Anselm's problems and dismissed Der Sturz as superfluous, as if Walser's aim were merely to provide solutions rather than explore problems to the furthest possible point. Peter Lämmle¹ and Oskar Neumann² were more charitable in their reviews; the former conceded that Der Sturz depicts 'unsere tagtägliche erfahrbare kapitalistische Wirklichkeit'.³ The consensus amongst early reviewers of Der Sturz was that Anselm had simply returned to his original situation at the beginning of the trilogy. This is not, however, entirely the case: although at the beginning of Der Sturz Anselm is indeed in a position similar to that at the beginning of Halbzeit, without either work or money but hopeful of obtaining both, he is now more anxious, less brazen, more aware of the forces hostile to his aspirations and more eager to escape from an unpalatable reality. Stress and anxiety make him less interested in society and politics than he had been in Das Einhorn, but no less sharply perceptive. There is moreover a further significant change to be observed: in the previous novels Anselm had commented on social and political issues without feeling personally affected by them; there was indeed an incongruous discrepancy at times between what Anselm as narrator told the reader, and what Anselm as character actually felt.⁴ In Der Sturz, on the other hand, the political reality which is in part the cause of Anselm's anxiety and bitterness obtrudes on his awareness from within his own subconscious, like a nightmare. After escaping from Munich and deciding to make his way on foot to Lake Constance, Anselm attempts, as in the two earlier novels, to suppress his anxieties by means of sexual fantasies. But when he imagines how pleasant it would be to walk on a Congolese boulevard amidst female parachutists, the dream turns into a nightmare: instead of shapely girls he is suddenly surrounded by foreign currency fleeing in panic from the threat of American dollars. Walser refers here to the influx of American dollars on the European market in the spring of 1971 which exerted downward pressure on all European currencies. This is the only direct reference in Der Sturz to contemporary politico-economic events, but it is an extremely pointed reference, which makes Walser's anti-American standpoint unmistakably clear:

Die ganze Nacht hindurch marschierte ich durch fliehende Währungen.
Auf der Flucht aus dem Dollar. Und dazu noch massenhaft vagabundierende Dollars, unberechenbar gefährlich für die Ehrlichen aller

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1. P.Lämmle, "Leben im widrigen Element", National Zeitung (Basle), 12.5.1973; cf. Lämmle's further interpretation, "Lust am Untergang oder radikale Gegen-Utopie?", Text+Kritik 41/42 (1974), pp.69-75.
 2. O.Neumann, "Ein Schluß, geschrieben in der Zukunft", Kürbiskern, 1973/4, pp. 786-790.
 3. P.Lämmle, loc.cit.
 4. See pp.64 and 68.

Länder, herfallend wie früher Heuschreckenschwärme über Früchte und Arbeit fremder Länder. Der vagabundierende Raubdollar ist aber eine Schädlingsart, gegen die noch kein Mittel gefunden ist. (S 31)

We know from Heimatkunde and Walser's efforts in the Büro für Vietnam that he considered the American cause unjust and objected to the support given to that cause by the West German government, which included supporting the value of the dollar by buying vast amounts, at the expense of the exchange-rate of other currencies. Anselm voices a similar attitude and points out that the Americans, at least the President and his representatives in West Germany, blamed the dollar crisis on unlawful speculations rather than on losses incurred during the Vietnam war:¹

Der amerikanische Präsident schob alles auf die Spekulanten. Auch seine Hiesigen verschwiegen den Krieg (in Vietnam). Ich rannte stundenlang ins Lechtal hinab und dachte darüber nach, ob unsere Nibelungentreue immer schon diese aufdringlichen und des hehrsten Verbergens bedürftigen Motive gehabt haben mochte. (S 32)

But this vehement condemnation of West German government policy leads Anselm not to revolt but to embittered resignation. A similar attitude is to be seen with regard to the National Socialist past: Anselm no longer draws covert parallels such as those between the young lieutenant and his National Socialist predecessors in Halbzeit, but the National Socialist era is now deeply embedded in the lives and consciousnesses of the Germans, as Anselm reflects when he finds himself singing Nazi songs as he walks through the countryside:

Ich ertappte meine Lippen beim Summen und Singen von Naziliedern. Dagegen kann ich, wenn ich wandere, fast nichts tun. Das sitzt zu tief. (S 31)

Dr. Zerrl still spends his spare time quantifying racial characteristics (S 96), while Heini Müller, a former driver in Treblinka, now exterminates mice by passing exhaust fumes into mouseholes (S 100). Anselm deploras such activities, but lacks the energy and confidence to do anything but passively accept them.

Anselm's sole concern is now the need to earn money; in Halbzeit and Das Einhorn this need had also dominated his life, but he had had other interests, illusions, and at least the hope of achieving material success and thus a degree of independence. Now he knows that his dependence is inescapable: all three parts of Der Sturz are significantly headed

1. The article "Dollarkrise. Geduld am Ende", in Der Spiegel, 19.4.1971, which states that the West German government bought up 3,000 million US Dollars, does refer to the Vietnam war and quotes the Herald Tribune and Washington Post as making similar connections. The American Monetarists even blamed the Vietnam war as the major cause of the crisis, cf. Robert Z. Aliber, The International Money Game, 2nd ed. New York 1976, pp.41-43.

'Geldverdienen'. The subtitles of the second and third parts indicate that Anselm imagines ways of escape, but these are no more than fantasies. His attempt to obtain work as secretary of BuSoM fails because he over-emphasizes his need for money; speculation on the hotel market leads to the loss of Alissa's entire capital; whereupon his last attempt to earn a living in a role that is at least tacitly accepted by society sees him as his cousin's souteneur. She exploits her wealthy clients by demanding money for abortions which she does not need, but when she falls in love and is rejected she realizes that it is she who is being exploited, and she turns to radical politics, leaving Anselm, after he has been beaten up by her new comrades-in-arms, to flee from Munich and seek help once again from Alissa.

The first part of Der Sturz relates to Anselm's experiences on the way from Munich to Lake Constance. These are grotesque, and the entire setting is unrealistic, which has the effect of stimulating the reader to analyse the significance of the incidents and to place them in an appropriate social context. A. Wayne points out that this section serves two purposes.¹ First, it is a parody of the journeys made by Anselm as a travelling salesman and intellectual in Halbzeit and Das Einhorn respectively; secondly, and more importantly, these nightmarisch experiences serve as symbols for his subconscious and unconscious mind, conveying his guilt, insecurity and fear of persecution. In many of the episodes he is a prisoner of women, prior to being a prisoner of financial exigencies later in the novel. Thus the first part reflects Anselm's disturbed inner world and the progressive deterioration of his situation. Events move in a circular pattern, following the 'Kreisbewegung' which Anselm had recognized in Das Einhorn; where he had found the symbol of the 'Gyrinus-Taumelkäfer' for it:

Gyrinus-Taumelkäfer, ich sah Dich im Sommer die engen Kreise auf dem Wasser ziehen, Dich mach ich zum ersten Tier in meinem Wappen. (E 12)

The whirligig beetle has proved stronger than the unicorn. Whereas in Das Einhorn Anselm perceived a circular movement only in the socio-political sphere, he now realizes that it also governs his own life. The hopes and expectations symbolized by the unicorn are still marginally visible in Anselm's first encounter: the girl Genovev seems to offer him the happiness and harmony he had hoped for with Orli. They live for a short while in a paradisial setting, without ever speaking, in what Anselm feels is a perfect non-verbal communication, a state which is the extreme antithesis of the intellectual's involvement, through language,

1. A. Wayne, op.cit., pp.91f.

in the affairs of society. But the dream comes to a savagely abrupt and disillusioning end when the girl, a deaf-mute who has escaped from an institution, is taken back there after being molested by an official and Anselm finds himself wanted by the police. Again the lesson for Anselm is that any form of happiness sought outside the sphere of social life cannot be permanent. The women whom he subsequently encounters all inspire fear in him: whereas in the past he exploited women, now he is exploited by them. Finchen with the six fingers uses him, albeit whilst giving him some affection in return; Frau Finchen merely wishes to enjoy his body whilst her husband observes their frolicking. Sex, which formerly served to sustain Anselm's ego, has now become a threat to his ego; once proud of his virility he is now insecure and fears he may become impotent.

Between his sexual adventures Anselm briefly works in a factory, where he learns that this level of society too is marked by exploitation and abuse: workers do not receive the wages for which they are hired, foreign workers are the victims of intense and ill-informed prejudice, parodied by Walser in the figure of the works manager who informs Anselm that due to the influx of migrant workers half the German population is now illiterate. By manipulating the workers and creating hostility amongst them, the employers prevent any proletarian solidarity; instead the workers are conditioned to feel solidarity with their employers. This had been illustrated in Das Einhorn with regard to the domestic staff and the drivers; now Anselm finds himself in the same position vis-à-vis Blomich. In Halbzeit and Das Einhorn he had associated with a group of socially successful intellectuals and wealthy industrialists; although aware that these associates constituted a homogenous group by virtue of their economic privileges¹, he had persuaded himself that he himself belonged to that group. Now he realizes that within the economic hierarchy an unbridgeable gap separates him from them. Now that he works for Blomich and is financially dependent on him, no communication between them is possible:

Dadurch wirken wir nicht nur getrennt, sondern wir sind es. Wir existieren weiter von einander entfernt, als wenn er vor 100 Jahren gelebt hätte und ich erst in 100 zur Welt käme. (S 41)

It has become clear to Anselm that only intellectuals such as NDB, who conform to the requirements of society, and those who acquire interests in the industrial sphere, can maintain their position at the top of the social hierarchy; the others fail utterly, however great their talents and their efforts. In Der Sturz Edmund and Wollensack reappear along with two new intellectuals, Fritz Hitz and Elmar Glatthaar, both unsuccessful

1. See p.79.

ful writers. The frustration caused by their lack of success is expressed through aggression and/or sickness, a response so familiar to Anselm that he has given it a name, his 'Tigergefühl', the destructive urge that occasionally overcomes his fear. When, towards the end of the novel, he loses his job with Blomich, his initial reaction is a desire to blow up the entire house, but in the end he merely damages all lampshades. Writing sometimes offers a substitute for violent action -- the only function that is now left, for Anselm, to this intellectual activity:

Anstatt meine Ohnmacht und Niedergetretenheit in Schweißausbrüchen erdulden zu müssen, anstatt herumrennen zu müssen nur zur Erschöpfung und zur Verhinderung einer Einsicht in meine Lage, wollte ich etwas niederreißen oder so hoch in die Luft sprengen, daß die ganze Stadt warten würde, bis die Trümmer zurückregneten aus dem blauen Himmel. Ich kaufte mir Papier und setzte mich in den Englischen Garten und schrieb -- zu meiner Wiederherstellung -- drauflos. (S 16)

But Anselm's creative talent itself becomes progressively crippled; he knows that writing is futile because it changes nothing, and he develops an antipathy towards all literature, to the point where he cannot even bear to pick up his friend Elmar's manuscript: 'Ich kann sein Manuskript nicht in die Hand nehmen; Es ist mir zuwider wie ein eigenes' (S 211). Although he still pretends to be a writer, Anselm is left capable only of playing back a tape-recording of his typewriter.

Fritz Hitz also tries to find a substitute for direct action in literary creativity. His intellectual activity is an outlet for his frustration at the lack of social success caused by a formidable array of neurotic symptoms: shyness, blushing, ingrowing toenails and sweating palms. He is a pitiable figure, unattractive but portrayed with sympathy, who escapes from his psychological burdens into fantasies of terrorism and lengthy political discussions with Edmund -- a type of intellectual which, to great public consternation, emerged in the early 1970s when urban terrorism was at its height in West Germany.¹ For Fritz as for Anselm's cousin the resort to radical politics is the clear product of frustration and helplessness. Because they lack any real understanding of socio-political issues, to which they respond merely emotionally, they can achieve nothing. When Fritz tries to give expression to his revolutionary views he is accused of terrorism, and gratifies his desire for action by pretending for a time that he has in fact committed the crimes of which he is accused. Not only does Walser make here an acid comment on the motives of those intellectuals who were drawn into a degree of support for and involvement with urban terrorism, the arguments of Fritz's defence lawyer also expose the mechanism by which even supposedly 'revolutionary' literature can function

1. Cf. p.48.

to the benefit of the existing system, inasmuch as it is used to replace, and thus forestall, revolutionary action:

. . . zu fragen sei doch, ob nicht die literarische Verarbeitung solcher Konflikte gerade eine Sublimierung und Verarbeitung der Spannung bedeute, also eine Ersatzhandlung, die es dem Betroffenen ersparen könne, etwas aus Protest wirklich in die Luft zu sprengen . . . Anstatt auf eine Tatbeteiligung hinzudeuten, stellen sie eine Tatersparung durch literarische Transposition und Abreaktion dar. (S 202f.)

The pessimistic conclusion conveyed by Der Sturz is thus that whether the intellectual tries to influence society by revolutionary suggestion or completely withdraws from society, the effect is the same: nil.

Wollensack has chosen the opposite extreme: the role of intellectual as popular entertainer. At the beginning of Der Sturz we are shown his and Edmund's humiliating attempts to earn a living in the film industry, attempts which Edmund soon abandons. Wollensack, however, achieves success in the mass media, with a daily television programme in which for two hours each day he talks about his private life, sitting in an empty room which appropriately reflects the remoteness of his activity from anything of the least social importance. Edmund for his part hopes to achieve literary success by faking a manuscript by a Russian dissident and smuggling it into the Soviet Union in order to have it smuggled out again and published serially in the West. The proposed manuscript is to combine salacious interest with the appropriate political sentiments, i.e. affirmation of the ideology of Western capitalism and condemnation -- purportedly based on first-hand knowledge -- of Communism. Walser's revulsion is forcefully conveyed in the distasteful imagery with which Edmund discusses his plan:

Was meinst du, wenn ich Zervixschleim und Vaginalepithel aus östlichem Gelände nur politisch sauber präpariere, kann mir dann die Zustimmung der Besten noch länger versagt bleiben? (S 179)

That Walser's contempt for West German anti-Communism has not changed is evident also in other episodes: when Anselm appears in court, for example, accused of a number of minor offences which he has, and a murder which he has not committed, his cousin is not allowed to testify because the Public Prosecutor dismisses the evidence of a Communist as valueless (S 123). If there is less discussion of anti-Communism than in the previous novels, this would appear to be because the author has resigned himself to accepting it as an integral element of the status quo.

The final stage of Edmund's plan is to reveal the truth about his manuscript and thus expose the gullibility of his publishers and readers, their eagerness to accept uncritically any writing that is ideologically affirmative. But Edmund's spirit has been broken, he lacks the stamina for such cynical opportunism, and is reduced, like Anselm, to playing a

tape-recording of his typewriter, while engaged on a study of spiders, whose principally auto-erotic sexual habits parallels his own series of sexual perversions which culminate in his grotesque suicide. One reason for Edmund's retreat into this bizarre extreme of isolated individualism is his conviction that public opinion now demands a literature entirely devoid of engagement. Speaking of Fritz's experiences in court, he argues that withdrawal is the only course open to the intellectual if he wishes to protect himself from similar misrepresentation: merely to permit this possibility is to collaborate with the existing system. To write according to one's conscience is rendered futile by public indifference and manipulative critical distortion, while to pander to public taste is an unendurable betrayal of intellectual integrity and responsibility:

Edmund erklärte uns beim Tee, das Typischste für uns sei, daß das absolut Höllenhafte unserer Existenz, wenn man es genau aufschreibe, das pure Feuilleton ergebe. Wer dieses Verhältnis nach dem Furchtbaren oder dem Komischen oder nach Furchtbaren und nach dem Komischen hin zuspitze, der könne damit zwar jede Menge Kunst produzieren, aber eben dadurch desertiere er aus dem wirklichen Verhältnis und lasse die anderen in der jetzt noch vernichtender gewordenen Banalität zurück. (S 150)

As an antipode to these intellectuals with their various failures, adjustments and compromises, Walser introduces the ironically styled 'Gegentyp'. He possesses all the qualities lacking in Anselm and his friends, even those who are successful: he has common sense (S 43), unlike the members of the Blomich circle; he has no enemies (S 45); unlike NDB; he loves his family (S 251) rather than philander like Anselm; he is well-informed (S 45) and his decisions are not 'vom eng persönlichen Interesse beschränkt' (S 252). He is universally admired and loved, an example to all, even Anselm (S 324f.). But these qualities are possible only because the 'Gegentyp' has no social obligations: others work for him, his financial security makes it unnecessary for him to defend his personal interests or restrict the expression of his views (S 251). This figure of the 'Gegentyp' adds further confirmation that Walser sees socio-economic conditions as decisively affecting the behaviour and qualities of intellectuals as well as of all other men. The 'Gegentyp' can also afford to be apolitical: 'Er ist Arbeitgeber, also Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms' (S 250), a reference to the ivory tower usually thought of as a residence of intellectuals which implies that to be apolitical when one has the means of exercising political influence is the privilege of a minority and therefore ultimately an act of injustice towards the majority.¹

1. Cf. Walser's essay Über die neueste Stimmung im Westen.

With heavy irony we are told that the 'Gegentyp' in his spare time also writes poetry, 'durch Zusammenfügen von Sprachteilen' (S 44), implying writing that is divorced from social concerns which can serve only as a temporary distraction. Such distraction from the real world can be dangerous: Anselm recalls how on one occasion during the war he was so engrossed in a trivial love story that it became more 'real' to him than reality, which was reduced to an unwelcome intrusion:

. . . andauernd kritzelt mir an der Bauchdecke die Angst, daß jetzt gleich ein Alarm losgeht und ich deshalb nicht weiterlesen kann. (S 12)

In his essays which were discussed in Chapter 2 Walser warns that escapist literature, by providing temporary relief, also encourages the reader to ignore, and thus accept, an unacceptable reality. Anselm also notes that precisely because the poems of the 'Gegentyp' have no connection with reality they acquire the status of something 'Kostbares, Gerettetes' (S 45). Sharing Walser's view that for most people the urge to write arises from a desire to expose that which they lack¹, Anselm maliciously speculates as to what the 'Gegentyp' might lack; as he lives in perfect harmony with his environment and lacks nothing socially the deficiency must, he concludes, lie in the intimate private sphere -- a phimosis perhaps (S 45). There is undoubtedly an element of self-mockery on Walser's part here: having explained the preoccupation with sex displayed by the majority of his characters as a product of social dissatisfaction, he here ironically reverses the causal relationship, in a manner which at the same time underlines the unrealistic quality of the 'Gegentyp's' social circumstances.

The advantages and qualities of this paragon serve as a counter-image of all that is unsatisfactory in the lives of the other intellectuals in the novel. Their dilemma is that although they perceive the mechanisms and injustices of society, they are not in a position to act, and are unable to effect any change by writing and talking alone. Edmund's reaction of complete withdrawal into the private sphere is tempting but ultimately destructive except for the wholly self-obsessed such as Wollensack and NDB who have the good fortune to find that their wholly subjective offerings are a saleable commodity. The majority have no other option but to attempt to live through social relationships. Because the intellectual in Der Sturz can neither accept society as it is nor envisage any alternative, they commit suicide. In an interview with Dieter Zimmer² Walser confirmed that these multiple suicides are intended

1. '. . . die Schreiber antworten auf einen Mangel, den sie erleben', in Wie und wovon handelt Literatur, Frankfurt a.M.1973, p.123.

2. In Die Zeit, 18.5.1973, p.27.

to show that Anselm is not an exceptional character but embodies the predicaments of all economically dependent individuals in the Federal Republic who see no way of escaping from their dependence. To survive in peace with one's environment is possible only when one makes a constructive effort to shape this environment according to one's ethical convictions. In Die Gallistl'sche Krankheit Walser had already portrayed an intellectual who has the courage to attempt that alternative.

Die Gallistl'sche Krankheit

Walser interrupted work on the Kristlein trilogy to write this short novel, which was published a year before Der Sturz. The figure of the intellectual and writer Gallistl was clearly conceived as a positive antipode to Anselm of the latter novel. Die Gallistl'sche Krankheit is divided into four sections: the first three describe and analyse, in the first person and in a whimsical, eccentric and at times faintly surrealistic manner, Gallistl's state of mind, his 'sickness'; the fourth section explores in more serious terms a possible 'cure'.

Like Anselm Kristlein, Gallistl realizes that he is a victim of the competitive society, suffering from 'Überforderung' (GK 9), as he has suffered all his life. He has always felt compelled to appear more gifted than he in fact is; even at school he struggled to remain one of the best pupils in his class in order to be thought intelligent. He has continued to struggle thus throughout his adult life, and regretfully admits that this unremitting cultivation of a false identity as a competitive intellectual has entailed a life without friendship. He suffers from that isolation entailed in playing an inauthentic social role which is shared by all Walser's major characters. They all have a circle of acquaintances whom they describe as 'friends', but none have genuine friends with whom they can communicate openly and honestly. But unlike Anselm, Gallistl realizes that his 'friends' are in the same isolated position as he; the heading of the section in which they are introduced, Symbiose, indicates their mutual dependence: the group provides a degree of protection against the hostility of society at large. But at the same time the group is itself a microcosm of that society, subject to its laws of competition and the survival of the fittest, laws which its members make no attempt to overcome by disregarding them. Their interaction is entirely competitive and self-aggrandizing. The predominance of the social roles from which they derive their self-esteem and through which they attempt to assert their superiority over one another, over their private personal selves, is indicated by the use of the initials of their professions to identify

them. Only Gallistl has a name¹; he introduces himself as Josef Georg Gallistl, but indicates the lack of close personal relationships in his life by adding: 'Meine Vornamen sind noch völlig ungebraucht'(GK 9). All the members of the group except Gallistl accept the fact that what holds them together is not friendship but mutual mistrust and dislike; Gallistl describes a typical evening spent together thus:

Es ist schon nach acht. Wir in unserem kleinen Freundeskreis müssen jetzt auf einander einschlagen. Ganz dringend. Wir können das nicht aufschieben oder dämpfen. Wir können nicht darauf verzichten, sofort wieder auf den einzuschlagen, der gerade auf einen anderen eingeschlagen hat und jetzt gerade eine Pause macht, eine Atempause. (GK 38f.)

Competitive verbal ferocity has invaded the personal sphere under the guise of intellectual discussion. Only the thinnest veneer of civilized behaviour covers their mutual hostility. The sphere of culture and the arts has become a battleground: because A praises Fellini, B. ferociously attacks him, but it is A that he is really attacking. As in Edmund's encounters with Josef-Heinrich and Dieckow in *Halbzeit*, the subject under discussion holds no intrinsic interest for them.

Gallistl realizes that such pseudo-communication and veiled hostility are to be found at all levels of society, and from childhood onward. His family life is characterized by the same violence as Anselm Kristlein's, and the children whom he observes around him seem all to be driven by hatred to calculated violence(GK 74). Real friendship appears impossible to him, only in relationships based on mutual indifference does he think sincerity at all feasible(GK 26). In *Der Sturz*, Anselm's children all developed pronounced neuroses; Gallistl's daughter similarly spends all her time throwing a ball against a wall. Gallistl himself is no longer capable of constructive activity, and displays symptoms similar to Anselm's, notably 'Liegesucht' and an aversion to movement(GK 15; cf. S 129). He can no longer work or read, has lost interest in art and suffers from extreme listlessness and inescapable boredom. Gallistl, like Anselm, concentrates his attention on his symptoms, but he is aware that at least some of them have social origins, an awareness which he formulates with sardonic humour:

Ich lasse praktisch nur noch den Krimi gelten. Wenn ich fest angestellt wäre, wäre ich wahrscheinlich auch für Kunst. Abteilungsleiter beim Funk, und dann Lyrik, das ist sicher der Gipfel. (GK 13)

If the high arts are only for the well-adjusted bourgeoisie, all that is left to the alienated intellectual is lethargy. Gallistl's own attempts to forge bonds with the world of men of action by means of art have failed: in his own poems he aimed to use subject-matter taken from the

1. W.Ross, "Gallistl und die fünf Engel", *Merkur* 26, 1972/290, pp.598-601 has pointed to the importance of this surname, which suggests Galle, Fistel or Distel, and List.

world of technology and thus address the substantial readership constituted by the technological intelligentsia. But these poems have simply brought him the reproach of a self-indulgent élitism, 'eine hedonistisch-bürgerlich-literarische Ambition' (GK 75). Lacking the energy to defend himself, Gallistl concedes his uselessness in the eyes of society and that, if his critics are right, he should commit suicide (GK 76). The reason why Gallistl does not kill himself, and thus complete his telescoped version of Anselm Kristlein's fate, is not even that he rejects this social judgement or the norms on which it is based; he merely lacks the necessary energy.

But here the difference between Gallistl and Anselm becomes apparent. Rather than succumb passively to the 'Abwärtsbewegung' (GK 68; cf. S 270), Gallistl resolves to resist it: he begins to write the history of his illness, as both diagnosis and possible therapy, not only for himself but also for his many fellow-sufferers, for he knows that he is only 'die Spitze eines Eisbergs' (GK 16): his 'friends' all share his illness -- that is, indeed, their raison d'être in the novel:

Wir tauchen hier nur auf, insofern wir jene Krankheit zum Ausdruck bringen, der ich meinen Namen leihe. Diese Krankheit ist ja nicht auf mich beschränkt. (GK 23)

One of the problems which Gallistl discovers is his need for approval and acceptance. Whereas Anselm had sought this support for his self-esteem from women, Gallistl finds it only through money:

Das Geld, das ich so urd so verdiene, ist die einzige Form der Zustimmung, die mir zuteil wird. Und ich bin so wehleidig, das für eine zu abstrakte Form der Zustimmung zu halten. (GK 23)

Gallistl does not enjoy the work which he is obliged to perform for money, and he laments the necessity of devoting all his energies to this end, but whereas Anselm reaches a point where he feels that his life would have no meaning at all without this necessity:

. . . mein Leben hätte, wenn der Zwang zum Geldverdienen entfiel, sofort überhaupt keinen Sinn mehr. (S 26),

Gallistl can still conceive of a sense of identity that might be derived from a source other than work done purely for the sake of money; he lacks the economic freedom to achieve such an identity, but he has not lost the capacity to imagine it:

Ich arbeite, um das Geld zu verdienen, das ich brauche, um Josef Georg Gallistl zu sein. Aber dadurch, daß ich soviel arbeiten muß, komme ich nie dazu, Josef Georg Gallistl zu sein. (GK 22)

Like Anselm, Gallistl has failed at a variety of occupations; these include in his case a wittily described attempt at becoming an actor. Gallistl imagines the acting profession as a very pleasant means of escaping from oneself by playing arbitrarily adopted roles: 'Nicht selber leben, nur noch das Leben anderer imitieren' (GK 47). Although Gallistl

does not become an actor, he does cultivate a variety of personae to present to the outside world. But unlike Anselm or Helmut Halm (in Ein fliehendes Pferd) who believe that such self-concealment offers a genuine security, Gallistl derives from his role-playing only the sense 'daß ich ein geringes Eigenleben habe' (GK 48). He begins to resent the concealment of his true self, however slight that self may be, and to feel that because nobody knows that self, he himself is gradually losing his awareness of it. As his contact with society decreases, his self-absorption increases: 'Ich interessiere mich nur noch für mich selbst' (GK 38); but his sense of self grows weaker thereby, not stronger. He begins to realize that a secure sense of identity requires social relationships.

Writing about his illness does however bring Gallistl an increased awareness of the sufferings inflicted by society: for a while he records all the insults and indignities he is subjected to in a large 'Rachekalender' (GK 37). Like the characters of Der Sturz he feels a strong desire for revenge, which is intensified by his accompanying 'momentane Machtlosigkeit' (GK 38). But here also Gallistl has a clearer understanding of his situation; he knows that his desire for violence is a reaction to his powerlessness: 'Wer Angst hat, will auch Schrecken verbreiten, das ist ja klar' (GK 38), and that his fear is the product of constant stress. He is also able to identify the source of that stress as the 'Wettbewerbsmentalität' (GK 40) of his 'friends', and resolves to try to liberate himself from that mentality. His resolve is to begin with little more than a determination to be different from his associates:

Ich will anders sein als ihr. Reiner. Stärker. Härter. Böser.
Mir ist alles recht, wenn es mich nur unterscheidet von euch. (GK 40)

This negative attitude produces only an increased sense of alienation. During Gallistl's four years of reflection (GK 78) his situation appears to him to be becoming progressively more hopeless: towards the end of the second section, Symbiose, even the idea of his own coffin is so alien to him that he wonders, with a clear echo of the end of Der Sturz, about the possibility of a coffin-less death in the Alps (GK 50). In section 3, headed Zuspitzung, where Gallistl's sickness is progressively intensified to the point of despair, he has dreams which recall the episodes of the first part of Der Sturz; like Anselm, Gallistl is also aware of the 'Kreisbewegung' of life:

Wir waren gut vorangekommen. Aber da war es schon wieder aus.
Wir mußten im Kreis gegangen sein. (GK 59)

He too attempts to escape from this circularity into Utopian fantasies:

Ich ziehe mich in ein Tal zurück. In ein hohes hallendes grün
aufwogendes schutzreiches rauschendes Tal. Bäume, Bäche und Tiere . . .
(GK 77)

His self-analysis leads him only to the conclusion that he is an isolated case, whose thoughts and actions can have no general significance:

Es ist für mich keine Frage mehr, ich bin ein Einzelfall.
Inzwischen ist mir klar geworden, daß genau das eine Art Todesurteil für alles ist, was ich überhaupt denken und tun kann, eine Art Vernichtungsbesiegelung. (GK 80)

This bleak conclusion appears to leave Gallistl only the escape into the banal world familiar to the reader of the Kristlein trilogy: he seeks distraction in trivial television entertainment, preferably a 'Krimi', 'in Farbe und mit Weibern . . . Eine ausführliche Handlung . . . mitreißend' (GK 80); anything that reflects the real world has become intolerable.

But Gallistl's dark night of the soul is the prelude to a dawning of hope, at least, in the final section, with its ironic heading which combines suggestions of both fairy-tale and Utopia: 'Es wird einmal'. He has a residual faith, which Anselm lacks, in the possibility of a better life, however unimaginable:

Es kann wieder heller werden. Auch wenn wir uns das überhaupt nicht vorstellen können. (GK 79)

He also has a tentative conception of the prerequisites of such a better life: 'eine andere Tätigkeit' (GK 79), 'Trockenheit, Wärme, kaum Krach. Menschen, die gerne etwas tun' (GK 87), and he struggles to formulate a vision of that life:

Ich kann es nicht aussprechen. Jeden Tag versuche ich es. Aus mir kommt nicht heraus, was ich möchte . . . Ich kämpfe um mich. (GK 85f.)

The fundamental difference between Anselm and Gallistl is that the latter believes that he can take control of his own life, that although the pressures of social expectations are formidable he is not compelled to conform to norms which he knows to be wrong -- the prime failing of Anselm, as Walser pointed out in an interview with Thomas Beckermann.¹

The turning point in Gallistl's life comes when he invites a number of Communists to his home. The transition from amnesia to supposed cure is abrupt, unexplained, and not entirely plausible; Gallistl's new friends appear on the scene like saviours (an effect which Werner Ross captured in the title of his review²), with a strong air of unreality by comparison with the description and analysis of the symptoms of alienation and frustration in the preceding three sections. The account of the new way of life upon which Gallistl subsequently embarks is also pale and unconvincing. The last section has two distinct themes: Gallistl's happiness with his new purpose in life and new companions, and his

1. Th. Beckermann, Erzählprobleme in Martin Walsers Romanen, Biberach a.d.Riß 1968, p.8.

2. W.Ross, "Gallistl und die fünf Engel", loc.cit.

scepticism concerning their convictions and actions. The former theme is treated with the same pleasing wit, irony and narrative invention that mark the earlier sections, but Gallistl's reservations concerning Communism read at times less like imaginative fiction than a treatise by the essayist Walser. This section consequently makes the impression of a projection of a possibility envisaged by Gallistl rather than an organic and credible development from the previous sections.

Gallistl clings to his new convictions with a mixture of despair and wishful thinking. '. . . es soll ja jetzt aufwärts gehen' (GK 88) he comments ironically as his friends mount the stairs, but immediately proceeds to forestall criticism by shedding doubt on this hope: 'wer sagt das, ich, ich will es, oder es wäre mir lieber . . .' (GK 88). His optimism is guarded, but it produces immediate salutary effects, even if only in small everyday matters: Gallistl rediscovers his pleasure in coffee and wine (GK 89), and his physical well-being is progressively restored as he discusses Communism with his new friends. There are many issues on which he disagrees with them, but the positive element in their comradeship is that these disagreements can be discussed honestly, with mutual respect and attentiveness which are wholly different from the aggressive competitive atmosphere of discussions with his former associates, and which remind Gallistl of the solidarity which he knew as a child through the Christian religion (GK 101).¹ For all his intense desire to belong to this group, Gallistl's progress is slow, and not without setbacks; as he tells Pankraz:

bevor man den schlimmsten Punkt nicht hinter sich hat, weiß man einfach nicht, daß es wieder anders werden könnte . . . Der Wendepunkt ist tatsächlich der schlimmste. Manchmal glaub ich, ich sei wieder zurückgeworfen auf diesen Wendepunkt . . . (GK 100)

The main obstacle is Gallistl's scepticism: in his discussion with the Communists he outlines all the doubts which beset a liberal bourgeois intellectual contemplating the possibility of committing himself to the Communist cause. As an intellectual, he doubts most of all whether there is any place for him in the Communist Party, which he sees as a workers' Party; he shares Anselm Kristlein's view that a person's sense of social identity is determined by his standard of living, and that he is unlikely to feel a common identity with people who earn only a fraction of his income. Gradually however he is persuaded that a different attitude is possible: he can seek closer contact with ordinary

1. Cf. Anselm's feelings in the incident at the railway station in Der Sturz; for him also the notion of solidarity has associations with childhood Christianity.

working people. He receives this advice in a letter from his aunt -- in keeping with the general whimsicality of Walser's narrative invention:

Lieber Josef, ich würde auf die gute Lage verzichten. Zieh doch zu Leuten, mit denen du lieber verwechselt wirst. (GK 93)

He takes a first step in the suggested direction when he decides to do some voluntary manual labour, and thus learns something of the satisfaction of simple but useful physical work (GK 100).

Later Gallistl has an important discussion with Pankraz about the position of intellectuals in the Communist Party. Pankraz describes the intelligentsia as 'freiwillige Linke' (GK 102) stressing the need for an active decision on their part, unlike the proletariat whose natural interests automatically lead them in the direction of socialism. Gallistl points out, however, that some intellectuals turn towards Communism not on the basis of a free ethical decision but as a result of an inner need: people are formed by their upbringing, mainly by maternal attitudes which are themselves reflections of social norms. In an analysis of the socialisation process which combines insights of both Marx and Freud, Gallistl argues (GK 103-107) that in a society based on individual achievement and reward, the main problem for the individual is that on the one hand some children receive so much praise and affection from their mothers that adult life inevitably disappoints them by comparison: their craving for praise leads them to seek public esteem as artists or intellectuals, who remain forever unsatisfied, however, because their demands increase with their rewards. On the other hand, others receive too little and are thus not conditioned to relate achievement to reward at all; they reject the 'Gib-Nimm-System' and their aspirations take on an anti-social or even criminal form. Both groups are ill-fitted to serve the self-perpetuation of a competitive, acquisitive society, and some of these maladjusted individuals realize the social origins of their maladjustment: these latter will try to solve their dilemma not by seeking compensation in the rewards of individual achievement, but by joining and supporting a collective. Thus social responsibility and concern are not the prerogative of the working classes:

Auf beiden Seiten des Mehrwertgrabens kann der Kapitalismus seine Aufhebung produzieren. (GK 105)

It remains true, however, that the bourgeois intellectual feels a less direct need to combat social alienation, since he is not directly involved in the production process and enjoys economic security and privileges. Because of the egocentricity which privilege creates, solidarity with the less privileged has to be learned. Thus for the intellectual commitment does remain a conscious decision, not simply the product of social and psychological factors.

Gallistl accepts the necessity for this commitment as the only means of overcoming his 'sickness' of alienation. He becomes a firm, but neither fanatical nor uncritical convert to Communism. He remains able to analyse and criticize the opinions of his comrades; thus he affectionately mocks Sylvio Schmon for the sentimental romanticism of his adulation of Lenin:

Lenin. Das ist seine Wiese, sein Wald, sein rauschendes Tal, sein Gesang und seine Quelle. Lenin. Er erzählt von ihm wie eine überaus verehrungswürdige Großmutter vom ersten Geliebten erzählt. (GK 108)

In particular Gallistl criticizes, in a series of discussions, both the DKP and the GDR. He condemns the presentation of the Federal Republic in the mass media of the GDR as a grossly distorted and manipulative stereotype, required by the GDR authorities 'zu Hause, zur Erzeugung eines festen Willens' (GK 107) but doing a disservice to the socialist cause by creating in the West an image of socialism as 'etwas Keifendes' (GK 107). Views of the GDR current in West Germany are, he adds, equally prejudiced and self-righteously moralistic:

. . . zur DDR verhalten wir uns wie zu einer Orgie, die wir nur vom Hörensagen kennen. Also ununterbrochen moralisch. (GK 111)

The GDR also poses a problem, Gallistl points out, for the West German Left, who are inhibited in their judgements and reactions: he can smile at Pompidou's reaction to Sartre, but when people talk of Biermann, 'dann bricht mir der Rechtfertigungsschweiß aus' (GK 112). Gallistl criticizes the DKP on two major issues: the first is its unquestioning obedience to Moscow, which disregards the need for independent critical thought and gives the DKP an alien image which makes it incapable of appealing to more than a tiny minority of West Germans (GK 109). The second issue is the 'foreign language' spoken by Communists in the Federal Republic: not only is the obligatory Party jargon a formidable barrier to understanding, but Marxist ideology itself is excessively concerned with past history and insufficiently related to the present-day situation in West Germany:

. . . ihr kommt hier momentan nicht weiter, weil ihr historisch überfrachtet seid und mit einer Fremdsprache auftrittet... laßt uns endlich beginnen mit der Übersetzung hierher und in die Gegenwart. (GK 109)

Furthermore -- and this is for an intellectual of course a major stumbling block -- the Party allows insufficient scope for the individual to articulate his own experience in his own terms, insisting instead on a pre-established vocabulary which fails to do justice to changing social circumstances and thus, while purporting to hold fast to fundamental insights, inhibits the application of those insights in fruitful new ways (GK 118f.).

There can be little doubt that Walser here is using the figure of Gallistl as a mouthpiece for his own views and that this is a serious aesthetic weakness of the work. It might be argued in Walser's defence that Gallistl speaks also for a considerable number of West German intellectuals, indeed intellectuals throughout the Western world. But the essayistic nature of Gallistl's utterances here is also related to the discrepancy between his political insights and his psychological condition. At the end of the four years taken up by his self-analysis Gallistl does not appear to have acquired the attitudes appropriate to his insights. Also, whilst indicating the intellectual basis on which a conversion to Communism might be possible, Walser has not given artistic form to the conversion itself. Why this is so remains an open question. Possibly Gallistl speaks for Walser when he expresses his reluctance to give aesthetic form to so important and energy-consuming a struggle:

Ich bin gegen eine ästhetische Fassung meines Kampfes. Vielleicht kommt das daher, daß mein Überlebenskampf schon die ganze Kraft kostet, also bleibt keine für eine Fassung. (GK 14)

What seems most likely is that the author simply lacked the full conviction necessary to embody the conversion in more than a tentative and ambiguous form.¹ The affectionate embarrassment which Gallistl feels towards his comrades would appear to be to some extent shared by the author. They have full names, rather than the mere initials of Gallistl's former capitalist associates, indicating genuine identities and knowledge of one another. But the names are comically grotesque: Pankraz Pudenz, Qualisto Queiros, Rudi Rossipaul, Sylvio Schmon, Tanja Tischbein, Urs Ulmer, Vinzenz Vetter, Wilfried Weißflog, York von York, and the final member of the comic alphabetic sequence who makes her long-awaited appearance just before the end of the novel, Zilli Zembrod, who is such an enthusiastic fighter for the cause that Gallistl underlines Walser's self-mockery by admitting: 'In mir zittert . . . immer noch der Wunsch, sie Zilli Zuckschwerdt zu nennen . . .' (GK 126). Both these *recherché* names and the shortcomings and afflictions of their bearers -- Tanja Tischbein for example is a chain-smoker and has a stomach complaint -- create a clear and unmistakable gulf between them and the 'positive hero' required in Socialist Realist fiction, which makes it difficult to agree with Werner Ross's view that the work was a 'Fingerübung . . . zu redlich gemeintem sozialistischen Realismus'.²

In this novel Walser has shown the premises for the development of an intellectual towards socialism, but he has not taken the further step

1. This may also reflect Walser's own position and decision not to join the DKP.

2. W. Ross, *loc.cit.*, p.601.

of giving his hero a fully achieved commitment. Nor is there in Die Gallistl'sche Krankheit any counter-image of society as it should be, beyond the indication that genuine friendship would be an essential element of a good society. This did not prevent some West German critics from dismissing the work as offering facile left-wing propaganda.¹ Critics in the GDR, on the other hand, reacted with a predictable mixture of praise and disappointment; Ursula Reinhold spoke for them all when she blamed Walser for failing to go beyond self-analysis and cast doubt on the work's usefulness to anybody but himself.² It can be argued, however, that the self-analysis is of wider value and interest, since Gallistl is surely not unique in his predicament, and of wider value, since the novel's open ending can stimulate readers to seek more constructive attitudes for themselves.

Whatever the future may hold for him, Gallistl's encounter with Communism has clearly had salutary effects for him: his health and his relationship with his wife improve considerably, and he no longer feels his former 'Lebensangst'; these are very substantial gains, especially when they are compared with the despair and suicide of Anselm Kristlein in Der Sturz. But at the same time one should not over-estimate the optimism implied by the ending of Die Gallistl'sche Krankheit, which is more ambiguous than many critics have realized. Theo Elm saw the ending very one-sidedly as Utopian and the work as thus belonging to a new development in West German literature of the early 1970s, which, he argued:

. . . im Gegensatz zum bisherigen kritischen Realismus die widrige Realität negiert und die glückliche Utopie schätzt, weil [sie] der Wirklichkeit die Möglichkeit vorzieht. ...[Es zeigt] den prinzipiellen Wechsel der Gegenwartsliteratur von der gesellschaftlichen Realität zur Illusion, die Wendung von der Mimesis negativer Zustände zur Poiesis positiver Utopien. (3)

But Gallistl does not escape into an illusion. He has analysed and understood his situation, has recognized the need for social change and for solidarity as a prerequisite for effecting such change. But he

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1. G.Blöcker referred to a 'Wunderschalter' producing 'rosarotes Licht'; quoted by H.Plavius in the "Nachwort" to the GDR edition of the work, Berlin/Weimar 1975, p.186; R.Düssel, "Praxis statt Lyrik?", Publikation 22, 1972, Nr. 5/251, pp.38f. also regrets that 'hier in Alternativen gedacht wird' (p.39). On the other hand, Peter Maiwald, "Die Abnahme des Interesses an Verzweiflung", Neues Hochland 65, 1973, pp.279-281, praised Walser for his 'Befassung mit den realen Alternativen' (p.281).
 2. U.Reinhold, "Martin Walser: Die Gallistl'sche Krankheit", Weimarer Beiträge 19, 1973/1, (pp.166-173), p.173; and "Erfahrung und Realismus. Über Martin Walser", Weimarer Beiträge 21, 1975/7, (pp.85-104), p.101. Cf. also M.Franz, "Erster Entwurf eines gesellschaftlichen Gegenbildes", NDL XXIV, 1976/8, pp.138-143.
 3. Th.Elm, Siegfried Lenz. Deutschstunde, Munich 1974, p.121.

faces his future with no certainties, and approaches that future in images that suggest considerable irony and scepticism on the author's part: driven off in Pankraz's car with its symbolic 'Löcher . . . rot gerandete' (GK 128), somewhat reluctantly, towards an unknown destination, he hardly embodies full conviction and certainty. The prefatory definition of amnesia: 'das -- wirkliche oder vermeintliche -- Wissen des Kranken von seiner Krankheit und ihrer Entstehung' (GK 5) leaves open the possibility that Gallistl has wholly misunderstood his 'sickness', and he himself remains uncertain to the end whether commitment to socialism is the cure for his malaise or simply another form of it:

Seitdem fühle ich mich verpflichtet, gesund zu werden. Oder ist das nur der neueste Einfall meiner Krankheit? (GK 124)

The fact that Die Gallistl'sche Krankheit was followed by the wholly pessimistic Der Sturz casts, of course, further doubt on the degree of optimism which Walser wished to convey.

Gallistl's full significance lies in his role as Anselm Kristlein's antipode. Whereas the latter drifts passively towards destruction, Gallistl refuses to accept this fate and makes a positive decision in favour of social change. There are no guarantees of what lies ahead. But these are the only two possibilities which Walser sees for an intellectual who has reached the nadir of revulsion from both himself and society as it exists. Of these, the only constructive possibility is that chosen by Gallistl: he abandons his self-centredness, accepts a share of responsibility for the shaping of society, and begins to assert his own integrity as a first step towards the improvement of his environment. In doing so he follows Walser's advice to find out where one's self-interests really lie.¹ Not to do so is to lend passive support to the status quo², and thus to incur a share of the blame for the shortcomings of existing society. This necessity of personal integrity and recognition of the real nature of one's needs and dissatisfactions is the theme also of Ein fliehendes Pferd.

1. M. Walser, "Die Parolen und die Wirklichkeit", in Was zu bezweifeln war. Aufsätze und Reden 1958-1975, (pp. 33-45), p. 41. Also in Heimatkunde, pp. 58-70.

2. M. Walser, "Rede an die Mehrheit", lecture given at Cologne University on 23.1.1969, published in Was zu bezweifeln war, pp. 45-52.

Ein fliehendes Pferd

In this short prose work Walser creates, with great wit, subtlety and psychological perception, two contemporary, contrasting intellectual figures: a schoolteacher trained in the liberal arts and ostensibly committed to a belief in their educative value but afflicted with severe scepticism and self-doubt; and a journalist who lives by the popularisation of current issues through the mass media and conceals behind a façade of vitality and modishness a realisation of the spuriousness and futility of his activity. The contrast and conflict between the two, who are both in their mid-forties and thus approaching what has come to be known as the mid-life crisis, is explored entirely on the level of their personal encounter and interaction; inasmuch as wider social issues are involved, these are presented obliquely and inconclusively. The inconclusiveness of Walser's presentation is indeed underlined by the prefatory quotation from Kierkegaard's Either/Or. The wider social implications of the work might thus appear to be marginal; this was in fact the view taken by most critics when the work appeared.¹ But under the guise of a psychological study Walser has in fact added a further dimension of depth and precision to his fictional examination of the distortions of personality suffered by people of sensitivity and intelligence in a ruthlessly competitive world.

Ein fliehendes Pferd takes up two of the principal themes of Walser's earlier works: role-playing as a supposed method of survival in present-day society, and the part played by sexuality in the life of an intellectual. Like Anselm Kristlein, both Helmut Halm and Klaus Buch play roles because they are afraid to reveal their true selves. In their shared sense of inadequacy when judging themselves by the norms of their society they embody two manifestations of the same fundamental problem, and although their attempted solutions appear radically different they both entail a flight from reality into a life of pretence.

In all Walser's novels sexuality functions as a compensation for social dissatisfaction. Anselm Kristlein finds in sexual adventures the 'approval' and confirmation which is denied him in the professional sphere and in his relationships with friends and relatives, and, in some cases, projects onto his sexual relationships his desire for the happy and harmonious existence which he cannot envisage as possible in the existing social context. At the same time he makes the sexual sphere the scapegoat for his wider dissatisfactions, blaming his apathy onto his failure with Melitta and the loss of Orli. In Ein fliehendes Pferd

1. See p.110.

Helmut Halm mistakenly identifies the sexual sphere as the source of his problems, blaming his aversion from sexual activity for his dissatisfaction and restlessness, instead of recognizing the true reverse relationship of cause and effect. Klaus Buch, on the other hand, makes sex a surrogate for social goals, displaying his attractive and much younger wife as a coveted 'Trophäe' (FP 21) and proclaiming his virility and self-confidence in a manner that is exhibitionistic to the point of near-hysteria. Thus each represents a further elaboration of one aspect of Anselm Kristlein's character; the competition between the two highlights the differences in attitude between them, but the author makes it clear that Helmut's resignation and Klaus's obsession have the same origins.

Helmut is the more clearly drawn of the two men; the action is narrated from his point of view, and the situation seen through his eyes, except for the brief section in which, after Klaus's presumed death, Helene reveals his true motivation and problems (FP 136-144). Klaus functions principally as a foil to Helmut, and some critics have felt, with regret, that the author has reduced him to a mere caricature.¹ Anthony Waine², on the other hand, feels that Klaus gains the reader's sympathy after Helene's revelations, which complement Helmut's one-sided view in a manner which shows Helmut's inability to see beyond appearances. The women are portrayed with much less clarity or depth, and go little beyond stereotypes: Helene is young and shapely and dresses in the latest fashion; Sabine is middle-aged and motherly. Both women function in the work not as individuals in their own right but by virtue of their relationship to Helmut -- and to a lesser extent Klaus. Helmut is attracted to Helene -- as he is to shapely young women in general -- but loves Sabine and knows that he should, but as yet cannot, discuss with her the reasons for his inability to maintain a sexual relationship with her. Sabine, we hear at the end, also has a 'speech to make' (FP 148), but the reader is not made acquainted with it, and we do not know whether she will ever be given the chance to discuss her situation as she sees it. By the time Anselm begins to experience genuine affection for Alissa and a degree of sympathy for her plight, which might enable him to communicate with her, it is too late. This may or may not prove to be the case with Helmut and Sabine also.

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1. E.g. J.Kaiser, "Martin Walsers blindes Glanzstück" Funktion und Funktionen der Novelle Ein fliehendes Pferd", Merkur 32, 1978/363, pp.828-838; and B.Henrichs, "Narziß wird fünfzig", Die Zeit, No. 9, 24.2.1978, p.38.
 2. A. Waine, op.cit., p.118.

Helmut's sexual conflict both arises from and reflects his lack of a fruitful relationship to society. In his youth he was a 'Klassenkämpfer' (FP 50), but his former resilience and ardour have given way to resignation and resentment of the demands made on him by a society whose workings he understands but does not approve. His name may well be intended to echo that of Harry Haller, Hesse's 'Steppenwolf', whose life of weary resignation on the fringe of a hated society is, like Helmut Halm's, disrupted by an intrusion of vitality which compels him to re-assess his life and values. Lacking the strength or courage to resist these demands in his public, professional life, Helmut does so instead in the private sphere by rejecting what he sees as the contemporary over-evaluation of sexual satisfaction, and by cultivating a protective shield of aloofness and anonymity in both spheres. Like Gallistl he knows that to hide his real self means living without friends. Helmut takes little interest in others and reveals as little as possible of himself to them. Thus although Sabine and he have spent their holiday for the past eleven years in the house of the same family, he has no desire to know either the landlord's occupation or his reasons for letting the house. At the school he has a reputation for progressive opinions; his wife thinks he lives only for his books and his studies; his real opinions, feelings and tastes are carefully concealed. Unlike Anselm, who at least initially enjoyed playing roles, which he felt he could adopt and abandon at will, Helmut does so only because of an inescapable revulsion from revealing his real self:

Es gab überhaupt nichts Ekelhafteres für ihn als dieses Offendaliegen vor einem anderen . . . Nur wenn er ein anderer schien und ein anderer war, lebte er. Erst wenn er doppelt lebte, lebte er. (FP 80)

His dislike of other people, who constitute for him merely a generalized 'Umwelt', is such that it is indifferent to him what opinion they have of him, provided it is erroneous: 'Egal, was die Umwelt über ihn und Sabine dachte, es sollte falsch sein' (FP 12). He likes to think of himself as living incognito; his worst fear is that if he lives and works in the same place for any length of time people will 'see through' him and recognize his real characteristics:

Jedesmal, wenn ihm das Erkannt- und Durchschautsein in Schule oder Nachbarschaft demonstriert wurde, die Vertrautheit mit Eigenschaften, die er nie zugegeben hatte, dann wollte er fliehen. (FP 12)

Helmut revealingly ascribes a similar obsession with privacy to Kierkegaard, whose diaries he proposes to read whilst on holiday: 'Unvorstellbar, daß Kierkegaard etwas Privates notiert haben konnte' (FP 11). In protecting his real personality by avoiding authentic contact with others

Helmut sees himself as a typical product of a society which makes such authenticity impossible:

War er mit seiner entwickelten Täuschungsfähigkeit und -freude nicht ein Ausbund all dessen, was hier und heute gewollt war? Von wegen Einsamkeit, Luxus, Abseitigkeit! Ein Repräsentant war er! Der typischste Typische überhaupt war er! Er war der Prototyp! (FP 70)

This extreme attempt at self-concealment has in fact been only very partially successful. As regards his sexual conflict he is more successful in concealing its real nature from himself than from others. The nickname given him by his pupils, 'Bodenspecht', is, as he knows, extremely perceptive and apposite (FP 12). He keeps his gaze lowered partly in order to conceal from his female pupils the covetousness which, for all his ostensible rejection of the sexual ethics of the permissive society, he undeniably feels. His loss of sexual interest in his wife, towards whom he feels strong affection, tenderness and loyalty, is not the consequence of age per se, but of the contemporary stereotypes of fitness and sexual prowess as the essential components of masculinity, which reflect a more general ethic of competitive achievement. In Helmut's view the sexual sphere, like all other spheres of life, has been pervaded and debased by the competitive orientation of modern society. But whereas in those other spheres Helmut is able to attempt at least to assume a false role which will leave his private self intact, this is not possible in the most intimate area of life. Benjamin Henrichs¹ regards it as a strength of Ein fliehendes Pferd that the characters no longer make the 'Wettbewerbsgesellschaft' responsible for their problems. But this is a misinterpretation, for although Helmut does not use this specific term, it is quite clear not only that this is the root of the problem, but that Helmut recognizes it as such. Not sexuality itself, but the manner in which it is publicly presented and discussed, appalls him. Although at school he propagates the fashionable notion of 'Luststeigerung', he tries to exclude it completely from his private life. This however is rendered extremely difficult by the fact that, despite his rational rejection of the current norms, Helmut cannot escape the emotional and psychological influence of the 'Herrschaftsbereich des Scheins' (FP 69) which he outwardly supports. Hence he lives in fear that his real feelings will be discovered, and cannot suppress a sense of shame at his inadequacy. His realisation of this feeling came when he overheard the vigorous sexual activity of the couple in an adjoining hotel bedroom; to this sense of inadequacy the treatment of sexual themes in literature and the mass media has added intense revulsion. The combination entirely

1. B.Henrichs, loc.cit., p.38.

paralyses Helmut's libido:

Sobald er das Bedürfnis spürte, sich geschlechtlich zu betätigen, brauchte er nur an die furchtbare Propaganda in den Druckwaren zu denken, dann wurde er ruhig. (FP 67)

Sex has been drawn for him, as for society at large, into the realm of 'Leistung':

Wer den Sexualitätsgeboten dieser Zeit und Gesellschaft nicht genügte, war praktisch ununterbrochen am Pranger. (FP 66)

The drastic intrusion into Helmut's life of Klaus Buch and his young wife painfully highlights Helmut's inner conflict. With his ostentatious masculinity Buch, whom Helmut lacks the necessary detachment to see at all objectively, becomes the immediate enemy and for a time replaces for Helmut the entire hostile world. During the story's time-span of five days Helmut's aversion is intensified to murderous hatred as it becomes impossible for him to conceal or repress his sexual confusion. Helmut is attracted to Helene, Sabine threatens to go to Klaus if Helmut continues to withhold sexual satisfaction from her. But for all the antagonism aroused between them, the two couples are less fundamentally different than it appears to Helmut. The sexually hyperactive Buchs lead an otherwise almost ascetic life; they eat frugally, drink only mineral water and make stringent demands on themselves in their sporting activities. The sexually inactive Halms, by contrast, indulge in rich food, expensive wines and contented idleness. They have in fact merely sought different solutions to the same problem of coping with social expectations.

The conflict between Klaus and Helmut is intensified in the symbolic incident from which the story takes its title, in which Klaus successfully pits his strength against a runaway horse, an image of uncontrolled, aimless and potentially destructive vitality, which he boastfully identifies as an image of his own virility. The conflict culminates in the sudden storm which reduces Helmut to fear and cautiousness but provokes Klaus to a frenzy of vitality similar to sexual ecstasy. The storm clearly symbolizes both Klaus's inordinate energy and Helmut's long repressed frustration and aggression, which are now released, just as the tiller which Helmut kicks from Klaus's hand, causing him apparently to drown, is an unambiguous phallic symbol. The rivalry which ~~culminates in~~ this symbolic attempted castration is however by no means restricted to the sexual sphere. The two men's professional lives and achievements are compared and contrasted, principally by their wives, both of whom are proud of, and fulfil the expected supportive roles for, their husbands. Gratifying, but less than truthful images of two contemporary types of intellectual are put forward. Helmut is seen through his wife's

eyes in the dignified role of the scholarly intellectual of modest habits, teaching at one of the best schools and with plans for a couple of books, a description with which he is happy to concur. The Halms' leisure, they tell the Buchs, is devoted to cultural pursuits: for the holiday Sabine has brought Wagner's Mein Leben with her, Helmut all five volumes of Kierkegaard's diaries. Klaus on the other hand strives to give an impression -- equally flattering but even less honest -- of a many-sided active life in which work is mastered with sovereign ease and freedom from any petit-bourgeois over-estimation of its importance. He is a journalist who specializes in fashionable ecological topics, on which he also writes books, whilst his wife does supportive field-work and writes about folklore and the use of herbs. Their spare time is spent in a variety of sporting activities. Whereas Helmut has merely read Nietzsche's Also sprach Zarathustra (FP 11), Klaus tries to act out his own childish conception of the 'Übermensch' (cf. FP 14f.).

Like Anselm Kristlein in Das Einhorn Klaus has opportunistically exploited the current popularity of his field, whilst Helene clearly fulfils the same affirmative function of the various young women in Anselm's life. After Klaus's supposed death, however, Helene reveals the quite different truth of his life, a life not only of spurious 'commitment' to fashionable social causes, but of humiliating economic dependence on editors and publishers, of unremitting hard work and constant insecurity:

Er hat nicht viel gehabt von seinem Leben . . . Es war nichts als eine Schinderei. Jeden Tag zehn, zwölf Stunden an der Maschine. Auch wenn er nicht schreiben konnte, hockte er an der Maschine. . . Ihm ist alles, was er getan hat, furchtbar schwer gefallen. Deshalb hat er ja rundum den Eindruck verbreitet, er arbeite überhaupt nicht . . . er wollte mühelos erscheinen. Und dann immer das Gefühl, daß alles, was er tue, Schwindel sei. (FP 136)

Like Helmut, Klaus is also a victim of the competitive ethos, over-strained and afraid to admit his own limitations, self-alienated and lacking the courage to reject the expectations of the outside world, aware and ashamed of the discrepancy between reality and appearances, and living in fear that his deceit will be exposed. Neither Helmut nor Klaus has the defence mechanism against guilt feelings which Anselm evolved: the conviction that those whom he deceived were willing accomplices in the deception.

At first sight the major theme of Ein fliehendes Pferd appears to be the problems of ageing; a number of critics have interpreted the work primarily as a psychological study, and have seen it as evidence that Walser had followed a general tendency to turn away from engagement towards 'Innerlichkeit'.¹ This is however an inadequate interpretation. Reinhard

1. E.g. B.Henrichs, loc.cit.; and M.Reich-Ranicki, "Martin Walsers Rückkehr zu sich selbst", FAZ, 4.3.1978.

Baumgart, in his review in Der Spiegel¹, clearly recognized Walser's actual intention:

Indem er sich auf das scheinbar Allerprivateste einläßt, auf zwei ihm gleich naheliegende Fluchtmöglichkeiten aus dieser Gesellschaft, kommt etwas ganz und gar Politisches zum Vorschein . . . Mit keinem Satz redet die Geschichte zur Lage der Nation. Und doch enthält sie als Ganzes unsere Lage.

Both Helmut and Klaus are of course distressed by the fact of increasing age, just as Anselm and Gallistl are. But this distress arises not directly from the experience of ageing itself, but rather from the over-evaluation by present-day society (unlike other societies in other periods of history) of youth and physical strength. Anselm was not anxious about reaching the age of fifty, but he did not want to live in a society in which it is 'peinlich . . . 50 zu sein' (S 331). Helmut also recognizes and rejects the over-estimation of youth, but he is too conditioned by social norms to be able to free himself entirely from it. However, in liberating himself from his sense of inferiority vis-à-vis Klaus he takes a first step towards a more general liberation. That the liberation comes through an act of primitive and almost fatal violence suggests both the necessity and the possibility of a fundamental reassessment by Helmut of his own nature and needs. For a single moment he has acted authentically, 'eine Sekunde lang hast du den Schein nicht geschafft' (FP 129), as he later reflects. Alone on the boat Helmut cries out for the first time the agony and despair that he has been obliged to suppress for Sabine's sake, and the symbolic episode ends hopefully as Helmut reaches dry land and walks towards the nearest light (FP 122).

The immediate effects of Helmut's belief that Klaus is dead are presented with wry irony: Sabine and he buy bicycles and cycling gear, and their first ride is a 'richtiges Erfolgserlebnis' (FP 131): he now feels free to engage in an enjoyable physical activity without the immediate obligation to compete with others. As he has overcome his sense of inferiority, so the 'fliehendes Pferd' has been replaced by the 'Heupferd' (FP 127), a twitching, dying insect which arouses in Helmut pity rather than apprehension (FP 127f.). Later, in the extraordinary scene in which the three characters virtually celebrate Klaus's disappearance, Helmut takes coffee and cake but foregoes a liqueur and cigar. But after Klaus's re-appearance the bicycles are abandoned, the liqueur and the cigar enjoyed. The golden mean is not to be so easily attained.

It is not made clear to what extent Helmut realizes that Klaus and he had both chosen outward conformity because it appeared to be the only

1. R.Baumgart, "Überlebensspiel mit zwei Opfern", Der Spiegel, No. 9, 27.2.1978, (pp.198-199); p.199.

means of survival. Subconsciously at least, Helmut knows that he must escape from his previous pattern of life, as is made clear by his dream of lying in a coffin, a symbol of his death-like existence. One side of the coffin has been left open: he still has a chance to escape; but it requires a struggle to reach the surface, and when Helmut achieves this his old fear and compulsion to disguise his true self return immediately: 'Wenn dich ein einziger erkennt, ist es aus, für immer' (FP 74). Helmut has no clear vision of a better life, no guiding conviction such as Gallistl's, but he does realize that somehow he must change his life. Looking back on his life, he regrets that he has virtually no memories, no friends, no real sense of a lived life; even his relationship with Sabine has become empty: 'er hatte das Gefühl, er habe die letzten Jahre allein gelebt' (FP 73). No immediate dramatic change occurs, but as a tentative start Helmut and Sabine break their long-standing holiday habits. Helmut can counter Sabine's insecurity, however, only with an evasive oblique metaphor:

Sabine sagte: Ich habe doch Angst vor der Hitze. Was tun wir, wenn es da drunten zu heiß ist.
 Ach, sagte Helmut leichthin, Schatten zusammennähen. (FP 150)

They achieve their symbolic fresh departure, and on the train Helmut begins to narrate the events of the past five days, as he experienced them, but with the detachment of the third person, showing, as Anthony Wayne interprets it:

daß er durch die Begegnung mit . . . Klaus einen Grad von Objektivität sich selber gegenüber erreicht hat, der es ihm ermöglicht, seine Probleme zu erkennen und ihre Lösung in Angriff zu nehmen. (1)

This is the most optimistic interpretation possible. If correct, it would imply that at least in his marriage Helmut can remove his mask, and this might enable him eventually to achieve more honest and satisfying social relationships. The last lines of the work, the beginning of Helmut's account, are identical to the first sentence of the story. If this is taken to signify that Sabine is to hear the identical account which the reader has just read, then an optimistic interpretation would appear justified.² Less optimistically, it is possible to interpret the choice of the third person as a means of evasion, a fictionalisation of events and motives in a manner in which Helmut is already well versed, which he has practised indeed for many years, from the ironically self-deprecating article in the school journal at the beginning of his career (FP 14) to the letter to Klaus which he writes but does not send:

1. A.Wayne, *op.cit.*, p.119.

2. Cf. the discussion of Andersch's *Efraim*, p.127.

Wenn er auch nur einen einzigen Satz dieses Briefes ernst meinte, hieß das, daß er ihn nicht mitteilen durfte. Aber er konnte nicht aufhören zu schreiben. (FP 37)

An intention to communicate honestly and directly with Sabine would have been more unambiguously indicated if the first person had been used in the last sentence of the work. The ending is therefore best interpreted as an open ending, similar to the ending of Die Gallistl'sche Krankheit: a way forward has been perceived, but it is uncertain whether it will be taken or, if it is, where it will lead. Helmut's cryptic words spoken to the colourful locomotive that is to take them on their journey into a new but indefinite future, 'qui tollis peccata mundi' (FP 150), from the Agnus Dei of the Catholic Mass, neatly encapsulate the ambiguities of the ending. They can be interpreted as a satirical comment on the pretensions of technology to cure the ills of the world -- pretensions that are implicit in the ecological movement to which Klaus belongs, with its plea for a wiser use of technology -- and thus as a sign of Helmut's regained confidence both in himself and in the subjects which he teaches, a confidence in the value of the verbalisation of human experience through literature, history and other humanistic disciplines. But the playfulness of Helmut's words, reinforced by the whimsical image of the locomotive which reminds him of a friar, can also be taken to imply that he is in a mood to take pleasure in sophisticated verbalisation rather than straightforward confession. Furthermore, the words might imply a suggestion, serious or ironic, that Helmut's malaise is in the last analysis neither social nor sexual in nature, but religious -- a suggestion which could itself provide the basis for yet another evasive role for Helmut to play.

As has been said of Siegfried Lenz¹, Walser presumes the 'politische, sprich geistige Reife' of the reader. Ein fliehendes Pferd does not impose any solution on the reader to the problems which it poses. It merely demonstrates ways in which the denial of one's authentic perceptions and conformity to the value-judgements and life-styles of others, even if only as a protective façade, must in the long run erode and destroy the individual's self-esteem and capacity for contentment. It has become increasingly clear in Walser's works that in his eyes the intellectual does not constitute an exception in this respect. He is as dependent on the social system as any other individual. The privileged social position bestowed by education and occupational status might be expected to enable him to understand his situation and act on his insights. None of the intellectuals in Walser's works do so in any clear and unambiguous manner. They constitute an exceedingly bleak portrait of the West German

1. Cf. p.169.

intelligentsia; only in their shortcomings, failures and occasional partial insights do they support Walser's view of how things could, and should, be.

B. Alfred Andersch: Efracim

Unlike his younger fellow-writers in the Gruppe 47, Andersch refrained from any kind of party-political activity in the 1960s.¹ During the 1930s he had abandoned his commitment to Communism and adopted a position of scepticism towards all ideologies which, he had come to believe, distorted the individual's perception of reality and endangered his moral integrity. His first novel, Sansibar oder der letzte Grund², clearly grew out of this experience. His political sympathies remained with the Left, but he combined this sympathy with a strong element of existentialism in his view of the world. Andersch was never a wholly apolitical writer, and to describe him, in a well-known phrase, as 'ein geschlagener Revolutionär'³ is to leave out of account an important part of his creative personality. But existentialism, a conviction both of the ultimately chaotic and meaningless nature of the world and the dominance of random chance in human history, and of the prime importance of individual self-determination in this world without God, was a component of his sensibility from the outset, and emerged at its strongest in Efracim.

Only if one accepts a definition which equates engagement with party-political commitment is it possible to describe Efracim as, in Jean Améry's words, 'ein Werk des Desengagements'.⁴ The character Efracim does indeed attempt to withdraw completely from all social involvement by exchanging journalism for creative writing, but by imaginatively exploring this extreme possibility Andersch offers a reflection on the place of the intellectual in society; the work's 'engagement' consists in its stimulus to the reader to reflect on the question of engagement.

Efracim is set in the period from autumn 1962 to spring 1965, and was written between October 1963 and winter 1966/67, a period in which the committed intelligentsia were becoming increasingly disillusioned by political developments in the Federal Republic, and found themselves, with the advent of the Grand Coalition in 1966, faced with a radical challenge to define their position. In the novel Andersch 'spielt eine Möglichkeit durch' -- the function of fiction as Andersch later defined it in Winterspelt.⁵ As to the feasibility of this 'possibility', he

1. See Chapter 2, pp.44f.

2. Olten & Freiburg 1957.

3. M.Reich-Ranicki, "Alfred Andersch. Ein geschlagener Revolutionär", in Deutsche Literatur in West und Ost. Prosa seit 1945, Munich 1963, pp.109-119.

4. J.Améry, "Über Alfred Andersch", Schweizer Rundschau, 1967/10-11, p.581.

5. Winterspelt, Zürich 1974, p.22

stated non-committally:

Andersch hält diese Auffassungen von Efraim für bedenkenswert. Er ist noch damit beschäftigt, sich zu überlegen, ob sie nicht stimmen. (1)

The novel is open-ended; Efraim does not appear at the end to have found any viable permanent solution to his problems. However, as will be demonstrated, he has reached a point where he might perhaps achieve a solution. What he does achieve is insight into the direction in which a solution might lie.

Efraim's first-person account of the two and a half years that make up the time-span of the novel constitutes a close scrutiny of his relationship to the world, and in the process of writing he comes to understand his own 'possibilities', the possibilities of an intellectual of his particular stamp more clearly. Thus Efraim's self-analysis raises questions of general social importance. In Die Blindheit des Kunstwerks Andersch wrote: 'Literatur ist Arbeit an den Fragen der Epoche'², its aim 'das Bestehende in Frage zu stellen und dessen verborgene Wahrheit zu enthüllen'.³ Efraim, though criticized by many as being subjective to the point of solipsism, is concerned with 'Fragen der Epoche'. But like all the other West German writers dealt with in this chapter, Andersch does not offer specific answers to the questions he poses. His aim is to present authentic individual perceptions without attempting to impose those perceptions on his readers.⁴ The criteria by which he assesses his characters' experience and actions are of a general moral and humanitarian rather than a specifically political nature. In an interview with Paul Kersten Andersch said of this attitude:

Ich mag das Wort Engagement nicht mehr, während das Wort Humanität für mich nichts von seinem Wert verloren hat. (5)

Like Lenz and Walser, Andersch presupposes a mature reader capable of reaching his own conclusions. When this is borne in mind, Efraim can be seen as a highly committed, even 'political' novel. Rather than regard Efraim's withdrawal from his existing social commitments as a 'Fahnenflucht' (Ef 450), as Efraim himself cannot entirely prevent himself from regarding it, it can be interpreted in a more positive light, as a 'desertion' similar to that of Brachvogel in Lenz's Das Vorbild, who speaks of 'desertieren, um nicht mitschuldig zu werden'.⁶

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1. "Plädoyer für das Engagement. Interview mit Kristina Bonilla", in G.Haffmanns, Über Alfred Andersch, Zürich 1974, pp.114f.
 2. Die Blindheit des Kunstwerks und andere Aufsätze, Frankfurt a.M.1965, p.152.
 3. Ibid., p.142.
 4. See chapter 2, p.45
 5. G.Haffmanns, Über Alfred Andersch, p.113.
 6. See p.45166.

It has been widely recognized that 'flight' is a major recurrent theme in Andersch's works: it is the principal concern of the hero of Die Kirschen der Freiheit, Gregor in Sansibar, Franziska in Die Rote, Efraim, and Major Dincklage in Winterspelt. In Die Kirschen der Freiheit and Winterspelt -- the very first and the penultimate of the author's major works -- the (literal) desertion, actual or planned, of the central characters during the Second World War is motivated precisely by this desire to avoid incurring further guilt. Efraim's situation in the 1960s is less unambiguous, but the differences are less great than they might appear. Elisabeth Plessen points out that in the stories of Mein Verschwinden in Providence the time-span from 1933 to 1968 is treated 'als ein Kontinuum'¹. As the motto to Winterspelt puts it: 'Das Vergangene ist nie tot; es ist nicht einmal vergangen'.² This continuity of past and present is clearly visible in Efraim's life-history, and is for him -- unlike most of the West German citizens he meets -- a major cause of his inability to relate positively to present-day society. Most Germans, as presented in the novel, have either forgotten or repressed the National Socialist past, and Efraim has been compelled to do likewise in his attempt to lead a 'normal' life. His decision to abandon this attempt is a positive form of protest against the guilt entailed in any comfortable adaptation to a world with such a past. Pierre Grange, in the story In der Nacht der Giraffe states: 'Ich flüchte nicht, ich steige einfach aus'³, and Efraim's decision to give up journalism in favour of creative writing is also not simply a form of flight from a reality which has become unendurable -- though it is that also. It is true that Efraim ironically admits that his proposed novel will be an 'Orgie der Subjektivität' (Ef 450), but just as his passion for literature has never cut him off entirely from his surroundings but has rather helped him to maintain the position of an incognito observer (Ef 315), so the possibility is left open that his own novel may be a means of communication as well as escape; Efraim's protest thus has the potential of becoming more active than that of Grange. Efraim's novel is of course Efraim as we have it, and it is indeed considerably more than a statement of resignation and withdrawal.

This was not recognized by a number of critics when the novel was

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1. E.Plessen, "Verletzte Utopie", Merkur 26, 1972/286, p.200.
 2. The motto is taken from William Faulkner; in a slightly different form (with 'nicht' instead of 'nie') it is the opening sentence of Christa Wolf's Kindheitsmuster, and (with 'niemals' instead of 'nie') it is the motto also to Wolfgang Joho's Das Klassentreffen (1961).
 3. In Geister und Leute, Olten/Freiburg 1958, p.117.

first published. Reich-Ranicki pronounced it 'sentimental', 'belanglos', 'armselig' and 'geradezu peinlich'.¹ Rolf Becker condemned both its style and its content and described it as 'wichtigtuersch'.² On the other hand Horst Rüdiger acclaimed it as 'ein Meisterwerk',³ reviews by Max Frisch and Ludwig Marcuse were highly laudatory⁴ and Efraim was subsequently awarded the Nelly Sachs Prize. Jean Améry, while regretting what he saw as the novel's 'Absage an die Politik',⁵ which he feared would soon become acceptance of the status quo -- a fear which proved quite unfounded -- expressed the conviction that Andersch was one of the few post-war West German authors with anything important to say.⁶ Most critics did however agree that Efraim's 'flight' entailed more than mere rejection, that it was the beginning of a new positive phase in the hero's life. Gregor-Dellin had called the desertion of the narrator in Die Kirschen der Freiheit a 'Schritt in die Freiheit', a first step towards 'Selbstverwirklichung':⁷

Die Dimensionen der Flucht bedeuten bei Andersch nicht literarische Verklärung und Verzicht auf Engagement, sondern Verwirklichung einer Freiheits-Position, aus der heraus Kritik erst möglich wird. (8)

This can be said of Efraim's decision also. A similar positive evaluation of the various forms of 'flight' adopted by Andersch's central characters is shared also by Max Bense⁹, Frank Beer¹⁰, Walter Heist¹¹, Mark Roberts¹² and Ulrich Fries & Günter Peters.¹³

Because the decision to 'flee' is preceded by the individual's awareness that he is free, that he is not compelled to conform to the expectations of others, and that he is not pre-destined to any specific fate, he can assume full personal responsibility for his actions. Such absolute freedom can exist only momentarily, for it must lead to a decision which, once taken, has consequences which restrict freedom.

1. M.Reich-Ranicki, "Sentimentalität und Gewissensbisse", in Lauter Verrisse, Munich 1970, pp.47-56.
2. R.Becker, "Über Alfred Andersch Efraim. Schickissimo, mon Dieu", Der Spiegel, Nr.46, 6.11.1967, pp.194 & 197.
3. In G.Haffmans, Über Alfred Andersch, p.40.
4. Extracts from these reviews are reproduced on the back cover of the Diogenes paperback edition of Efraim.
5. J.Améry, loc.cit., p.582.
6. Ibid.
7. M.Gregor-Dellin, Nachwort to Die Kirschen der Freiheit, Zürich 1951, p.148.
8. Ibid., p.150.
9. "Porträt Alfred Andersch 1962", in G.Haffmans, op.cit., pp.18-30.
10. "Der Erzähler Alfred Andersch", ibid., pp.30-39.
11. "Flucht in die Arktis? Versuch über Alfred Andersch", Merkur 24, 1970/271, pp.446-458.
12. The themes of 'flight' and 'engagement' in the major literary works of Alfred Andersch, unpublished MA thesis, University of Birmingham 1979.
13. "Zum Verhältnis von Kunsttheorie und ästhetischer Praxis bei Alfred Andersch", in H.L.Arnold (ed.), Text+ Kritik 61/62, Munich 1979, pp.27-51.

But this brief moment of freedom is of the utmost importance, for it is then that the individual bears full responsibility for the further course of his life. Efraim reaches this point on the threshold of existential self-determination, but unlike Gregor, Knudsen and Helander in Sansibar or Franziska in Die Rote he does not cross that threshold to take positive action. Like Anselm Kristlein in Walser's Das Einhorn Efraim glimpses his freedom, but opts for the time being for a continuation of his passive resignation under changed external circumstances. Anselm's insight concerned the socio-political structure of society and the possibilities open to the individual of reacting against that structure; Efraim's realisation is that the individual has a moral responsibility towards himself and others. For both men, acting upon their insights would have given their lives the meaning they sought, but both fail to grasp their opportunity. But for Efraim the failure need not be seen as permanent.

Georg Efraim is an intellectual and a Jew, in his early forties. Reich-Ranicki accused Andersch of exploiting his hero's Jewishness, but failed to recognize the importance of this motif for the novel. In the first place of course Efraim's personal history -- his childhood in Berlin, evacuation to England, and the death of his parents in a concentration camp -- sharpens his perceptions of the behaviour and attitudes which he encounters in Germany during his first visit since childhood, the varying responses of present-day German citizens to their country's 'unbewältigte Vergangenheit'. But beyond this specific perspective, Efraim's rootlessness, his continual unsuccessful search for a home and a homeland are those of the 'Wandering Jew', the 'Ewige Jude' alluded to a number of times in the novel; this 'Heimatlosigkeit' becomes a metaphor for a bleakly pessimistic view of the situation of the European intellectual: nowhere at home, bound to no faith or ideology because these have all been discredited, powerless and irrelevant in a world given over to power politics and devoid of any ultimate ethical foundations, yet never able entirely to abandon the search and the hope of a 'Promised Land', a social order based on ethical principles within which a genuine synthesis of freedom and responsibility might be possible. Efraim's central dilemma is still that posed by Gregor in Sansibar: 'kann man ohne einen Auftrag leben?'; can one 'nach den Regeln leben, ohne den Geist zu binden?'¹ Efraim has for some time past evaded this fundamental question. He has rejected the assumption that he has a fixed task in life and has opted for the role of a detached and weary observer on the fringe of society. As such he has been well suited to his occupation as an

1. Sansibar oder der letzte Grund, London (Harrap), p.64 & 67.

investigative reporter, an uncommitted purveyor of facts, not a 'Kommentator oder Leitartikler' (Ef 209).

This position has the advantage of considerable freedom, both inner and outer, as is appreciated particularly by Werner Hornbostel, the young musician Efraim meets in Berlin, whose relationship to Anna is the antipode of Efraim's torturing dependence on Meg, and whose absorption in esoteric music gives him a childlike serenity and indifference to the world around him such as Fabio Crepaz in Die Rote aspires to, but does not wholly achieve, through music. But whereas Werner finds fulfilment in his creative absorption, just as Efraim's uncle Basil, another 'Kontrastfigur', finds fulfilment in an austere life of work and religious study (Ef 124ff.), such withdrawal is not a viable solution for Efraim himself, who constantly suffers from loneliness and estrangement and is hence eventually compelled to face his problems. His attempt at an honest self-analysis results in a highly critical portrait both of Efraim himself and of European society, in particular life in the Federal Republic. In thus taking stock of himself and the world he lives in Efraim undergoes a crisis which is both social and personal, calling in question the validity of both his professional activity and his private relationships. Specifically, he finds himself compelled to make two crucial choices regarding his future: where to live, and how to earn a living.

Since the war Efraim has been a journalist for a conservative London newspaper, with a reputation for excellence as a foreign correspondent which permits him to live where he chooses. At present he is stationed in Rome -- where Andersch himself lived for a number of years -- which he appreciates for its beauty and for the anonymity which he enjoys there; it is a largely negative relationship towards his environment, and fails to satisfy him completely. As a home he considers London and, tentatively, Berlin. He had lived in London during the late 1930s, joined the British Army during the war, lived in London again until the late fifties, and had married Meg, an English photographer. It is principally because of his unhappy relationship with Meg and Keir Horne, his superior and Meg's lover both before and during her marriage to Efraim¹ that he no longer wishes to live in London. In addition to this purely personal reason, however, Efraim suffers from a sense of linguistic estrangement: though highly competent in English, Efraim has

1. The triangular relationship between a woman and two men is a recurrent motif in Andersch's works. Cf. Franziska, Herbert and Joachim in Die Rote, Melanie, Richard and Lothar in Ein Liebhaber des Halbschattens, and Käthe Lenk, Hainstock and Dincklage in Winterspelt.

always remained aware that it is not his native language. His complete inability to cope with the Times crossword-puzzles ironically indicates the limits of his assimilation into the English-speaking environment and suggests also a wider dimension of social alienation.

The language which Efraim uses consists of a mixture of English, German, Italian and Yiddish, in accordance with the elements which constitute his background and personality. His relationship to the German language is no less problematic than his relationship to English: he has maintained contact with the language as a broadcaster during the war, and later for professional reasons, and still speaks German with his old Berlin accent, but it is still closely linked in his mind with the ideology of the Third Reich:

Denn wenn man anfängt, Menschen zu vernichten wie Ungeziefer,
wenn man nicht Feinde töten, sondern einen Samen ausrotten will,
dann vernichtet man nicht nur sechs Millionen Seelen, sondern,
ganz nebenbei, auch die Sprache der Überlebenden. (Ef 102) (1)

Efraim is also highly sensitive to recent developments in the German language, especially contemporary slang and jargon. He notes how much of the new German slang suggests underlying violence and aggression. Expressions such as 'etwas in den Griff bekommen' or 'am Drücker sein' offend him, the appalling 'bis zur Vergasung' (Ef 204) provokes him to physical violence. The manipulative jargon of the mass media amuses him, he mocks its absurdities with whimsical inventions (e.g. 'Geheimnisträger führen echte Gespräche über Intimsphäre' (Ef 329f.)), but it also underlines his sense that German also is a language in which he could never feel entirely 'at home'.

Efraim may in some respects be compared to Susanne in Walser's Halbzeit.² Both have been affected in their lives and attitudes by their years of exile to a degree that makes it difficult for them to integrate into any society. But although their Jewishness has marked them ineradicably, they do not identify with it strongly enough to base their lives on it. When crossing into East Berlin Efraim is angered by the behaviour of the border officials, and when he realizes that he is being treated as a German -- not as a foreigner or a Jew -- his sense of solidarity, in this situation, with his fellow-sufferers leads him to the realisation that his sense of Jewishness, such as it is, is likewise based on a sense of solidarity with the victims of persecution, that is to say on psychological and ethical, rather than racial or political considerations. Hence he rejects outright the notion of settling in Israel, whose nationalistic stance he finds unacceptable, although he

1. For Andersch's concern with this problem and that of the contributors to Der Ruf and the members of the Gruppe 47, see Chapter 2, pp.23f.

2. See p.71.

would fight on the Israeli side in the event of a war (Ef 262).

Efraim feels most at home on the escalators of the London Underground, where he is able to feel that he is, as it were, in transit, a telling image of the underlying psychological preference for quest and homelessness which makes it so difficult for him to choose a permanent residence or a permanent life-style. Thus he accepts the posting to Berlin partly because it offers him the chance to find out whether he could live there; but it takes him only a few days to realize that this would be quite impossible. However much he tries to remain free of hatred and preconceptions, he cannot always relate spontaneously and naturally to the Germans he meets, though he finds most of them likeable. He tells himself: 'Ich bin nicht hierher gekommen, um Mörder zu suchen. Ich hasse niemanden' (Ef 31), but when he sees a couple without children he wonders 'Was haben sie mit ihren Kindern getan?' (Ef 30). Since he has no political convictions he is able to observe both German states with an open mind; the division of Germany is for him not a source of anguish as it is for Anna: when a fellow-journalist refers to it as 'die Scheiße' Efraim reflects that:

. . . mir das, was er als 'Scheiße' bezeichnet, -- die Mauer, die Teilung einer Großstadt, die Abgesperrtheit West-Berlins --, nicht so unerträglich erscheint, als daß ich es mit diesem Wort bezeichnen könnte. Es ist noch nicht lange her, daß es ganz andere Formen von Ghettos gegeben hat . . . (Ef 107f.)

Efraim has a pronounced puritanical streak; the conspicuous affluence of West Berlin offends him, and he finds East Berlin, with its 'Geruch nach Armseligkeit und Desinfektion, nach feinem grauem Staub und Puritanismus' (Ef 210) more attractive; but when he encounters the impersonal authoritarianism of the border officials he realizes that he could not live in a country, 'in dem man die Zigarette aus dem Mund nehmen muß, um sein Paßbild kontrollieren lassen zu können' (Ef 269). These personal responses, both positive and negative, scarcely constitute rational value judgements. They reflect rather Efraim's desire for a congenial retreat, not a community in which he might participate in an active and responsible way. It is in keeping with this attitude that Efraim interprets Brecht's Die Tage der Commune, a performance of which he attends in East Berlin, one-sidedly as 'Ein Abgesang auf die Revolution' (Ef 270) and reacts with amused irony to the celebration of socialist values which Brecht's play also contains: 'ich mußte lächeln -- nie habe ich eine lyrischere Revolution auf der Bühne gesehen' (Ef 270).

As for West Germany, the insuperable obstacle is that the majority of young people cannot understand his horror and revulsion at the crimes of the National Socialist past. Frau Bloch, whom Efraim meets when he visits his former parental home, is one of the few who feel guilt, who

know that the past lives on into the present (Ef 48). But her daughter winks at Efraim, assuming that he, like her, finds her mother's words 'hysterical'. Anna, with her highly developed left-wing political consciousness, is nonplussed by Efraim's violent emotional reaction to contemporary ignorance or thoughtlessness; for her the real problem which a colloquialism such as 'bis zur Vergasung' (Ef 204) reflects is the West Germans' lack of political awareness. For Anna morality and politics cannot be separated, each is conditioned by the other: 'Die Moral steht in einem dialektischen Zusammenhang mit der Politik' (Ef 204). But for Efraim morality transcends politics: a fact which lies at the heart of his social rootlessness.

Fries and Peters¹ have pointed out that Efraim's criticisms remain on a general moral plan¹ because his responses never transcend the perspective of individual suffering. Efraim's egocentricity does indeed lead him to view history principally in terms of his personal fate. Being by his own confession apolitical, he never considers himself as belonging to any community, and seeks to solve his problems by retreating from society -- a privilege which he will in fact be able to enjoy for a limited period thanks to the income from his parents' legacy, the house in Berlin. Whereas Walser's Anselm Kristlein seeks a solution in the pretence of conformity to social demands, Efraim opts for withdrawal from those demands: their approaches are fundamentally similar inasmuch as both men refuse to see their problems in a social context, defining them instead in purely personal terms, so that their solution can only be in terms of a negative and sterile social attitude. This does not prevent them from observing German society with a sharply critical and perceptive eye. The most significant political events to occur during the time-span of Efraim are the Cuba crisis and the Spiegel affair: Efraim notes with surprise and irony that the Germans pay much more attention to the latter than to the former, despite the very real risk of a Third World War over Cuba. The uproar in the Federal Republic over Augstein's arrest appears to Efraim out of proportion to its cause; his comments on this cause célèbre show in fact a surprising political perceptiveness for someone who considers himself apolitical: whilst sympathizing with Augstein from a moral point of view, he realizes that his political action, attacking one individual member of the political establishment, is bound to be ineffectual; he describes Augstein as:

ein tadellos angezogener junger Bürger, der des Glaubens ist, er habe es mit einem Minister zu tun, nicht mit einem System. Aber es ist ja schon viel, wenn einer nervös und empfindlich genug ist, das Gesicht eines Ministers nicht ertragen zu können. (Ef 170)

1. Loc.cit., p.35.

But Efraim's reaction to the Spiegel affair is also revealingly ambivalent: on the one hand his subjectivity leads him to understate its significance, to see it purely in empiric terms, not as involving a matter of principle, and hence to reflect that in comparison with the fate of the Jews the maximum of two years imprisonment which Augstein might receive is relatively trifling. Franz Josef Strauß is for Efraim primarily an unpleasant individual, certainly no Hitler, as he comments (Ef 23). On the other hand, however, he does see and deplore the wider political implications of the appointment of Strauß as a government minister (Ef 23). His protective shell of cynical indifference is also pierced by the assassination of President Kennedy, which genuinely shocks him (Ef 141). It is, however, generally agreed that the depiction of the contemporary political background in Efraim is superficial and unsatisfactory; Andersch has been perhaps justly accused of sharing his hero's weary cynicism in this regard.¹

Although Efraim's apolitical attitude does not prevent him from sympathizing with the political Left, as we are told several times in the novel, he has very little faith or interest in the so-called radical youth movement, with its pretentious jargon and ineffectual activism. The student demonstration in Frankfurt against the Spiegel arrests is described in a heavily ironic set piece (Ef 373-379) which emphasizes the orderliness and docility of the fifty or so law-abiding demonstrators and their 'gemäßigte(n) Empörung, den angemeldeten und genehmigten Protest' (Ef 375). Andersch's account of this demonstration is very similar to that in Lenz's Das Vorbild,² especially with regard to the pleasant and polite police officers. There is however a revealing difference, which shows how much stronger the influence of Marxism has been on Andersch's thinking than on that of Lenz: in Efraim, shortly before the demonstration comes to an end, a large number of police vehicles is seen to arrive on the scene. Their presence proves unnecessary and they disperse, but there is no doubt that they would have been called into action had circumstances appeared to warrant it. Their brief appearance forcefully reminds the reader of the power of the State and its readiness to defend its authority with force, the over-reactive repressiveness underlying its apparent tolerance of dissent.³ But this

1. E.g. by Jean Améry, "Efraim -- oder die kluge Skepsis", in G.Haffmans, op.cit., (pp.90-94), p.93.

2. See p.169.

3. The story "Jesuskingdutschke", in Mein Verschwinden in Providence, pp.119-146, is concerned with similar themes. Andersch forcefully expressed his views on this aspect of West German society in some of his poems of the 1970s, published in empört euch der himmel ist blau (Zürich 1977), e.g. "Artikel 3(3)", pp.109-114, and "Zwölf Strophen über die Arbeitslosigkeit", pp.115-125. See also Chapter 2, p.46.

theme is not pursued in Efraim. Likewise Efraim displays no more than a cursory interest in the potentially interesting figure of Anna's petit bourgeois Communist father.

Efraim, despite his sympathy for the Left, is no more interested in Marxism than in any other ideological or philosophical standpoint that goes beyond his own bleak, near-nihilistic views. In his conversations with Anna Efraim rejects the claims of Marxism to provide a rational explanation of social and political phenomena. The crimes of National Socialism cannot in his view be explained: in the face of Auschwitz both philosophy and religion break down, he feels; hence he suppresses both the political and the religious components of his sensibility and opts for a position verging on nihilism which allows a prime role to chance and chaos and rejects any teleological conception of human history:

Ich hingegen glaube weder an das Schicksal noch an die Vernunft.
Es gibt nichts als ein großes Durcheinander . . . Es gibt keine
Gesetze und keine Freiheit. (Ef 17)

. . .
Angesichts von Auschwitz will ich zur Ehre Gottes annehmen, daß
es ihn nicht gibt . . . Das Leben des Menschen ist ein wüstes
Durcheinander aus biologischen Funktionen und dem Spiel des
Zufalls . . . (Ef 90)

All that stands between Efraim and complete nihilism are occasional moments when he feels less than certain of his convictions, and 'ein Gefühl der Trauer darüber, daß ich an nichts weiter glauben kann, als an den Zufall und das Chaos' (Ef 258). If everything is the result of blind chance then it is of no importance who one is or what one does, life is absurd, the concepts of identity and responsibility meaningless. This sense of existential absurdity relieves Efraim's sorrow, but it also prevents any genuine identification with the self or the environment. Since all positive action appears useless, all that is left is to retreat into a position of extreme non-involvement. Thus Efraim's emotional sympathy with the political Left does not in the least prevent him from working for a conservative newspaper. Towards all political events and developments he has cultivated a cold, indifferent detachment:

Da ich nicht an gesetzmäßige Entwicklungen und schon gar nicht an
politische Ideologien glaube, kann ich das Spiel des Zufalls kalt
verfolgen, sein chaotisches Wirken konstatieren, ohne irgendwelche
Schlüsse ziehen zu brauchen. (Ef 61)

The fact that these bleak convictions bring Efraim no sense of satisfaction is partly due to the fact that they provide no alleviation for the suffering caused by his unhappy private life. His asceticism goes hand in hand with a distaste for sexual intercourse; he is inhibited and sometimes impotent, and resorts in consequence to masturbation and stimulation by pictorial material. Efraim is well aware that these

perverse preferences spring from his inability to establish genuine personal contacts: they are symptoms of a more general alienation.¹

This is evident from the fact that he experiences none of these problems with Meg, the only woman whom he loves and to whom he is able to relate as a whole person, not merely as a woman, as is the case with Anna. Not a moment of the time spent with her had ever seemed wasted; but her insistence on continuing her relationship with Keir -- as she had informed Efraim before their marriage that she would continue it -- removes from him this one source of happiness in his life. However, it is when he begins to write about this one positive experience in his life that he recovers the hope that the world might not be governed entirely by chance and chaos (Ef 119).

It is in Berlin, during his quest for Esther, that Efraim glimpses the possibility of both freedom and moral responsibility. His investigations convince him that Keir and the nuns of the Berlin convent could have saved Esther's life if they had exercised their freedom of choice while there was still time, and that in failing to do so they incurred moral guilt. From this single example Efraim begins to realize that the catastrophe of National Socialism might have been averted if more people had chosen to oppose it rather than to passively acquiesce in it. His conversation with Mother Ludmilla clarifies his realisation that it is not enough to blame the Evil of the world, nor to trust in the goodness of God, but that man must accept responsibility for his actions. Thus a purely negative existentialism -- belief in the absurdity of existence -- is complemented by the positive existentialism of belief in man's freedom and duty of self-determination. Efraim reaches the existential-humanist position held also by Major Dincklage in Winterspelt:

Dincklage war sich der Existenz des Chaos gewiß. Das Chaos allein erklärte ihm, warum es Ungeheuer gab. Natürlich gab es sogar inmitten des Chaos und angesichts der Ungeheuer ethische Entscheidungen, die Wahl zwischen Gut und Böse, das Gewissen. (p.56)

Efraim is thus at least potentially capable of the bold self-commitment to positive action guided by moral insight which Dincklage achieves.

With this newly won position the question of guilt assumes great importance for Efraim. He tends to see the guilt of others rather than his own -- there is a considerable degree of truth in Meg's accusation that he is full of self-pity -- but he is aware that he incurs guilt through his lack of concern for others, particularly in his relationships with women. He knows too that his taste for pornography is objectionable because it arises from a desire to commit the fundamental moral crime of

1. Edmund Gabriel's auto-eroticism in Walser's Kristlein-trilogy, and Halm's sexual inhibitions and frustrations in Ein fliehendes Pferd have similar origins, see pp.78, 92 and 106f.

reducing other human beings to passive objects which can be used as a means to an end without emotional involvement or concern for any other person qua person:

Die Unzucht der unzüchtigen Bilder besteht darin, daß sie einem die Illusion verschaffen, man könne über einen menschlichen Körper verfügen wie über einen toten Gegenstand, und daß sie es einem erlauben, bei sich zu bleiben. (Ef 453)

This insight does not however prevent Efraim, at the end of the novel, from establishing a permanent arrangement with the Italian prostitute Lidia, who he realizes is no more than a quite inadequate substitute for Meg. Like Kristlein towards the end of Walser's Das Einhorn Efraim has gained insight into the nature of his problems and inadequacies and has seen a possible solution to them: a life guided by ethical norms within a community of responsible and mutually supportive individuals. But like Kristlein, Efraim takes no action to achieve such a life. His self-acceptance at the end of the novel, embodied in his decision to leave his narrative in the first person form, is couched in terms that imply less a strong sense of personal identity than a weary indifference towards his own inadequacies: 'Wenn es gleichgültig ist, wer ich bin, . . . kann ich auch ich bleiben' (Ef 469).

In the course of the novel Efraim has turned from journalism to literature, from detached reportage to interpretation, analysis and evaluation, however subjective. Although he initially conceives his writing purely as a private act of self-analysis, he gradually realizes that his notes are intended for publication and hence as a means of communication. But he rejects the notion of writing a fictitious account and insists on adhering as closely as possible to the truth. Here may be seen a positive element in Efraim's decision: although he has opted for a life of withdrawal and isolation, he nevertheless wishes to communicate his experiences to others, and although his novel will, as he knows, be an 'Orgie der Subjektivität' (Ef 450), writing it will nevertheless be a socially constructive act. As Andersch had written in Die Kirschen der Freiheit:

. . . ich bin überzeugt, daß jede private und subjektive Wahrheit, wenn sie nur wirklich wahr ist, zur Erkenntnis der objektiven Wahrheit beiträgt. (1)

It is moreover clear that Efraim's withdrawal from society can only be temporary; he has the income from his parents' house, but he keeps the door open to journalism. His discussions and negotiations with his publisher guarantee some interaction with society, of a kind which he has always experienced as rewarding. His work had always been important to him; even though the world might be chaotic: 'wie ein unzerstörbares

Ornament zieht sich die Arbeit durch das Chaos' (Ef 190). Indeed his work has sometimes been more than a mere 'ornament': he tells his readers with pride that his report on the negotiations over the Indochina war in 1953 had actually achieved concrete results (Ef 415). Efraim thus has at least something of Andersch's own conviction that the writer can influence and change the world by extending the consciousness of his readers.

Efraim remains open-ended in accordance with Andersch's desire to exert such influence not didactically but by encouraging the reader's independent critical reflection: 'Ich bemühe mich, so zu schreiben, daß dem Leser die kritische Entscheidung nicht abgenommen wird'.¹ This desire Andersch has in common with the other authors discussed in this chapter. Nevertheless the author's own views are sufficiently apparent to make it clear that Efraim's withdrawal into a 'private ghetto'² is not to be seen as a satisfactory course of action. His future is left uncertain; he may after all opt permanently for passivity and resignation. But the seeds of a more positive attitude have been sown, and may yet come to fruition. His final separation from Meg may prove to have opened the way to a happier private life, just as his turn to literature may prove to be the discovery of his true vocation.

Andersch has insisted that even the most subjective works of literature can fulfil a social function by extending the range of human awareness; but in Efraim his aim is to demonstrate primarily that a writer's fundamental obligation is to be true to himself; as he put it in his interview with Kristina Bonilla:

In erster Linie sollte der Schriftsteller sich selbst gehören, danach den Menschen und der Gesellschaft, und den Institutionen wenn möglich überhaupt nicht. (3)

Max Frisch sees Efraim as a plea for recognition of the fact -

daß wir, wie sehr uns die allgemeine Geschichte angeht und bewegt, die Welt schließlich doch immer vom Ich her erfahren, erleiden, bewältigen oder nicht. (4)

Thus for all Efraim's apparent abdication of the social responsibility of the intellectual, he remains true to the underlying principles of integrity and self-awareness that are central to the European intellectual tradition. It is unusual to encounter in a West German context such an insistent reminder of the need for what Christa Wolf has called 'subjektive Authentizität'⁵, a reminder which we have come to expect more from East German writers as they slowly and painfully struggle to assert the vital

1. G.Haffmans, op.cit., p.116.

2. Livia Z. Wittmann, Alfred Andersch, Stuttgart 1971, p.62.

3. In G.Haffmans, op.cit., p.115.

4. Quoted on the back cover of the Diogenes paperback edition of Efraim.

5. See Chapter 5, p.225.

necessity of individual integrity in shaping and assessing their experience. In Andersch's case it is a further reminder also of the influence that Marxism has exerted on his thinking: only where such a mistrust of subjectivity has been overcome is such an insistent plea for its legitimacy to be expected.

In Efraim Andersch gave free rein to the pessimistic, anti-political side of his creative personality, and produced a vision of the intellectual pushed by conviction and circumstances to the brink of complete and irreversible withdrawal from society. The effect of writing Efraim would appear to have been cathartic: after being the most non-committed of West Germany's literary intellectuals in the late 1960s Andersch emerged in the 1970s as one of the most radical.¹ He proceeded to crown his literary career with a searching and complex exploration of the possibilities of positive moral commitment and action in his magnum opus and last major work, Winterspelt (1974).²

1. See Chapter 2, p.46.

2. Winterspelt was followed just before Andersch's death by the shorter work Der Vater eines Mörders, Zürich 1980.

C. Günter Grass: örtlich betäubt and Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke

As set out in detail in Chapter 2,¹ Günter Grass has since 1961 taken an active interest in West German political life, contributing first to Martin Walser's publication Die Alternative oder brauchen wir eine neue Regierung?, and later campaigning in support of the SPD. In the early Danzig trilogy (Die Blechtrommel, Katz und Maus, Hundejahre) he was, however, concerned much less with contemporary issues than with the past: his own childhood in Danzig, and the National Socialist era. His interest in the present was restricted to a sardonic critical scrutiny, through the medium of a grotesque and immensely fertile creative imagination, of the failure of post-war Germany to face the challenge of the National Socialist past, and to rid itself of the burden of that past by re-assessing its ideological attitudes and removing former prominent National Socialists from positions of power and influence; these themes may be discerned beneath the bizarre and often surrealistic narrative invention of the final sections of both Die Blechtrommel and Hundejahre.

After the completion of the Danzig trilogy in 1963 Grass began to draw closer to the contemporary political scene in his works. The play Die Plebejer proben den Aufstand (1966) dealt with the East Berlin uprising of June 1953 and Grass's interpretation of the role played by Bertolt Brecht on that occasion. This work, concerned as it is with the role of the intellectual in politics, conveys much of the uncertainty of Grass's own position, hovering uneasily between detachment and involvement, condemning the aestheticisation of politics of which the play accuses Brecht as a betrayal of the artist's commitment to social goals, yet evincing at the end of the play at least a degree of sympathy with Brecht's attitude and behaviour. Grass was very acutely aware of the pressures to which an artist is subjected as a result of fame. He himself put his fame to good use in his electioneering campaigns, but discovered that it often constituted a severe burden, as is evident from Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke.

It would appear from Grass's own account that his development towards a literature directly concerned with contemporary political issues came about malgré lui. In his Princeton speech of 1967² he rejected the demand that literature should be engagé, arguing that as a citizen he could be engagé but that as a writer the concept was meaningless to him, and insisting that he personally kept literature and politics carefully separate.

1. See Chapter 2, pp.30ff.

2. See Chapter 2, pp.34f.

However, his next novel, örtlich betäubt (1969) does deal explicitly with a political issue, and in Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke (1972) he combines the genres of autobiography, fiction and political reportage -- thus most successfully extending the scope of the novel form -- in order to accommodate both the literary and the political components of his personality.

Inevitably, his literary style changed to suit this new subject-matter, to which neither the baroque extravagance of narrative invention nor the linguistic virtuosity of the Danzig trilogy were appropriate. This change was deplored by many critics.¹ Grass himself rejected the critics' use of Die Blechtrommel as a yardstick for his later works, pointing out that the reception of that novel had been far from unanimously enthusiastic when it first appeared. It was also suggested that the source of Grass's creative imagination had run dry², a view which was more than adequately refuted by the subsequent publication of Der Butt (1977), the author's most exuberantly inventive work since Die Blechtrommel.

The two works examined in this thesis were selected on the grounds of their contemporary setting -- large sections of both are concerned with events in the past, but these events are seen in the perspective of the present, a reversal of the narrative structure of the Danzig trilogy -- and because they are the two works by Grass which have intellectuals as central characters. In örtlich betäubt there are a number of characters who embody radically different viewpoints and together constitute a fictional exploration of various possibilities open to the intellectual in relation to the socio-political sphere. In Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke an account of Grass's contribution to the SPD's 1969 election campaign is combined with the fictitious life-history of Hermann Ott, nicknamed Zweifel, which runs parallel to the contemporary events and which both supports and elaborates Grass's arguments in favour of moderation and compromise in political matters. The examination commenced in örtlich betäubt is continued and concluded

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1. E.g. R.Becker, "Mäßig mit Malzbonbons", Der Spiegel, 11.8.1969, pp. 102f.; H.Krüger, "Kein Geschmack für Ort und Augenblick", Die Zeit, 22.8.1969, p.13; H.Karasek, "Zahn gezogen", Die Zeit, 5.9.1969, p.20; M.Reich-Ranicki, "Eine Müdeheldensoße", Die Zeit, 29.8.1969, also in Lauter Verrisse, Munich 1970, pp.84-92.
 2. Especially by Reich-Ranicki, loc.cit. There were however also a number of positive reactions to the novel, e.g. J.Nolte, "örtlich betäubt", Die Welt der Literatur, 14.8.1969; M.Durzak, "Abschied von der Kleinbürgerwelt", Basis I, Frankfurt a.M.1970, pp.224-237; K.Miles in Günter Grass, London 1975, pp.172-198. M. Durzak, "Plädoyer für eine Rezeptionsästhetik", Akzente 18, 1971, pp.487-504, points out that on the whole German critics gave the novel a hostile reception, whilst American critics welcomed it enthusiastically.

in Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke, so that taken together these works present Grass's view of the social role of the intellectual, underlining the ethical basis of that role, but not offering clear-cut solutions to any specific political problems.

örtlich betäubt

örtlich betäubt is a subtle and probing exploration in fictional terms both of the psychological complexities which underlie certain well-known and widespread political attitudes, and of the tensions, conflicts and ambiguities in Grass's own very complex view of the relationship of the intellectual to the contemporary political sphere. From a technical point of view it is a masterly work. It is carefully structured in three parts, and the technical devices used by the author: discussion, projection and association, enable the three levels of the narrative to be effectively combined: the past, principally the period 1945-1949; the present, January-February 1967, and the imaginary realm constituted by Starusch's emotional reactions to past and present reality. The action is narrated retrospectively from the standpoint of 1969, by Starusch; he, the dentist with whom he engages in lengthy imaginary discussions, and his pupil Philip Scherbaum are the three main characters on the present time-level and embody various attitudes which complement and illuminate one another. The figures of the dentist and Scherbaum reflect two different aspects of Starusch's own personality and embody two alternative modes of behaviour open to him. örtlich betäubt has been criticized for portraying types rather than rounded characters, a criticism which is to some extent justified; but the alleged deficiency does not detract from the effectiveness of the novel; a certain degree of typicality is an essential part of Grass's intention.

The symbolism derived from the sphere of odontotics is used consistently and to great effect. At the beginning of the novel, Starusch has just begun a course of dental treatment. Initially, he merely wishes to have the tartar removed from his teeth, but X-rays reveal that he has more severe dental problems. A number of scholars have investigated Grass's use of dental symbolism, and have concentrated their attention mainly on mythological interpretations of teeth as an indicator of strength and virility, and Freudian interpretations which link the fear of loss of teeth to a fear of castration and thus see Starusch's dental problems as a reflection of his personal inadequacies and complexes in the sexual, social and creative spheres, his professional incompetence, inhibitions, frustrations, and even complete existential

failure.¹

Grass's use of dental symbolism is overt and explicit: in an early discussion with the dentist, Starusch's tartar is described as 'Versteinerter Haß' (öb 40); its removal has a cosmetic effect, which temporarily improves Starusch's morale. But his dental problems lie deeper than the externally visible tartar, just as his psychological problems have a deeper source than plain hatred. The dentist establishes that unlike Scherbaum's problems, which are to be treated later and which are 'acquired', Starusch's problem is 'angeboren' (öb 193), which makes it much more difficult to treat and impossible to remove altogether. In the context of the novel this difference in part reflects the generation gap between Starusch and Scherbaum, the fact that Starusch, who belongs to the generation which has lived through the Third Reich, has been permanently damaged, spiritually and psychologically, by this experience.

Theodor Ziolkowski² traces the development of dental symbolism from early religious and mythological sources (including the Old Testament) to nineteenth- and twentieth-century uses which reflect the cosmetic and psychological importance of dentistry, concluding:

the characteristic that distinguishes most twentieth-century dental images from earlier ones is the shift in emphasis from psychodontia to sociodontia: decaying teeth now represent with increasing frequency society as a whole and not just the esthetic or moral agony of the individual. (3)

In accordance with this interpretation Ziolkowski comes to the conclusion that Starusch with his faulty teeth represents an entire generation of Germans attempting to come to terms with their past. Grass himself has confirmed this interpretation:

örtlich betäubt meint . . . über den zahnmedizinischen Anlaß hinaus den Gesellschaftszustand. (4)

Nevertheless certain reservations are necessary here. Starusch does not represent his entire generation but only those members of it who are morally aware of social and historical realities, and thus experience the pain of that awareness. Although Starusch is acutely sensitive to pain and can endure it to only a slight degree, he acknowledges its usefulness, indeed its necessity, as a moral stimulant. The

1. For a thorough account of this topic see C.O.Enderstein, "Zahnsymbolik und ihre Bedeutung in Günter Grass' Werken", Monatshefte 66, 1974/1, pp.5-18.

2. Th.Ziolkowski, "The telltale teeth: psychodontia to sociodontia", Publications of the Modern Language Association of America 91, 1976, pp.9-22.

3. Ibid., p.19.

4. In an interview published in ad lectores 9, September 1969; quoted from H.-P.Brode, "Von Danzig zur Bundesrepublik", Text + Kritik 1/1a, 5th ed. 1978, (pp.74-87); p.78.

dentist on the other hand provides 'local anaesthetic' which temporarily removes pain without affecting its causes, and remedial dentistry likewise treats symptoms rather than causes, and can thus never be permanently successful.

As important as such general considerations is the specific use to which Grass puts his dental symbolism. At the very beginning of the novel Grass establishes the nature of Starusch's dental problem, and the dentist's proposed treatment, as a very precise symbol of the problems posed by his ambivalent political attitudes: a malformation of the jaw, pronounced since puberty, has given him an appearance of determination and strength of will, but has prevented a satisfactory bite; the proposed bridgework will rectify, it is hoped, this imbalance between appearance and reality, just as the moderate political attitudes to which Starusch commits himself despite his violent impulses, will prove in the long run more effective than violent action in bringing about desired social change:

[Er]war . . . bei Artikulationsstörungen und bei meinem Profil, dem seit der Pubertät ein progener Unterkiefer mehr Willensstärke zuspricht, als eine dentale Frühbehandlung hätte verhindern können. . . . Ich habe einen Hackbiß. Ich kann nicht mahlen. . . . Mir fehlt diese normale Artikulation . . .
Denn von allen meinen Backenzähnen standen die Weisheitszähne, acht plus acht -- acht minus acht, am sichersten; Brückenpfeiler sollten sie werden und mir, dank korrigierender Brücke, den Hackbiß mildern. (öb 9f.)

Starusch, the central character of the novel, is presented to the reader by means of self-revelation in conversations with the dentist and Scherbaum concerning both himself and the contemporary political situation in Germany. Critics have been tempted to equate Grass with one or other of these three characters, in most cases with Starusch, sometimes with Scherbaum, sometimes even with the dentist. It will be argued in the following analysis that all three characters embody certain of the author's attitudes, opinions and feelings, and that the author is concerned to distance himself, by means of irony, from all of them, concluding not with an optimistic synthesis, but with the melancholy acceptance that the problems posed by the three characters' conflicting attitudes are only partially soluble. It is however Starusch, not Scherbaum or the dentist, who occupies the central position in the novel as its first person narrator. John Reddick has argued¹ that the dentist is to be regarded as the 'positive' character in the novel, being 'quietly productive', not obsessed with the past but confidently committed to progress, with an optimistic faith in the present and the future. He

1. J.Reddick, "Action and Impotence: Günter Grass's örtlich betäubt", MLR 67, 1972, pp.563-578.

supports this argument by reference to the positive qualities which Grass ascribes to the dentist: 'sachlich', 'knapp', 'kühl', 'aufgeschlossen', 'gelassen', 'mit fröhlicher Selbstsicherheit'. It would seem, however, that although Grass acknowledges these virtues, he has clear ironic reservations about the dentist's over-rationalistic and unimaginative way of thinking. Grass has of course repeatedly asserted, 'Ich bin Reformist'¹, but he has left no doubt that he is emotionally attracted to less cautious, more radical attitudes; the tension between these two attitudes is fully discussed in Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke.² This is indeed Starusch's central problem. The dentist is a one-sided character inasmuch as he knows no such tension; accordingly he has no doubts, irony or scepticism to keep his optimism in check, and he is not receptive to any suggestions or viewpoints other than those based on an uncritical belief in the positive social potential of technological advance. He is as inflexible in his convictions as others are in their political idealism. Within the structure of the novel it is not the dentist per se -- who is never named -- who occupies an important place, but rather the significance of his activity and values in Starusch's mind. It is never clear what or how much the dentist actually says; most of the discussions would appear to take place only in Starusch's imagination, particularly as he spends most of his time with the dentist incapable of speech due to cotton wool, a saliva ejector and the assistant's fingers in his mouth -- as indeed is made clear in the novel's opening sentences: 'Das erzählte ich meinem Zahnarzt. Maulgesperrt und . . . tonlos . . .' (öb 7).

Starusch uses the dentist in the same way as he uses the television screen provided in order to distract his thoughts from his treatment: he listens to him, but responds for the most part with his own associative reactions rather than by entering into direct discourse with him. Their 'conversation' thus consists of parallel monologues, whereby the dentist's logical and orderly insistence on the specific task in hand is contrasted with Starusch's wide-ranging reflections on his past life, as in the following example:

'Wie das so zugeht, Dokter: lange lagerten meine Milchzähne; denn was einmal gerettet wird, geht so schnell nicht wieder verloren ...'
'Doch machen wir uns nichts vor: gegen Zahnstein gibt es kein Mittel ...'

1. G.Grass, "Literatur und Revolution oder des Idyllikers schnaubendes Steckenpferd", speech delivered at the Writers' Congress in Belgrade, 17-21 October 1969, published in H.L.Arnold & F.J.Görtz (eds.), Günter Grass: Dokumente zur politischen Wirkung, pp.201-206. The same assertion is to be found in several other political speeches.

2. See p.154.

'Als der Sohn die Eltern suchte, wurde ihm ein Seesack zugestellt...'
 'Deshalb wollen wir heute den Zahnstein oder den Feind Numero eins bekämpfen ...'
 'Und jedes Mädchen, das in mir ihren zukünftigen Verlobten vermutete, bekam meine geretteten Milchzähne zu sehen ...'
 'Denn die instrumentelle Beseitigung des Zahnsteins gehört a priori zu jeder Zahnbehandlung ...'
 'Doch nicht jedes Mädchen fand Eberhards Milchzähne schön oder interessant ...' (öb 14)

Starusch's reactions to the television screen are similar: he does not attend to the actual programme, which almost immediately evokes his own memories: the girl in the commercials becomes his former fiancée Linde, the newsreader recounts Starusch's past experiences. Starusch also projects his own fantasies onto the screen, escaping from his frustration into a realm of violence and revenge -- to be curbed, however, by his own conscience, that rational self which is concretized in the figure of the dentist. Whenever Starusch indulges in such fantasies the dentist, in Starusch's imagination, checks him by threatening to withhold the local anaesthetic, that is to say by reminding him of the physical pain which in the real world is the concomitant of violent action.

In the first part of the novel the dentist does not provide an active corrective to Starusch's thoughts. His main function there, on the plane of the real world, not Starusch's imagination, is to provide Starusch with a local anaesthetic, removing physical pain and thus leaving his mind free for mental anguish. Starusch admits to Scherbaum that without such an anaesthetic his toothache prevents him from turning his mind to the political issues which distress his pupils:

'Sie mit Ihren Zahnschmerzen. Und was ist im Mekong-Delta los? Haben Sie das gelesen?'
 'Ja, Scherbaum, das habe ich gelesen. Schlimm. Schlimmschlimm. Doch muß ich zugeben, daß mich dieses Ziehen, diese auf immer den gleichen Nerv gerichtete Zugluft, daß mich dieser zu lokalisierende, gar nicht mal schlimme, doch auf der Stelle tretende Schmerz mehr würfelt, trifft und bloßstellt als der fotografierte, unübersehbare und dennoch abstrakte, weil nicht meinen Nerv berührende Schmerz dieser Welt. (öb 17)

But in his enforced inactivity in the dentist's chair Starusch is left entirely with his own thoughts. Listening to the dentist's eulogy of technological progress he projects onto the television screen an image of himself as an engineer in the cement industry, working on the environmental side of production, combatting pollution of the air, a career comparable to that of the dentist. Starusch concludes, however, that he would be a failure in such a profession, because unlike the dentist he finds no fulfilment in pragmatic concentration on the present and future. It is of no consequence for the interpretation of the work whether Starusch had actually become an engineer before studying biology and 'Germanistik', or whether, as is suggested in the third part, he was

merely a 'Werkstudent', his projection purely imaginary. What is important is that he rejects the possibility of such practical activity as inadequate for him.

Instead he has become a teacher of German and history, and is thus concerned with keeping the knowledge of the past alive, in particular the German past, and drawing from this knowledge lessons for the future. A similar concern motivates his unsuccessful attempt to write a biography of General Schörner. There are clear parallels between the effects of National Socialism on Starusch's personal life and on Germany as a whole, but it is also made clear that precisely because of these effects on their personal lives, men of Starusch's generation are incapable of sufficient objectivity to make correct decisions regarding Germany's present-day problems. The best Starusch can do is to warn his pupils against repeating the mistakes of the past. Grass has confirmed that this is his own personal conviction:

Allein schon vom Alter, vom Jahrgang und von den Erfahrungen her, bleiben Starusch und mir, . . . als Leute, die auf Vernunft und Aufklärung setzen, nichts anderes übrig, als den Versuch zu unternehmen, Erfahrungen zu übermitteln. (1)

These experiences also act as a check on Starusch's own destructive impulses. Immediately after the war we see him as Störtebeker, the self-indulgent, anarchistic, wilfully destructive gang-leader known to readers of the Danzig trilogy. He has since then matured into an adult with more constructive attitudes, who accepts responsibility not only for himself but for society at large in his role as teacher, but remains insecure, frustrated and prone to relapse into his former cast of mind, for, as he ironically admits: 'ein Studienrat ist ein umgepolter Jugendbändenführer' (öb 16). Thus while with his reason and ethical sense he is appalled by Scherbaum's proposed form of public protest against the Vietnam war, he cannot help but be attracted by it on less rational levels of his personality, despite his awareness that the protest will be not only revolting in the extreme, but also entirely ineffective. He is even tempted to take Scherbaum's place and burn a dog himself, and this would be not only in order to protect the boy from being assaulted by an outraged public and his academic prospects ruined. Starusch thus occupies a position between the calm rationality of the dentist and the violent radicalism of his pupil. But his experience helps him to suppress his emotional reaction and adopt the course of reasoned persuasion to prevent Scherbaum's plan from being put into practice.

1. In a discussion with Klunker, quoted by G. Cepl-Kaufmann, Günter Grass. Eine Analyse des Gesamtwerkes unter dem Aspekt von Literatur und Politik, Kronberg/Ts. 1975, p.108.

All three main characters put forward opinions which can with some plausibility be equated with those of the author. Nevertheless, the view that Starusch represents the dialectic synthesis of the opposing positions embodied in the dentist and Scherbaum is unsatisfactory, as such a synthesis can scarcely be imagined and is in no way suggested by the novel: Scherbaum's attitude is plainly rejected by both Starusch and the author, and eventually by Scherbaum himself. Nor is a synthesis of the attitudes of Starusch and the dentist put forward as at all feasible. Starusch reflects that such a synthesis -- a world ruled, as it were, by dentists and teachers -- is an appealing but unworkable notion:

Man stelle sich vor: Ein Zahnarzt und ein Studienrat regieren die Welt. Das Zeitalter der Prophylaxe bricht an. Allem Übel wird vorgebeugt. Da jeder lehrt, lernt auch ein jeder. Da alle dem Kariesbefall ausgesetzt sind, finden sich alle einig im Kampf gegen die Karies. Fürsorge und Vorsorge befrieden die Völker. Keine Religionen und Ideologien mehr, sondern Hygiene und Aufklärung beantworten die Frage nach dem Sein. Kein Versagen mehr und kein Mundgeruch. Man stelle sich vor... (öb 263)

Starusch's irony is clearly evident in his elaboration of the fantasy, and he reluctantly rejects it:

Vielleicht geht das doch nicht: ein Zahnarzt und ein Lehrer. Er ist es gewohnt, schmerzlos zu behandeln; ich werte den Schmerz als Mittel der Erkenntnis . . . (öb 244f.)

Scherbaum's advocacy of direct action is not based on an ideology but springs from an impulse provided by the immediate political situation: the complacency of the majority of the German populace, exemplified by the affluent ladies of West Berlin, who spend their afternoons eating cake at Kempinski's, and whose peace of mind is not in the least disturbed by what is happening elsewhere in the world, least of all by the fact that, as they eat, napalm is being used in Vietnam. This is all the more distressing as it is less than a single generation since Germany itself suffered the ravages of war, a suffering which has been too easily forgotten. Scherbaum is truly Starusch's pupil in his conception of pain as a moral stimulant. Unlike the affluent Berlin ladies with their self-indulgence and moral apathy, Scherbaum embraces the opposite extreme of identification. Not for him Arantil or Seneca (regularly quoted by the dentist in his advocacy of stoicism): in choosing to burn his pet dog Scherbaum chooses to share at least some of the pain which he can do nothing to alleviate¹. He realizes that his act will be no more than symbolic, but he hopes that the sight of a burning dog may actually nauseate the onlookers, thus at least temporarily removing their 'local

1. Cf. Lucy Beerbaum's voluntary endurance of the hardships suffered by political prisoners in Greece, in Lenz's Das Vorbild; see pp.166f.

anaesthetic' and forcing them to acknowledge a horrific reality.¹ He hopes that they will then draw the appropriate political parallels. The presentation of horrific events by the mass media has, Scherbaum argues, reduced these events to a source of entertainment, but:

Ein brennender Hund, das trifft sie. Sonst trifft die nix. Die können darüber lesen, soviel sie wollen, und sich Bilder angucken mit einer Lupe, oder im Fernsehen ganz dicht dran sein, da sagen die bloß Schlimmschlimm. Wenn aber mein Hund brennt, fällt denen der Kuchen raus. (öb 176f.)

Starusch also predicts a violent public response to the proposed burning, and is accordingly worried for Scherbaum's safety. He is also very well aware of the general public's superficial curiosity regarding acts of violence and of the appropriateness of the particular act which Scherbaum has chosen:

Sie können heute Christus auf dem Kurfürstendamm während der Hauptverkehrszeit . . . kreuzigen und gekreuzigt aufrichten, die Leute gucken zu, machen ihr Foto, wenn sie das Dings bei sich haben, drängeln, wenn sie nichts sehen, und sind auf den besseren Plätzen zufrieden, weil sie mal wieder ergriffen sein können; aber wenn sie sehen, wie jemand einen Hund, hier, in Berlin, einen Hund verbrennt, da schlagen sie zu, immer wieder zu, bis nichts mehr zuckt, und auch dann noch hauen sie drauf. (öb 226)

Scherbaum, whose hero is Helmuth Hübener, a mormon from Hamburg who was executed in 1942 for printing and distributing oppositional pamphlets, is encouraged in his plan by his girlfriend Vero Lewand, who describes herself as a Maoist, having moved from anarchism and symbolic protest against West German consumerism -- the mindless destructivity of her 'Sternchenpflücken', sawing off the star-emblems of Mercedes cars -- to political radicalism. The hollowness of her arguments is shown also in Starusch's encounter with a group of ultra-Left intellectuals who welcome Scherbaum's proposed protest as a political act per se without either regard to its consequences or any notion of a concrete alternative to existing social arrangements. The wholly destructive nature of Vero's radicalism is also to be seen in her suggestion regarding Starusch's dental problems: she alone recommends extraction. Starusch rejects out of hand this proposal to create a painless gap without any indication of how it is to be subsequently filled, thereby symbolically repudiating the idea of a full-scale revolution as envisaged in the late 1960s by left-wing radicals who likewise offered no clear proposals for the post-revolutionary future. At the same time, however, Starusch is compelled to admit that small-scale changes and compromise are not an ideal solution either. He reflects on his dentist's conception of treat-

1. There is a parallel here with the aims of the 'Theatre of Cruelty' of Antonin Artaud, whose shock techniques enjoyed considerable popularity and critical attention in the 1960s.

ment, but proceeds to point out the limitations of that conception, which is so cautious that it runs the risk of becoming conservative rather than progressive:

Erkenntnis plus Handwerk, während das voreilige Ziehen der Zähne, dieser Wahn, eine nicht mehr schmerzende Lücke schaffen zu wollen, eine Tat ohne Erkenntnis ist: Dummheit wird tätig.
 Also Fleiß, Zweifel, Vernunft, Dazulernen, Zögern, mehrmaliger Neubeginn, kaum merkliche Verbesserungen, einkalkulierte Fehlentwicklungen, Evolution Schritt für Schritt: die SpringprozeSSION; während der Täter langsame Abläufe überhüpft, das hemmende Wissen abwirft, leichtfüßig und faul ist: Die Faulheit als Sprungbrett der Tat.
 Oder auch Angst. Die Entwicklung, so scheint es (ist es) ist nicht mehr abzulesen. Kein Zeiger schlägt aus und meldet den kleinen alltäglichen Fortschritt. Stillstand und Leerlauf atmen die berühmte Friedhofsruhe, in die meine Kollegin Irmgard Seifert, ihr 'Wenn doch etwas geschehen würde...' hineinspricht. Ruhe bei steigenden Verlustzahlen. Ein angstgeducktes Stillhalten, das Scherbaum mit seiner Tat aufscheuchen möchte: Angst treibt zur Tat. (öb 193f.)

Similarly in Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke Grass describes the town of 'Schnecklingen' where 'progress' is even slower than the snail, and is in fact tantamount to 'Stillstand' (Tb 47ff.)

Starusch thus rejects radicalism partly because he sees its roots as laziness -- unwillingness to devote energy to slow but real progress -- frustration and fear, rather than any positive motivation, but also partly on other grounds. As a historian Starusch knows that revolutions have never provided permanent solutions but have always been followed by restoration and stagnation, necessitating further revolutions in their turn. Referring to the French Revolution he reflects:

. . . wie alles in Reformismus endete. Das hätte man . . . billiger haben können. So wurde Napoleon möglich. Die Revolution als Reproduktion. . . Absurde Zwangsläufigkeiten: Revolution schafft Restauration, die durch Revolution beseitigt werden soll. (öb 200)

Historical knowledge and insights are also deployed in Linde's attempt to convert her father, Field Marshall Krings, by means of 'war games' from his belief that Germany could have won the Second World War. The failure of this attempt to defeat irrational fanaticism by means of reason, logic and factual knowledge, counter-balances Starusch's success in dissuading Scherbaum from his plan and demonstrates the limits set by human perversity to the effectiveness of these cardinal intellectual weapons.

Starusch also warns Scherbaum against incitement by people such as his colleague Irmgard Seifert. Like Starusch she was born in 1927, and was an active supporter of National Socialism. Her worst act, as a BDM leader in 1945, was to report a farmer who refused to give up his land to the SS; although nothing happened as a result, she still feels hysterical remorse. Obsessed with her guilt, she has adopted 'Marxengels'

with the same fervour with which she embraced National Socialism twenty-five years earlier, and now teaches Marxism with the vocabulary of fascism. That her authoritarian attitudes have not changed is demonstrated by her spontaneous reaction to Scherbaum's plan, by which she is initially appalled: she proposes to inform the police. Starusch comments: 'Irmgard Seifert hat es mit der Polizei. Muß ich jetzt sagen: immer noch?' (öb 192). Irmgard subsequently completely changes her mind and strongly urges Scherbaum to carry out his plan, hoping for a vicarious atonement for her sins and those of her generation by this act of a member of the younger generation. She is not in the least concerned for Scherbaum's welfare or the consequences of his act, nor does she have any notion of what that act is intended to achieve. Her invocation of 'absolute purity' is contradicted by her own motives, which are anything but pure. Apart from her cultivated remorse, they include an element of sexual and emotional frustration, visible in her unhappy relationship with Starusch, but it is important to note that Grass -- unlike Martin Walser¹-- does not ascribe any very great importance to the sexual-emotional sphere as either a determinant or a reflection of political attitudes.

It is Starusch's realisation of the impurity and confusion of Irmgard's motives which leads him to examine his own motives more closely than might otherwise have been the case. He too has fantasies of violent action, one of his favourites being that of using a bulldozer to create a flattened wasteland as a basis for a new beginning of some sort. He realizes, on reflection, that it is not only social evils which he would like to eradicate, for he is strongly motivated by a personal grievance: the fantasy is closely linked to dreams in which he murders his faithless former fiancée. He knows that such a desire to avenge a personal rejection can have very far-reaching and appalling consequences for mankind, as in the case of Hitler:

Denn unser Volk verträgt das nicht: Abgewiesene Zukurzgekommene
Versager. Überall hocken sie und lauern auf Rache . . . Und
wollen ausmerzen abschaffen stillmachen. (öb 96f.)

If unchecked, Starusch's own emotional responses to the present political situation would also be one of strong protest, but he realizes that it is frustration and vindictiveness such as his which create support for totalitarian systems. Irmgard Seifert is, it may fairly be said, a type rather than a rounded character, but a type is needed in this context to indicate that her attitudes are widespread among the German population, especially of her generation. Although harmless as individuals, Grass

1. See p.78.

warns that their 'Mitläufer'-mentality makes intellectuals such as Irmgard, as a group, potentially dangerous.

But although Starusch rejects radicalism such as that of Vero or Irmgard, he places no great faith in any of the alternative courses of action which he proposes to Scherbaum: that he should take over the editorship of the school newspaper, or, since he has artistic talent, write protest songs. It is not suggested that such small-scale activities constitute a genuine effective alternative to direct political action. When Scherbaum contemptuously rejects the second suggestion with the retort:

Das ist doch zum Einlullen. Da glauben Sie doch selber nicht dran . . . Drückt doch nur auf die Tränendrüsen. (öb 221),

Starusch can do no more than tacitly agree, and on this question of the impossibility of effective social protest through art, Scherbaum speaks for Grass himself. Grass wrote a number of poems in the late 1960s on this very theme; Starusch's assertion that literature of protest is nothing but 'Beschäftigungstherapie' (öb 219) echoes the following poem by Grass:

Mach doch was. Mach doch was.
Irgend was. Mach doch was.
Man macht sich Luft: schon verbraucht der gerechte Zorn.
Der kleine alltägliche Ärger läßt die Ventile zischen.
Ohnmächtige Wut entlädt sich, füllt einen Luftballon,
der steigt und steigt, wird kleiner und kleiner, ist weg.
Sind Gedichte Atemübungen?
Wenn sie diesen Zweck erfüllen, -- und ich frage,
prosaisch wie mein Großvater, nach dem Zweck, --
dann ist Lyrik Therapie. (1)

Starusch accepts Scherbaum's disparaging view of art, but points out to him that to burn a dog would also be no more than a symbolic gesture; this is highlighted in Scherbaum's own consideration whether he might burn Vero's toy dogs instead, as a symbol of the symbol, or whether or not he should ask the dentist to give the dog an anaesthetic beforehand.

It is not made clear how far this persuasive reductio ad absurdum is instrumental in Scherbaum's change of heart; a further motive would appear to be that he is unwilling to be exploited by Vero's radical friends for propaganda purposes; nor is it certain to what extent Scherbaum genuinely realizes the pointlessness of his plan, and to what extent sentimental reasons are involved: he is violently sick when Starusch takes him to Kempinski's so that he may imagine the proposed burning. No doubt a combination of all three factors is involved; as with other characters, notably Starusch and Irmgard, complex and partially opaque motives may perhaps be assumed. This may be seen as a weakness in

1. Published in the section "Zorn, Ärger, Wut" of the collection Ausgefragt, Neuwied & Berlin 1967, p.60.

the novel, if we take Grass's purpose to be, with all sceptical reservations, the advocacy of rational persuasion. If on the other hand, one regards Scherbaum primarily as embodying one of the options open to Starusch, then it is of secondary importance whether or not Scherbaum puts his plan into operation once Starusch has resolved, despite his doubts and concealed disappointment, to oppose it. The arguments which Starusch uses in his attempt to dissuade Scherbaum are, furthermore, those which he had earlier attributed to the dentist, that is to say purely rational arguments to which he admits himself unable to give whole-hearted support. Nevertheless, however reluctantly, Starusch does opt for these rational arguments, as constituting at the very least the lesser evil. Grass has himself made the same choice, with the same difficulty: 'Ich bin kein geborener, ich bin ein gelernter Sozialdemokrat'.¹

Scherbaum accepts the alternatives proposed by Starusch: he becomes editor of the school paper, undergoes dental treatment and embarks on the study of medicine, a remedial rather than a revolutionary discipline, closely related to that of the dentist, and a choice which suggests the same ironic reservations on Grass's part regarding its efficacy. Within the context of the central images of the novel this choice of career carries a strong implication that Scherbaum has opted for cautious conformity. Starusch has achieved his aim, which, seen objectively, is the only reasonable aim possible. Grass makes it very clear here that Starusch as a teacher and an intellectual has duties other than those towards himself. Even though he may not be capable of setting an example, he has the obligation to act responsibly and with integrity, even if this involves doing violence to some of his own impulses and preferences. Grass's irony does not conceal the seriousness of this sentiment:

Der Lehrer ist ein Begriff. Vom Lehrer wird etwas erwartet. Von einem Lehrer erwarten wir etwas mehr. (öb 170)

Irmgard Seifert exemplifies the betrayal of that obligation by the irresponsible intelligentsia who allow themselves to be guided only by highly subjective ideological cravings without concern for their consequences in the real world. Precisely because personal preferences and social obligations do not necessarily coincide, the ethical decision to give priority to the latter is of prime importance. It is in accordance with this insight that Starusch remains a teacher, for the time being at least, despite his lack of conviction and his disappointment at the

1. Grass in conversation with Leo Bauer, in Die neue Gesellschaft, 2, 1971, p.88.

meagre results of his work. Starusch wryly reflects, when thinking of the dentist and himself, each in his own way an idealist:

Zwei betriebsblinde Utopisten, verschoben er und ich albern.
 (Bin ich das? Muß der Lehrende, winzig vor seinem Lehrstoff, den er in Häppchen aufteilen muß, den Spott seiner Schüler fördern?)
 Meine Schüler lächeln, sobald ich die Lehrbücher in Zweifel ziehe:
 'Da ist aber kein Sinn, sondern nur organisiertes Chaos. --
 Warum lächeln Sie, Scherbaum?'

'Weil Sie trotzdem unterrichten und -- das nehme ich ziemlich stark an -- trotzdem einen Sinn in der Geschichte suchen.'

(Was soll ich machen? Aus dem Unterricht laufen, mich auf den Schulhof oder in die nächste Konferenz stellen und Aufhören! Aufhören! rufen? Zwar weiß ich nicht, was richtig ist, weiß ich noch nicht, was richtig ist, aber das muß aufhören, aufhören ...) (öb 172f.)

Starusch continues 'trotzdem'. But at the end of the novel, two years later, it is perhaps doubtful whether he will continue to do so for much longer. Scherbaum, his gifted former pupil, has exchanged radicalism for conformity. Field Marshall Krings remains unregenerate, his fanaticism still impervious to logic, reason and the appeal to incontrovertible historical fact. The 'war games' have become popular entertainment for the wealthy and prominent (öb 335f.). Starusch is still prey to fantasies of violence, he has not completed his book on General Schörner, his dental problems prove ever more intractable, indeed apparently insoluble. The succinct and eloquent final sentences of the novel cast doubt even on the little that has been achieved: 'Nichts hält vor. Immer neue Schmerzen' (öb 358).

The pain remains -- but with it remains of course also the moral stimulus which it brings, for Grass himself at least, who refused to be equated with the resigned and weary Starusch:

Der Unterschied ist der, daß ich in der Sache weitermache, trotz aller Skepsis, während ich bei Starusch nicht ganz sicher bin, ob er nicht doch in Resignation stecken bleiben wird. (1)

The ironic parable of the painter Möller in örtlich betäubt suggests that even if art can have little effect on society, which it can portray only indirectly, the artist must nevertheless persevere with his work. In his painting of the Last Judgement Möller finds himself obliged to paint a glass bell over the head of Sin, but this at least reflects the surrounding world. Möller places the councillors who forced this expedient on him in the boat bound for Hell, but he also paints himself, the artist, in a small corner striving to prevent the boat from going down. Starusch compares himself to Möller in this grimly ironic allegory:

Wenn ich nicht wäre, ginge es prompt bergab. Der Künstler als Retter. Er erhält uns die Sünde. (öb 350)

Thus this allegory becomes the key to an understanding of örtlich betäubt:

1. In E. Rudolph (ed.), Protokoll zur Person. Autoren über sich und ihr Werk, Munich 1971, pp.59-72.

the artist redeems mankind by keeping alive the awareness of sin and human frailty. This is one of the reasons for writing given explicitly by Grass in Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke. Its implication is optimistic. And despite Grass's own insistence that he is not an optimist, the tone of his political speeches and writings during the 1960s was one of confidence. Only since 1969 notwithstanding the electoral success of the SPD does that confidence appear to have become more subdued.¹ Nevertheless he continued to campaign actively for the SPD until the 1972 victory had been assured. His reasons for this continued commitment are set out in Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke.

Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke

The figure of the intellectual as mentor of the young is also at the centre of Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke, but he is now a figure of much greater confidence and optimism, and facing a much more immediate personal responsibility: a father helping his children to understand the National Socialist past, a task in which there is little place for scepticism and self-irony. At the same time he is campaigning vigorously on behalf of the SPD, a task which likewise demands active and whole-hearted commitment. That the account of events in the past actually goes considerably beyond the task of bringing enlightenment to young children, is an indicator of how difficult, indeed impossible it is for Grass to exclude scepticism and pessimism from his reflections. Similar, although Grass's original aim may have been to give, for the benefit of his children, a 'Selbstdarstellung', the novel is actually more in the nature of a 'Selbstprüfung'.²

There are two time levels in this novel: the first is the contemporary autobiographical account of the author's election campaign in 1969, beginning with the election of Gustav Heinemann as President on 5 March 1969 and ending with the election of Willi Brandt as Federal Chancellor on 21 October 1969. This account also includes information concerning the author's private life, notably his relationship with his wife and their children. During these months Grass also works on a speech which he has been invited to give in Nuremberg in 1971 during the celebrations marking the five hundredth anniversary of Dürer's birth; this speech

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1. Cf. M.Jäger, "Der politische Günter Grass", in R.Geißler (ed.), Günter Grass. Materialienbuch, Darmstadt & Neuwied 1976, pp.154-169. Cf. also V. Neuhaus, Günter Grass, Stuttgart 1979, pp.125-133.
 2. F.J. Raddatz, "Der Weltgeist als berittene Schnecke. Günter Grass' kleine Hoffnung -- aus großer Melancholie", in M.Jurgensen (ed.), Grass. Kritik--Thesen--Analysen, Berne 1973, (pp.191-197); p.192.

reflects and summarizes the author's socio-political views as expounded in the novel, and is appended to it. On the second time level the novel narrates events from the life of the fictitious character Hermann Ott, nicknamed Zweifel, principally his adult life from the late 1920s until 1945. Although not Jewish himself, Ott chooses to teach Jewish children, and is therefore closely linked with their fate during the Third Reich in Danzig; this thematic complex is thereby integrated into the novel. Both Zweifel himself and some of the Jews known to him survive the war; the latter are visited by Grass in Israel, thus linking the two time levels at the end of the work.

At the beginning of the novel Grass explains his aim of making clear to his, and other people's, children why he engages in political activity and what his views are concerning Germany, past and present. It is important for these children to understand that the past is not dead, and that it must be remembered by those who lived through it and known by those who did not. This important and difficult task of the older generation is discussed by Grass in his speech "Schwierigkeiten eines Vaters, seinen Kindern Auschwitz zu erklären"¹ in which he concludes that the only narrative strategy appropriate to this task is one of individualisation and indeed trivialisation, of reducing history to stories, to the experience of a single character whose life-history is narrated in such a matter as to excite the desired interest and curiosity. In Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke Grass addresses his children directly, and incorporates their responses and questions into his account to illustrate this process in detail.

The parallels between the two narrative levels are very close: Grass links them at the outset by explaining to his children the relevance of Ott's experiences to the present election campaign, especially to his own motives for participating in it. He tells them that he will narrate Ott's story 'Solange der Wahlkampf dauert und Kiesinger Kanzler ist' (Tb 16), thus in a direct and polemical way linking the era of National Socialism and the fate of the Jews to the present government of the Federal Republic.² Further links are provided by other implied comparisons -- which assume, of course, an informed adult reader rather than the children to whom the book addresses itself: Grass here already goes beyond this restrictive conception, but it is never entirely lost sight of. The following piece of historical information, for example, immediately suggests a contemporary parallel:

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1. First published in Der Tagesspiegel (West Berlin), 27.5.1970. Reprinted in G.Grass, Der Bürger und seine Stimme, Darmstadt/Neuwied 1974, pp.89-91.
 2. For Grass's objections to Kiesinger's Chancellorship see pp.32f.

1930 entschied sich der Deutschnationale Dr. Ernst Ziehm für eine Minderheitenregierung [in Danzig]. Fortan war er auf die zwölf Stimmen der Nationalsozialisten angewiesen. (Tb 18)

This reminds the reader how close the CDU/CSU was to repeating its victory in 1969, and suggests that given the opportunity, they would have been willing -- despite previous protestations to the contrary -- to enter into a coalition with the NPD. In the same way the author's objections to what he regards as the neo-Fascist tendencies of the political Right are supported by developments in the Ott action, the misdeeds committed against the Jews in Danzig and subsequently against Ott himself. By means of such parallels Grass suggests that the mentality of the German people at large, not merely certain prominent politicians, is still dangerously similar to that of the 1930s and '40s, a similarity visible in the fact that a man such as Franz Josef Strauß, who in Grass's explicitly stated view visibly lacks any vestige of moral scruple or integrity (Tb 327), can be allowed to play an important role in political life.

In örtlich betäubt Grass had pointed out that the danger of radicalism arose from the willingness of so many people to suspend critical judgement. In Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke he illustrates the ease with which prejudice and mass hysteria can still be aroused and draws a parallel between past and present prejudice: the slogans of the 1930s, such as the notorious 'Die Juden sind unser Unglück' (Tb 18) are brought into association with the simplistic and manipulative generalisations of the radical Left APÖ in 1969: 'Wer hat uns verraten? Sozialdemokraten!' (Tb 19)¹. It is thus clear that Grass objects equally strongly to all fanaticism, be it that of the Left or the Right. He scornfully alludes to 'antifaschistische Mahnmale, gebaut in stalinistischem Stil' (Tb 16), and savagely castigates the 'radical chic' of the privileged, 'zugutbehauste Söhne, die vom Proletariat wie von einer Marienerscheinung schwärmen' (Tb 52). Whilst sympathetic towards the enthusiasm of politically committed young people, he repeatedly in this novel condemns their frequent imperviousness to reason, their impatience with pragmatic reformism and the affinity of left-wing extremism to fascism:

Ach, wie sie liquidierfreudig sind. Ach, wie durch ihre stalinistischen Knopplöcher -- und sie merken es nicht -- Klein-Goebbels linst ... (Tb 320)

His description of the discussions between Augst and his son (Tb 277) shows again that the radical Right and the radical Left are guilty of the

1. This slogan was taken from a text by Peter Chotjewitz in Supergarde 50. The complete text is quoted by P.K.Kurz, Über moderne Literatur, Frankfurt a.M.1973, Bd.III, p.253.

same dogmatic refusal to listen to counter-arguments and enter into reasoned debate. In örtlich betäubt, taking the French Revolution as an example, Starusch had stated his conviction that revolution never leads to real and permanent improvement. Grass repeats this conviction here, and commits himself instead to a belief in snail-pace evolution.

Grass considers the snail a more apposite emblem for the SPD than its official emblem of the rooster, which he regards as excessively aggressive. He contrasts the snail, with its slow, almost imperceptible yet real and constant progress, but also its perseverance and hardiness -- a snail can traverse the sharp edge of a knife without harm -- to the swift and powerful horse which he uses as a symbol of the radical Left, the Hegel-quoting Marxists.¹ Rather than attempt to leap from one supposed stage of historical development to the next on the basis of a fanatical ideology, the snail moves cautiously, democratically but continuously from one firmly secured position to another: 'Eine Schnecke -- immer unterwegs -- verläßt feste Standpunkte' (Tb 177), never moving faster than is safe, but never clinging with rigid conservatism to the status quo, always concerned to protect what had been gained by the slow progress of the past. This, for Grass, is true progress: 'Die Schnecke, das ist der Fortschritt' (Tb 9). There are, however, dangers: first, the snail must be watched over and protected, for even if welcomed in times of stress and adversity it is easily disparaged once normal conditions have been restored, and may well then be destroyed, as Lisbeth destroys Zweifel's snail when her 'cure' is complete. Secondly, Grass does not overlook the danger that the snail-pace approach can lead to a slowness of change that is tantamount to complete stagnation; after visiting the town of 'Schnecklingen' (Tb 47-51), one of the many similar 'um ihren Ruf und Stillstand besorgte Städtchen' (Tb 48) which he visits, Grass allows his snail to reflect:

Ich liege hinter mir.
Meine Spur trocknet weg.
Unterwegs vergaß ich mein Ziel. (Tb 51)

Vigilance, caution and the ability to keep the goal in sight are thus the essential qualities of the intellectual who commits himself to this philosophy.

The image of the snail is heavily laboured, in the view of some

1. Cf. Tb 51. Grass derives this image from Hegel's reference to Napoleon as 'Weltgeist zu Pferde'. Cf. V. Neuhaus, Günter Grass, Stuttgart 1979, p.125.

critics over-laboured.¹ Grass uses all kinds of snails:

beispielhafte, fabelhafte, prinzipielle und solche, die
wirklich vorkommen. (Tb 248)

Much scientific information concerning snails is included in the novel, and the metaphor is extended far beyond the political sphere. Zweifel collects real snails, and his observation of them reinforces his political convictions; but he also uses them for erotic purposes, and again Grass makes the parallel explicit: in love also one should proceed with the slowness and gentleness of the snail (Tb 298).

Grass's political reflections lead him to the conclusion that the two extremes as regards political attitudes are 'melancholy' and 'utopia', 'melancholy' being a state of depression, inactivity and lack of belief in the possibility of fruitful change, 'utopia' being the unrealistic desire for radical change regardless of actual possibilities or consequences. In the Dürer commemorative speech, 'Vom Stillstand und Fortschritt. Variationen zu Albrecht Dürers Kupferstich "Melencolia I"', he tells his audience:

Meine Kriechspur zeichnete eine Gesellschaft, an deren Rändern sich Gruppen verzweifelt extrem zu verhalten begannen: resignativ oder euphorisch. Täglichen Ausbrüchen in die Utopie entsprangen Rückfälle in melancholische Klausur. (Tb 341)

The twin extremes of melancholy and utopia are, he argued, 'Zahl und Adler der gleichen Münze' (Tb 341). But at the present time only utopia is considered respectable, whereas melancholy is dismissed either as the state of the socially oppressed, to be remedied by political radicalism, or else as the privilege of a 'sich geistreiche Untätigkeit genehmigende Elite' (Tb 349), that is to say as a symptom of parasitic decadence. Utopia is, however, entirely unrealistic -- not, as some idealists claim, a feasible reality which can in time be materialized, but a fantasy which can only lead to disillusionment and, in the Soviet Union, State terror (Tb 356f.). Melancholy, so despised in our time, should, Grass urges, be accepted as a humane and realistic tempering of Utopian excess, a realisation of man's limitations, of his terrible capacity for cruelty and destruction, of the historical record of brutality and oppression. It is moreover, Grass argues, a cast of mind appropriate to our age, which, like Dürer's is an age of stasis and doubt, a time for critical stock-taking:

1. However, the novel was well received, far more so than örtlich betäubt, although critics on the whole were more enthusiastic about its content than its form. H. Krüger's review in Die neue Rundschau 83, 1972, pp. 741-746 seems to express a critical consensus: 'Ich meine, es ist aufschlußreich für die Sprachkraft dieses Erzählers, daß dieses tickhafte Überinterpretieren einer Metapher seinem Text nicht schadet, sondern zugutekommt.' (P.745).

Stillstand im Fortschritt. Das Zögern und Einhalten zwischen den Schritten. Denken über Gedachtes, bis nur noch der Zweifel gewiß ist. Erkenntnis, die Ekel bereitet. -- Das trifft auch für uns zu. (Tb 355)

If this is realistically accepted, without utopian yearnings, it can be the basis for a new phase of progress, with fewer illusions, but for precisely that reason the better premises for genuine advance. This advance can and must only be slow, but it is the knowledge that it is possible which sustains hope in a period of melancholy and doubt. It is the snail which embodies this hope by mediating between the two extremes, 'Mittlerin zwischen Melancholie und Utopie' (Tb 108).

The two principal characters in Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke are the first person narrator, here unambiguously Grass himself, and Hermann Ott, or Zweifel. Grass as narrator presents himself -- with self-irony and without complacency -- as an intellectual who, like Starusch in örtlich betäubt, is aware of his obligations towards society and the past; his task is to communicate his experiences; the task of the younger generation is to make the effort to understand them; if it does not, it too will incur guilt and shame:

Es stimmt: Ihr seid unschuldig. Auch ich, halbwegs spät genug geboren, gelte als unbelastet. Nur wenn ich vergessen wollte, wenn ihr nicht wissen wolltet, wie es langsam dazu gekommen ist, könnten uns einsilbige Worte einholen: die Schuld und die Scham; auch sie, zwei unentwegte Schnecken, nicht aufzuhalten. (Tb 17)

This intellectual responsibility to keep alive the knowledge of the past is intensified by the factor of time, for the passing of time, Grass writes, favours the guilty; their deeds are forgotten, while their victims are blamed for a supposed lack of resistance (Tb 173), and former murderers survive to become respected pillars of society, as Grass adds with polemical savagery:

Überlebende Mörder geben als Sinngeber brauchbare Muster ab. Schuld als Ausweis für Größe. (Tb 168)

The writer can and must attempt to prevent this deformation and betrayal of truth through the passing of time:

Ein Schriftsteller, Kinder, ist jemand, der gegen die verstreichende Zeit schreibt. (Tb 169)

Grass combines this task with his political activities, opposing obscurantism and committing himself to the pursuit of limited, but real and reasonable goals:

Gegen schon wieder dämmernde Verdunkelung und für etwas sprechen, das in seiner Begrenztheit vernünftig ist . . . (Tb 170)

Grass summarizes his belief in caution, moderation and flexibility thus:

Ich habe Meinungen, die sich ändern lassen . . . Ich mag keine bigotten Katholiken und keine strenggläubigen Atheisten. Ich mag keine Leute, die zum Nutzen der Menschheit die Banane geradebiegen

wollen. Widerlich ist mir jeder, der subjektives Unrecht in objektives Recht umzuschwindeln versteht.

Ich fürchte alle, die mich bekehren möchten. (Tb 92f.)

As a complement to this account of his intellectual stance, Grass uses the figure of Zweifel. Whereas Grass's account of his political campaigning highlights the active, optimistic component of his personality, Zweifel embodies his underlying caution and scepticism. His life-history appears to be loosely based on that of the literary critic Marcel Reich-Ranicki ('der Kritiker Ranicki', Tb 333), but Grass urges his children not to form too specific a mental image of Zweifel, as he wishes him to represent a particular type of person and attitude. He is however to be understood as a flesh-and-blood character as well as the embodiment of a cast of mind; Grass portrays through him not only a way of thinking but also a way of living. Here 'doubt' has positive connotations; it does not entail the self-doubt of a Starusch: Hermann Ott is entirely certain of his role and obligations as a teacher, he adheres to his principles unhesitatingly and without fear of consequences, and he carefully observes political developments, going into hiding when the danger to himself becomes too great to risk. He dissociates himself from the very beginning from National Socialism and its anti-Semitic ideology, but he chooses the path of silent resistance rather than violent protest, holding fast for as long as possible to routine and normality. During the period which Zweifel spends in hiding in Stomma's cellar his fate depends to a substantial extent on the course of the war; towards the end of the war, when the defeat of Germany is imminent, he is treated well, but he is deeply disillusioned by the ease and speed with which peacetime 'normality' is restored and the old ideology replaced by a new ideology, with no change in fundamental attitudes: although not an ardent National Socialist, Stomma had been willing, indeed eager to acquire German nationality: now, for purely opportunistic reasons he is equally willing to join the Communists in post-war Poland (Tb 325). Throughout the war Zweifel holds fast to his values of objectivity, caution, doubt and quiet optimism. But the profound disenchantment caused by his post-war experiences, seen principally -- in accordance with Grass's strategy of 'personalizing' history for the benefit of his children -- in Lisbeth's callous and selfish behaviour after she too has been restored to 'normality', temporarily breaks his spirit. He falls prey to depression, searches in vain for the special snail that had cured Lisbeth's melancholy, and in summer 1947 he is temporarily committed to a lunatic asylum: in the newly-organized Communist state of Poland there is no place for his values. Grass is however too committed to the values embodied in Zweifel to allow his life-history to end on so bleak a note: he is subsequently

cured and released, moves to West Germany in the late 1950s and lives on, with Lisbeth, into the present, still devoted to the study of snails. But there is little optimism in this ending: Grass's only comment is the lapidary: 'Zugegeben: er lebt' (Tb 333). This would seem to imply that there is little place for his values in the Federal Republic either. Thus by the end of the novel Zweifel has come to embody not only the positive principle of doubt, but also Grass's very real sceptical doubt regarding the prospects for fruitful social change under the aegis of that principle.

It is clear from Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke that Grass rejects not only the political programme of the West German New Left but also that of orthodox Communism as established in Poland, and the rest of Eastern Europe, after the war. A comment in his later novel Der Butt, referring to the dockers' strike in Danzig -- now Gdansk -- shows how bitterly Grass condemns Communism as a betrayal of its supposed ideals of social justice and equality:

Welche ideologischen Widersprüche bereiten wem (im Sinne Marxengels) dialektischen Spaß, wenn in einem kommunistischen Land die Staatsmacht auf Arbeiter schießen läßt, die soeben noch, dreißigtausend, vor dem Parteigebäude die Internationale gesungen haben: aus proletarischem Protest? (1)

Grass recognizes and understands the attraction of Communism as a proposed solution to existing injustices, but for him it is 'utopian', and hence illusory and dangerous. Forcefully and unambiguously he tells his children that he would oppose them if they were ever, later in life, to embrace the Communist cause; the passage deserves to be quoted at some length because it summarizes Grass's own entire political programme as well as his reasons for rejecting the philosophy of the revolutionary Left:

Es könnte sein, Franz und Raoul, daß euch später, wenn ihr was sucht, der Kommunismus Hoffnung macht; er lebt davon, Hoffnung auf den kommenden, den wahren Kommunismus zu machen.

Ihr könntet eines Tages, weil in Deutschland die Theorie vor die Wirklichkeit gestellt ist, in jenem totalen System, das in sich zu stimmen vorgibt und schmerzlose Übergänge verspricht, die Lösung finden wollen. (Das befriedete Dasein).

Es könnte euch Glaube hellseherisch für ein Endziel und blind für die Menschen in ihrer Gegenwart machen. (Die paar Tausen Unbelehrbaren.) Es könnte euch Unrecht als Vorleistung für die große, alles umfassende Gerechtigkeit billig werden. (Subjektivismus hält uns nur auf.)

Es könnte sein, daß euch das Ziel alles ist und euch die Wünsche weniger Böhmen nichts bedeuten. (Kleinbürgerlich.)

Es ist mein Recht zu befürchten, ihr könntet euch, nachdem Zeit verstrichen ist und weil sich Geringeres als zu schwierig erwiesen hat, das Ziel setzen, die Befreiung der Menschen durch den Kommunismus (den wahren) zu erzwingen: um jeden Preis.

Ich sage: Es könnte ...

Ich sage: Ich stünde euch dann im Wege. (Tb 172)

1. Der Butt, Fischer Taschenbuch 2182, Frankfurt a.M.1979, p.118.

Of the other characters, the most important are Stomma and his daughter Lisbeth, and in particular Manfred Augst. Stomma, the bicycle dealer, embodies what Grass sees as typical characteristics of the lower middle-class: he is not evil, but he is weak, opportunistic and unprincipled. He is prone to excesses of misguided enthusiasm and believes uncritically in technological progress. While he exploits the opportunities provided by the war, Lisbeth is typical of its many innocent victims: after losing both her lover and their child in the early days of the war Lisbeth falls victim to extreme melancholy, loses the faculty of speech and withdraws into a private world. Zweifel demonstrates the efficacy of his patient optimism by gradually restoring her to normality, first sexually and later mentally, with the aid of his snails. But his victory over melancholy has a bitter sequel: Lisbeth, once cured, loses her sensitivity to snails, destroys the special snail which helped to cure her, and comes close to destroying Zweifel himself. All the incorrigible stupidity which Zweifel, and Grass, combats in vain are castigated in Zweifel's comment: 'Die Schönheit der Schnecken kann den Ekel vor Schnecken nicht einholen. Das Normale siegt und bleibt dumm' (Tb 313).

The pharmacist Augst is the antipode to Zweifel. Where Zweifel represents 'melancholy' in the sense of caution and a moderating awareness of human limitations, Augst represents 'utopia'. In Augst, spiritual intensity and intellectual confusion, together with the legacy of an authoritarian upbringing produce first a blend of Christianity and National Socialism, then, in the post-war era, hopelessness, despair and finally suicide. In the National Socialist era Augst was a member both of the right-wing Protestant splinter group which called itself the 'Deutsche Christen' and the general SS. His repeated rejection by the 'Waffen-SS' only heightened his fanatical devotion to National Socialism as a supposed bulwark of Christian civilisation. After the war, as a right-wing Christian extremist who retains his loyalty to his former comrades in the SS, he remains desperately eager to serve a cause, to belong to a 'Gemeinschaft' (Tb 250), to derive a sense of identity from his membership of a variety of right-wing organisations. His warped and frustrated idealism can express itself only in a barrage of reactionary clichés, subjective grievances and elements of genuine social concern as he lists the causes of his frustration:

Die Parteien, die da oben, das Geld, der Apparat, die geografische Lage, die Liberalen. Schon früh ein Magengeschwür und die Zwischenprüfung. Dann der verlorene Krieg, die gesamte Sippschaft: Freimaurer, Juden und Funktionäre. Später die Frauen (mehrere aber besonders eine). Heute der allgemeine Überfluß, die herrschende Ungerechtigkeit, die fehlenden Krankenhäuser Schulen Wohnungen Gesetze, die höheren fehlenden Werte, der fehlende tiefere Sinn.
(Tb 201)

Augst constitutes an urgent challenge to the liberal intellectual to try to understand and help him, for there are many like him, and it is they who support Franz Josef Strauß and his policies. 'Augst ein Denkmal schreiben' (Tb 283), Grass notes, and reflects that he should have urged Augst to join the SPD election campaign (Tb 230) in order to help him direct his undoubtedly genuine idealism towards a worthy cause. Above all, Grass wishes it were possible to combine this idealism with the caution and scepticism of Zweifel, to seat them both, as he puts it, at the same table (Tb 284). The conversion of the petit bourgeois Christian conservatives who once supported Hitler, to the cause of social democracy is the severest challenge facing the liberal intellectual in West Germany; in Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke Grass acknowledges the challenge, but can only indicate in the most general symbolic terms how it might be met.

Grass's sympathetic understanding of Augst springs from his awareness that in him too there is a consciously suppressed hunger for a more intense and emotional involvement in political life. It is evident from both the novels which have been examined that his commitment to moderation and sobriety is the result of careful rational reflection, and that emotionally he is strongly attracted to the exuberant prophetic style of the young New Left which his ethical sense obliges him reluctantly to repudiate. In Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke he describes one of his APO opponents at a public meeting with a mixture of irony, envy and only partially concealed admiration:

Die APO aus Lörrach besaß einen apostelhaft schönen Sprecher.
 . . . Er mischte selbsterdachten Sozialismus mit allemannischer Anthroposophie . . . Er meldete sich, noch während ich redete, unübersehbar zu Wort und hatte eine Verkünderstimme . . . Kann sein, daß ich eifersüchtig gewesen bin . . .
 Frühchristlich auf Sandalen: wie er mal sanft wohltönend, mal als aggressiver Prophet (dabei vital und von mehreren Magdalenen umgeben) den Säckinger Bürgern im Vereinshaus eine globale Harmonie einredete, so, in seiner Ekstase und wortseligen Schönheit, reich an Rotbart und Haupthaar, hätte ich ihn gerne, samt seinen Klimperketten und indianisch-germanischen Amuletten gezeichnet . . . (Tb 240f.)

Like Starusch, Grass recognizes the attraction to such a political style as pernicious and suppresses it in favour of rational behaviour, but it is his awareness of this tension within himself that saves him from any trace of self-righteousness and gives him such a wide range of sympathetic understanding.

D. Siegfried Lenz: Das Vorbild

Siegfried Lenz's intention as a socially committed writer is to indicate that the world is in need of change and to show the reasons for that need. But for him the path to reform is to be found not in a specific political programme but in the application of fundamental democratic and humanitarian principles. He has accordingly chosen to employ not the abrasive shock tactics of Grass or Walser, but a strategy of gentle persuasion, attempting to enlist the reader's support by means of a narrative technique which invites him, as it were, into the writer's workshop. To this end Lenz from time to time uses the 'wir' form; he also gives the reader insight into his own creative processes, starting with the very first paragraph of the novel, which reflects on the technical problem of introducing the main characters in a plausible way. Lenz's tone is ingratiating, conveying his desire to draw the reader into his deliberations, but without ponderousness. His aim is a complicity, serious but tinged with irony, with the reader -- a 'Pakt mit dem Leser' as he has called it¹ -- in the exploration of his theme. Like Walser and Andersch, Lenz does not presume that he is competent to tell his readers what is right or wrong for them. His aim, according to a statement made in an interview with Reich-Ranicki, is not to provide solutions to problems, but to tell thought-provoking stories,

mit denen gewiß nichts entschieden wird, die vielleicht aber ein bißchen von der Identität der Wirklichkeit lüften können. (2)

He sees his task as 'zu verstehen, nicht zu richten'³; judgement is left to the reader:

. . . wenn die Überprüfung erfolgt ist, gebe ich das Urteil an den Leser ab, weil ich selbst kaum in der Lage bin . . . das für mich selbst zu entscheiden. (4)

His method of revealing reality is to ask questions and cast doubt on established truths and opinions; a writer, he has said, must 'aus beruflichen Gründen zweifeln, und das heißt zugleich: immer von neuem Fragen stellen'.⁵ Lenz's strategy is thus to pose a variety of questions by means of fictional characters and situations and to suggest a variety of possible answers without seeking to impose any of them on the reader, in order to demonstrate not that a particular course of action is always or necessarily correct, but 'daß es richtiges und falsches Handeln gibt'.⁶

1. S.Lenz, "Der Künstler als Mitwisser. Eine Rede in Bremen" (1962), in Beziehungen, Hamburg 1970, p.278.

2. In Beziehungen, p.297.

3. Ibid., p.285.

4. In Text Kritik 52, October 1976, p.8.

5. Beziehungen, p.285.

6. S.Lenz, "Baumeister einer brüderlichen Welt", in Dokumente einer Ehrung, Hamburg 1970, p.36.

Moral judgements are possible and necessary, but there are no absolute truths. Theo Elm¹ has pointed out that the majority of critics have related this moral relativism to Lenz's own personality rather than to his conception of realism. But Lenz's preference for a place 'zwischen den Stühlen' and his scepticism with regard to 'einseitige Wahrheiten'² have decisively affected his conception of the form appropriate for a novel. Thus the open ending of Das Vorbild was anticipated in Lenz's warning:

Wer sich auf die Suche nach der Wahrheit begibt, muß damit rechnen, als einziges Ergebnis nur die Einsicht mitzubringen, daß alles vergeblich war. (3)

Instead of finding absolute truths, Lenz hopes that his reader will acquire increased tolerance and understanding, and that these in turn will facilitate communication. The core of Lenz's social criticism is an awareness of the isolation of individuals, their lack of mutual understanding, and the inadequacy of their attempts to communicate with one another. In Das Vorbild he has set out to show that differences of age and ideology, which cause so much discord, are less important than the ethical considerations on which human relationships ought properly to be based.

In Das Vorbild Lenz pursues this theme by presenting a wide variety of intellectuals in a wide variety of situations designed to raise problematic moral issues and thereby convey his vision of life as a series of individual decisions in ethically ambiguous and challenging situations on ever-changing specific problems. His three main characters face, in their private lives, situations which reveal them as being as fallible as humanity at large, whilst their search for an 'exemplary life' demonstrates the absence of any overriding moral standpoint from which reliable moral messages might be issued. The wide variety of situations by means of which this absence is conveyed makes possible, and necessitates, the novel's loose episodic structure.

The central question posed in Das Vorbild is whether it is possible for intellectuals whose activities lie in the field of education to agree on an exemplary figure for the moral guidance of the younger generation, and, if so, what qualities such an exemplary figure should possess. Three educationalists, a retired headmaster, a forty year old schoolteacher and a free-lance publisher's reader have been given the task of finding such a 'Vorbild' for inclusion in a school reader. It has been pointed out,

1. Th. Elm, Siegfried Lenz. Deutschstunde, Munich 1974, footnote I, 40, p.132.

2. Beziehungen, p.66.

3. S. Lenz, "Die Politik der Entmutigung", in M. Walser (ed.), Die Alternative oder brauchen wir eine neue Regierung, (pp.131-136); p.131.

first that this situation is not realistic, and secondly that Lenz does not exploit its narrative potential to full advantage. Werner Klose¹, himself a teacher and editor of school books, maintained that the actual procedure in such matters was quite unlike Lenz's account. Hans Mayer² considered the discussions in the novel to be not 'auf der Höhe der erziehungswissenschaftlichen, soziologischen, auch literaturtheoretischen Sachdiskussion'. Kurt Batt³ regretted Lenz's failure to discuss the various educational principles associated with the different political ideologies of the main characters. Alan Draper⁴ found it implausible that the project should be so easily abandoned 'after it had been prepared with official governmental sanction'. Godehard Schramm⁵ dismissed the very subject of an 'exemplary life' as obsolete, but a study by Helmers⁶ showed that school readers in West Germany do in fact include 'Vorbilder' along with sections on 'nature', 'work' and 'home', as is the case in Lenz's novel. Lenz himself⁷ pointed out that he had scrutinized some thirty school readers in preparation for writing the novel.

The credibility of the situation is in any case not of prime importance. As Hans Wagener⁸ pointed out, it was not Lenz's intention to discuss the preparation of a school book from a professional point of view. The 'Lesebuch' conference merely provides the narrative framework for a discussion between three intellectuals, each of whom represents one of the main currents of political thought in West Germany. The resulting structure comprises a series of unrelated short stories which reflect the principles and values of those who put them forward for consideration, and constitute idealized versions of their images of themselves. Critics⁹ have frequently commented that Lenz is essentially a writer of short

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1. W.Klose, "Zu Siegfried Lenz' neuem Roman: Ein Vorbild" reicht nicht aus", Die Zeit, 12.10.1972, pp.62f.
 2. H.Mayer, "Das Vorbild. Nachsitzen in der Deutschstunde", Der Spiegel, Nr. 34, 20.8.1973, p.92.
 3. K.Batt, Revolte Intern, Munich 1975, p.204.
 4. A.Draper, The Individual and Society in the Novels of Siegfried Lenz, unpublished MA Thesis, Swansea University College, 1975; p.155.
 5. G.Schramm, "Wiedererkennen der Wirklichkeit", in H.L.Arnold (ed.), Deutsche Bestseller -- Deutsche Ideologie, Stuttgart 1975, p.112.
 6. H.Helmerts (ed.), Die Diskussion um das deutsche Lesebuch, Darmstadt 1969.
 7. In a radio interview, quoted by W.Baßmann, Siegfried Lenz, Bonn, 2nd ed. 1979, p.184.
 8. H.Wagener, Siegfried Lenz, Munich 1976, p.72.
 9. Cf. J.Lachinger, "Siegfried Lenz", in D.Weber (ed.), Deutsche Literatur seit 1945 in Einzeldarstellungen, Stuttgart 1968, p.420; M.Reich-Ranicki, "Siegfried Lenz, der gelassene Mitwisser", in Deutsche Literatur in West und Ost, Reinbek 1970, p.179; C.Russ (ed.), Der Schriftsteller Siegfried Lenz, Hamburg 1973, pp.241-252; Th.Elm, op.cit., pp.71f.

stories rather than a novelist, and this predilection is evident in Das Vorbild, which consists largely of parts of the life-histories of the three editors, a number of stories of their choice, episodes from the lives of a variety of minor characters, and a series of episodes from Lucy Beerbaum's life. Only Baßmann appears to have applauded Lenz's attempt to write the various episodes in 'unterschiedlicher und wechselnder Stillage'¹. Other critics are on the whole agreed that the stories are all unmistakably written in Lenz's familiar manner. Nevertheless Lenz has succeeded in linking the characters and their attitudes to the stories which they tell. All three main characters do, however, endorse one fundamental conviction, Lenz's own conviction that there are no 'exemplary' characters and that the only valid criteria for assessing human actions are basic moral values. This shared conviction does to some extent obscure the differences between the characters, a risk of which Lenz was aware:

Fast alle meine Bücher -- und das ist vielleicht auch ein Manko meiner Bücher und meiner Theaterstücke -- gehen von einer Idee aus oder von einer sozialkritischen Lage oder von einer moral-kritischen Lage. (2)

Johann Lachinger³ considers this subordination of characters and plot to a central idea to be Lenz's chief failing. Walther Killy⁴ agrees, and adds the criticism that Lenz's characters have no real personality, but

. . . unterscheiden sich lediglich durch die ihnen im Problemlauf zugewiesene Rolle und die ihnen angehefteten Erkennungszeichen.

Schwarz⁵ also found Das Vorbild too much 'vom Intellekt her konzipiert und ohne innere Konsequenz erzählt'. There is no doubt some truth in these strictures, but there is perhaps more 'innere Konsequenz' in Das Vorbild than Schwarz gives the author credit for. The characters of the educationalists do convincingly embody the different standpoints which they represent; indeed, the reason why they fail in their joint task is their unwillingness to compromise with regard to these differences, along with an inability to communicate adequately among themselves. Each is unable to understand attitudes which differ radically from his or her own. All three are guilty to a certain degree of self-righteousness which arouses mutual hostility; these differences and their effects are elaborated by the author with considerable 'innere Konsequenz'.

1. W.Baßmann, op.cit., p.190.

2. W.J.Schwarz, "Gespräch mit Siegfried Lenz", in Der Erzähler Siegfried Lenz, Berne/Munich 1974, p.130.

3. J.Lachinger, "Siegfried Lenz -- 1970", in G.Russ (ed.), op.cit., p.240.

4. W.Killy, "Gediegene Deutschstunde für die ganze Welt", Der Spiegel, Nr.12, 15.3.1976, (pp.196-202); p.198.

5. W.J.Schwarz, op.cit., p.92.

The former headmaster Valentin Pundt embodies the attitudes and values of a typical conservative intellectual. He has fixed ideas and is not prone to look critically at either those ideas or his own personality and behaviour. Rita Süßfeldt is a liberal who believes in the values of flexibility and moderation and rejects authoritarian attitudes. Heller is a progressive intellectual who identifies somewhat uncritically with the values and aspirations of the younger generation. The dress and habits of these three main characters reflect, with affectionate irony, their contrasted personalities: Pundt dresses formally, wearing a 'Lodenmantel' outdoors and a 'Hausjacke' indoors, eats dried fruit, drinks home-brewed schnaps and is engaged on a scholarly work on the origins of the alphabet. Rita is kindly, ineffectual, untidy and unpunctual and triumphantly disregards traffic regulations. Heller wears a beard, partly to create the desired progressive image, partly to conceal his weak chin, and a red pullover which, like its owner, is no longer young, though not entirely faded either: 'verwaschen' but 'immer noch weinrot' (Vb 21). The publisher Dunkhase with his youthful radicalism is also characterized by his external appearance: extremely tight-fitting jeans and a 'sorgfältig vernachlässigte(r) Titusfrisur' (Vb 513).

Murdoch and Read¹ point out the symbolism of the three editors' names, which indicate respectively 'ponderous conservatism, visionary ideology and sweet sympathy', to which one might add that all three names are ironic, inasmuch as Pundt lacks any real weight of personality, Heller's views are often as muddled as his private life, and Miss Süßfeldt leads a life that is clearly lacking in sweetness. The novel is indeed heavy with such symbolism: during the discussions Heller plays with the African weapons in the conference room -- themselves suggesting an atmosphere of conservatism through their association with the colonial era -- in a manner which suggests an aggressive and destructive temperament; Pundt's opposition to the wind of change goes hand in hand with an intense aversion to draughts: his son Harald's favourite place was, by contrast and as a reaction against his father, under a ventilator. After Harald has lost faith in Mike Mitchner he removes his photograph from its frame, which he leaves standing empty on his desk.

Among characters with such widely differing attitudes there can be no unanimity as to what would constitute an exemplary character or act. Within the novel, not only the educationalists but also the fictitious characters which they propose, serve in certain ways as examples, as do also some of the minor characters, for example Mike Mitchner, Harald Pundt,

1. B.O.Murdoch & M.Read, Siegfried Lenz, London 1978, p.85.

Heino Merkel and Dr. Dunkhase, but none of course can be regarded as 'exemplary'. Initially the virtues selected for endorsement appear uncontroversial: Pundt suggests loyalty and self-sacrifice for the sake of a stranger in distress; Heller integrity in the face of corruption; Rita maternal love for a delinquent son. But in each case the doubts raised by the two colleagues reveal that none of these supposed virtues commands unanimous approval. The same problem arises in the discussion of various episodes from Lucy Beerbaum's life, concerning her self-sacrifice, her acceptance of the sacrifice of others for the sake of a common cause, her compassion and charity, and finally the gesture of political protest which leads to her death. In some cases the actions of the minor characters shed new light on supposedly exemplary behaviour: for example the apparent self-sacrifice of Rita's sister Mareth is seen to be determined by her own needs as much as, if not more than Heino's dependence. The reader is thereby drawn into a consideration of the complex implications of moral value-judgements.

The questions posed during the discussions of various proposed 'exemplary' acts are whether they unambiguously reveal genuinely ethical, as opposed to personal motives, and whether they achieve any good. The divergences of opinion which emerge in these discussions inevitably lead to the fundamental questions of whether it is at all possible, in the present time, to find an exemplary person, and in what form such a person should be presented to young readers. The answers to the latter question are determined by the differing political stances of those concerned. Pundt -- at least until he learns of his share of guilt with regard to his son's suicide and the adverse effects which his teaching methods have had on a number of other former pupils -- is convinced that the young need characters with whom they can identify and whom they can aspire to emulate. He believes in timeless qualities valid independently of the situation in which they are displayed, notably courage, honour and consistency. Dunkhase, his antipode, also has clear-cut views, and believes in the possibility of exemplary characters; in his view the aim of including such characters in schoolbooks should be that 'das revolutionäre Potential in den Schulen . . . geweckt [wird] durch Vorbilder, die handeln' (Vb 518). But the two more moderate and sceptical intellectuals have much more modest expectations. Heller dismisses Pundt's conception of outstanding qualities as useless for pedagogic purposes:

Das Hervorragende ist asozial . . . es belastet sich selbst;
mit dem Hervorragenden kann sich niemand solidarisieren. (Vb 46)

Heller indeed questions the very notion of 'exemplary' characters or actions as 'eine Art pädagogischer Lebertran, den jeder mit Widerwillen schluckt' (Vb 45). To impose such exemplary characters on young people

is, in Heller's view, tantamount to 'jungen Leuten einen Minderwertigkeitskomplex beibringen', 'Einschüchterung durch Autoritäten' and 'pädagogische Vergewaltigung' (Vb 103). The uncritical reverence of the crew of the ship which Heller visits with his daughter for their 'Vorbild', Admiral Tittgens, lends support to this view. This has furthermore been the effect of Pundt's pedagogic methods on his former pupils, which gives a clear indication at least of where the author's own sympathies do not lie.

Rita Süßfeldt attempts to mediate between these two opposing views of Pundt and Heller. On the whole her sympathies lie more with Pundt, but she recognizes that Heller's views provide a necessary corrective to Pundt's too insistently authoritarian attitude. She is convinced that an exemplary life can be found, but that it should not be a life to be merely imitated, but should rather stimulate the pupils to independent critical thought:

. . . ein Vorbild [soll] nicht chloroformieren, sondern zum Zweifel anstiften . . . (Vb 487).

This is clearly in accord with the author's own convictions outlined above, and it is precisely this effect which Lenz's characters and their actions in the novel have. Lenz attempts to portray all his characters with the same detached objectivity, though it will be argued below that in the case of Dunkhase he does not quite live up to this good intention. All three main characters are, however, endowed by the author with a judicious mixture of strengths and weaknesses.

Pundt is conscientious and punctual, reliable and pedantic. The story of his choice, Die Falle, reveals his uncomplicated idealism. He is sure that notwithstanding the ingratitude of his former pupils he has been a good teacher. During his visit to Hamburg, however, he discovers that he has in fact failed entirely in his pedagogic ambitions: he learns that his pupils referred to him scornfully as 'der Wegweiser', indicating his inflexible authoritarianism. Eckelkamp reminds him of his anger over his essay in praise of inconsistency; Brüggmann reveals his hatred of Pundt by reminding him of his habit of leaving pupils who failed to answer his questions standing up for lengthy periods, telling him 'daß niemand . . . es so verstanden hätte, einen Schüler "lautlos und ohne Aufwand zu knicken" wie[er]' (Vb 215). Worst of all, Pundt learns that his own son Harald felt similarly oppressed and humiliated: brought up to account for every decision and action, Harald used to refer to this 'Rechenschaft ablegen' as 'den Tag auskotzen' (Vb 380). But these failings are counter-balanced by Pundt's sincere efforts to understand young people, which gain him the reader's sympathy:

he visits a pop concert, goes to the café which Harald frequented, talks to his son's friends, is chastened by their disclosures and accepts his share of guilt. In the café he overhears a discussion amongst some students who are planning a sit-in, and although his belief in authority and order is offended, he is open-minded enough to admire the rationality of the students' arguments. Here too Pundt lives up to his declared belief in consistency. But especially during the pop concert an unbridgeable generation gap becomes apparent: to Pundt the youngsters appear like a different species; however, his reaction to them is curiosity, not hostility. It is noteworthy that these young people are described in similar terms elsewhere in the novel, where they are not seen through Pundt's eyes -- an indication that the author appears to share this sense of estrangement from the young generation, whose sub-culture he rejects as escapist.¹

Pundt eventually withdraws from the entire educational project, having realized, as he admits with humility and dignity, that he is not qualified for the task as he lacks the requisite moral superiority. But his motives are less unambiguous than this alone would suggest, for his decision comes after he has been severely assaulted by a group of young people after coming to the aid of other victims -- that is to say, acting courageously, and without thanks, in accordance with his principles. He returns home with the intention of devoting himself exclusively to his scholarly work, thereby withdrawing from his social obligation. Whether his insights into the damage he has caused in his professional life will have any beneficial consequences, remains uncertain. The vicious violence inflicted on Pundt by the young thugs, from which he could well have died, and their subsequent uncomprehending mockery of his books and manuscript -- the darkest and bitterest episode of the novel -- suggest that insights into the manner in which juvenile violence, whether destructive or self-destructive, can be fostered by authoritarian parents and teachers, are insights of which society can ill afford to be deprived. Pundt would do well to communicate them to others.

Janpeter Heller also abandons the project, to which he was never firmly committed, although -- as Pundt forcefully reminds him -- he accepted both the commission and the fee. His advocacy of democratic teacher-pupil relationships appears sincere and persuasive; unlike Pundt he is popular with his pupils, who visit him at home and discuss their problems with him. At first sight he might appear comparable to Starusch in Grass's örtlich betäubt, who is also popular because he is willing to treat his pupils as equals and expects responsible behaviour from them.

1. See p.167.

Heller however identifies with his pupils to excess, and descends too readily to their level; whereas Starusch maintained his own integrity in relation to his pupils, Heller compromises his. His support for their aims is as much an immature rejection of adult responsibility as an expression of genuine convictions. Many of his actions are no more than empty anti-authoritarian gestures, for example his refusal to carry his identity card with him. When Heller spontaneously joins the student demonstration in Hamburg, the police officer who arrests him speaks perhaps for the author when he tells him: '[Es] ist mir noch niemand so erbarmungswürdig vorgekommen wie ein betagter Revolutionär' (Vb 122). Heller defends his behaviour on the grounds that the young people need him,

zumindest meine Formulierungshilfe. Sie wollen etwas verändern, aber sie sind darauf angewiesen, daß Erfahrung ihnen beisteht. Es ist meine Aufgabe, ihnen zu helfen. (Vb 189)

But rather than providing genuine help Heller appears in reality to have sought merely self-gratification: after his release he leaves without speaking to the demonstrators at all. His progressive views serve principally to foster an image of himself, to which he dogmatically adheres without concern for the needs and sensitivities of others. His activity as a well-known dissenter in broadcast discussions of educational topics, where he indulges his non-conformism for material reward and in a socially institutionalized fashion that in no way threatens the status quo, is seen by Lenz with a sharpness of irony reminiscent of Walser's portrayal of intellectuals as public performers¹ (a sharpness which turns to acid mockery in the imaginary televised debate on the moral implications of Lucy Beerbaum's research.) Heller propounds, using the appropriate fashionable terminology, the anti-authoritarian and anti-materialistic sentiments current in the late 1960s in West Germany, but he entirely fails to grasp the essence of those sentiments, namely the desire to improve the quality of human relationships. Thus Heller refuses to accept the desk which his wife buys for him, on the grounds that possessions enslave people, indeed 'terrorise' them, in the jargon of the day:

Ich mißtraue dem Besitz, weil er uns an die Kette legt oder zum Opportunismus verleitet . . . je wertbeständiger der Besitz, desto größer der Terror, der von ihm ausgeht. (Vb 302)

Charlotte would appear to voice the author's opinion when she condemns such insensitive intransigence:

Ich habe Angst vor Leuten, die kein Verständnis für Kompromisse haben, die alles lupenrein verändern wollen . . . (Vb 303)

Heller readily puts his principles into practice at the expense of others'

1. See p.79.

feelings, but not where such consistency would prove irksome to him personally. Thus he objects to the reward system which Charlotte has developed for the upbringing of their daughter, but employs it himself when it proves the easiest course of action. Progressive though he may appear with his pupils, he is authoritarian in his dealings with his own child.

Although prepared to compromise in the choice of an exemplary character for the schoolbook, Heller abandons the task when he encounters firm opposition. Since his visit to Hamburg had actually served the prime purpose of meeting his estranged wife Charlotte, his motives for withdrawing are, like Pundt's, mixed and uncertain: he is right to describe Dunkhase as intransigent, but it may also well be that he wishes to leave Hamburg once he has succeeded in disrupting his wife's relationship with another man, for he reacts evasively to her attempted rapprochement -- behaviour which the author presents in a clearly critical light, as he also presents Heller's attempts to seduce Magda the hotel maid.

Rita Süßfeldt appears to be the most tolerant, understanding and open-minded of the three editors. Yet with the people nearest to her she has little genuine contact. She severely injures her cousin Heino's self-esteem by influencing a jury to award him a prize, and when reproached by Mareth for this well-meant but unthinking action, she retaliates cruelly by informing Mareth of Heino's concealed bitterness towards her, thereby inflicting serious psychological damage. Although Rita is the only person willing to continue with the project despite Dunkhase's opposition, her determination proves wholly ineffectual, and in the end she leaves, exhausted by Heller's flippancy, presumably also abandoning her efforts on behalf of the project.

Heino Merkel also plays an important role in Lenz's investigation of various moral attitudes and dilemmas. He too is an intellectual, and one who has in the past taken his responsibilities very seriously. But he has been reduced to inactivity partly by the after-effects of a brain operation -- recurrent fits -- and partly as a result of obsessive guilt feelings over the death of the animals in the fire which broke out during the filming of his book, through no fault of Heino's, guilt feelings which manifest themselves in compulsive neurotic behaviour. This somewhat melodramatic example suggests that disproportionate guilt feelings should not be allowed to distort a person's ethical perceptions. Furthermore Heino's determination to overcome his formidable difficulties and persist in his work, provides an indirect comment on the contrasting behaviour of the main characters. In Heino's case Rita's misjudgement may perhaps have a positive effect -- yet a further moral ambiguity --

for she has forced him to leave an over-protective and indulgent environment and assert his independence. Whether this will ultimately prove to his advantage is left an open question; here too no simple moral assessment is possible, since the consequences of human actions are almost never entirely predictable. The episode offers only the stimulus to further thought on the reader's part.

The final character to be discussed as a possible 'Vorbild' is Lucy Beerbaum. She is suggested by Heino, who realizes that her actions will give rise to a fruitful and complex debate. (Heino's sensitivity to moral ambiguities is further reflected in the speech concerning the opaque motives of anonymous patrons of the arts and scholarship which he delivers at the prize-awarding ceremony.) Lucy's life is a life full of morally ambiguous situations and decisions. The reader learns how Lucy encourages a young girl to steal from her when she refuses charity despite her poverty; sacrifices herself in order that the bakery workers may continue to smuggle tools and information into prison; accepts the self-sacrifice of her fellow-conspirators in order to continue to serve their cause; accepts the influence which she has gained by a rigged election because she knows she will serve the cause better than her rival; and finally protests, at the cost of her life, against the Greek dictators. These incidents are unrelated, and do not constitute a notably consistent portrait of an individual character. They function rather as a means for Lenz to examine a wide range of forms of social protest which all challenge the reader to reflect on their ethical acceptability. The first episode, from Lucy's childhood, shows her guided by compassion rather than conviction: she encourages Andrea to steal in the instinctive sense that need justifies theft; later she explains this attitude with reference to the corrupt values of capitalist society, in a manner that is reminiscent of, but in one important respect differs from, views expressed by Walser's Anselm Kristlein:

In gewissen Vergehen müssen wir uns alle wiedererkennen; denn sie enthalten eine Beschreibung der Welt und der Verhältnisse . . . Wenn einem das Nötigste verweigert wird, kann ein Verbrechen zu neuen Möglichkeiten führen . . . vielleicht sollte unsere Hilfe damit beginnen: neu zu bestimmen, was ein Verbrechen ist. . . . ein Verbrechen am Schreibtisch oder im Konferenzsaal übergehen wir mit einem Achselzucken; für ein Verbrechen aus Armut aber oder aus Leidenschaft wollen wir kein Verständnis aufbringen.
(Vb 254f.)

In Walser's Halbzeit Anselm similarly points out:

White collar crimes . . . ein Verbrechen in den oberen Rängen war immer nur ein Skandal; . . . mich wenn man erwischt hätte, oh je! Daß auch die oberen Ränge von unaufgedeckten Skandalen leben, ist doch bloß noch ein Beichtgeheimnis. (H 47f.)

The important difference is that Anselm's criticism is much more explicitly

directed against the class structure of capitalist society. Lucy, who includes crimes of passion in her argument, pleads for a more generalized humanitarian compassion.

Lucy's social conscience has, however, also been aroused by the injustice of the class system, notably in the incident in which a young woman whose hair had been caught in a machine returns to work the same day because her employer rejects her claim for compensation and callously dismisses the accident as the result of 'unerhörter Leichtsin' (Vb 357). This awareness of injustice and inhumanity has led Lucy into political activity helping to edit an underground paper. When her friends are tortured but refuse to betray her, she promises to continue writing rather than go to jail, thus demonstrating the relativity of justice in the absence of any absolute principles.¹ This relativity is taken to a provocative extreme when Lucy accepts her election as a student representative, although she does not in fact have the majority of votes. Her self-justification calls in question the cherished belief in the Western notion of democratic elections:

. . . nur wenn wir bereit sind mitunter gegen das Prinzip zu verstoßen, können wir etwas ändern . . . Auch die Mehrheit kann irren, und manchmal können wir nur etwas für sie tun, indem wir uns über sie hinwegsetzen. (Vb 343)

In all these episodes Lucy is guided by a firm personal ethical conviction on which she is prepared to act. She is similarly guided in her work as a research biologist. Her argument with her assistant Rainer Brachvogel, who also acts on a firm moral conviction when he points out the ethical dilemmas involved in research into the possibilities of genetic engineering, whilst Lucy defends her view that knowledge is preferable to ignorance regardless of its possible consequences, raises, but does not pursue, the important issue of the social and moral responsibility of the scientific intelligentsia. Lucy and Brachvogel merely represent two positions, which are stated but not examined further. The discussion results in Brachvogel's resignation, while Lucy continues her work and the reader is left to ponder the issue; the author in no way attempts to adjudicate between their diametrically opposed viewpoints. (It is later disclosed that Brachvogel is a friend of Dr. Dunkhase, which casts some doubt on the impartiality of the latter's motives for rejecting Lucy as a possible 'Vorbild'.)

The final episode of Lucy's life, which Heller and Rita agree to propose for the book, concerns her opposition to political developments in Greece: she gives up her research, despite her colleagues' objection

1. This particular aspect of Lenz's concern with moral complexities is treated most fully in Stadtgespräch.

that it would contribute more to the welfare of mankind than her protest. Lucy's aim is 'Anteilnahme', sympathetic identification with the plight of her compatriots by voluntarily sharing their living conditions. Her gesture undoubtedly draws attention to the inhumanity of the Greek government, but it remains an unanswered question what she achieves, even by her resulting death.

Lucy's action is paralleled by Harald Pundt's suicide. Like her Harald had sought a form of protest against authoritarian repression, and he had believed Mike Mitchner to be a spokesman for that protest until Mitchner disappointed him by yielding to the allurements of success as a pop singer and thus betraying their cause. Heller also blames Mitchner for allowing himself to be corrupted by wealth and glamour and losing sight of the social responsibility of the artist by offering nothing but temporary escape and distracting his young listeners from what ought to be their social concerns:

Du als Priester auf der Gitarre, der für die preiswerte Religion
des Vergessens wirbt . . . Weißt du, was du verhinderst? Du
peitschst sie in selige Gärten und nimmst ihnen dabei den Blick
für das, was hier verändert werden muß. (Vb 274f.) (1)

Mitchner cynically retorts with the argument of the non-committed artist:

Was mich betrifft -- ich will eigentlich nur Musik machen . . .
Meine Lieblingsfarbe ist -- auch wenn es Sie enttäuschen wird --
gelb. (Vb 275)

Harald has killed himself, it appears, as the only form of protest left to him. This is, however, clearly not his only motive; as with all the characters in Das Vorbild his motives are mixed: fear of life is also involved. Harald hates everything that his father has instilled into him, yet he cannot liberate himself from the effects of his upbringing: as Lilly Fligge tells Pundt, he remains obsessed by the need to account for every action. It is likewise suggested that Lucy might have purely personal motives for her action, inasmuch as her old friend Victor Gaitanides is one of the political prisoners. But neither Lucy nor the author confirms or denies this suggestion.

The question of whether Lucy's and Harald's actions were justified, or at all effective, is left equally unanswered. Lucy's doctor articulates the view that her self-destructive gesture is pointless because it will be inevitably trivialized in the public consciousness (Vb 480), and we are given no positive indication that the impact of Harald's suicide on his father will in any way help to promote more humane teaching methods. Certainly his suicide has not affected the attitudes of his formal idol

1. Martin Walser condemns popular culture for very similar reasons in Über die neueste Stimmung im Westen, see p.50. See also the discussion of the role of popular culture in the late 1960s in Chapter 2, pp.49f.

Mitchner, who merely offers a cynical comment on Harald's extremism: 'sogar der Selbstmord war ihm recht, um auf Übelstände aufmerksam zu machen' (Vb 270). On the other hand, even if their respective protests have achieved nothing, it can be argued that at least they have attempted to combat what they considered wrong, rather than passively endure it, and thus become partly responsible for it, as Harald points out to Mitchner:

Mag sein, daß unsere Proteste belächelt wurden und daß sie sich abnutzten durch Gewöhnung -- wir hatten zumindest versucht, was uns notwendig erschien. (Vb 312)

The justification for protest lies not only in the result achieved or desired, there is also a personal necessity, a rejection of participation. This accords with Lenz's fundamental principle: neither ideology nor dogma but the individual's own moral conscience must guide his actions. This conviction is the fundamental hallmark of the intellectual: it is shared by intellectuals as different as Lenz and Walser in West Germany, Christa Wolf and Jurek Becker in East Germany. It entails an acceptance of responsibility not only for oneself but also for society. Lucy here clearly speaks for the author:

Wenn wir dem Leben Glaubwürdigkeit geben wollen, dann müssen wir uns zuständig fühlen für das Unrecht . . . (Vb 401)

Lenz does not presume to indicate how this moral responsibility should be discharged, but his presentation of his characters is weighted sufficiently in favour of Lucy and Harald -- though Lenz encourages the reader to question the value of their voluntary deaths -- and perhaps to a lesser extent Heller and Rita, to suggest where he himself stands. He insists that the intellectual must make his position clear with the aim of stimulating thought in others. He clearly rejects the demand for revolutionary action, and would appear to agree with Heller's condemnation of Dunkhase. When the latter rejects Lucy's story on the grounds that hers is a protest 'der taten- und deshalb folgenlos bleibt' (Vb 517) and contemptuously dismisses her as someone who has 'zu spät ihren Gandhi gelesen' (Vb 519), Heller sharply rejects Dunkhase's activism as a new and dangerous 'Spielart der Arroganz' (Vb 518):

Handeln als neue Form der Lösung, als Religion, ohne Rücksicht darauf, wohin die Gemeinde gelangt. (Vb 518)

With the figure of Dunkhase Lenz's objectivity appears to falter. He is presented with consistent irony and never given an adequate opportunity to expound his viewpoint, although his position could be as persuasively defended as any of the others which Lenz presents. Here it could be objected that Lenz has pre-empted the right of judgement which he purports to leave to his readers. It is largely on the basis

of Lenz's presentation of Dunkhase that left-wing critics have rejected Das Vorbild. Dunkhase demands that an exemplary story should be more specifically 'für diese Zeit' (Vb 516) than Lucy's and this objection can in fact be levelled against many of the incidents in the novel itself. Lenz casts his net wide, and touches on a very large number of contemporary issues, which raise a variety of intriguing and complex moral questions, but the price paid for this range is a superficiality that sometimes approaches trivialisation and tends to rob the incidents of any very forceful relevance. Hamburg in 1968 -- a turbulent year throughout Germany, as elsewhere -- was the scene of a number of student demonstrations, but they were instigated by weightier issues than an increase in public transport fares. Moreover, as Werner Ross pointed out in Merkur, Lenz's account of the demonstration is 'irgendwie gemütlich geraten'¹; Godehard Schramm² euphemistically drew attention to the fact that Lenz's presentation of the behaviour of the police during the demonstration -- they are seen as 'gelassen' and 'gutartig' -- was not entirely realistic. Similarly, no political background is given to Lucy's protest: she refers to the people with whom she expresses solidarity as 'Unabhängige' (Vb 396); this is presumably intended to indicate that her protest is neither directed against the political ideology of the dictators, nor supports that of the dissidents -- who were all socialists, communists or trade unionists -- but merely against the inhumanity of the repressive measures as such. Lenz here takes up the issue of international solidarity, which was widely discussed in 1968, but reduces it to an assertion of humanitarian principles and divorces it from its very real political basis. It is in accordance, furthermore, with Lenz's refusal to see the world in political categories that the outside world, from which the editors in their deliberations are carefully insulated, is consistently presented through images of disorder and confusion rather than of recognisable conflicts. Human experience is for Lenz an intricate nexus of moral challenges the complexity of which precludes the simplification entailed in political categories. Thus although Lenz considers himself a 'political' writer, his emphasis has shifted, in Das Vorbild, from political to moral, and hence from social to personal issues. Nevertheless his characters are located in a social context, and to some extent their private concerns do reflect social issues. Because Lenz assumes the political and intellectual maturity of the reader, he sees no need to assume a more overtly didactic role. He has upheld the traditional position of the intellectual by upholding his values without advocating

1. W. Ross, "Vorbilder -- Leicht beschädigt. Zu dem neuen Roman von Siegfried Lenz", Merkur 28, 1974/309, (pp.188-191); p.190.

2. G. Schramm, loc.cit., p.107.

specific courses of action. It remains debatable how successful he has been. Critics have been predictably divided: on the whole, those on the political Left have rejected the work as unsatisfactory, a view which is summed up by Pätzold's criticism that Lenz's linking of morality and politics

verhindert gleichermaßen die Entwicklung praktikabler Lösungsmodelle für primär politische wie für primär moralische Konfliktsituationen. (1)

Schwarz, Mayer, Vollmann, Schramm and Batt² all agreed with this view that Das Vorbild was a failure because its author had failed to commit himself to a particular standpoint. Beckmann, Nolte, Reich-Ranicki and Wagener³ praised the novel for precisely that reason.

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1. H.Pätzold, "Zeitgeschichte und Zeitkritik im Werk von Siegfried Lenz", Text+Kritik 52, p.10.
 2. W.J.Schwarz, op.cit., p.92.
H.Mayer, loc.cit., p.93.
R.Vollmann, "Trotz starkem Bemühen: kein Vorbild", Stuttgarter Zeitung, 18.8.1973.
G.Schramm, loc.cit., p.112.
K.Batt, op.cit., pp.206f.
 3. H.Beckmann, "Vorbild ohne Chloroform", in C.Russ(ed.), op.cit., pp.11-19.
J.Nolte, "Herausforderung mit verstellter Stimme", in C.Russ (ed.), op.cit., pp.20-26, especially p.26.
M.Reich-Ranicki, loc.cit., p.184.
H.Wagener, op.cit., p.80.

completely of National Socialist attitudes and influences was by means of socialist reform, and it was in this spirit that in June 1945 the KPD drew up its programme for a new German society, the Programm der Kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands für den demokratischen Neuaufbau, which was published in the Deutsche Volkszeitung of 13 June 1945 (Berlin). The reorganisation of society along socialist lines began immediately in the SBZ, with nationalisation of heavy industry and the banking system, reform of the press and the education system, and the expropriation of landed estates which were broken up into small units and handed over to the agricultural workers who had worked on them. (Voluntary collectivisation was encouraged at this early stage, but collectivisation of land was not enforced until 1960/61.)¹ In April 1946 a merger of the KPD and the SPD to form the new SED was brought about after protracted negotiations;² other political parties -- in 1946 the CDU and LDPD, later the NDPD and DBD founded in 1948 -- were gradually assimilated into what was in essence a one-party system, with all real power exercised by the SED; the trade unions were brought under State control and reorganized as the Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund, from which non-SED-members were expelled; the Freie Deutsche Jugend was also founded in 1946 and immediately began to organize voluntary help on the land, in industry and with the clearance of city rubble, as part of a programme to re-educate German youth in socialist attitudes. In 1948 the Gesellschaft für Deutsch-Sowjetische Freundschaft was set up to promote interest in Soviet culture, language and history: by this time the development of the Soviet Zone towards a Communist state had become irreversible.

The division of Germany could no longer be prevented. In 1947 the allies had disagreed over the issue of economic aid to Germany; the Western allies agreed on Germany's participation in the American Marshall Aid Plan, but the Soviet authorities refused to accept this for their zone of occupation, fearing -- no doubt justifiably -- the strong economic and political influence over Western Europe in general and Germany in particular which the Marshall Aid Plan would ensure for the USA. The SED drew up a manifesto in favour of an independent -- i.e. neutral and demilitarized -- united Germany³, which was put to the vote in the SBZ and won support there, but was not put to the vote in the Western zones. When

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1. The various stages of land reform in the SBZ and subsequently in the GDR are presented in vivid detail in Erwin Strittmatter's novel Ole Bienkopp.
 2. The evidence relating to this much-debated merger is set out in detail by D.Staritz, Sozialismus in einem halben Lande, Berlin 1976, pp.62-81. P.Noack, Die deutsche Nachkriegszeit, Munich 1973, p.28, presents the view that the merger was forced upon the SPD.
 3. DDR-Handbuch, published by the Bundesministerium für innerdeutsche Beziehungen, Cologne 1975, p.198; see also A.Grosser, Germany in Our Time, Penguin 1974, pp.99-118 & p.403.

the Western allies introduced a currency reform in their zones in 1948 this spelled the end of what little cooperation there had been between the Western allies and the Soviet Union. The Control Council broke up in disarray, hostility between East and West reached a new peak with the blockade of Berlin. From then on it was only a matter of time before the division of Germany into two ideologically incompatible political entities was consolidated by the formal proclamation of the two German republics in 1949: The Federal Republic in September and the Democratic Republic in October.¹ Officially at least, Germans took over the machinery of government from the Soviet authorities in the former SBZ, a machinery which now brought all political life under strict, centralized Party control.

In the meantime cultural and intellectual life had likewise been organized under Party control. In 1946 the Akademie der Künste and the Akademie der Wissenschaften had been set up in East Berlin with the intention of drawing non-political intellectuals into the political arena in the service of the socialist cause. In 1947 the First Writers' Congress had been held; at the second, in 1950, the Deutscher Schriftstellerverband (DSV) was founded. This was a trade union and Party organ in one, responsible for 'criticism' and ideological guidance of writers as well as publication. Subsequent meetings were held in 1952, 1956 and 1961, the general trend in these years, apart from a brief spell of relaxation around 1955, being towards increasing influence of the Party over literary life.

In 1951 the SED officially adopted the theory of Socialist Realism² and acclaimed the literature of the Soviet Union as the source of models for aspiring GDR writers, on the grounds that although there were differences between the situation of the GDR after 1945 and that of the Soviet Union after 1917, there were also strong parallels, and since German literature provided no suitable models for contemporary writers, they should look to their Soviet fellow-writers for inspiration and guidance. The first literary works to be published in the GDR had been written during or immediately after the war, and dealt with individual experiences of fascism, war and exile. All were written from a communist viewpoint, many indeed continued the tradition of the proletarian literature of the BPRS³, for example the writings of Johannes R. Becher, Willi Bredel, Hans Marchwitza and Ludwig Renn, but they all were concerned with individual personal experience. 'Vergangenheitsbewältigung'

1. A full account of the origins of the division of Germany in the period 1945-49 is given by R. Thilenius, Die Teilung Deutschlands, Hamburg 1957. See also A.Grosser, op.cit.

2. See the Excursus at the end of this Chapter.

3. Ibid.

was acknowledged by the Party to be an essential task of post-war literature, but individual experience per se was rejected as inadequate as a source of illumination: the new literature, it was insisted, must put the evils of National Socialism in a clear historical and politico-economic perspective, and must also show the socialist alternative. As the writers of the BPRS had shown the need for a proletarian revolution, so the writers of the GDR were to show the construction of a socialist society, using as their models the works of Soviet Aufbauliteratur. This meant that writers were expected to support Party policy, explain it, make it attractive and thus help to persuade their readers to accept initial hardship for the sake of a future better society. This functional conception of literature, the seeds of which are to be found in the writings of Marx and Engels, had been developed by various Marxist thinkers, culminating in the theory of Socialist Realism as defined at the First Soviet Writers' Congress in 1934.¹

The intellectuals in the GDR did not, however, unanimously accept the theory of Socialist Realism, and it is important to emphasize that this did not mean that they dissented from a Marxist conception of literature. Ever since the time of Marx and Engels themselves there had been a variety of conflicting opinions amongst Marxists as to what literature should be and what precise function it should aim to fulfil; the conception developed by Lenin and the Stalinists was only one among several. Their commitment to Marxism did not prevent the intellectuals in the GDR from wishing to enrich their work by means of exposure to influences other than those which were officially prescribed. Thus during the first few years after the war, these writers, especially those who had spent the years of exile in the West, took as their models and sources of stimulus not only works of the BPRS and of Soviet writers, but also the German classics as well as newly discovered modern writers such as Whitman, Faulkner, Hemingway, Kafka, Joyce and Proust. But after official endorsement of the theory of Socialist Realism in 1951 these latter writers were strictly banned in the GDR as being products of decadent capitalism², and only Soviet writers were allowed to serve as models. Since then, whilst much has been written in the GDR about Socialist Realism, the conception has remained basically unchanged since its formulation in 1934. The cultural policy of the SED has likewise remained essentially unchanged: the function and duty of writers is to support the SED; whilst the aesthetic value of art is acknowledged, its

1. See the Excursus at the end of this Chapter.

2. Cf. O.Grotewohl, "Der Kampf gegen den Formalismus in Kunst und Literatur für eine fortschrittliche deutsche Kultur", speech made at a meeting of the Central Committee of the SED on 15-17 March 1951, published in Einheit (Berlin DDR), No.8/9, 1951.

subordination to political ends is insisted upon. During the early years of the GDR official statements on this subject were frequent, explicit and insistent. The following statement by Walter Ulbricht is typical of many:

Von den Schriftstellern und Künstlern erwarten die fortschrittlichen Kräfte unseres Volkes eine schöpferische Gestaltung des Lebens der arbeitenden Menschen und ihres Strebens zu einer höheren gesellschaftlichen Ordnung. So wird in gemeinsamer Arbeit jene große Masseninitiative entwickelt werden, die allein imstande ist, die Erfüllung und Übererfüllung des Zweijahrplans zu sichern. . . . Die kulturelle Aufgabe, Menschen mit einer neuen gesellschaftlichen Erkenntnis und einer neuen Einstellung zur Arbeit zu erziehen, ist nur zu erfüllen, wenn alle Schriftsteller und Künstler ihre ganze Kraft und Begeisterung diesem Werk widmen.

. . . Die fortschrittlichen Schriftsteller können durch ihre Werke dazu beitragen, Arbeitsfreude und Optimismus bei den Arbeitern in den Betrieben und bei der werktätigen Landbevölkerung zu entwickeln. Ihre Werke können Sinn und Bedeutung des Zweijahrplans und aller mit ihm zusammenhängenden gesellschaftlichen Folgen dem ganzen Volk vermitteln. (1)

In 1956 Ulbricht made the same appeal, more succinctly:

Schriftsteller und Künstler! Schafft Werke, die unser Volk im Kampf für Frieden, Einheit, Demokratie und Sozialismus begeistern! (2)

In 1972 Erich Honecker at the 8th Party Conference produced the same sentiments, which by this time had become expected pious platitudes:

Unser Ziel ist und bleibt die Erziehung gebildeter und überzeugter Erbauer des Sozialismus. . . . Die sozialistische Kultur und Kunst hat die Aufgabe, die Entwicklung sozialistischer Persönlichkeiten und ihre bewußte schöpferische Tätigkeit zu fördern und zur Stärkung des sozialistischen Bewußtseins einen hohen Beitrag zu leisten. (3)

GDR writers are instructed to employ the techniques of Socialist Realism, the aims of which are twofold, to propagate socialist ideology and to mobilize support for specific short-term goals:

- (i) die Ideologie des Marxismus-Leninismus mit Hilfe künstlerischer Werke breiten Bevölkerungskreisen zu erläutern und als einzige den Interessen der arbeitenden Massen dienende Weltanschauung zu propagieren;
- (ii) die Bürger der sozialistischen Staaten zum aktiven Einsatz für die Erreichung der von der kommunistischen Führung proklamierten Nahziele ihrer Politik zu mobilisieren. (4)

The key concepts used to characterize this blend of ideology and pragmatism are to be seen in the following definition:

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1. W. Ulbricht, "Maßnahmen zur Durchführung der kulturellen Aufgaben im Rahmen des Zweijahrplans", speech delivered at the First Party Conference of the SED in January 1949, published in Dokumente der SED. Beschlüsse und Erklärungen des ZK sowie des Politbüros und seines Zentralsekretariats, Hrsg.v. ZK der SED, Berlin DDR 1951, p.47.
 2. At the 4th Writers' Congress 1956; quoted from K. Franke, Die Literatur der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, Munich/Zürich 1971, p.60.
 3. E. Honecker, "Bericht des Zentralkomitees an den VIII. Parteitag der SED", quoted from Zur Theorie des sozialistischen Realismus, hrsg.v. Institut für Gesellschaftswissenschaften beim ZK der SED, Berlin DDR 1974, p.268.
 4. E. Schubbe (ed.), Dokumente zur Kunst-, Literatur- und Kulturpolitik der SED, Stuttgart 1972, p.39.

Lebensechtheit, d.h. Darstellung der Wirklichkeit in ihrer aufsteigenden Entwicklung, Darstellung des Typischen; sozialer Optimismus; Volkstümlichkeit, d.h. in enger Beziehung zum Leben der Werktätigen stehend, und klar und einfach gestaltet. (1)

This does not mean that literature is thought of merely as reflecting reality; indeed, it is precisely because, like the other arts, literature also contributes to the shaping of that reality, by affecting the reader's consciousness and hence, potentially, his behaviour, that literature must be strictly harnessed to the political goals of the moment:

Literatur und bildende Kunst sind der Politik untergeordnet, aber es ist klar, daß sie einen starken Einfluß auf die Politik ausüben. Die Idee in der Kunst muß der Marschrichtung des politischen Kampfes folgen. (2)

Only those of the first generation of writers who could fully identify with the Party and its aims accepted this conception unquestioningly. Many other writers, whilst in full agreement with the Party's political programme, resented the imposition of doctrinaire prescriptions for literary activity and were highly critical of the actual literary products that resulted from the new cultural policy. The Aufbauliteratur demanded by the Party came into being: a vast number of Landreform³ and Betriebsromane⁴ depicting life in the new Landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaften (LPGs) and Volkseigene Betriebe (VEBs). Such novels present direct accounts, without any attempt at sophistication of language or narrative technique, of initial struggle and ultimate success, and of the psychological development of a central character into a well-adjusted socialist. Great emphasis is placed on this central character, the 'positive hero' in the terminology of the theory of Socialist Realism. As Walter Dreher has explained, the term 'Held' has two meanings: first as a moral-ethical category related to the Middle High German degen, recke and the concept of êre; secondly as an aesthetic category, denoting the central character in a work of literature. Dreher defines the positive hero as:

die zentrale Figur eines Werkes, die in ihrer ganzen Vielseitigkeit dargestellt wird; in ihm soll sich die Aussage des Werkes konzentrieren, er soll insbesondere die Anschauungen des Dichters ausdrücken; sein Verhalten und sein Denken und Fühlen sollen

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1. Ibid., p.40
 2. O.Grotewohl, loc.cit.; quoted from P.Demetz, Post War German Literature, New York 1972, p.33.
 3. For example: Otto Gotsche, Tiefe Furchen (1949); Walter Pollátschek, Herren des Landes (1951); Werner Reinowski's trilogy Der kleine Kopf, Vom Weizen fällt die Spreu (1952) & Diese Welt muß unser sein (Roman einer Produktionsgenossenschaft.) (1953); Margarete Neumann, Der Weg über den Acker (1955); Erwin Strittmatter, Tinko (1954).
 4. For example: Eduard Claudius, Menschen an unserer Seite (1951); Maria Langner, Stahl (1952); August Hild, Die aus dem Schatten treten (1953); Marianne Bruns, Glück fällt nicht vom Himmel (1953); Elfriede Brüning, Regine Haberkorn (1955); the latter two deal especially with the role of women in industry.

charakteristisch sein für die fortschrittlichen Menschen seiner Zeit; er soll den Leser herausfordern, ihm ähnlich zu werden, ihm nachzueifern. (1)

In the literature of the GDR we meet the positive hero in novels dealing with the war, the struggle against fascism, and the post-war construction of socialism. The qualities which he displays are defined by Dreher as:

Klassenbewußtsein, Treue zur Partei und zur Sache des Sozialismus, Unbeugsamkeit, Unerschütterlichkeit, Wissen um gesellschaftliche Zusammenhänge, . . . Bereitschaft zu kollektiver Hilfe im Produktionsprozeß, . . . Bereitschaft zur Verteidigung der sozialistischen Errungenschaften. (2)

These qualities are indeed to be seen in the central characters of virtually all literary works published in the GDR from the late 1940s to the early 1960s. It will be seen in Chapter 5 that even some novels of higher literary quality and with a distinctly critical approach to socialist society, adhere in principle to the notion of the positive hero³, whilst in the novels of the 1970s to be discussed the 'positive hero' takes on a new function: that of upholding those basic moral values of truthfulness and justice on which a socialist society ought properly to be based, in the face of authoritarian and conformist attitudes inimical to those values.

It has also been argued by some GDR critics that the positive hero should be seen as the true successor to the hero of the classical German Bildungsroman: Frank Trommler quotes Natalie in Goethe's Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre in support of 'Vorbildliteratur':

Wenn . . . wir die Menschen nur nehmen, wie sie sind, so machen wir sie schlechter; wenn wir sie behandeln, als wären sie, was sie sein sollten, so bringen wir sie dahin, wohin sie zu bringen sind. (4)

But the weakness of this theory with regard to GDR literature is that 'man as he should be' is strictly defined in advance and hence is bound to appear in literature as a stereotype. The SED, however, welcomed this approach and demanded greater political explicitness from intellectuals who preferred a subtler and more oblique presentation of their themes. This attitude can be seen in the following review of Stefan Hermlin's collection of poems Flug der Taube:

Zu oft noch muß der nach dem Sinn forschende Leser raten, deuteln, interpretieren. Warum? Offenbar, weil Hermlin noch immer die Rolle unterschätzt, die dem gestaltenden Bewußtsein auch in der Lyrik gebührt. Sich von subjektiven Gedankenverbindungen treiben zu lassen, das bedeutet Verzicht auf die bewußte Gestaltung der Wirklichkeit. Den roten Faden der leitenden Idee eines Gedichts von Zufälligkeiten der Sprachmusik, des Rhythmus, eines Reims, einer Alliteration überwuchern zu lassen, das ist ein Rest von

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1. W. Dreher, "Der positive Held historisch betrachtet", NDL X, 1962/3, p.84.
 2. Ibid., p.89.
 3. For example Christa Wolf Der geteilte Himmel and the novels of H. Kant.
 4. F. Trommler, "Von Stalin zu Hölderlin", Basis II, 1971, p.180.

Glauben an die Spontaneität im künstlerischen Schaffen. (1)

Here, as in many similar pronouncements, it is clear how deeply official literary theory had been influenced by the thinking of Georg Lukács.² Johannes Becher lent his support to this demand for clarity and explicitness, as he had before the war, and applauded the close link between politics and culture as marking the end of the antagonism between 'Geist' and 'Macht' characteristic of capitalist society:

Nie waren Kunst und Dichtung so verbunden mit der Macht wie bei uns, nie war die Macht so aufgeschlossen gegenüber Kunst und Dichtung wie bei uns . . . (3)

As for his own work, Becher energetically repudiated the suggestion that he had compromised his artistic integrity by putting his art in the service of politics:

Ich habe nicht meine Dichtung der Politik geopfert, sondern ich habe der Dichtung nur all das geopfert, was für die Entwicklung der Dichtung schädlich ist, das heißt, ich habe darauf verzichtet, eine verinnerlicht-lyrische Existenz zu führen und auf diese Weise die Dichtung allen feindlichen Einflüssen wehrlos preiszugeben. (4)

Becher was Minister of Culture of the GDR from 1954 onwards and thus exercised both personal influence and power of patronage over the younger generation of writers. During his years of exile he had written an autobiographical novel, Abschied, in which he dealt with his bourgeois family background and his conversion to communism. He now encouraged young writers to undertake a similar process of defining their formative experiences as a form of public commitment to communism -- particularly such writers as had not been immune to the appeal of National Socialism. Obediently, a large number of writers followed suit; one of the few memorable results was Franz Fühmann's Das Judenauto, otherwise 'das große Anderswerden' (J. Becher) was treated with little literary distinction. Brecht, in his poem Das Amt für Literatur, commented sardonically on the stereotyped quality of such works:

Das Amt für Literatur mißt bekanntlich den Verlagen
der Republik das Papier zu, soundso viele Zentner
des seltenen Materials für willkommene Werke.
Willkommen
sind Werke mit Ideen,
die dem Amt für Literatur aus den Zeitungen bekannt sind.
Diese Gepflogenheit
müßte bei der Art unserer Zeitungen
zu großen Ersparnissen an Papier führen, wenn
das Amt für Literatur für eine Idee unserer Zeitungen
immer nur ein Buch zuließe. Leider
läßt es so ziemlich alle Bücher in Druck gehen, die eine Idee

1. Neues Deutschland, 3.9.1952.

2. See the Excursus at the end of this Chapter.

3. J. Becher, "Verteidigung der Poesie", Gesammelte Werke Bd.13, Berlin DDR/Weimar 1972, p.133.

4. Ibid., p.371.

der Zeitungen verarzten.
 So daß
 für die Werke manchen Meisters
 dann das Papier fehlt. (1)

Brecht was not the only one to complain. Since one of the chief tenets of Socialist Realism is that the individual must never be depicted in isolation from his social environment, but must be presented as developing his personality and ethical qualities in the sphere of social relationships, particularly the sphere of work, writers in practice tended often to leave individual psychology entirely out of their works, with the result that their characters became crude stereotypes lacking credibility. In 1952 Alfred Antkowiak condemned this widespread failing:

Es gibt Autoren bei uns, die im Bewußtsein ihrer Erziehungsaufgabe ihre Gestalten eine Entwicklung durchmachen lassen, die von vornherein unglaubwürdig wirken muß, weil sie den individuellen Möglichkeiten und den klassenmäßigen Grenzen auf der gegebenen Etappe ihres Werdens widerspricht; sie lassen ihren Gestalten keinen Raum der konfliktreichen Entwicklung und damit der überzeugenden literarischen Darstellung. Die Gestalten entwickeln sich gleichsam ohne Zusammenstoß, ohne Konflikt. Der Prozeß der individuellen Entwicklung des Menschen wird so grob schematisiert. (2)

The widening gap between the Party's demands for literature with a clear social message, and the insistence of the critical intellectuals on a more truthful and hence more complex presentation of human experience, led to increasing tension. On May 27, 1953, at a 'Tagung der Intelligenz', convened by the Kulturbund, Walter Ulbricht appealed to intellectuals to put their trust in the Party and to support it with renewed vigour, promising them special privileges if they did so. Brecht commented that the Party was thus treating art as a means to an end, rather than an end in itself, in a fashion fundamentally at odds with the principles of socialism, which should aim to liberate all social activity from the instrumental character imposed on it by pre-socialist social organisation:

Die Arbeiter drängte man, die Produktion zu steigern, die Künstler, dies schmackhaft zu machen. Man gewährte den Künstlern einen hohen Lebensstandard und versprach ihn den Arbeitern. Die Produktion der Künstler wie die der Arbeiter hatte den Charakter eines Mittels zum Zweck und wurde in sich selbst nicht als erfreulich oder frei angesehen.

Vom Standpunkt des Sozialismus aus müssen wir, meiner Meinung nach, die Aufteilung Mittel und Zweck, Produzieren und Lebensstandard aufheben. Wir müssen das Produzieren zum eigentlichen Lebensinhalt machen und es so gestalten, es mit soviel Freiheit und Freiheiten ausstatten, daß es an sich verlockend ist. (3)

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1. NDL I, 1953/8, p.22.
 2. Alfred Antkowiak, Begegnungen mit Literatur: Beiträge zur neuen deutschen Literaturkritik, Weimar 1953, p.27.
 3. B. Brecht, [Zum 17. Juni 1953], Gesammelte Werke, Frankfurt a.M. 1967, Band 19, pp.327f.

The intellectuals could in any case not be won over so easily. The Deutsche Akademie, a month after Ulbricht's appeal, issued a statement insisting that artistic matters were the concern of the author, publisher and public, not of the state, except in as much as the state should give maximum support to the arts:

Die Verantwortung des Künstlers vor der Öffentlichkeit muß wieder hergestellt werden, . . . für schriftliche Arbeiten müssen der Autor und der Verleger . . . verantwortlich sein... Die staatlichen Organe sollen die Kunst in jeder nur denkbaren Weise fördern, sich aber jeder administrativen Maßnahme in Fragen der künstlerischen Produktion und des Stils enthalten. Die Kritik muß der Öffentlichkeit überlassen bleiben. (1)

A few days later the Kulturbund published a bold and comprehensive demand for freedom from state interference in all branches of artistic life:

Der Kulturbund tritt dafür ein, daß in allen wissenschaftlichen und künstlerischen Diskussionen die Freiheit der Meinung gewährleistet wird . . . Die eigene Verantwortung der Schriftsteller und Verleger, der bildenden Künstler, der Leiter der Theater und Orchester in den Fragen des künstlerischen Schaffens ist zu sichern. Die administrative Einmischung staatlicher Stellen in die schöpferischen Fragen der Kunst und Literatur muß aufhören. Presse und Rundfunk sollen künftig für eine wirklichkeitsgetreue Information der Bevölkerung in einer verständlichen Sprache sorgen. . . Die Verantwortlichkeit der Journalisten muß wiederhergestellt und das Recht auf Berichtigung von Irrtümern muß zugestanden werden. (2)

Günther Cwojdrak urged writers to speak out where they felt that the government was not telling the general public the truth³, and Peter Huchel vehemently attacked the Party for dogmatism, over-reaction and intimidation of writers:

Nicht, daß man Fehler machte . . . schreckte unsere westdeutschen Freunde so sehr ab, aber daß eben jene, die Fehler auf Fehler machten, die Stirn hatten, den Standpunkt der Unfehlbarkeit einzunehmen und den schöpferischen Menschen ein Gefühl von Unsicherheit, ja Furcht, einzuflößen, indem sie aus jedem Pinselstrich sofort ein Politikum machten. (4)

After the death of Stalin and the ensuing changes of policy in the Soviet Union, and also no doubt influenced by the political disturbances of June 1953 in the GDR, the Party relaxed its demands for a while. In September 1955 the Institut für Literatur was opened in Leipzig, following numerous disputes between the Ministry of Culture and literary theorists and philosophers, among them Ernst Bloch, Wolfgang Harich and Georg Lukács. These latter rejected the dogmatism of the Stalinists and called for renewed study of Marx and Hegel. The SED denounced them ferociously as

1. Published in Neues Deutschland, 30.6.1953.

2. Ibid., 3.7.1953.

3. G. Cwojdrak, "Schreibt die Wahrheit", NDL I, 1953/8, p.28.

4. P. Huchel, "Antwort auf den offenen Brief eines westdeutschen Schriftstellers", NDL I, 1953/9, pp.89-91.

revisionists, in articles in Neues Deutschland and Neue Deutsche Literatur, but took no further action for the time being. At the 4th Writers' Congress in 1956 it was clear that even the most loyal Party supporters desired less Party control and more artistic freedom. Anna Seghers had already pointed out that literary creativity required more than political consciousness:

Ideologische Klarheit genügt nicht, um einen Schriftsteller, selbst wenn er talentiert ist, zum 'Meister' zu machen, (1)

and at the Congress she added that it was becoming irksome to be obliged to write only about workers and peasants, that these did not constitute the whole of GDR society, that there were also administrative and technical employees, shopkeepers, teachers, artists, writers and scientists, many of whom still adhered to bourgeois ways of thinking -- an element of contemporary social reality which, however regrettable, ought not to be ignored.² Johannes Becher, on behalf of the Party, attempted to conciliate the intellectuals by defending the works of Party supporters, but he admitted that attempts to portray the new socialist philosophy often produced crude results:

Wir sind noch nicht so weit, daß das Neue unserer Weltanschauung uns so tief in Fleisch und Blut eingegangen wäre, um uns frei im Stoff bewegen zu können. Wir müssen diese Bewegungsfreiheit im Stoff erst erarbeiten, und es kann gar nicht ausbleiben, daß das Inhaltliche häufig als Rohstoff, künstlerisch unverarbeitet noch, in den Werken unserer Schriftsteller hervortritt. (3)

With the Party thus on the defensive, renewed demands were made for the acceptance of Kafka, Joyce and Proust in the GDR, but these demands went unheeded, and by the summer of 1956 the GDR had come close to another revolt, this time of the intellectuals rather than the workers. It must be emphasized that these intellectuals did not oppose the socialist system of the GDR; their desire was for intellectual freedom within that system. Nor did they either harbour plans for a social revolution or seek an alliance with workers. In a statement published by a group around Wolfgang Harich they described themselves as follows:

Wir sind eine Gruppe von SED-Funktionären, die über eine breite bewußte und eine noch breitere unbewußte Anhängerschaft verfügt. Diese Anhängerschaft hat sich besonders aus den Kulturinstitutionen der DDR herausgebildet, aus Universitäten, Hochschulen, Zeitungsredaktionen, Verlagen und Lektoraten . . . (4)

Events in Hungary in 1956 had a sobering effect, however, on these in-

1. Neues Deutschland, 12.10.1955.
2. "Der Anteil der Literatur an der Bewußtseinsbildung des Volkes", in Protokoll des IV. Schriftstellerkongresses, Deutscher Schriftstellerverband Berlin 1956, p.52.
3. "Von der Größe unserer Literatur", speech delivered at the 4th Writers' Congress, January 1956, in Bemühungen. Reden und Aufsätze. Eine Auswahl. (ed. H. Haase), Berlin DDR/Weimar, 2.Aufl. 1976, (pp.432-458), p.456.
4. SBZ-Archiv Cologne No. 5/6, 25.3.1957, pp.72ff; quoted from K. Franke op.cit., p.75.

tellecuals, whilst helping the Party to regain its confidence. Measures were swiftly taken against the most outspoken of the intellectuals demanding freedom of expression: Wolfgang Harich was sentenced to ten years imprisonment, editors of newspapers and literary journals were replaced, Party control over cultural life was reinforced. As for literature, the theory of Socialist Realism was insisted upon with renewed emphasis.

In the few years prior to 1956 even Becher's epigoni had moved in a direction which the Party leadership considered too individualistic. Use of autobiographical material as urged by Becher had led many writers to give prominence to personal recollections at the expense of a wider socialist perspective. At a Kulturkonferenz held by the SED in October 1957 all such 'revisionists' were officially denounced and a statement was read by representatives of the DSV in which they admitted their mistakes and proclaimed renewed adherence to Party instructions. The outcome was a programme which called for working-class literature, with working-class characters. This led to the so-called Bitterfelder Weg¹, named after the Writers' Conference held at Bitterfeld in April 1959, where it was decided that the most important aspect of cultural policy in the coming years should be to encourage workers themselves to write about their everyday lives, both individually and collectively. The motto of the Bitterfelder Weg was 'Greif zur Feder, Kumpel! Die sozialistische Nationalkultur braucht dich!' Intellectuals were sceptical towards the notion of a prescribed proletarian literature, but many workers took up the idea with great enthusiasm. The Bitterfeld programme envisaged the setting up of Zirkel schreibender Arbeiter under the guidance of a professional writer, who would live and work amongst them and thereby, it was hoped, also enhance the authenticity of his own writing. Large numbers of Brigadetagebücher and new Betriebs- and LPG-Romane soon flooded the market, but professional writers took little notice of this new Party line -- Christa Wolf was a notable exception -- and when the Fifth Writers' Congress was held in May 1961, the Bitterfeld programme was scarcely mentioned. A most notable aspect of this conference, however -- the last to which Western writers were also invited -- was the ideological loyalty expressed by the majority of GDR writers. In a discussion with Grass, Enzensberger and Johnson (who had recently 'moved' to West Berlin) the GDR writers criticized various aspects of West German literature, notably its militaristic tendencies and excessive concern with sexual matters, and denied that they were deprived of freedom of expression. Indeed they emphatically asserted that they were free to write as

1. For a detailed discussion of the programme and development of the Bitterfelder Weg, see Ingeborg Gerlach, Bitterfeld. Literatur der Arbeitswelt und Arbeiterliteratur in der DDR. Kronberg/Ts. 1974.

they chose and that any restrictions were self-imposed and a sign of social responsibility.¹ The same view had been expressed by Christa Wolf in 1958, when she answered the question 'Kann man eigentlich über alles schreiben?' thus: 'Das kommt darauf an, was man für die Wahrheit hält' and went on to state that the criterion should be:

das Verantwortungsbewußtsein des Autors, der nicht in erster Linie seine Komplexe abreagieren, sondern der Gesellschaft nützen will. (2)

GDR writers, it was evident at the 1961 conference, considered the main difference between themselves and their West German fellow-writers to be the fact that they believed, as the West German writers did not, in the social effectiveness of literature. Hermann Kant referred to Martin Walser's remarks 'Daß wir öffentlich ohne Wirkung sind, befreit ungeheuer' and 'Wir haben uns mit unserer Rolle als Lorbeerbäume neben den Rednerpulten abgefunden',³ and urged his West German colleagues not to resign themselves to that fate but to oppose those in power; their only weakness, Kant told them, lay in their anti-Communism. This reproach recurred indeed in almost all the speeches by GDR writers; Wolfgang Joho summarized the general view as follows:

Wenn Günter Grass im Ton einer etwas melancholischen Ironie meinte, die westdeutschen Schriftsteller könnten, wenn sie auch kaum Einfluß auf die Leser hätten, doch wenigstens 'ein Körnchen Staub aufwirbeln', so bewies ihm Alexander Abusch, daß der verbreitete Kult mit der literarischen Ohnmacht bei den westdeutschen Schriftstellern letztlich gegen das Wesen der Literatur überhaupt verstoße, denn jede echte Literatur will und muß Wirkung ausüben, wenn sie ihre Berechtigung erweisen will. Und wenn der gleiche Günter Grass meinte, 'daß wir zwischen beiden deutschen Staaten stehen, ist unsere Stärke', so hielt ihm Alexander Abusch entgegen, es bedeute eine Zerstörung der humanistischen Kampfposition der westdeutschen Schriftsteller, wenn sie nicht erkannten, daß sie in der DDR ihren naturnotwendigen Verbündeten hätten. (4)

It is important to bear in mind, when we consider the criticisms voiced by writers whom the Party tends to regard as 'difficult', that these writers support the above views. The critical intelligentsia of the GDR does not oppose socialism⁵, it opposes some of the practices within

1. See W. Joho, "Dem Leben näher", NDL IX, 1961/8, pp.3-15.

2. C. Wolf, "Der Schriftsteller und unsere Zeit: Kann man eigentlich über alles schreiben?", NDL VI, 1958/6, (pp.3-16), pp.14f.

3. M. Walser, "Skizze zu einem Vorwurf" (1960), published in Weyrandt's anthology Ich lebe in der Bundesrepublik and quoted by Hermann Kant in "Macht und Ohnmacht einer Literatur", NDL IX, 1961/8, p.66. Also in M. Walser, Erfahrungen und Leseerfahrungen, Frankfurt a.M.1965, pp.29-32.

4. W. Joho, loc.cit., p.14.

5. When speaking of 'the GDR intelligentsia' this thesis disregards dissenting intellectuals who have chosen to leave the GDR and give up their GDR citizenship.

the existing social system, and the 'difficulty' arises from the extent to which this opposition can be openly expressed.

1961 marks an important point in the development of literature in the GDR for two reasons. In the first place the building of the Berlin Wall, whatever may be said about its other effects, secured greater social stability in the GDR, which enabled the Party to relax a little its control over cultural matters. In the second place, in 1961 the first works of a second generation of writers began to be published, writers who had been born in the late 1920s and 1930s and had not experienced active war service. For them, coming to terms with National Socialism was not the major concern of either their lives or their works, although it remained of course an important subject, increasingly so indeed in the 1970s as the necessity arose to interpret National Socialism to a younger generation who had grown up entirely within socialist society and to whom the National Socialist era was correspondingly remote. But for these writers contemporary life was of prime interest. The literature of the early 1960s has been described as Ankunftsliteratur, after a novel by Brigitte Reimann, Ankunft im Alltag (1961). To this category may be assigned the early novels of Christa Wolf, Hermann Kant, Karl-Heinz Jakobs, Erwin Strittmatter, Werner Heiduczek and others of their generation, who wrote predominantly about tensions and problems within GDR society. Christa Wolf's Der geteilte Himmel, and Hermann Kant's Die Aula were immediately immensely successful, and earned warm praise from the Party; other novels of the period were praised rather more cautiously, with the admonition to the authors not to forget the socialist perspective. But on the whole the SED was unhappy about the emergence of a strongly critical mode of writing about life in the GDR; at the second Bitterfeld Conference in 1964 Ulbricht called for greater adherence by all writers to Party policy as the guiding light of all social activity:

Die Partei muß, da sie die Führerin dieser Gesellschaft ist, in den Kriterien der sozialistischen Literatur mit ihrem Urteil objektiv vorausgesetzt werden. (1)

However, writers rejected the schematism which rigid adherence to Party pronouncements had produced in the literature of the 1950s, and insisted that literature must deal not only with the achievements of socialism and its future goals, but also with the problems and conflicts encountered by the individual. The literary scene in the GDR in the 1960s is thus characterized by intense debate on the question of the nature and significance of conflict within socialist society. At the second Bitterfeld

1. W. Ulbricht, quoted by E. Pracht & W. Neubert, "Zu aktuellen Grundfragen des sozialistischen Realismus in der DDR", NDL XIV, 1966/5, (pp.108-170), p.124.

Conference Ulbricht also complained of what he regarded as an excessive concern with conflict:

In der letzten Zeit sind eine Reihe von Werken der Literatur und Kunst erschienen, deren Konflikte sich aus der Auseinandersetzung mit Erscheinungen der Enge, des Dogmatismus und der Bürokratie ergeben. Selbstverständlich sollen die Künstler und Schriftsteller am Kampf gegen solche Erscheinungen, die uns hemmen, teilnehmen. Aber ist das das Haupthindernis unserer Entwicklung?

Ulbricht went on to urge that writers should deal not only with conflicts but also with the ways in which they can be resolved with the help of the Party:

Für uns sind nicht Widersprüche 'an sich' interessant. Eine Literatur und Kunst, die bloß Widersprüche feststellen will, geht in die Irre. Interessant und erregend ist die Lösung der Widersprüche in der bewußten Arbeit von Partei, Staatsführung und Volksmassen.

The implication here is that in a socialist society all conflicts are 'non-antagonistic' and must be shown as such; if an artist fails to indicate that a problem can be solved and will be solved then he is guilty of setting greater store by his limited individual perceptions than by the larger truth accessible to the Party with its overall view of society:

Ein Künstler, der die Wahrheit und das Ganze im Auge hat, kann nicht vom Blickpunkt eines empirischen Beobachters all dieser Erscheinungen schaffen, auch nicht vom Blickpunkt eines einfachen Mitarbeiters. Er braucht unbedingt auch den Blickwinkel des Planers und Leiters. (1)

This need for writers to work in harmony and cooperation with the Party is expressed in the description of them as 'Planer und Leiter' which has been in the Party programme since 1964, whilst the condemnation of criticism unaccompanied by reference to the Party's wisdom has been emphatically reiterated:

Es kann nicht die Funktion des sozialistischen Schriftstellers sein, ausschließlich Fragen an die Gesellschaft zu richten und Widersprüche und Probleme nur aufzudecken, ohne im Sinne der Beschlüsse von Partei und Regierung die Richtung der Entwicklung zu weisen. (2)

This view was restated by Ulbricht in 1968:

Der Schriftsteller . . . kann Fehler aufzeigen, meinetwegen auch von Genossen und Funktionären, wenn er in seiner Arbeit auch aufzeigen kann, wie kontinuierlich und richtig die Politik der Partei in diesem Lande gewesen ist. (3)

The majority of writers took heed of these admonitions, but it would seem justified to say that these were all minor writers, whose livelihood was -- and remains -- comfortably secured by their membership of and loyalty to the DSV and who had little incentive to hold out against such

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1. Quoted by Max Zimmering, "Zu einigen ideologischen Problemen", NDL XIV, 1966/2, pp.22-24.
 2. K. Hager, "Literatur im Dienst der sozialistischen Menschengemeinschaft", NDL XV, 1967/1, p.51.
 3. Neues Deutschland, 28.10.1968.

pressure from the Party leadership. The more significant writers were less docile and insisted on the importance of remaining true to their personal experience, of what Christa Wolf called 'subjektive Authentizität',¹. Their attention had shifted from the individual in harmony with his social environment to the individual in conflict with that environment, and the individual's chief aspiration was presented no longer as social integration but self-discovery and self-fulfilment. This inevitably produced scepticism towards the notion that Party policy was unquestionably right at all times. The SED, thoroughly alarmed by such scepticism, stressed the need for continued 'Parteilichkeit' on the part of writers. Helmut Sakowski sharply criticized writers such as Stefan Heym and Wolf Biermann for losing sight of the fundamental necessity of such explicit commitment to the Party and its goals:

Es geht um Haltung . . . Haltung zur Politik unserer Partei, Haltung gegenüber den Menschen unseres Landes, für die wir zuerst schreiben . . . Es geht um Haltung. Und ich denke mir, wir von der Literatur sollten uns ruhig wieder getrauen, Begriffe zu gebrauchen, die ein bißchen aus der Mode gekommen sind. Ich meine solche Begriffe wie Klassenstandpunkt oder Klassenkampf oder Parteilichkeit. (2)

In order to ensure that only works acceptable to the Party reached the reading public, censorship was tightened. The term 'Zensur' is never in fact used in the GDR: censorship is part of the activity of literary criticism, which consists not only in reviewing new works for the benefit of reader and writer but also in the vetting of works prior to publication to ensure their acceptability. Ulbricht pointed to the need for vigilant and well-trained publishers' readers to carry out this task:

Die Literaturkritik muß auf einem hohen prinzipiellen Niveau stehen, damit sie im besten Sinn erzieherisch wirken kann und sich immer bewußt bleibt, daß die künstlerische Gestaltung im Sinne des Bitterfelder Weges eine große Revolution im Schaffen der Schriftsteller und Künstler darstellt. . . . Dazu brauchen wir Lektoren mit hoher Allgemeinbildung, marxistisch-leninistischem Niveau, klarem politischen Standpunkt, mit Kontaktreichtum und Einfühlungsvermögen. (3)

Thus a writer who refuses to comply with the Party's demands will find it difficult or impossible to have his work published, and may, if the Party's objections to his work are particularly severe, be excluded or expelled from the DSV. The Party has no difficulty in justifying this

1. See below, chapter 5, p.225.

2. H. Sakowski, "Nach dem 11. Plenum", NDL XIV, 1966/2, p.13.

3. W. Ulbricht, "Der Sozialismus -- Werk des Menschen", NDL XIX, 1971/4, pp.17f. A decade later, Honecker too expresses this same view, cf. the Excursus at the end of this chapter, p.208.

practice by reference to the writer's responsibility towards society:

Ein Fleischer, der wegen Nahrungsmittelfälschung vor Gericht steht und verurteilt wird, muß damit rechnen, aus seiner Gilde ausgestoßen zu werden, vielleicht wird sie selbst Maßnahmen gegen solche Elemente ergreifen und den Kampf gegen sie aufnehmen. Nur in diesem Sinne scheint mir ein 'Zünftertum' unter den Schriftstellern gerechtfertigt. (1)

Yet despite increasingly strict control, the younger generation of writers continued to produce, and have published, a literature which the Party considered either too individualistic or insufficiently related to the task of constructing a socialist society.

A recurrent major objection raised by the Party was that these writers continued to choose intellectuals rather than workers as their central characters. Hermann Kant had defended this choice shortly after the publication of Die Aula with the argument that 'intellectuals' were less remote from the people at large than the Party feared:

ich glaube, es gehört zu den Dingen, die unseren Staat auszeichnen, daß Bildung immer mehr zu einer Tugend wird und sich herumspricht als Tugend; Bildung als Fähigkeit, auf intellektuelle Weise mit dem Leben fertig zu werden. Daher ist die Spannung oder gar Kluft zwischen einem intellektuellen Helden im Buch und einem Publikum, das keineswegs nur aus Intellektuellen besteht, nicht so groß, wie oft befürchtet wird. Der Pegel von Verständnis und Zuneigung zu einer solchen Erzählerhaltung und zu solchen Figuren ist gestiegen. (2)

But the Party disagreed. Heinz Plavius, whilst conceding Kant's point that the general level of education in the GDR had risen, complained of a lack of balance in contemporary literary output:

Ich sehe Wirklichkeitsverlust in der Literatur im thematischen Bereich, in dem Umstand, daß der Themenhaushalt unserer Literatur nicht ausgeglichen ist. Bereits ein flüchtiger Blick läßt erkennen, daß wir es mit einem starken Akzent auf dem akademischen Milieu zu tun haben. Stoff, Handlung und Thema vieler Romane und Erzählungen entstammen sehr häufig dem intellektuell-künstlerischen Bereich. In einer Gesellschaft, in der Bewußtheit mehr und mehr an die Stelle von Spontaneität tritt, in der also die geistigen Faktoren ein ständig wachsendes spezifisches Gewicht erlangen, kann dies auch nicht anders sein. Brechts Fragen jedoch, wer da baute, kochte, pflanzte . . . haben auch für unsere Gesellschaft ihren Sinn behalten. (3)

At the 6th Meeting of the Central Committee of the SED in July 1972 Kurt Hager also stressed the need to keep the working classes at the centre of literary production.⁴

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1. M.Zimmering, "Zu einigen ideologischen Problemen", NDL XIV, 1966/2, p.34.
 2. Neues Deutschland, Beilage Nr. 41, 7.10.1965.
 3. H. Plavius, "Griff zur Wirklichkeit", NDL XX, 1972/9, p.159.
 4. K. Hager, "Zu Fragen der Kulturpolitik der SED. Protokoll der 6. Tagung des ZK der SED, 6./7. Juli 1972", in Dokumente der SED, Berlin DDR 1972, pp.47f.

An aspect of 'individualism' that has especially worried the Party since the late 1960s has been the tendency of writers to repudiate the role of the omniscient 'Planer und Leiter', to admit that their perceptions are limited, that they are willing to believe that the problems which they perceive can be solved, but to insist on their right to say that they cannot see an immediate solution, rather than make obeisances to the Party's ability to solve all problems. There is a perceptible difference between the general mood of certainty and confidence in the novels of the early 1960s, for example Christa Wolf's Der geteilte Himmel and Hermann Kant's Die Aula, and the tone of doubt and scepticism which pervades Wolf's Nachdenken über Christa T. or Becker's Irreführung der Behörden and, even more pronouncedly, Schlaflose Tage, as well as many other novels of the 1970s. Such scepticism is, of course, anathema to the Party. As early as 1965 Herbert Wolfgram had urged intellectuals to be sceptical about their own scepticism:

Wir aber, die wir ja zum Sozialismus sagen, weil er sich in unserem Leben als wahr erweist, sind auf dem richtigen Wege, wenn wir die Zweifelsucht konsequent in Zweifel ziehen. (1)

Alexander Abusch, the then acting Minister of Culture, had also identified what he saw as a 'Kult des Zweifelns', which he dismissed as a fashionable product of ignorance:

Man trägt jetzt Skepsis, so wie man schmale, viereckige Hornbrillen trägt -- sie beschränken offensichtlich das Sehfeld. (2)

For the writers in question the issue was, of course, much more serious than that. They were fully aware of the dangers of excessive individualism, and willing to exercise a degree of self-censorship in the awareness of their responsibilities. Interviewing Konstantin Simonov in Moscow, Christa Wolf asked questions which revealed a great deal about her own awareness of the problem:

Gibt es bei Ihnen Probleme, Konflikte -- in Ihrem Leben als politischer Mensch --, über die Sie glauben, nicht schreiben zu können oder nicht schreiben zu sollen: nicht, weil Sie als Schriftsteller den Stoff nicht bewältigen könnten, sondern weil Sie glauben, es wäre schädlich, darüber zu schreiben, oder es würde vielleicht niemals zu Ihren Lebzeiten erscheinen können -- eine Art Selbstzensur?

Christa Wolf continued, speaking now directly of the GDR and its literature:

Was die Literatur meines Landes und meiner Generation betrifft: Ich habe oft das Gefühl, daß die wichtigsten Erlebnisse -- innere und äußere -- die wichtigsten Entscheidungen und Konflikte die unsere Entwicklung bestimmt haben und uns seit bald drei Jahrzehnten bewegen, nur schwach oder gar nicht in unserer Literatur sichtbar werden. (3)

1. Neues Deutschland, 12.12.1965.

2. Ibid., 15.12.1965.

3. C. Wolf, "Fragen an Konstantin Simonov", NDL XXI, 1973/12, pp.5-20.

She went on to ask:

Empfinden Sie eigentlich für sich als kommunistischer Schriftsteller -- dessen Disziplin und Verantwortungsgefühl sich von denen des bürgerlichen Schriftstellers unterscheiden -- manchmal die Gefahr, in der Selbstzensur zu weit zu gehen? Die Gefahr, daß man nicht nur bloß das Erwartete schreibt, sondern vielleicht nur noch sieht, was von einem erwartet wird? Daß man nicht mehr frisch und ursprünglich sehen und erleben kann, was ja Voraussetzung alles Schreibens bleibt? (1)

Simonov's replies -- much more cautious than Christa Wolf's questions -- are not relevant here; the questions however are symptomatic of the entire generation of writers of the 1960s and 1970s in the GDR to which Christa Wolf belongs. There can be no question of the genuine support of Christa Wolf and many other writers for the principles of socialism, just as there can be no doubt that they understand in principle the Party's reasons for its insistence on strict control of literary work -- including as a major reason the immediate proximity of the Federal Republic anxious to extract the maximum propaganda advantage from any expressions of discontent by GDR writers, as Kurt Hager reminded them in 1967:

Wir stehen . . . an der Weggabelung zwischen den zwei gesellschaftlichen Systemen, zwischen Sozialismus und Kapitalismus. Wir sind tagaus, tagein in eine politische und ideologische Auseinandersetzung verwickelt. . . Der Schriftsteller der DDR kann meines Erachtens seine Verantwortung nur im vollen Maße wahrnehmen, seine Wirkung auf Menschen nur in der richtigen Weise ausüben, wenn er sich stets dieser in Deutschland vor sich gehenden Auseinandersetzung der zwei Systeme und Ideologien bewußt ist und sein ganzes Können in die Waagschale wirft, um die Wahrheit des Sozialismus und Humanismus der Lüge des Antikommunismus, dem Gift der Nationalismus und Revanchismus entgegenzusetzen. (2)

This awareness of being exposed to the baleful scrutiny of the ideological enemy is the reason why even otherwise fully trusted Party members are severely attacked when they fail to comply with Party prescriptions. This was the case with Nachdenken über Christa T.: Christa Wolf was the prestigious author of Der geteilte Himmel, she had been awarded both the Heinrich Mann Prize and the 'Nationalpreis', and had been for a short time a member of the Central Committee of the SED. Her loyalty to the Party was beyond question, and her good intentions in writing her second novel were not in doubt, yet for all that Nachdenken über Christa T. was withdrawn for a time immediately after publication, and the author was very severely criticized by the Party for the novel's scepticism and ambiguity:

Wir kennen Christa Wolf als eine talentierte Mitstreiterin unserer Sache. Gerade deshalb dürfen wir unsere Enttäuschung über ihr neues Buch nicht verbergen. Wie auch immer parteilich die subjektiv

1. C. Wolf, loc.cit.

2. K. Hager, "Literatur im Dienst der sozialistischen Menschengemeinschaft", NDL XV, 1967/1, pp.47f.

ehrlische Absicht des Buches auch gemeint sein mag: So wie die Geschichte nun einmal erzählt ist, ist sie angetan, unsere Lebensbewußtheit zu bezweifeln, bewältigte Vergangenheit zu erschüttern, ein gebrochenes Verhältnis zum Hier und Heute und Morgen zu erzeugen. -- Wem nützt das? Wem nützt eine subjektiv ehrliche, parteilich gemeinte Absicht, wenn sie streckenweise im literarischen Text und im Gesamteindruck die Doppelbödigkeit der Aussage so eindeutig provoziert, daß sich die andere Seite nur zu wählen braucht, was sie gern herauslesen möchte. Wir sind nun einmal noch nicht allein auf der Welt, wir Sozialisten . . . (1)

Writers in the GDR are aware that Western literary critics peruse their works closely and are often inclined to interpret any criticism as a sign of fundamental dissidence. Such misinterpretation can cause them difficulties at home. This was the case with Jurek Becker's Irreführung der Behörden, which led Becker to accuse the critics concerned of deliberate over-interpretation with hostile intent and to defend his and other writers' right to give an honest account of their own experiences and perceptions without being accused of presumption:

Aus eigener Erfahrung weiß ich, daß solche Interpretationssucht mitunter zu Resultaten führt, an die kein Mensch vorher denken konnte, am wenigsten der Autor selbst. Und plötzlich sieht er sich in der Lage, angeblich, vielleicht sogar ehrlich, in jedem Fall aber entstellend, so verstanden worden zu sein. Dies kann unmöglich nur das Problem eindeutiger oder weniger eindeutiger Formulierungen sein, dafür geschieht es einfach zu oft, es ist vor allem eine Frage von Absichten. Ich nehme mir das Recht heraus, in einem Buch genau das zu sagen und das zu beschreiben, worüber ich etwas zu sagen und das zu beschreiben ich für richtig halte. Und ich nehme mir ebenso das Recht, genau das wegzulassen, was mir entbehrlich scheint. Ein Autor teilt mit seinem Buch nichts anderes mit als das, was darin steht, sichtbar für jeden, der lesen kann. Zum Bücherlesen braucht man nicht das zweite Gesicht. Und die Forderung, für sich selbst sprechen zu dürfen, hat, meine ich, nichts mit einer Alleinvertretungsanmaßung zu tun. (2)

Meanwhile, of course, the GDR writer writes first and foremost for readers in his own country. With the Party, he believes in the social importance of literature as a means of illuminating existing problems and conflicts and of thus pointing the way to their possible solution, even where he feels unable to offer a solution himself. The existence of the Federal Republic as a hostile next-door neighbour cannot be allowed, in the opinion of these writers, to interfere with this acknowledged function of literature. Inge von Wangenheim made the point with a drastic analogy:

Man läßt nicht in dem Augenblick die Hosen runter, in dem der

1. M.W. Schulz, "Das Neue und das Bleibende in unserer Literatur", NDL XVII, 1969/9, pp.47-50.
2. J. Becker, "Über verschiedene Resonanzen auf unsere Literatur", NDL XXII, 1974/2, p.59.

Feind vor dem Tor die Kanonen aufführt. Stehen aber diese Kanonen immer da, sind sie keine Rechtfertigung mehr, auf jegliche gesellschaftliche Notdurft zu verzichten. (1)

The writer has a responsibility towards socialism, but this cannot override his responsibility towards truth and integrity. His position has in fact reverted to the traditional position of the European intellectual. GDR writers are committed to the goal of a socialist society, but whereas the Party expects 'Übereinstimmung nicht nur mit dem Ziel, sondern auch mit dem Weg'², their commitment is to the goal only. As for the path to that goal, they reserve for themselves the right to bring their own critical intelligence to bear on the question and to express their views on the matter as honestly as possible, even if this means in some cases merely pointing out a particular state of affairs without reference to any way in which that state of affairs might be changed. It is this legitimacy of the autonomous critical intelligence that GDR writers have increasingly begun to claim:

. . . indem wir die Wirklichkeit darstellen, signalisieren wir einen Zustand, und es wird sich herausstellen, ob dieser Zustand verändert werden muß oder nicht. (3)

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1. I. von Wangenheim, Die Geschichte und unsere Geschichten, Halle 1966, p.94. Quoted from K. Franke, op.cit., p.146.
 2. Zur Theorie des sozialistischen Realismus, Hrsg.v. Institut für Gesellschaftswissenschaften beim ZK der SED, Berlin DDR 1974, p.798.
 3. Karl-Heinz Jakobs, quoted in Christel Berger, "Die Biographie der Dinge oder „wer präzis informiert ist, kann präzis formulieren“", NDL XXIII, 1975/5 (pp.148-167), p.154.

Excursus: The Theory of Socialist Realism

Realistische Künstler stellen die Macht der Ideen dar und die materielle Grundlage der Ideen. (B. Brecht)¹

Marx and Engels never developed a comprehensive aesthetic theory, but there are a number of writings from which their fundamental views on the subject can be seen. All Marxist conceptions of the function of literature are rooted in three of Marx's most famous pronouncements:

1. Es ist nicht das Bewußtsein der Menschen, das ihr Sein, sondern umgekehrt ihr gesellschaftliches Sein, das ihr Bewußtsein bestimmt. (2)
2. Die Philosophen haben die Welt nur verschieden interpretiert, es kommt darauf an, sie zu verändern. (3)
3. Die Gedanken der herrschenden Klasse sind in jeder Epoche die herrschenden Gedanken, das heißt, die Klasse, welche die herrschende materielle Macht der Gesellschaft ist, ist zugleich ihre herrschende geistige Macht. (4)

The first of these pronouncements is central to the theory of Basis and Überbau, which declares the economic conditions of any society to be its fundamental basis, while political institutions along with the entirety of cultural and intellectual life are to be regarded as secondary, a superstructure dependent on the basis. But the superstructure also influences the basis, in the dialectical relationship that is at the heart of the Marxist conception of historical change; thus literature, as an element of the superstructure, not only reflects social reality but also can help to shape and change that reality, and can thus play an important role in the fundamental task facing all Marxists in a pre-socialist society: to change the world, as the second passage quoted above, the celebrated eleventh Feuerbach thesis, states. The third passage, apart from its central importance in the context of 'ideology' and 'false consciousness', is important in the context of literary theory because it is frequently adduced, in the present-day socialist countries, as a justification for the insistence that since the working class is now the dominant social class, literature should reflect the experience and viewpoint of that class.

The notion of a literature that might help to change society for the better, arguably already to be seen in the Sturm und Drang writers of the

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1. B. Brecht, "Über sozialistischen Realismus", Gesammelte Werke, Bd. VIII, Frankfurt a.M. 1967, p. 548.
 2. Foreword, "Zur Kritik der politischen Ökonomie", Marx Engels Werke Bd. 13, p. 9.
 3. K. Marx & F. Engels, [Thesen über Feuerbach] (1845), MEW Bd. 3, p. 7.
 4. From "Die deutsche Ideologie", MEW Bd. 3, p. 46.

late eighteenth century, was explicitly proposed by Wolfgang Menzel in 1828 when he wrote that the world had seen enough beautiful writing and that it was time for writers to turn their hand to historically useful action.¹ His views were taken up by the Jungdeutschen and expressed in Karl Gutzkow's opposition newspaper Telegraph für Deutschland. This paper also published articles by the young Friedrich Engels between 1839 and 1841; in 1839 Engels wrote:

Es sei die Funktion der Dichtung, den Landmann, den Handwerker, den Lehrjungen zu stärken: ihm sein sittliches Gefühl klarer zu machen, ihm seine Kraft, sein Recht, seine Freiheit zum Bewußtsein zu bringen, seinen Mut, seine Vaterlandsliebe zu wecken. (2)

When Engels became acquainted with the more radical views of Ludwig Börne, who completely rejected aesthetic values in favour of political content, he was easily won over; the poverty and misery of the working classes which he saw in England in 1842 further strengthened this view of the function of literature.

Marx's knowledge and appreciation of literature were initially those of a typical German Bildungsbürger: he knew and admired Shakespeare, Goethe and the Classics, and wrote poetry himself in his student years. However, his later concern with economic theory and his conviction of the dependence of cultural life on the economic basis led him increasingly to the view reached independently by Engels, and by the time the two men wrote Zur Kritik der politischen Ökonomie together in 1859 they were substantially of one mind on literary matters. The most explicit expression of Marx's views at this time is to be found in his letter to Ferdinand Lassalle of 19 April 1859 on the subject of Lassalle's drama Franz von Sickingen.³ Lassalle wrote this play concerning the aristocrat who sided with the peasantry in the Peasants' War of 1525, after the failure of the 1848 revolution in Germany. Marx, whilst welcoming the choice of subject as timely and praising Lassalle's literary skill, sharply criticized his treatment of the subject. Lassalle, Marx objected, had focused attention too exclusively on the individual failure of the central character, and had omitted both to expose Sickingen's underlying reactionary motives and to show the potential strength of the peasants;

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1. W.Menzel, Die deutsche Literatur (1828). Quoted in P.Demetz, Marx, Engels und die Dichter, Stuttgart 1959, p.17.
 2. F.Engels, "Die deutschen Volksbücher", quoted by P.Demetz, op.cit., p.37, from MEGA (Moscow 1927-1935), I,2, p.49; not included in MEW Berlin DDR 1961ff.
 3. Written 1858/1859, published anon. 1859. For a brief comment on the play and the subsequent reactions of Marx and Engels (1859) and Lenin (1911), see F.J. Raddatz (ed.), Marxismus und Literatur, Reinbek bei Hamburg 1969, Bd. III, p.279.

nor had Lassalle given a dramatic voice to the progressive forces of the early sixteenth century: the peasant leaders and revolutionary elements in the city populations. This reproach anticipates all later insistence by the theorists of Socialist Realism that in the presentation of any social situation, whether contemporary or historical, a truly 'objective' presentation requires that prominence be given to the progressive potential inherent in that situation, and that progressive attitudes be clearly distinguished from reactionary attitudes, that is to say that social developments be analysed in terms of the dialectics of opposing class interests. Reality must be shown in its historical context as a dynamic process, analysing cause and effect in this process and illuminating its direction.

A similar approach is to be seen in Marx's review of Eugene Sue's Les secrets de Paris ; his main objection to this novel was that a mere depiction of the poverty of the lower classes is no more than 'sentimentale Elendsmalerei'; for the novel to be 'realistic' the author would have to indicate the social causes of poverty and the inherent strength of the exploited classes, encouraging them to solve their own problems rather than hope for help from arbitrary benefactors from the oppressing class. What is relevant in literature, Marx argued, is not the subjective psychological experiences and emotions of individuals, but the social attitudes and behaviour of typical representatives of an entire class. A number of years later Engels formulated this view in what has become the locus classicus of the theory of Socialist Realism, the letter to Margaret Harkness in which he comments on her novel City Girl:

If I have anything to criticize, it would be that perhaps after all, the tale is not quite realistic enough. Realism, to my mind, implies, beside truth of detail, the truth in reproduction of typical characters under typical circumstances. Now your characters are typical enough, as far as they go; but the circumstances which surround them and make them act are not perhaps equally so. In City Girl the working class figures as a passive mass, unable to help itself. All attempts to drag it out of its torpid misery come from without, from above. (1)

This passage, especially its second sentence, is frequently quoted, with emphasis usually being given to the phrase 'typical characters under typical circumstances'. As will be seen when dealing with the literature of the GDR in the 1950s, the greatest risk if this notion is adhered to too rigidly is of producing stereotyped and schematic writing. Engels himself was aware of this risk; in the same letter to Margaret Harkness he wrote:

1. Original in English. Quoted from D. Craig (ed.), Marxists on Literature, Penguin 1975, pp.269f. German translation in MEW Bd.37, pp.42-44.

I am far from finding fault with your not having written a point-blank socialist novel, a 'Tendenzroman', as we Germans call it, to glorify the social and political views of the authors. That is not at all what I mean. The more the opinions of the author remain hidden, the better for the work of art. The realism I allude to may crop out even in spite of the author's opinions. (1)

Engels went on to mention Balzac as an example of what he had in mind. In a letter to Minna Kautsky of 26 November 1885 Engels had made both this point and the further related point that if an author presents problems this does not oblige him to present solutions also:

Aber ich meine, die Tendenz muß aus der Situation und Handlung selbst hervorspringen, ohne daß ausdrücklich darauf hingewiesen wird, und der Dichter ist nicht genötigt, die geschichtliche zukünftige Lösung der gesellschaftlichen Konflikte, die er schildert, dem Leser an die Hand zu geben. (2)

The second point has been consistently ignored by later Socialist Realists, who programmatically present, and insist that other writers should present, not only problems but also their ready-made solutions.

The first attempts to apply the Marxist theory of dialectical materialism to the field of literary criticism were made by Georgy Vladimir Plekhanov (1857-1918) and Franz Mehring (1846-1919). Both were interested as much in politics as in literature and recognized the importance of both spheres, distinguishing between them as two fundamentally different activities. They both acknowledged the functional aspect of art, but emphasized that this was one aspect only, and also argued that inasmuch as art has a social function it should fulfil that function by means of its own resources and not at the expense of its aesthetic values. Plekhanov was the first critic in Russia to adopt a sociological approach to literature, approaching art as a reflection of the social conditions of its age in respect of both content and form.³ Mehring rejected all art which failed to deal directly with social reality; he demanded realism, a concept which for him included the notion of 'Parteilichkeit', and hence rejected both neo-Romanticism and Naturalism. Neo-Romanticism, like the notion of l'art pour l'art he dismissed as a 'Flucht in ein Traumland, . . . das . . . das Gefühl einer illusionären Freiheit gibt'⁴, whilst noting its reactionary nature:

Das Ideal der 'reinen Kunst' ist überhaupt ein Erbteil der reaktionär-romantischen Schule, das jede revolutionäre Klasse nur sehr mit Vorbehalt antreten wird. (5)

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1. Loc.cit., p.270.
 2. K.Marx & F.Engels, Über Kunst und Literatur, ed. by Kurt Thöricht & Roderick Fechner, Berlin 1949, p.102.
 3. G.V.Plekhanov, "Die französische dramatische Literatur vom Standpunkt der Soziologie", in F.J.Raddatz, op.cit., Bd. I, p.160-174.
 4. F.Mehring, "Naturalismus und Neuromantik", in F.J.Raddatz, op.cit., Bd. I, p.199.
 5. F.Mehring, "Kunst und Proletariat", in F.J.Raddatz, op.cit., Bd.I, p.202.

As for Naturalism, the supposed antipode of Romanticism, it did not fulfil the requirement of pointing out the way forward, it

blieb auf halbem Wege stehen. Er sah in der herrschenden Misere nur das Elend von heute, aber nicht die Hoffnung auf morgen. (1)

It is this deficiency which Mehring termed 'Parteilosigkeit': since the development inherent in late capitalist society is towards socialism, the 'Hoffnung auf morgen' can only be the hope of the advent of socialism; and since man is himself largely responsible for the historical process, which he actively brings about, the struggle for socialism requires a conscious individual commitment. 'Parteilichkeit' entails showing both the hope and the commitment. Literature should thus, in Mehring's view, take on a didactic role by aiming to raise the class consciousness of its readers, especially of the proletariat, and thus to stir them into action by demonstrating the necessity and possibility of radical social change.

Mehring maintained, however, that it was not necessary to be a member of any political party in order to practise 'Parteilichkeit', a view which he supported by reference to the correspondence between Freiligrath and Marx after the former had left the Communist Party; Freiligrath wrote:

Meiner, und der Natur jedes Poeten, tut die Freiheit not. Auch die Partei ist ein Käfig, und es singt sich, selbst für die Partei, besser draus als drin. Ich bin Dichter des Proletariats und der Revolution gewesen, lange bevor ich Mitglied des Bundes und Mitglied der Redaktion der Neuen Rheinischen Zeitung war! (2)

To this Marx wrote a conciliatory, indeed friendly and approving reply:

Ich habe ferner das Mißverständnis zu beseitigen gesucht, als ob ich unter 'Partei' einen seit acht Jahren verstorbenen 'Bund' oder eine seit zwölf Jahren aufgelöste Zeitungsredaktion verstehe.

Unter Partei verstand ich die Partei im großen historischen Sinne. (3)

The person to demand explicitly that writers who supported the socialist cause should commit themselves to the Party was Lenin. Taking up Marx's view that the proletariat could not spontaneously develop a class consciousness but that this consciousness had to be imparted to them from the outside, Lenin argued that it should be the function of literature to serve that purpose as part of the organisation that Lenin considered necessary to lead the proletariat from above:

Literature must become part of the common cause of the proletariat, "a cog and a screw" of one single great Social-Democratic mechanism . . . (4)

1. F.Mehring, "Naturalismus und Neuromantik", in F.J.Raddatz, op.cit., Bd. I, p.198.
2. Quoted by F.Mehring, "Sozialistische Lyrik, G.Herwegh--F.Freiligrath--H.Heine", in F.J.Raddatz, op.cit., Bd.I, p.221.
3. Ibid.
4. V.I.Lenin, "Party Organisation and Party Literature" (1905), Collected Works, Moscow 1962, Vol. 10, (pp.44-49); p.45.

Lenin never went so far as to suppress non-supporters or opponents, although he entered into vehement polemics against them. But for Party members there was no choice but to follow Party policy to the letter: writers were free, he wrote, to write as they pleased; but the Party was likewise free to expel them if they went against its wishes.¹ Nor did Lenin lay down any specific guidelines regarding literary form and technique; these, he wrote, were the artist's own concern, and he admitted, perhaps ironically, that he understood very little of these matters. He personally preferred a realistic literature, he said, because he could understand it, and for the same reason he considered it to be the most suitable means of reaching a wide proletarian readership. His self-confessed lack of understanding in literary matters did not inhibit him from condemning symbolism and modern literary experimentation as entirely subjective and non-communicative products of decadent capitalism. Lenin asked of writers that they should share their experiences with their readers, not by writing down to them, but by actively sharing in their lives. He encouraged writers to 'go to the people', to live and work with them, and to take part in physical labour in order to learn the reality of working life and thus be able to describe it convincingly. The literature of the Soviet Union, according to Lenin, should be a reflection of reality as seen through the eyes of an enlightened socialist and interpreted according to official Party ideology; for him, 'realism' meant such writing. In principle the communist intelligentsia of the Soviet Union agreed with Lenin and supported his call for a Tendenz-literatur. They differed, however, as to the precise meaning of 'realism', tending on the whole to regard Lenin's conception as excessively restrictive and simplistic. In fact the only writers who entirely followed Lenin here were the members of the RAPP, the Russian proletarian writers' association. They represented a specifically proletarian culture (customarily abbreviated as Proletkult) of writing by and for proletarians with proletarian life as its subject matter and with little aspiration to literary sophistication. Lenin was critical of them because their views did not correspond to his conception of a revolution from above, and further irritated by their refusal to subordinate themselves to the Party. Trotsky rejected Proletkult on the grounds that the proletariat, i.e. the urban industrial labour force, being a product of capitalism, inherently lacked the ability to produce a culture from its own resources. Part of the socialist programme was, he insisted, to provide the proletariat with access to the literary and artistic heritage

1. Loc.cit., p.47.

of the nation, as part of the general process of emancipation at the end of which the working class would no longer be a 'proletariat'. Trotsky accordingly advocated realism in literature, but defined it in such a way as to leave individual writers the fullest scope to use all available techniques:

. . . der neue Künstler wird alle von der Vergangenheit geschaffenen Verfahren und Methoden benötigen und noch einige dazu, um das neue Leben zu erfassen. Und dies wird keine künstlerische Eklektik sein, weil die Einheit des Schaffens sich aus dem aktiven Weltgefühl ergibt. (1)

Trotsky wrote the above in 1924, in the essay Die Kunst der Revolution und die sozialistische Kunst; it demonstrates that from the early years of the Soviet Union there was a development in Marxist literary theory which was neither dogmatic nor prescriptive. To this line of development belong Brecht, Anna Seghers and most of the talented writers of the GDR in the past two decades, and it cannot be too heavily emphasized that it does not, as is often asserted by dogmatic functionaries, in any way constitute a counter-revolutionary or reactionary development. However, it does reflect a specific attitude with regard to the role of the Party, and for this reason both Trotskyists and the RAPP were suppressed in the 1930s. By this time the RAPP had become the most influential literary organisation in the Soviet Union, and it exercised a strong influence on the literature of the German Left in the 1920s.

The views of literature held by the intellectual Left in Germany in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century had varied widely, but even the most radical thinkers did not advocate a prescriptive theory of literature. On the one hand the Social Democrat Karl Kautsky took the view that any artist was entitled to pursue whatever theme he chose, whether this were a social cause, or love, beauty, religion or whatever. In Vermehrung und Entwicklung in Natur und Gesellschaft² he pointed out that the most primitive forms of art had probably been means of self-expression before they were used as means of communication, and that it was thus in the nature of art that l'art pour l'art was as legitimate as art engagé; he even argued that in contemporary society l'art pour l'art was a valid form of protest against bourgeois attitudes. On the other hand the radical Left, whose most articulate members on the topic of literature were Rosa Luxemburg and Clara Zetkin, rejected subjective, individualistic art and called for a utilitarian art which aimed directly to educate and mobilize the proletariat, but neither of them felt that literature should be so subordinated to practical politics as to lose

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1. L.Trotsky, "Die Kunst der Revolution und die sozialistische Kunst", in F.J.Raddatz, op.cit, Bd.I, (pp.354-373); p.359.
 2. Stuttgart 1910; p.136.

sight of wider aspects of human experience. In 1917 Rosa Luxemburg, while in prison for her political activities, wrote to Luise Kautsky of Goethe's universality and detachment, qualities which she maintained were particularly necessary for anyone involved in political struggle:

Dieses völlige Aufgehen im Jammer des Tages ist mir überhaupt unbegreiflich und unerträglich. Schau z.B. wie ein Goethe mit kühler Gelassenheit über den Dingen stand. . . . ein Kämpfer muß erst recht über den Dingen zu stehen suchen, sonst versinkt er mit der Nase in jedem Quark . . . (1)

It is worth emphasizing that this most ardent champion of the socialist cause, who spent years in prison and finally died for that cause, not once suggested restrictive or prescriptive measures for harnessing literature to that cause.

In Germany the 1920s saw a reaction against literary Expressionism, with its extremes of subjectivity and rhetorical intensity, and the emergence of more detached and factual styles of writing which came to be loosely grouped under the term Neue Sachlichkeit. Such 'Sachlichkeit' tended, however, to preclude political commitment of the kind urged by the Left. Rudolf Leonhard implied a distinction between objectivity and commitment which the Left did not accept:

Der Schriftsteller soll Geschichtsschreiber sein, er soll getreulich und exakt berichten aber er soll sich nicht an eine Klasse binden. (2)

The Left however wanted a literature that would serve the cause of revolution, a revolution which they still considered a real possibility, taking the view that the failure of the attempted revolution at the end of the First World War in 1918 was due to betrayal by the Social Democrats. They turned to the proletariat in the hope that this class would instigate a successful revolution with the encouragement and guidance of the intellectuals. In 1919 Ludwig Rubiner published the anthology Kameraden der Menschheit as a proletarian counterpart to Pinthus's Menschheitsdämmerung; in the Epilogue he wrote:

Der Proletarier befreit die Welt von der wirtschaftlichen Vergangenheit des Kapitalismus; der Dichter befreit sie von der Gefühlsvergangenheit des Kapitalismus. (3)

Arbeiterliteratur in Germany in the 1920s tended at first to be a matter of sentimental glorification of the sufferings of the workers, what Marx had condemned as 'sentimentale Elendsmalerei'⁴. But in 1927, in celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Russian Revolution, the first

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1. Letter of 26.1.1917 in Rosa Luxemburg. Schriften über Kunst und Literatur, ed. by Marlen M. Korallow, Dresden 1972, p.126.
 2. R.Leonhard, quoted by A.Klein, "Zur Entwicklung der sozialistischen Literatur in Deutschland 1919-1933", NDL X, 1962/6, p.22.
 3. "Nachwort zu 'Kameraden der Menschheit'", in Ludwig Rubiner, Der Dichter greift in die Politik. Ausgewählte Werke 1908-1919, Leipzig 1976, p.328.
 4. See p.194.

Conference of Proletarian-Revolutionary Writers was held in Moscow, and here it was decided to found the Bund Proletarisch-Revolutionärer Schriftsteller (BPRS) in Germany, with the aim of producing a radical proletarian literature. The programme of the BPRS defined its aims as:

- a) to show the life of the working class as class struggle;
- b) to depict especially the avant-garde of the working class, the organized Communists;
- c) to mobilize the masses for revolutionary action;
- d) to advocate the ultimate victory of communism;
- e) to defend the Soviet Union against attack by capitalist aggressors.

This programme was, however, never published, because the BPRS failed to settle its differences with the KPD, which was as sceptical of the BPRS as the Soviet Communists were of the RAPP. The Party wanted propagandistic literature produced by bourgeois intellectuals; the Party publishing house refused to publish anything other than pamphlets and brochures for the proletariat, refusing to believe that genuine proletarian literature could in any way further the socialist cause.¹

At the foundation of the BPRS its aim had been defined as the creation of a proletarian literature supported by a Marxist theory of literature; questions of method were however initially ignored. Until 1930 all emphasis lay on ideological content, and Die Linkskurve, the journal of the BPRS, published mainly articles, reports, letters and stories by so-called Arbeiterkorrespondenten, i.e. proletarians who wrote about their experiences. 'Erlebnis' was the key concept, techniques were considered of secondary importance:

Dann kommt es nicht mehr auf den Streit um Darstellungsmethoden . . . sondern die Erfassung und intensivierende Wiedergabe des neuen Erlebens, der neuen Erlebnisse an. Das Erleben nicht einzelner Individuen, die immer von Zeit zu Zeit die Kunstmöglichkeiten der jeweils herrschenden Klasse bereichert haben, sondern der ganzen aufsteigenden Schicht. (2)

In this respect the BPRS differed from the RAPP, whose programme did include a section on method.

Johannes Becher, one of the leading spirits behind the foundation of the BPRS, defined proletarian-revolutionary literature as 'eine Literatur, die die Welt vom Standpunkt des revolutionären Proletariats aus sieht und sie gestaltet'³ and insisted that it must be first and foremost agitational:

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1. Helga Gallas, Marxistische Literaturtheorie, Neuwied 1971, p.28, reports that as late as 1932 the KPD publishing house rejected a proletarian novel on the grounds that novels were bought and read only by intellectuals, for whom the literary standards of proletarian literature were inadequate.
 2. R.Leonhard, quoted by A.Klein, loc.cit.
 3. J.R.Becher, "Unsere Front", Die Linkskurve 1929/1, p.1; also in Zur Tradition der sozialistischen Literatur in Deutschland, ed.by the Deutsche Akademie der Künste, Berlin DDR 1967, p.137.

Proletarisch-revolutionäre Literatur ist nicht Armeleutepoesie oder Mitleidsdichtung . . . Proletarisch-revolutionäre Literatur singt Klassenliebe und Klassenhaß. (1)

The KPD, however, following Lenin, rejected the notion of art as mere propaganda and insisted on the importance of literary quality:

Kunst ist eine zu heilige Sache, als daß sie ihren Namen für Propagandamachwerk hergeben dürfte . . . Was der Arbeiter heute braucht, ist eine starke Kunst . . . , solche Kunst kann auch bürgerlichen Ursprungs sein, nur sei es Kunst. (2)

Becher continued to insist that art and propaganda were not incompatible, whilst Andor Gábor carried the advocacy of proletarian literature to an extreme in the third issue of Die Linkskurve, with his article "Über proletarisch-revolutionäre Literatur", in which he argued that only proletarians could write proletarian literature because only they had the necessary direct experience.

By 1930 however the attitude of the BPRS began to change; it began to seek allies amongst the bourgeoisie, chiefly as a result of the growing threat of fascism. In a speech at the Second World Conference of Revolutionary Literature at Charkow in November 1930³ Becher expressed concern at political developments in Western Europe and stressed the need to attract bourgeois writers to the proletarian cause. He argued that the Russian Revolution had begun as an intellectual revolution but had then become a proletarian revolution, but that the different situation in Germany, with the alternative appeal of National Socialism, meant that the intelligentsia would have to decide which side they were on. To woo the bourgeoisie away from National Socialism would necessitate, among other things, so Becher argued, the development both of a literary theory and of a clear editorial policy for Die Linkskurve. Josef Lenz likewise took issue with Gábor's narrow conception of proletarian literature:

Die proletarische Literatur, die wir brauchen, muß das ganze Leben der menschlichen Gesellschaft, das Leben aller Klassen vom Standpunkt des revolutionären Proletariats widerspiegeln. Der Standpunkt des revolutionären Proletariats, das ist nicht der Standpunkt eines mit seinem Lohn und seinen Arbeitsbedingungen unzufriedenen Arbeiters, sondern der Standpunkt eines Marxisten-Leninisten, der den inneren Mechanismus der bestehenden Gesellschaftsordnung, die Ursachen ihrer Widersprüche, ihrer Greuel und ihrer Barbareien und die Notwendigkeit ihres Unterganges klar begreift. (4)

The same view was expressed by the RAPP representative at the Charkow Conference.

1. J.R.Becher, loc.cit., p.138.

2. Die rote Fahne 17.10.1920, quoted from H.Gallas, op.cit., p.126.

3. "Die Kriegsgefahr und die Aufgaben der revolutionären Schriftsteller", in Zur Tradition der sozialistischen Literatur in Deutschland, pp.221-260.

4. H.Kraus (= Josef Lenz), "Gegen den Ökonomismus in der Literaturfrage", Die Linkskurve 1930/3; also in Zur Tradition der sozialistischen Literatur in Deutschland, p.183.

From this point on Die Linkskurve concerned itself with the development of a literary theory. Between May and November 1930 Karl August Wittfogel published a series of articles under the title "Zur Frage einer marxistischen Ästhetik". Referring to Kant, Hegel and Mehring, Wittfogel pursued the argument that the choice of theme was the central issue for Marxist aesthetics, and defended the need for a Tendenz in proletarian art:

Das proletarische Kunstwerk braucht sich, im Gegensatz zum bürgerlichen, seiner Tendenz nicht zu schämen. Im Gegenteil, nur indem es . . . den Mut zur proletarischen Tendenz hat, ist es echtes Kunstwerk, groß, wahr. (1)

In a subsequent radio discussion with Gottfried Benn, Johannes Becher supported Wittfogel's view; to Benn's argument that there was no place for Tendenz in literary art, Becher retorted that there was no such thing as pure art or eternal values, but that all true art served in some way the on-going progress of humanity:

Die reine Kunst hat sich als Fiktion erwiesen; gerade sie ist Tendenz, wenn nicht in dem, was sie ausspricht, so in dem, was sie verschweigt. Jede Zeit hat ihre Aufgabe, und die Aufgabe dieser Zeit ist die Befreiung der gesamten Menschheit. Dieser Aufgabe dienen meine Dichtungen. Wer sich als Dichter dieser Zeit entzieht, hat sich der Aufgabe entzogen, die ihm als Mensch und Dichter von der Zeit gestellt ist. Es gibt auch für einen Dichter keinen Sprung über die Aufgaben der Zeit hinweg in die Ewigkeit. (2)

This ad hominem argument no doubt over-simplifies the issue, and in fact both Wittfogel and Becher had their reservations, since both realized the necessity of a literary method. Wittfogel warned that Tendenz alone does not make a work of art, that 'unfertige proletarische Künstler, Schriftsteller [oft] im äußerlich häufenden Bericht oder im abstrakten Leitartikel hängenbleiben'³, while Becher called for a concerted effort to devise an appropriate literary method:

Unsere Literatur muß nach einem festen Plan geleitet werden, wir müssen versuchen, auch als Schriftsteller in unseren Werken eine schöpferische Methode herauszubilden, das Zufällige und Willkürliche muß nach Möglichkeit aus unseren Reihen verschwinden . . . (4)

At about the same time Erwin Piscator was developing theatrical techniques appropriate to political drama: the use of documentary material, film background, readings from newspaper articles, reports and statistical material by a narrator on stage.⁵ Brecht, stimulated by Piscator's

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1. K.A.Wittfogel, "Nochmals zur Frage einer marxistischen Ästhetik", Die Linkskurve 1930/9, pp.22f.
 2. G.Benn & J.R.Becher, "Rundfunkgespräch" (broadcast on 6.3.1930), in Zur Tradition der sozialistischen Literatur in Deutschland, pp.148-152.
 3. Die Linkskurve, 1930/9, p.23.
 4. Die Linkskurve, 1931/10; also in Zur Tradition der sozialistischen Literatur in Deutschland, (pp.370-384); p.376.
 5. See E.Piscator, Das politische Theater, Berlin 1929, p.131.

innovations, was taking the first step towards his conception of 'epic theatre' in his notes to Die Dreigroschenoper and the "Anmerkungen zur Oper Mahagony" (1930). This incorporation of documentary elements into dramatic art was widely adopted by writers of the BPRS.

In the Soviet Union, however, the RAPP condemned such innovatory techniques as the product of capitalist decadence, and recommended instead Tolstoy as a model for their writers. In 1932 the RAPP was dissolved and replaced in 1934 by the Soviet Writers' Union, which proceeded to formulate the theory of Socialist Realism. Before this, however, Georg Lukács had begun to develop a similar theory in Germany, and it is Lukács who is considered by many to have provided the most satisfactory account of what is meant by Socialist Realism.¹ Lukács joined the editorial staff of Die Linkskurve in 1931 and soon became its dominant contributor, while Becher and Wittfogel, after the dissolution of the RAPP in the Soviet Union, kept a low profile and published no further theoretical articles. Lukács's first contribution was a sharp attack on the novels of Willi Bredel.² He criticized Bredel's failure to integrate documentary material satisfactorily into his fictional narrative, a failure which he ascribed to the entire proletarian literary movement. He complained that instead of 'shaping' (gestalten) they merely 'reported' (berichten), and continued to describe human action in terms of continuous psychological development rather than the revolutionary 'Sprünge' which Brecht had written of in the notes to Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagony. Lukács pursued this line of thought further in a review of Ernst Ottwalt's novel Denn sie wissen was sie tun. Ein deutscher Justizroman (1931)³. Ottwalt, he argued, had failed to go beyond the mere reportage of the iniquities of the bourgeois legal system; but reportage can only show appearances, whereas the writer's task is to analyse appearances, 'uncover' the dynamic forces which underlie them, then to 'cover up' these forces again by presenting them in a work of art in such a way that the appearances presented by the author depict not arbitrary immediate perceptions but the essence of reality.⁴ Thus the work of art, according to Lukács, would transcend mere appearances and create a harmonious totality from the disparity of appearance and essence:

[Das Ziel jeder großen Kunst ist . . .] ein Bild von der Wirklichkeit zu geben, in welchem der Gegensatz von Erscheinung und Wesen, von Einzelfall und Gesetz, von Unmittelbarkeit und Begriff usw. so auf-

1. Cf. D.Craig, (ed.), Marxists on Literature, Penguin 1975, p.12.

2. "Willi Bredels Romane", Die Linkskurve 11/1931; in G.Lukács Werke, Neuwied/Berlin 1971, Bd.4, "Probleme des Realismus I", pp.13-22.

3. "Reportage oder Gestaltung", Die Linkskurve 7-8/1932; Werke, Bd.4, pp.35-68.

4. Ibid. Lukács uses the terms 'aufdecken', 'zudecken' and 'gestalten'.

gelöst wird, daß beide im unmittelbaren Eindruck des Kunstwerks zur spontanen Einheit zusammenfallen, daß sie für den Rezipienten eine unzertrennbare Einheit bilden. (1)

Lukács took up Engels's notion of 'typical' characters and circumstances as the means of presenting important features of social reality without recourse to un-literary documentary techniques; he illustrated this point by comparing Ottwalt's novel with Tolstoy's Resurrection. Ottwalt retorted that Lukács's notion of 'totality' in fact entailed for the reader a purely aesthetic experience, producing no more than an 'emotionelle(n) Erregtheit' and a 'sanfte(n) Genugtuung, ein schönes Buch gelesen zu haben'². Lukács, however, not only continued to insist on 'totality' but went on to argue that it demanded a traditional linear narrative:

Es gehört zum Wesen ihres Aufbaus und ihrer Wirkung daß erst der Schluß die wirkliche und vollständige Aufklärung über den Anfang gibt . . . Die wesentlichen Bestimmungen jener Welt, die ein literarisches Kunstwerk darstellt, enthüllen sich also in einer kunstvollen Aufeinanderfolge und Steigerung. (3)

The entire literary theory developed by Lukács at this time sprang from his political convictions, which were in line with Lenin's view that the proletariat could only acquire a class consciousness, i.e. learn to see the essence and totality of life, with help from above. Literature was thus to be didactic by means of being exemplary. This was the position taken by Soviet realist writers and by Becher, Lukács, Kurella and others throughout the 1930s, '40s and '50s. On the other hand the group centred around Brecht, Benjamin, Bloch and Eisler supported the view represented earlier by Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht and Trotsky, that literature should, by using whatever formal resources appeared most appropriate, seek to stimulate the reader to independent thought rather than influence him by means of example. Brecht saw the function of art not as the solution of conflicts but their exposure, as a stimulus to social change. He argued that Lukács's notion of totality and integration would not be conducive to change because it would not stimulate a reader, or spectator of a drama, to think in an independent and complex manner about what he was reading or seeing:

Dies entspricht einer Haltung des Zuschauers, in der er nicht über die Sache denkt, sondern aus der Sache heraus . . . Das komplexe Sehen muß geübt werden. (4)

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1. "Kunst und objektive Wahrheit" (1954), Werke Bd.4, (pp.607-650), p.616.
 2. E.Ottwalt, "Tatsachenroman und Formexperiment. Eine Entgegnung an Georg Lukács", Die Linkskurve 10/1932; also in Zur Tradition der sozialistischen Literatur in Deutschland, pp.463-472.
 3. "Kunst und objektive Wahrheit", loc.cit., pp.616f.
 4. B.Brecht, Schriften zum Theater, Bd. II, Berlin DDR/Weimar 1964, p.96.

Art, Brecht agreed, should be a reflection (Abbild) of reality, but not a synthesis of appearance and essence, rather: 'Das Abbild muß . . . noch um sich herum die Spuren anderer Bewegungen und Züge aufweisen'¹. Brecht furthermore rejected Lukács's conception of realism as too narrowly formalistic. 'Realismus ist keine Formsache'², he insisted: a writer can and must use whatever forms and techniques best suit his purposes, not simply imitate Balzac and Tolstoy:

Über literarische Formen muß man die Realität befragen, nicht die Ästhetik, auch nicht die des Realismus . . . (3).

Jeder, der nicht in formalen Vorurteilen befangen ist, weiß, daß die Wahrheit auf viele Arten verschwiegen werden kann und auf viele Arten gesagt werden muß. (4)

Brecht was also convinced that it was not necessary to patronize working people by offering them only unchallenging traditional literary forms:

Ich spreche aus Erfahrung, wenn ich sage: Man braucht nie Angst zu haben, mit kühnen, ungewohnten Dingen vor das Proletariat zu treten, wenn sie nur mit seiner Wirklichkeit zu tun haben. (5)

Brecht declined to pursue his difference of opinion with Lukács further; with the imminent threat of National Socialism he felt the Party had more important issues to concentrate its attention on, and he requested that an essay which he had sent to Die Linkskurve on the subject of literary theory be withheld from publication.⁶ When the BPRS was declared illegal in 1933 and most of its members went into exile; it was difficult to pursue the debate under such adverse conditions, with the result that few objections to Lukács's ideas were heard throughout the National Socialist era.

One continuation to the debate which was, however, published during those years was the celebrated correspondence between Lukács and Anna Seghers.⁷ Anna Seghers, who was not only a highly gifted writer but also

1. B.Brecht, Schriften zum Theater, Bd.II, Berlin DDR/Weimar 1964, p.34.
2. B.Brecht, "Praktisches zur Expressionismusdebatte", in Gesammelte Werke, Frankfurt a.M.1967, Bd. VIII, (pp.292-296); p.296.
3. "Weite und Vielfalt der realistischen Schreibweise", GW VIII, (pp.340-349); p.349.
4. "Volkstümlichkeit und Realismus", GW VIII, (pp.322-333); p.327.
5. Ibid., p.329.
6. For a detailed discussion of the debate between Lukács and Brecht see W.Mittenzwei, "Der Streit zwischen nichtaristotelischer und aristotelischer Kunstauffassung. Die Brecht-Lukács-Debatte", in W.Mittenzwei (ed.) Dialog und Kontroverse mit Georg Lukács, Leipzig 1975, pp.153-203. Also H.Gallas, Marxistische Literaturtheorie, Neuwied 1971, pp.119-178. Although refraining from further public debate, Brecht continued to write down his objections in his Arbeitsjournal 1938-1942 (ed. by W.Hecht), Frankfurt a.M. 1973; see for example Bd. I, pp. 13, 26, 39.
7. The correspondence dates from June 1938 to March 1939 and was published in Internationale Literatur, which appeared in Moscow from June 1931 to December 1945.

a trained art historian, brought a wide and scholarly historical perspective to bear on the issue and produced powerful and well-substantiated arguments in favour of a broad and flexible conception of 'realism'. She pointed out that no modern writer can know the whole of 'reality', and that nobody can know in advance what later generations will recognize as the 'typical' features of that reality:

Die Aneinanderreihung scheinbar zufälliger Elemente erwies sich nämlich erst nachher als die Herausarbeitung des Typischen, als die wesentlichen Momente im Gesicht der Klasse. (1)

Nor, she argued, can any artistic method be prescribed in advance for the great task of giving artistic expression to the new reality of the twentieth century and the struggle for socialism, and she eloquently rejected Lukács's attempt to do so as altogether too restrictive:

Nur der ganz große Künstler kann ein neues Stück Wirklichkeit ganz bewußt machen; andere sehen nur dieses Stück Wirklichkeit, und es gelingt ihnen nicht völlig oder erst nach vielen Schwierigkeiten, es bewußt zu machen. Aber auch den ganz großen gelingt diese Bewußtmachung nicht immer für den jeweiligen Zeitpunkt und für die jeweilige Gesellschaft. Rembrandt wurde nach der 'Nachtwache' ausgelacht und ruiniert. Und allen großen Synthesen sind sowohl bei dem einzelnen Künstler wie bei der ganzen Künstlergeneration Bestandsaufnahmen der neuen Wirklichkeit, Experimente usw. vorausgegangen. Selbst der realistische Künstler hat gewissermaßen seine 'abstrakte Periode', und er muß sie haben. (2)

Meanwhile, however, Lukács and his associates had gone to Moscow, where they found themselves in substantial agreement with their Soviet fellow-theorists over matters of literary technique. In 1934 the theory of Socialist Realism was formulated and officially accepted at the First Writers' Congress. Zhdanov, Stalin's Minister of Culture, took up the phrase 'engineers of human minds' which Stalin had used in October 1932 during a meeting with writers at Gorky's house, and proceeded to give a definition of Socialist Realism -- the term had been in use since 1932 -- which has since been regarded as a binding formulation:

Comrade Stalin described our writers as engineers of human minds. What does it mean? What duties does this title impose on you? It means above all, to know life in order to depict it truthfully in works of art, to depict it not scholastically, not lifelessly, not just as 'objective reality', but to depict real life in its revolutionary development.

In so doing, truthfulness and historical concreteness of artistic depiction must be combined with the task of ideological remolding and re-education of the toiling people in the spirit of Socialism. This method in fiction and in literary criticism is what we call Socialist Realism. (3)

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1. Letter dated 28.6.1938, published in G.Lukács Werke, Bd. 4, p.351.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Quoted from G.Struve, Russian Literature under Lenin and Stalin 1917-1953, London 1972, p.262.

Later in the same speech Zhdanov, in a much less frequently quoted passage, went on to add that writers were free to use whatever forms and techniques they chose, but subsequent elaborations of the theory ignored this and concentrated on a conception derived from Lenin's preference for conventional linear narrative and dislike of literary experimentation. This conception stressed the need to portray reality as directly perceived whilst pointing the way to the future as it should be in accordance with Marxist-Leninist teaching. Parteilichkeit remained a central concept, both in the Soviet Union and later in the GDR -- not in the sense in which Lukács had used the word, the sense of general commitment to Marxist ideology,¹ but in Lenin's more restrictive sense of loyalty to a specific Party line. Literature was thus defined as an element in the Party machine, supporting its political programme and lending its voice to the glorification of Stalin and propaganda for individual Soviet projects and ambitions. In the following years, the darkest years of the Stalinist terror, real and potential dissidents were liquidated, most notably during the purges of 1936-38. Little then changed until the 'thaw' following Stalin's death in 1953.

The post-Stalinist 'thaw', so named after Ilya Ehrenburg's novel The Thaw (1954), one of the first novels to be published after Stalin's death, was of brief duration. At the Second Congress of Soviet Writers in December 1954 the necessity of ideological purity was re-affirmed. A second, even briefer 'thaw' has been detected after the XXth Party Congress in 1956, but this came to an abrupt end after the Hungarian rising later the same year. Since then there have been occasional fluctuations, but no substantial change in the Party's insistence on the orthodox conception of Socialist Realism. 1962 saw further campaigns against more liberal attitudes towards literature and the arts in general.² Since the 1960s there has certainly been greater unrest and friction in the Soviet Union between authorities and intellectuals, a state of affairs which is paralleled in the GDR, where the Party still adheres to a basically unchanged conception of Socialist Realism as established in 1934. After the Eleventh Plenum of the SED in December 1965 a very rigid Party line was re-asserted, which was reflected in the Sixth Writers' Congress in 1969, where the stereotyped conceptions of the 1950s reappeared. Writers objected strongly that such dogmatic adherence to a rigid conception of literature was more likely to alienate readers than to win their

1. See G.Lukács, "Tendenz oder Parteilichkeit?", Die Linkskurve 6/1932; Werke Bd. 4, pp.23-34, esp. pp.32f.

2. For a survey of the post-Stalinist era in Soviet literature see E.J.Brown, Russian Literature since the Revolution, London 1963, chapters 11-13.

attention, but the Party continued to insist that authority in these matters lay in its hands and not with the writers themselves.¹ Since the Eighth Party Congress of the SED in 1971 the Party has been less inflexible in theoretical matters;² Honecker spoke of the task of literature as the 'Herausbildung der allseitig entwickelten Persönlichkeit'.³ There has been much talk of the removal of taboos and the freedom of writers to go their own way provided that they remain firmly on the side of socialism, but there has remained a considerable difference between the Party and writers concerning the interpretation of this freedom and its limits. Writers have continued to adhere to the more flexible conceptions of Brecht and Anna Seghers, but literary critics, whose evaluations reflect the Party's view, still show allegiance to the rigidly prescriptive views of Zhdanov and Lukács. Behn sums up this lack of real understanding between writers and Party critics which has bedevilled literary life in the GDR ever since its foundation:

Klagen über die Literaturkritik haben in der DDR eine lange Tradition von der Formalismus-Debatte der 50er Jahre, die damals so prominente Autoren wie Becher und Brecht wegen ihrer Literaturfremdheit auf den Plan rief, bis hin zum Beschluß des Politbüros des ZK der SED zu den 'Aufgaben der Literatur- und Kunstkritik', der Ende 1977 gefaßt wurde.

Das Verhältnis von Schriftstellern und Literaturkritik ist in der DDR häufig als eines äußerster Beziehungslosigkeit gekennzeichnet worden. (4)

The present (1981) situation would appear to be characterized by increasing confusion within the Party leadership concerning the degree to which they should continue to attempt to exert control over writers. Increasingly the Party finds itself on the defensive, its censorship activities appear to have become less a matter of prescribing guidelines for a literature which will help in the building of socialism than an attempt to stem the tide of critical opposition.⁵ At the 10th Party Congress of the SED in April 1981 Honecker sharply condemned literature which he described as hostile to existing socialism and Party policy and called on writers to exercise 'artistic responsibility'.⁶ It is too early to say what will be the effect of Brezhnev's advice to the East European leaders referred to in Chapter 1.⁷

1. See the unpublished Ph.D. thesis by G.D.Tate, Identity, Community and Continuity in the East German Novel, Warwick 1977, Chapter 5.

2. See M.Behn (ed.), Wirkungsgeschichte von Christa Wolfs Nachdenken über Christa T., Königstein 1978, p.6.

3. E.Honecker, "Inhaltliche Tiefe und meisterhafte Gestaltung", published in NDL XIX, 1971/8, pp.3-6.

4. M. Behn, op.cit., pp.11f.

5. See A.Stephan, "Kulturpolitik in the GDR under Honecker", paper delivered at the Conference on the GDR under Honecker 1971-1981 at the University of Dundee, 11-13 September 1981.

6. E.Honecker, Report of the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany to the 10th Congress of the SED, Berlin DDR 1981, p.142.

7. See pp.19f.

Chapter 5. The Intellectual in selected East German novels of the 1960s and 1970s.

- A. Christa Wolf: Der geteilte Himmel (1963)
Nachdenken über Christa T. (1968)
- B. Hermann Kant: Die Aula (1965)
Das Impressum (1972)
- C. Günter de Bruyn: Die Preisverleihung (1972)
- D. Jurek Becker: Irreführung der Behörden (1973)
Schlaflose Tage (1978)
- E. Rolf Schneider: Das Glück (1976)

Introduction:

As we have seen in chapter 4, the official cultural programme for the 1960s, worked out at the Bitterfeld Conferences of 1959 and 1964, emphasized the need for closer contact between artists and intellectuals, and workers. With the aim of diminishing the gap between art and life, workers were encouraged to write about their own experiences, while professional writers were urged to acquire experience of industrial work and to use this experience as the raw material for works of literature, following the methods of socialist realism, that is to say, to interpret their experience in the context of the socialist conception of historical progress, and evaluate it in the light of socialist morality.

The initial response to the Bitterfeld programme was strong and enthusiastic. Virtually all the leading authors in the GDR produced a novel with an industrial or agricultural background¹, giving detailed accounts of the production process and its social relevance, as well as showing the personal development of the central character towards political consciousness. However, in the literary presentation of the world of work by professional writers, two major deviations from the official conception became apparent almost immediately. Whereas this conception gave emphasis to the depiction of the actual production process and the individual in relation to it, that is to say the social and economic functions of the individual, writers tended to show much greater interest in the individual's subjective experience of his part in the production

1. E.g. K.H.Jakobs, Beschreibung eines Sommers (1963); C.Wolf, Der geteilte Himmel (1963); E.Strittmatter, Ole Bienkopp (1963); E.Neutsch, Spur der Steine (1965). Franz Fühmann also published a reportage, Kabelkran und Blauer Peter (1961), describing his experiences as a docks worker.

process, and his rational and emotional evaluation of it. Rather than the utilitarian -- i.e. political and economic -- aspects of socialism, they stressed its human, psychological and moral aspects, pointing out that political and economic developments, whilst necessary and indeed of the utmost importance, were ultimately means, not ends, the end being the establishment of a socialist society in which each individual can fulfil his potential and so achieve both the greatest possible personal happiness and the greatest possible social good. They also stressed that although it is inevitable that in the period of transition to true socialism each individual will be required to make sacrifices in order to help establish a new society, these sacrifices must never be taken for granted, but must in each case arise from a conscious decision on the part of the individual, who must have the right to ask questions and draw his own conclusions, albeit with the help of Marxist-Leninist ideology. The task of the Party, these writers insisted, was to help the individual to see his situation more clearly, and advise him when necessary, not to dictate solutions but to help in the search for them. As we shall see from the novels dealt with in this chapter, writers agree unanimously with regard to this principle, though they formulate it with varying degrees of explicitness. This emphasis on the rights of the individual is, of course, one of the main reasons why writers and other intellectuals have incurred the disapproval of the authorities.

The second point of divergence between the Bitterfeld programme and the actual practice of professional writers was that they increasingly chose intellectuals for their central characters rather than working-class figures. As has been pointed out in chapter 4, they were severely criticized for this by the Party, despite Hermann Kant's defence that in a socialist society there was no longer a real gap between the intelligentsia and the workers. This assumption clearly underlies the novel Die Aula, where a journalist of proletarian origins is the focal point for a critical scrutiny of East German society past and present. The choice of intellectual characters is due largely to the fact that writers began to write about their own experiences and views rather than themes prescribed by the Party. Die Aula is indeed, like many other literary works of the 1960s, largely autobiographical in content. Christa Wolf justified this use of the writer's own biography in the interests of honesty and authenticity:

Der Autor muß sich stellen. Er darf sich nicht hinter seiner Fiktion vor dem Leser verbergen; der Leser soll ihn mitsehen. (1)

1. In an interview with Joachim Walther, in J. Walther, Meinetwegen Schmetterlinge. Gespräche mit Schriftstellern, Berlin DDR 1974, p.121.

East German critics have tended to express disapproval of the choice of an intellectual as the central character of a novel, but they have not looked closely at the actual presentation of the characters and their experiences, nor have they inquired after the reasons for the choice. It will be the purpose of this chapter to investigate these topics, paying particular attention to those problematic areas of life in the GDR which are brought under scrutiny through the presentation of an intellectual, notably the problems of intellectual freedom and its relationship to social responsibility, the danger of social isolation, the particular problems arising from an artistic temperament, and the problem of reconciling personal inclination with social commitment and obligation.

The novels dealt with in this chapter have been selected according to the following criteria:

1. They were written and published in the 1960s and 1970s.
2. Their central characters are intellectuals living in contemporary GDR society.
3. Their main theme is the problems facing an intellectual in a socialist society.
4. The authors all belong to that generation which was old enough to experience the Third Reich and the Second World War consciously, but young enough to start a new life after the foundation of the new Republic, and hence identify strongly with the GDR as its founding generation.

The first decade, approximately, of the new republic was marked by the idealism of this young generation; then, gradually at first but more rapidly after the disillusionment following the revelations of the XXth Party Conference of the Soviet Communist Party in 1956, by an increasingly critical attitude. This did not mean that ideals were abandoned, but it did mean greater open-mindedness with regard to the discrepancies which still existed between those ideals and reality. Whilst accepting the Party's view of the didactic role of literature, writers took it upon themselves to maintain the vigour of their socialist ideals not by pretending that reality was more attractive than was actually the case, but by demonstrating why there were still so many shortcomings, by criticizing both personal and social failings, and by showing that the ultimate responsibility for the successful establishment of a socialist society lies with each and every individual, because such a society can function only when it is made up of genuinely socialist individuals. That is to say, writers emphasized the moral values of socialism, particularly personal integrity and honesty. Initially, their attitude was in general one of optimism, but gradually, as social and political developments in the GDR

failed to take the course which they had hoped for and the rigid dogmatism of the Party's policies failed to make way for more democratic attitudes, the criticisms voiced in literature became more forceful and the writers' attitude less implicitly hopeful. Although they did not adopt an attitude of resignation, they did cease to offer ready-made solutions to the problems which they explored in their works. Moral content is still evident in these later works, but they tend to remain open-ended, indeed in some cases they show markedly abrupt and aesthetically unsatisfactory endings, for example the novels by Becker and Schneider to be discussed later in this chapter. Such endings leave it to the reader to decide which course of action would be correct in view of the particular circumstances involved, thus placing upon the reader by implication the responsibility for the present and future state of his society.

It is in keeping with this attitude of uncertainty, and awareness of the failure of reality to match idealistic expectations, that all the intellectuals portrayed in the novels to be discussed are presented as fallible human beings, whose personal shortcomings are as considerable as those of the society which they scrutinize; Rita Seidel and David Groth come perhaps closest to being 'exemplary' characters as required by the Party's notion of Socialist Realism, but even they have their failings and limitations. The intellectuals portrayed in Nachdenken über Christa T., Die Aula and the novels of Becker, de Bruyn and Schneider are even more imperfect, as regards both their social and their private relationships. These intellectuals do not, any more than their West German counterparts, inhabit a sphere of pure reason and detached enlightenment. Only David Groth in Kant's Das Impressum has an unproblematic private life (apart from the period of estrangement from Franziska prior to their marriage.) For the rest, the unproblematic presentation of 'positive' heroes has given way to an ironic scrutiny of complex and problematic individuals.

A. Christa Wolf: Der geteilte Himmel and Nachdenken über Christa T.

Christa Wolf might appear, at first sight, to have come a long way since her first writings in the 1950s, her book reviews and critical articles in Neue deutsche Literatur, and her own first creative work, Moskauer Novelle (1961). Closer examination reveals, however, a clear continuity of development, and a development which is indeed representative of the general development of intellectuals in the GDR during this period: a sense of guilt and disillusionment in the late 1940s, followed in the early 1950s by whole-hearted commitment to socialism with an enthusiasm bordering on euphoria; after Stalin's death in 1953 a gradual realisation of the imperfections of social reality and a more sober, indeed increasingly sceptical outlook -- but one which in no way entailed rejection of the socialist ideal. Christa Wolf admitted in 1972¹, looking back over more than fifteen years of literary activity, that there was much that she would no longer write in the same way; she conceded that the stereotyped literature of the first years of the GDR frequently lacked artistic quality, but insisted that it was useful and necessary at the time. Regarding her own contributions to literature and literary criticism during that early period, her defence is characteristic: the essential fact is that at the time she was entirely honest in her convictions and intentions.² Honesty has remained the most important of her values. Rita Seidel embodies this quality of honesty, which is a central theme of Nachdenken über Christa T. also.

Whereas Moskauer Novelle can be regarded as a typical product of the theory of Socialist Realism, inasmuch as the personal problems of the central characters are solved by unquestioning obedience to advice given by representatives of the Party, Der geteilte Himmel, whilst still clearly displaying many of the features of Socialist Realism, presents its characters and their experience in a more complex and problematic way. In Der geteilte Himmel Christa Wolf traces the evolution of a socialist intellectual through higher education and experience of the world of industrial work, and at the same time examines various other contrasting types of intellectual: the bourgeois technocrat Manfred, the socialist managerial leader Wendland, the academic-activist Schwarzenbach and the dogmatic Stalinist Mangold. This imaginative presentation of various kinds of intellectual was new in GDR literature, as was Christa Wolf's attempted synthesis of social and personal themes. Rita Seidel embodies

1. J. Walther, loc.cit., p.128.

2. Ibid., p.129.

the new intelligentsia of the GDR, and develops in close contact with the workers, sharing their values, principles and interests and experiencing genuine solidarity with them. In this respect Rita is an exemplary character, but she is presented without any of the didacticism which mars the later novels of Anna Seghers on similar themes, Die Entscheidung (1959) and Das Vertrauen (1968). But Der geteilte Himmel is not merely a study of the evolution of an individual's relationship to society, it is at the same time a vivid and many-sided portrait of that society itself; it is by virtue of this latter aspect that it is commonly considered as a product of the Bitterfeld movement:

Die Erzählung erfaßt mithin nicht nur die subjektiven Veränderungen im Bewußtsein der Hauptgestalt; sie reflektiert auch die objektiven, gesellschaftlichen Veränderungen, die den Hintergrund von Ritas Geschichte bilden. (1)

In order to portray both the formative experiences of a young socialist intellectual, and the process of reflection which leads to full consciousness of the import of those experiences, Christa Wolf employs a narrative technique which was boldly innovatory for its time, and indeed recognized as such by critics², and which has been widely emulated in GDR literature since: the counterpointing of two time levels, and a narrative perspective which alternates between first and third person. Of the two time levels, one comprises the months September to November 1961, the period which Rita spends in hospital and convalescing after an accident which is tantamount to attempted suicide; the other encompasses the period from summer 1959 to September 1961 and culminates in Rita's breakdown after her final separation from Manfred.

Rita, a student teacher, develops in a working-class environment from a passive country girl into a politically aware young woman. Her decisive experiences are gained in that working-class environment, the factory in which she works before commencing her studies, and during vacations. To reproach the author with 'Mangel an Volkstümlichkeit', as some GDR critics have done, is entirely unjustified.³ But Rita is not in every respect a positive heroine -- her understanding of events and people is too limited for that -- nor is her bourgeois lover and ideological adversary Manfred portrayed as an entirely negative character. Only during the months in hospital, on the second time level, does Rita

1. P.Gugisch, "Christa Wolf", in H.J.Geerds (ed.), Literatur der DDR in Einzeldarstellungen, Stuttgart 1972, (pp.395-415); p.397.
2. A valuable collection of the critical reactions to Der geteilte Himmel is provided by M.Reso (ed.), 'Der geteilte Himmel' und seine Kritiker, Halle (Saale) 1965.
3. Cf. R.Heise, "Der geteilte Himmel", NDL XI, 1963/6, pp.148-153.

come to understand the full import of her experiences by analysing and evaluating them: she now consciously re-takes the decision not to stay with Manfred in West Germany, which she had at the time taken in a more instinctive manner, and in a state of great pain and confusion. Her emotional decision is retrospectively vindicated by her reason and moral sense. The advantage of this narrative technique is that it enables Rita's formative experiences to be convincingly located in their social and political context, and encourages the reader to reflect on them also, as Rita does. At the same time the account of events retains an immediacy and subjectivity -- a subjectivity which was indeed thought excessive by many GDR critics, who would have preferred less weight to have been given to Rita's emotional responses and more to her moral evaluations. In her emphasis on the importance of emotional reactions even for a young and in many ways exemplary socialist intellectual, Christa Wolf also went beyond contemporary stereotypes in East German fiction.

When the reader is first introduced to Rita she is an unworldly village girl wholly lacking in political consciousness, dissatisfied with her unrewarding life as an office clerk, but without any conception of a positive alternative until she meets and falls in love with Manfred and is persuaded by Schwarzenbach to train to be a teacher. Her experience of love in her relationship with Manfred is one of her decisive formative experiences, and in according such importance to the private emotional sphere in the evolution of a socialist intellectual, the author was also breaking new ground. Rita's maturing process takes place in her relationship with Manfred, in the home of his parents, at the teacher training college (of which we see very little) and, pre-eminently, in the railway carriage works, the school of industrial labour.

Rita and Manfred belong, by virtue of the ten years age difference between them, to different generations. Manfred is old enough to have been influenced by the National Socialist era, Rita knows only the world of socialism. As Manfred reflects, this constitutes a fundamental difference:

Komisch: Irgendwo zwischen ihr und mir fängt die neue Generation an. Wie soll sie begreifen, daß man uns alle frühzeitig mit dieser tödlichen Gleichgültigkeit infiziert hat, die man so schwer wieder los wird? (GH 56)

The existence of a generation gap is not officially acknowledged in the GDR.¹ The Party's view is that all citizens of the GDR are united in the struggle for a common goal. Christa Wolf shows with understanding that

1. See for example H. Kant, "Unsere Worte wirken in der Klassenauseinandersetzung", speech delivered at the VIIth Writers' Congress in November 1973, published in Deutsch als Fremdsprache, 1974/11 (Sonderheft), p.6.

differences do, however, exist, and that each individual with his own experiences must first learn to understand and accept the common goal. The age gap between Rita and Manfred reflects, however, a much more fundamental difference, the difference between the 'old' and the 'new' intelligentsia. Rita represents that new intelligentsia that has been fostered and educated by the socialist state in order to replace the bourgeois intelligentsia, whose cooperation, however, is for the time being still vitally necessary. Rita develops contemporaneously with the socialist society and in accordance with, and loyal to, its principles. Manfred, by contrast, comes from a bourgeois background and finds himself, partly because of inherited bourgeois attitudes, partly because of the effects of the National Socialist era, unable to give credence to the promises of the new era of socialism. His cynicism, as he looks back on the immediate post-war years and the hypocrisy and opportunism of his father and so many like him, exemplifies the attitude of many of his contemporaries:

Wir lachten laut, wenn wir die Plakate lasen: Alles wird jetzt anders. Anders? Mit wem denn? Mit diesen selben Leuten? (GH 57)

Manfred cannot easily believe in the possibility of a good society, and his early experiences in the new socialist state do little to help him towards such a belief.

Manfred is, clearly, a reactionary bourgeois intellectual, to use the standard terminology of the Party. But what was new in Christa Wolf's presentation was the degree of sympathy with which she demonstrates both the part played by the National Socialist past in reinforcing his negative political attitudes, and the contribution to his disillusionment of the shortcomings of the new socialist society. That his attitudes are condemned by the author cannot be seriously doubted; the majority of GDR critics -- though not all -- saw this clearly when Der geteilte Himmel was first published. Manfred is competitive, egocentric and cynical; he sees his work almost entirely in terms of personal status and esteem rather than in terms of its social value; he uses his verbal skills to evade social responsibility by disguising his moral indifference and superior social and philosophical insight, patronisingly rejecting socialist idealism as naive and the socialist system as inappropriate for advanced industrial societies; he believes uncritically in scientific progress regardless of its social relevance; he is unsociable and oversensitive, and his relationship to Rita, his 'braunes Fräulein', is patronizing, unsupportive, and based on a traditional conception of male dominance -- as his name (Manfred Herrfurth) is clearly intended to indicate. All these characteristics are typical of a stereotype of the

'Western' bourgeois that is familiar in East German literature. Manfred may hate and despise his parents for their reactionary attitudes and cynical opportunism, but he has been unable to liberate himself from those attitudes; Ekkehard Kloehn rightly sees this inability as one, at least, of the reasons for Manfred's 'Republikflucht':

Nicht [Manfreds] Intellektualität ist es, die ihn nach drüben treibt. Manfred kommt nicht los von dem, was er als kluger Kopf doch gerade verachtet: von der Vergangenheit und dem 'Bürgertum'. Er und seine Berufskollegen stehen zwischen dem 'Noch-nicht' und dem 'Nicht-mehr', während sich Rita unbelastet dem 'Noch-nicht' zuwenden kann. (1)

Manfred may be contrasted here to Tom Breitsprecher in Karl-Heinz Jakobs's novel Beschreibung eines Sommers, who belongs to the same generation and comes from the same middle-class background as Manfred, but succeeds, not without difficulties, in identifying with the socialist cause.

It may well be fair to say that in the presentation of Manfred's parents, and the contrast between them and the positive figures of Wendland and Meternagel, the author is guilty of a 'Schwarz-Weiss-Malerei' all too familiar in East German literature.² But Manfred himself is given sufficient positive characteristics to produce a rounded and complex portrait of the bourgeois intellectual. It is clear that he does have a capacity for enthusiasm, and that if his experiences had been less unfortunate he might well have been won over to the socialist cause. Fritz Raddatz points out that no author prior to Christa Wolf had shown such sympathetic understanding towards a bourgeois defector:

So läßt [Christa Wolf], zum ersten Mal in der DDR-Literatur, auch den 'anderen', den, der geht, Recht haben; Christa Wolfs Manfred ist nicht 'gekauft' und 'Agent des Imperialismus', nicht einmal bloß einer, der 'noch nicht' das Licht des Heils sieht, das zu sehen, den Klügeren, Gläubigeren schon vergönnt ist. (3)

Manfred was clearly at one time an active supporter of social change, who spoke out boldly against defects in the education system:

Ich hab gesprochen. Über Fehler im Studienbetrieb. Über den tollen Ballast, der uns belastete. Über Heuchelei, die mit guten Noten belohnt wurde. (GH 176)

But the result was that he was branded as a bourgeois reactionary and publicly condemned by a former friend, whose very terminology betrays the myopic dogmatism of those who can speak only in the Party's clichés:

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1. E.Kloehn, "Christa Wolf: Der geteilte Himmel. Roman zwischen sozialistischem Realismus und kritischem Realismus", Der Deutschunterricht, 1968/1, (pp.43-56); p.48.
 2. Cf. M.Durzak, Der deutsche Roman der Gegenwart, 2nd rev.ed. Stuttgart 1973, p.276. P. Hutchinson, Literary Presentations of Divided Germany, CUP 1977, pp.92f. finds 'this judgement . . . rather harsh', but there is little in the presentation of the elder Herrfurths to refute Durzaks criticism.
 3. F.J.Raddatz, Traditionen und Tendenzen. Materialien zur Literatur der DDR, Frankfurt a.M. 1971, p.380.

Er schrieb über die, vom Leben abgekapselten, in bürgerlichen Irrmeinungen befangenen Intellektuellen, die unsere Universitäten in den ideologischen Sumpf zurückzerren wollen. (GH 177)

Nowadays, Manfred adds bitterly, the newspapers are full of the criticisms which he voiced in those earlier years. But Manfred does not take this as a sign that progress is possible, and has been to some extent at least achieved; by now he has truculently accepted the image of the unregenerate bourgeois, blaming his withdrawal into reactionary attitudes on the limitations of others. There is truth in his accusation, although it does not, in the last analysis, justify his attitudes, for Manfred is guilty of 'bad faith', of regarding himself as the object of others' actions, not as a self-determining subject:

Er, er ist es gewesen, der mich zwang, dem Bild ähnlicher zu werden, das er wider besseres Wissen von mir entworfen hat. (GH 177)

When Manfred meets Rita he attempts to regain his belief in the possibility of a better future. He devotes his energies to the project which he and a younger colleague are developing. But when this project is rejected, as a result of bureaucratic corruption, Manfred reverts to his stance of cynical withdrawal. Partly this is a case of giving up too easily; but it is also the case that Manfred does not find the support and encouragement which might have strengthened his resolve. Rita has not as yet sufficient confidence or experience to be able to articulate her belief in socialism, which is still almost entirely instinctive and emotional. Ernst Wendland, the new works manager who embodies the ideal of active socialist commitment in the industrial sphere, and whose name may be intended to suggest a 'Wendepunkt', both in the development of the GDR and, at the end of the novel, in Rita's personal life, shows good will towards Manfred, but circumstances are not conducive to a warmer relationship: Wendland is harrassed at work by shortages of raw materials and unrest among the workers over production norms, his marriage has broken down and he is strongly attracted to Rita. When Manfred challenges Wendland's socialist principles, the latter responds only reluctantly and does not embark on a full discussion (GH 191f.) Since the cooperation and support of the bourgeois technocratic élite was essential to the industrial success of the GDR, Wendland can fairly be said to have behaved less than adequately towards Manfred, in both personal and social terms.

Throughout their relationship Rita rejects Manfred's cynicism, but without being able to argue rationally and convincingly with him. She too encounters dogmatism and harshness, particularly in the figure of Mangold, a doctrinaire Stalinist intellectual, who quotes Marx and the Party line at length but is wholly devoid of the humane spirit of socialism, but she is determined not to be intimidated by him. The obligation to

counter doctrinaire bigotry with sensitivity and humanity is a recurrent theme in all the novels to be discussed in this chapter. At this point in the novel Rita has not yet consciously considered the issue at stake; her reaction to Mangold is rather the spontaneous aversion of an uncorrupted personality. But when later in the novel her friend Sigrid falls foul of the authorities for attempting to conceal her parents' defection to the West, Rita has become more conscious of her reasons for condemning Mangold's harshness as the product of irrational fanaticism:

Er sprach über die Parteilinie, wie Katholiken über die unbefleckte Empfängnis reden. (GH 174)

Dogmatists such as Mangold are not easily defeated. It is Schwarzenbach, another model socialist, who takes up the challenge: rather than preaching and punishing, he suggests, men of Mangold's certainty and conviction should try to help and support those who are weaker and less certain than they:

Sorgen Sie lieber dafür, daß eine Sigrid merkt: Für sie ist die Partei da, was ihr auch passiert. -- Für wen denn sonst, wenn nicht für sie. . . (GH 174)

But Mangold is not converted by Schwarzenbach's appeal, and reappears later in the novel with his attitudes and behaviour unchanged. Schwarzenbach, for his part, falls foul of his colleagues for his advocacy of progressive teaching methods. Schwarzenbach and Wendland are complementary figures in the structure of the novel, representing the 'kulturtragende Intelligenz' and 'technische Intelligenz' respectively; both have humane qualities which are presented as wholly admirable, but not as wholly adequate to the political challenges which they face in Mangold and Manfred. Rita, however, does not lose her faith in socialism as a result of the encounter with Mangold, but holds fast to the conviction that it is precisely her sensitivity, which is outraged by Mangold's behaviour, that is necessary for the future humane progress of socialism: 'Gerade die Empfindlichen brauchen wir. Was sollen uns die Stumpfen nützen?' (GH 128).

Schwarzenbach plays an important part in sustaining Rita in this conviction, but the Party does not appear anywhere in this novel as a collective body -- an omission for which the author was severely criticized. Rita's contacts with socialist ideology come only through various individuals. The Party's official representative in Manfred's University department, Rudi Schwabe, is seen in a very poor light, as ineffectual and over-fervent, although he arouses Rita's sympathy for these very reasons when she sees him being provoked by Manfred and his colleagues. Apart from fanatics such as Mangold and mediocrities such as Rudi Schwabe, the Party appears to consist of remote figures, who offer little help and

encouragement (Meternagel appears to receive no support in his crusading zeal from the Party), and do not share Schwarzenbach's humane and progressive views. (When Der geteilte Himmel was serialized prior to publication in book form this hostile relationship between Schwarzenbach and his fellow SED members was demonstrated in a symbolic episode: his child's illness was caused by his and his wife's enforced attendance at a Party meeting despite the child's sickness. This episode was omitted in the book version, leaving the motif of the sick child unexplained.) Thus the socialist intellectual appears here already as a Party member who finds himself highly critical of his fellow Party members.

A major formative influence for Rita is Rolf Meternagel, whose dedication and integrity play an important role in her political education. The worker as educator is a familiar figure in East German literature¹, but Christa Wolf adds complexity and interest to the figure of Meternagel by giving him an element of vindictiveness and self-defeating fanaticism and a 'rückläufige Kaderentwicklung' which illuminates an important aspect of the social history of the GDR: Meternagel belongs to that generation of working men who had responsibility thrust upon them without the necessary skills and experience to carry out the formidable tasks demanded of them, and were in due course ousted by men of a younger generation who had had the time and opportunity to acquire education and managerial training. Meternagel has indeed suffered far greater harshness and injustice than Manfred, to whose resignation and withdrawal his dedication provides, for Rita as for the reader, a vital corrective. This is a characteristic feature of socialist realism: the intellectual develops and learns in the company and by the example of working people, discovering solidarity with them in the pursuit of their common goal. Manfred's parents and colleagues provide, on the other hand, the negative example of egocentric, competitive and cynical behaviour which Rita comes to realize she could never share or accept. When she reads in Manfred's eyes the decision 'Auf nichts mehr bauen, in nichts mehr Hoffnung setzen', her instinctive unspoken reaction is 'Nie und nimmer erkenn ich das an' (GH 150). Whereas Manfred embodies everything that an intellectual should not be, Rita acquires the necessary positive qualities: commitment, enthusiasm, determination to use her skills and abilities for the common good, tact, sociability and practical solidarity. Despite difficulties, shortcomings and injustices, and despite the formidable obstacles to progress created by the legacy of the National Socialist past, the apathy, scepticism and opportunism of many working people, Rita retains, not

1. See E. Zak, "Tragische Erlebnisse in optimistischer Sicht", in M. Reso, op.cit., pp.31-40.

without difficulty at times, her faith in the future, a faith which is reinforced by every sign of progress which she sees.

The progress of socialism is seen in Der geteilte Himmel in direct concrete terms: Manfred's arguments are refuted not by words but by actions. Hans-Georg Hölsken noted that this was a fundamental narrative strategy of the author:

Es scheint ein Gestaltungsprinzip der Autorin zu sein, daß sie Zweifel am Sozialismus nicht durch eine intellektuell-ideologische Beweisführung überwindet, sondern durch persönliche Erfahrungen in der sozialistischen Lebenswirklichkeit auf emotionalem Wege entschärft. (1)

Thus the workers at the railway carriage works vindicate Rita's faith by their achievements, and a symbolic triumph of socialism is provided by the success of the Soviet Union, on 12 April 1961, in sending a manned spacecraft into orbit. Gagarin's historic achievement directly refutes Manfred's view that modern man is no longer capable of 'Faustian' aspirations, and gives visible meaning to the struggle to liberate mankind from the injustices of the capitalist class-system:

Dadurch bekam alles, was bisher geschehen ist, seinen Sinn: daß ein Bauernsohn den Himmel pflügt und Sterne als Saatkörner über ihn verstreut ... (GH 193)

It is this promise of socialism to give full scope to the creative powers of the human race which in the end gives Rita the strength to refuse to follow Manfred to the West, the attractions of which she has learned to recognize as hollow and trivial:

Aber schließlich läuft alles das doch auf Essen und Trinken und Sichkleiden und Schlafen hinaus. Wozu aß man? fragte ich mich. Was tat man in seinen traumhaft schönen Wohnungen? Wohin fuhr man in diesen straßenbreiten Wagen? Und woran dachte man in dieser Stadt, ehe man einschlief bei Nacht? (GH 234)

The realisation that the material prosperity of the West constitutes an irresistible temptation for many people leads Rita to accept as justifiable the construction of the Berlin Wall. As Martin puts it, speaking of Manfred:

Wenn er hiergeblieben wäre, und sei es durch Zwang: Heute müßte er ja versuchen, mit allem fertig zu werden. Heute könnte er ja nicht mehr ausweichen ... (GH 180)

Manfred's motives for leaving are of course, as Rita understands, more complex than this: he is not only tempted by the professional opportunities offered him in the West, he has lost all belief in a possible better future under socialism, and he is escaping from his relationship with Rita which has become too problematic for him to cope with, while osten-

1. H.-G. Hölsken, "Zwei Romane: Christa Wolf Der geteilte Himmel und Hermann Kant Die Aula. Voraussetzungen und Deutung", Der Deutschunterricht, 21, 1969/5, pp.61-99.

sibly placing the blame for the failure of their relationship on her if she refuses to join him. It is in this complex interplay of personal and ideological factors in motivating crucial decisions -- in the case of Rita as well as Manfred -- that Christa Wolf goes beyond the stereotyped behaviour patterns expected by the theorists of Socialist Realism.

Rita's difficult and painful decision to return to the GDR after her visit to Manfred in West Berlin is likewise the product of complex and confused motives, more emotional than rational. Critics in the GDR predictably objected that the decision was thus insufficiently 'exemplary',¹ and not brought about, as it should have been, by ideological insights or the guidance of the Party. But Christa Wolf is more interested in truth than in exemplary behaviour, as she was to make clear with the greatest emphasis in Nachdenken über Christa T. It is only during her period of convalescence after her breakdown following the building of the Berlin Wall -- which makes her decision to separate from Manfred irreversible -- that she achieves a moral and rational understanding of the rightness of her decision. It is this harmonizing of the rational and emotional spheres which in Christa Wolf's presentation constitutes the coming to maturity of a socialist intellectual. Rita continues to the end however to have moments of doubt:

Ist die Welt überhaupt mit unserem Maß zu messen? Mit Gut und Böse?
Ist sie nicht einfach da -- weiter nichts? . . . Und dann wäre es
ganz sinnlos, daß ich nicht bei ihm geblieben bin. Dann wäre jedes
Opfer sinnlos. (GH 250)

Rita here -- fleetingly at least -- doubts her own deepest moral intuitions, even though these are supported by the rational conviction which she has acquired with the help of mentors such as Schwarzenbach. In allowing Rita to glimpse the fundamental dilemma that moral convictions do not carry the guarantee of their rightness, that the most passionately held beliefs can be wrong, Christa Wolf anticipates the investigation of this dilemma in Nachdenken über Christa T. But Rita overcomes her doubts with the spiritual strength which, the author suggests, is the essential quality on which the future depends: the ability to combine intellectual scepticism and doubt with an overriding commitment:

Vielleicht wird man später begreifen, daß von dieser seelischen
Kühnheit ungezählter gewöhnlicher Menschen das Schicksal der
Nachgeborenen abhing -- für einen langen, schweren, drohenden
und hoffnungsvollen geschichtlichen Augenblick. (GH 256)

Rita's commitment is to truth, honesty, and courage. It is Schwarzenbach who eloquently formulates the necessity of truth, a necessity which Rita's behaviour has confirmed for him:

1. E.g. H.-G.Werner & D.Heinemann, "Konflikt und Motiv", in M.Reso, op.cit., pp.121-128.

Zum erstenmal sind wir reif, der Wahrheit ins Gesicht zu sehen. Das Schwere nicht in Leicht umdeuten, das Dunkle nicht in Hell. Vertrauen nicht mißbrauchen. Es ist das Kostbarste, was wir uns erworben haben. . . . Manchmal glauben wir, etwas zu verändern, indem wir es neu benennen. Sie haben mir heute bestätigt: Die reine Wahrheit, und nur sie, ist auf die Dauer der Schlüssel zum Menschen. (GH 252)

The novel ends with a statement of Rita's courage to continue the struggle for the realisation of genuine socialist values; the ending is not wholly free of the sentimentality that occasionally mars Christa Wolf's writing in this novel:

Sie hat keine Angst, daß sie leer ausgehen könnte beim Verteilen der Freundlichkeit. Sie weiß, daß sie manchmal müde sein wird, manchmal zornig und böse. Aber sie hat keine Angst. Das wiegt alles auf: Daß wir uns gewöhnen, ruhig zu schlafen. Daß wir aus dem vollen leben, als gäbe es übergenug von diesem seltsamen Stoff Leben. Als könnte er nie zu Ende gehen. (GH 270)

Throughout Der geteilte Himmel Christa Wolf insists that socialism is not a 'magische Zauberformel' (GH 252), that socialists must not indoctrinate but must rationally persuade:

Immer noch versuchen manche zu diktieren, anstatt zu überzeugen. Aber wir brauchen keine Nachplapperer, sondern Sozialisten. (GH 251)

It is here that the prime task of the socialist intellectual lies. After the transitional period of the 1950s, the early 1960s were a period of hope, when many intellectuals in the GDR shared Rita's hope that progress could be brought about by the efforts of reasonable, undogmatic socialists. But as the decade progressed, a sense of disappointment began to make itself felt at the continuing failure to remove dogmatism and unimaginative narrowness from public life. It became increasingly difficult for individuals to continue to suppress their personal needs and desires for the sake of their social obligations. Although the promise of socialism had been to create a social order in which each individual could fulfil his potential, the reality demanded increasing conformity to an unsatisfactory pattern of existence. In Christa Wolf's next novel, the central character is no longer content to suppress her individuality for the sake of a better future: her repeated question is 'Wann, wenn nicht jetzt?'

Nachdenken über Christa T.

The immediate enormous success of Der geteilte Himmel made Christa Wolf a prominent literary figure. Shortly after its publication she was elected to the ZK of the SED, but soon incurred the disapproval of her fellow ZK members by her support of Wolf Biermann, Werner Bräunig and others, whose freedom to portray life in the GDR in an overtly critical light she vigorously defended. At the VIIth Party Congress of the SED

in April 1967 she was not re-elected to the ZK. It may reasonably be supposed that the emphasis given to the concerns and experiences of an individual who finds it impossible to harmonize her personality with the demands of socialist society in Nachdenken über Christa T., is not unconnected with these developments in Christa Wolf's life. Whereas in Der geteilte Himmel she had shown the evolution of a socially oriented and integrated intellectual and had contrasted her with an a-political intellectual who declines to accept any responsibility for the condition of society, in Nachdenken über Christa T. she turned her attention to a character who is more complex and problematical than either: a highly intelligent, sensitive and creatively gifted intellectual who is ethically committed to socialism but finds the purely supportive role allotted to the intellectual in a developing socialist society onerous and unsatisfactory, and who suffers in addition from the malaise of so many creative people: a keen and constant awareness of the disparity between ideal and reality. Nachdenken über Christa T. poses a fundamental question which had not hitherto been posed in East German literature: to what extent can the socialist intellectual in an as yet very imperfect socialist society achieve personal happiness without neglecting or betraying his or her socialist principles? Whereas for the characters of Hermann Kant the reconciliation of personal self-fulfilment with the discharge of social obligations presents no problems, for a person such as Christa T. it does, and the novel constitutes a powerful plea for sympathetic understanding of this problem.

This is not to say that Christa T. is uncritically portrayed. Critical interest in the novel -- which has been very intense and widespread¹ -- has been so concentrated on the figure of Christa T. herself that little attention has been paid to the other principal intellectual character in the novel: the narrator. It will be argued here that the narrator is a figure of great importance, to be closely -- though not wholly -- identified with the author, whose evaluations of Christa T.'s attitudes and behaviour are as important as the portrait of Christa T. herself, indeed constitute a necessary complement to that portrait.

Nachdenken über Christa T. is a novel of great stylistic and technical distinction. It presents a complex character with subtlety and precision, and vividly conveys the painfully problematic nature of that character's search for truth, self-knowledge and moral integrity. The reader is drawn into the story by means of an insidiously oblique narrative technique, whose provocative modernity perfectly accords with the

1. A collection of the critical reactions to Nachdenken über Christa T. is provided by M. Behn (ed.), Wirkungsgeschichte von Christa Wolfs Nachdenken über Christa T., Königstein/ts. 1978.

novel's content: there is no omniscient narrator to give a definitive account of Christa T.'s life; the narrator has rather to attempt to piece together that life from incomplete evidence, a narrative strategy which reflects the mystery and opacity of human nature and the inadequacy of fixed formulae and simple patterns for understanding human behaviour. Little is left here of the technique of socialist realism, as Christine Cosentino observed:

Hier handelt es sich kaum noch um einen aufgelockerten sozialistischen Realismus, sondern vielmehr um eine Kunst, die ihre Inspiration aus einem realistisch gesehenen Sozialismus empfängt. (1)

The then Minister of Culture, Klaus Gysi, was not alone in objecting -- in line with the views of Lenin and Lukács -- that Christa Wolf's departure from linear narrative made 'eindeutige Parteilichkeit' impossible.² More perceptive critics realized, however, that Christa Wolf had pioneered -- as far as East German literature is concerned -- a narrative technique which opened up important new possibilities to the art of the novel, and had in so doing articulated vitally significant experiences of a whole generation of East German intellectuals:

Vor allem die intellektuellen Leser in der DDR haben sich durch diese bisher dort nicht praktizierte Schreibweise angezogen gefühlt. Die seismographischen Aufzeichnungen trafen die subjektive Befindlichkeit der von Hoffnungen, Zweifeln und Rückschlägen geplagten, vielfach überforderten politisch aktiven Aufbau-Generation genau. Die Frage nach der historischen Form von Individualität, die die neue Produktionsweise entstehen läßt, ist ihre Frage. Der Identifikationszog, der zweifellos von den Definitionsversuchen der Christa T. ausgeht, hat sie keineswegs in die alte Antinomie Individuum contra Gesellschaft zurückfallen lassen (wie es die westlichen Kritiker triumphierend voraussagten). Andererseits wurde in diesem Roman mehr als deutlich, daß die Rede von der 'harmonischen sozialistischen Menschen-gemeinschaft' vorerst nicht viel mehr als eine Phrase ist. (3)

Both the title and the narrative technique of Nachdenken über Christa T. are immediately suggestive of Uwe Johnson's Mutmaßungen über Jakob (1959) and Max Frisch's Mein Name sei Gantenbein (1964), as well as Erik Neutsch's later Auf der Suche nach Gatt (1973). They reflect the author's concern for what she has called 'subjektive Authentizität'⁴, her insistence that the objective concerns of the social world are, for each individual, subjective experiences and must be honestly recognized as such if the social world is genuinely to reflect the nature and aspirations of its

1. C. Cosentino, "Eine Untersuchung des sozialistischen Realismus im Werke Christa Wolfs", The German Quarterly, 47, 1974/2, (pp.245-261); p.246.

2. In a speech at the VIth Deutscher Schriftstellerkongreß. Quoted by M. Behn, op.cit., p.6.

3. F. Meyer, "Zur Rezeption von Christa Wolfs Nachdenken über Christa T." alternative 18, 1975/100, (pp.26-31); p.31.

4. H. Kaufmann, "Subjektive Authentizität und gesellschaftliche Wahrheit. Interview mit Christa Wolf", in A. Löffler (ed.), Auskünfte, pp.485-517.

individual members. This insistence links Christa Wolf with Max Frisch¹ -- to whom she has gratefully acknowledged her indebtedness -- and to Alfred Andersch, whose novel Efraim Frisch praised for the way in which it demonstrated that we

. . . wie sehr uns die allgemeine Geschichte angeht und bewegt, die Welt schließlich doch immer vom Ich her erfahren, erleiden, bewältigen oder nicht. (2)

This does not in any way imply a withdrawal from social concerns and responsibility; on the contrary, Christa Wolf's innovations of narrative technique in Nachdenken über Christa T. serve a clear social purpose: the more precise articulation than had previously been attempted in any East German novel of the problematic but highly important relationship to society of a certain kind of intellectual. Günter de Bruyn has commented on Christa Wolf's ability to reflect large social matters through the most delicate and detailed evocation of a sensitive individual's perceptions and responses; of Juninachmittag (1965) he wrote:

. . . wie stark das Alltägliche immer durchsetzt ist mit großem Geschehen, wie sich da bei kleinsten Verästelungen des Lebens das Große immer bemerkbar macht. (3)

Klaus Jarmatz has in more general terms energetically repudiated the view that concern with private experience obscures an author's perception of social issues:

Mitunter wurden auch Einwände laut, daß den Schriftstellern offensichtlich die Bindung an 'große' öffentliche Probleme verloren gegangen wäre, daß sie unsicher geworden seien und sich nun auf Selbstbetrachtung, auf eine Reflexion nur ihrer Selbst 'zurückzögen'. Das Nachdenken über Möglichkeiten des Schreibens resultiert jedoch aus neuen Anforderungen an das Erzählen. Durchweg geht es um die gesellschaftliche Verantwortung, die die Prosaautoren selbst empfinden und der sie gerecht werden möchten. Daß ihnen das Erzählen selbst zu einem Problem von Wichtigkeit wurde, ist keineswegs ein Rückzug aus gesellschaftlicher Verantwortlichkeit, sondern eher gerade ein Beitrag zum sozialistischen Gesellschaftsbild. (4)

A striking similarity of argument may be noted here to the similar defence by West German writers and critics of a concern with private individual experience, during the same period.⁵

Nachdenken über Christa T. had been announced for some time in the GDR prior to publication, extracts had appeared, but full publication was delayed due to official apprehensions, and when it did appear only

1. C. Wolf, "Max Frisch, beim Wiederlesen oder: Vom Schreiben in Ich-Form", in Text+Kritik 47/48, 1975, pp.7-12.

2. See p.128.

3. In an interview with S. Töpelmann, in A. Löffler (ed.), Auskünfte. Werkstattgespräche mit DDR Autoren, Berlin DDR/Weimar 1976, p.46.

4. K. Jarmatz, Forschungsfeld Realismus, Berlin DDR/Weimar 1975, p.249.

5. See pp.53f.

a small imprint was distributed.¹ Its initial critical reception in the GDR was extremely hostile; it was publicly condemned by the ZK of the SED² in 1969 and at the VIth Writers' Congress in the same year³, and disavowed by the publishers.⁴ Its literary quality was not disputed, but it was felt to be ideologically unacceptable; the general verdict was summed up by a Western critic as 'literarisch hervorragend, ideologisch höchst bedenklich'. It was a verdict based largely on misunderstanding of the novel's ideological import; critics saw in it 'eine strikte Entgegensetzung von Individuum und Gesellschaft'.⁵ Later critics in the GDR were more perceptive; some, like Horst Haase, admitted that their initial verdict had been one-sided:

Bei aller Kritik, die seinerzeit an Christa Wolfs Roman Nachdenken über Christa T. auch von mir in meiner Rezension geübt wurde, scheint es mir . . . berechtigt zu sein, diesen Roman heute [1975] als eine wichtige, in sich sehr widersprüchliche Leistung bei der Entwicklung dieser Richtung [scil. intensity of psychological characterisation] historisch einzuordnen. (6)

However, the vast work Zur Theorie des sozialistischen Realismus (1974, edited by Hans Koch), which deals with the literary developments in the GDR since the late 1940s as well as with the theory of socialist realism, makes no mention of it. It was, of course, from the outset discussed very widely in West Germany, where the supposed antagonistic conflict between individual and society was regarded as a virtue on the author's part.

Critics in the GDR sharply admonished the author to remember her loyalty to the East German socialist state and not to provide ammunition for Western critics by appearing to condemn the quality of life in that state. But Christa Wolf answered that, whilst she was fully aware of the utterances of her West German critics, she wrote primarily for her readers in East Germany, about their reality and their problems. Excessive concern for the reception of her work in the Western world could, she argued, easily result in a desire to conceal crucial tensions and conflicts which urgently needed to be investigated and articulated. The difficulty of the writer's position when confronted with this conflict

1. Reliable publication figures are hard to obtain for East German literature. West German estimates of the initial imprint range from 400 (!) to 15,000. Subsequent imprints were certainly very much larger. See M.Behn, op.cit., pp.6-9.
2. In a speech by Heinz Adameck, published in Neues Deutschland, 1.5.1969.
3. See M..Behn, op.cit., pp.70-72.
4. In Neues Deutschland, 14.5.1969.
5. M. Behn, op.cit., p.5.
6. H.Haase, "Unsere Literatur gestern und heute. Zu einigen Problemen der Geschichte jüngster DDR-Literatur", in M.Diersch & W.Hartinger, Literatur und Geschichtsbewußtsein, (pp.275-286); p.284.

of interests is discussed in Christa Wolf's interview with Konstantin Simonov.¹ By the mid-1960s she had decided that silence was no longer justifiable on such grounds. It was quite unnecessary to remind her of her loyalty to the socialist cause, which has throughout her literary career never been open to serious doubt. She is a Marxist who has described her discovery and study of Marxism as one of the 'Grund-Erfahrungen' of her life.² She is convinced of the historical necessity of the development towards socialism and aware that man himself is responsible for that development. But while whole-heartedly supporting commitment to socialism she emphasized that that commitment must always be a free choice, taken in full consciousness and without repressing whatever doubts and uncertainties the individual may feel. This freedom of choice is essential; after all, what is involved is no less than the decision to give life a meaning in the absence of any metaphysical meaning:

Die Welt hat keinen Sinn. Ihr einen zu geben -- gerade diesen --
ist unser freier Entschluß. (3)

Attacking the novel for its criticisms of life in the GDR and its apparent advocacy of a-political attitudes, literary critics also condemned it for the more specific fault of lacking an 'exemplary' character and a 'typical' situation as required by the theory of Socialist Realism. The author had foreseen this criticism and forestalled it both in the essays of Lesen und Schreiben and in the novel itself, where the narrator comments on her choice of heroine:

Nie wäre ich, das möchte ich doch schwören, auf sie verfallen.
Denn sie ist, als Beispiel, nicht beispielhaft, als Gestalt kein
Vor-Bild. Ich unterdrücke die Vermutung, daß es nicht anders
erginge mit jedem wirklich lebenden Menschen, und bekenne mich
zur Freiheit und zur Pflicht des Erfindens. Einmal nur, dieses
eine Mal, möchte ich erfahren und sagen dürfen, wie es wirklich
gewesen ist, unbeispielhaft und ohne Anspruch auf Verwendbarkeit.
(CT 57)

This passage makes it clear that the narrator accepts in principle the desirability of exemplary characters in fiction, even though, as she ironically suggests, actual human beings are rarely if ever exemplary; but she justifies her choice in this particular instance on the grounds that her subject is a real person, and furthermore, one whose experiences are of relevance and value to others: her purpose is not simply to erect a memorial to a friend who died young; the task of remembering and reflecting is undertaken not for her friend's sake, but for the sake of the narrator and readers:

1. See pp.188f.

2. H.Kaufmann, loc.cit., p.494.

3. Lesen und Schreiben, Berlin DDR/Weimar, 2. erweiterte Aufl.1971, p.234.

Und bloß nicht vorgeben, wir täten es ihretwegen. Ein für allemal: Sie braucht uns nicht. Halten wir also fest, es ist unseretwegen, denn es scheint, wir brauchen sie. (CT 9)

'We', that is to say, the readers of the novel, need Christa T. because with all her faults and failure to harmonize her aspirations with the demands of society, she possessed qualities essential to the humane development of that society: imagination and conscience, and because in recalling her life and her values, her contemporaries and fellow-citizens may become more conscious of their own lives and values. By evaluating Christa T.'s actions, one evaluates the circumstances and events which helped to shape them. Thus not only Christa T.'s specific life-history is important, but also its evaluation by the narrator within its historical context, which lends that life a wider significance and validity than that of a single individual life. Although not 'beispielhaft', Christa T. is a 'Beispiel'; in discussing Anna Seghers' Die Entscheidung Christa Wolf had reminded her readers that negative examples have their uses as well as positive examples:

. . . die Gestalt in einem Buch muß selbst nicht unbedingt optimistisch sein, um richtige Handlungen beim Leser zu erzeugen. (1)

Although in many ways untypical, Christa T. is in other ways representative of her generation, particularly of the intellectuals of that generation who found their experiences and conflicts so precisely articulated in the novel.² After describing an imagined encounter between Christa T. and the headmaster of her school, the narrator makes this explicit:

Auffällig ist, daß nicht notwendig sie es war, Christa T., die da vor dem Mann gesessen hat. In dieser Szene ist sie austauschbar gegen eine Menge Personen ihres Alters. Gegen eine Menge, nicht gegen alle. (CT 134)

The 'Menge', the group of which Christa T. is representative, is no doubt not the largest group in East German society, nor, as the Party would certainly insist, the most important, or the most 'typical'. But it is a substantial group, and as to its 'typicality' -- the central concept of the theory of Socialist Realism -- Christa Wolf rejects this concept as a literary criterion: at the XIth General Assembly of the SED in December 1965 she made a bold plea for the subjective artistic treatment of untypical problematic phenomena as a necessary means of exploring a reality as yet inadequately categorized by the human sciences; her arguments are strongly reminiscent of those of Anna Seghers -- whom Christa Wolf greatly admires and on whom she has published a monograph --

1. C. Wolf, "Anna Seghers über ihre Schaffungsmethode. Ein Gespräch", NDL VII, 1959/8, (pp. 52-57); p. 54.

2. See above, p. 225.

in the celebrated debate with Lukács:¹

Die Kunst muß auch Fragen aufwerfen, die neu sind, die der Künstler zu sehen glaubt, auch solche, für die er noch nicht die Lösung sieht. . . . Das ist die typische Literaturfrage. Wir haben dabei sehr wenig an Hilfe, weil unsere Soziologie und Psychologie uns wenig an Verallgemeinerungen gibt. Wir müssen selbst auf diesem Gebiet studieren und experimentieren, und es wird nach wie vor passieren -- es wird mir passieren oder schon passiert sein --, daß man etwas verallgemeinert, was nicht verallgemeinerenswert ist. Das kann sein. Dazu möchte ich aber sagen, daß die Kunst sowieso von Sonderfällen ausgeht und daß Kunst nach wie vor nicht darauf verzichten kann, subjektiv zu sein, d.h. die Handschrift, die Sprache, die Gedankenwelt des Künstlers wiederzugeben. (2)

Christa Wolf's concern with 'subjective authenticity' was later greatly elaborated, in the conversation with Kaufmann, in Lesen und Schreiben and in the novel Kindheitsmuster.³ Nachdenken über Christa T. indeed occupies an important position in the history of East German literature precisely because it inaugurated an intensive discussion of the whole question of the role of subjectivity in socialist art.⁴

Both the narrator and Christa T. have much in common with the author, and the relationship between them is at the heart of the novel; it is in essence the relationship between the individualistic and the socially committed components of Christa Wolf's creative personality. In a 'Selbstinterview' in Lesen und Schreiben she asked herself: 'Sie schreiben also eine Art von posthumer Lebenslauf?' and replied:

Das dachte ich zuerst. Später merkte ich, daß das Objekt meiner Erzählung gar nicht so eindeutig sie, Christa T., war oder blieb. Ich stand auf einmal mir selbst gegenüber, das hatte ich nicht vorhergesehen. Die Beziehungen zwischen 'uns' -- der Christa T. und dem Ich-Erzähler -- rückten ganz von selbst in den Mittelpunkt. (5)

There are clear biographical correspondences between Christa T. and Christa Wolf: birth and childhood in a village which is now part of Poland, school years in the Third Reich with National Socialist teachers, faith in the ideology of National Socialism; then in 1945 flight from the approaching Red Army (even specific incidents in the novel such as the death of a child during the flight); later the years of study at University with the discovery of Marxist principles and ideals. They share too the same fundamental attitude towards socialism.

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1. See Chapter 4, Excursus, pp.205f.
 2. Quoted from H.D.Sander, Geschichte der schönen Literatur in der DDR, Freiburg 1972; p.230.
 3. See K.Jarmatz, op.cit., pp.262ff.; also K.McPherson, "In search of the new prose: Christa Wolf's reflections on writing and the writers in the 1960s and 1970s", New German Studies IX, 1981/1, pp.1-13.
 4. See A.Stephan, Christa Wolf, Munich 1976; M.von Salisch, Zwischen Selbstaufgabe und Selbstverwirklichung, Stuttgart 1975; C.Thomassen, Der lange Weg zu uns selbst, Kronberg/Ts.1977. For a sceptical evaluation of the notion of 'subjektive Authentizität' see K.Werner, "Zur Darstellung der Kunst- und Künstlerproblematik in der Literatur der DDR", in M.Diersch & W.Hartinger (eds.), Literatur und Geschichtsbewußtsein, p.154.
 5. Lesen und Schreiben, p.81.

Concurrently with Nachdenken über Christa T. Christa Wolf wrote the collection of essays Lesen und Schreiben, which in a different way and on a different level deal with the same themes as the novel. Both show an attitude towards socialism similar to that of Rita Seidel in Der geteilte Himmel: somewhat naive, emotional rather than rational, often instinctive rather than fully conscious. For both Christa T. and her creator political and economic systems are no more than a means to the end of a more humane way of life. Christa Wolf is a convinced Marxist, but she rarely refers directly to Marxism in her writings; she rejects, however, the reproach that her conception of socialism is too subjective and individualistic. Marx, it might be said, is for her the Humanist Marx of the 'Paris Manuscripts', rather than the political economist of Das Kapital. Although she values the guiding role of the Party -- of whose Central Committee she was for a time a member -- she insists that the quality of each individual human life must be the paramount concern. In 1965 she warned of the danger that this simple fact might be forgotten, that concern with the means might come to obscure the end:

Wofür machen wir überhaupt diesen Sozialismus? Denn es kann passieren, daß über den Mitteln -- Politik, Ökonomie -- das Ziel vergessen wird: der Mensch. Was für einen Menschentyp bringt unsere Gesellschaft hervor? . . . Hier, glaube ich, ist der Punkt, an dem die Literatur aufpassen und ihren Platz verteidigen muß. (1)

We learn in the novel that during the immediate post-war years Christa T. suffered from guilt and depression, until she discovered the works of Gorky, Makarenko, and 'die neuen Broschüren, die, so wichtig wie die tägliche Nahrung, jedem in die Hand gegeben werden, der seine Hände nicht zumacht' (CT 40). The contents of these brochures are not specified, but an East German reader will recognize the reference to the propaganda literature of those early years which explained National Socialism and the war and its aftermath in terms of class conflict and social necessity, often pedantically and unimaginatively. Christa T.'s reaction to these, for most people, less than inspiring writings, is uncritical and enthusiastic to the point of euphoria:

Ja, so wird es sein. Dies ist der Weg zu uns selber. So wäre diese Sehnsucht nicht lächerlich und abwegig, so wäre sie brauchbar und nützlich. (CT 41)

The essays in which Christa Wolf describes her own conversion to socialism are similarly exuberant in tone. The lines which she quotes from Engels's works as having given her new confidence and hope are inspirationally prophetic rather than rationally persuasive:

1. C.Wolf, "Diskussionsbeitrag", NDL XIII, 1965/3, pp.102ff.

Und so wird im Lauf der Entwicklung alles früher Wirkliche unwirklich . . .

An die Stelle des absterbenden Wirklichen tritt eine neue, lebensfähige Wirklichkeit. (1)

It is understandable that such optimistic faith in abstract values should be followed by disappointment. In her description of Christa T.'s and the narrator's reactions to the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956 the author articulates this sense of disappointment, but also the sense of the necessity to see and accept reality in a new, more sober light:

. . . die Rolle der eisern Gläubigen war abgesetzt, die Bühne, auf der man solche Rollen spielte, war verdunkelt. Ja, ein plötzlicher Lichtwechsel hatte stattgefunden, vorausgesehen hatten wir ihn nicht. Erst später fragten wir uns: Warum eigentlich nicht? In jener Nacht bei unserem Tee, der kalt wurde, als die vielen hämischen Stimmen sich in unserem Zimmer trafen, merkten wir nur die Verdunkelung der Welt und merkten nicht, daß bloß die Bühnenscheinwerfer gelöscht waren und wir uns daran gewöhnen mußten, in das nüchterne Licht wirklicher Tage und Nächte zu sehen. (GT 168)

Christa T.'s memories of the National Socialist past, being memories of childhood, are also primarily emotional and associative: unconnected incidents which only in retrospect form a pattern which comes to symbolize National Socialism for her, for example the exodus of gypsies from her village and her undefined sense of guilt and injustice as she watched them leave while neither she nor her father intervened. A strong awareness of passively incurred guilt has remained with her to fuel her strong sense of moral responsibility. Like so many of her generation, Christa T. suffers from a deep-rooted feeling that even her own father, well-known though he was in the village as a socialist and indeed harassed though he was by the authorities for that reason, was nevertheless a 'Mitläufer' because he failed to offer any resistance to the inhumanity of the National Socialist regime. She is tempted to attribute guilt to his generation in order to exonerate her own, but her intellectual integrity forces her to admit that, under such circumstances, guilt and innocence are a matter of when one was born:

Den Schnitt machen zwischen 'uns' und 'den anderen', in voller Schärfe, endgültig: das war die Rettung. Und insgeheim wissen: Viel hat nicht gefehlt . . . Schuldlosigkeit aus Mangel an Erwachsensein. (CT 36)

From this constant awareness springs her determination to impart, as a schoolteacher, an awareness of individual moral responsibility to the children in her charge, whilst at the same time preserving her own personal moral integrity.² This moral integrity becomes for her the criterion by which she assesses the society around her, for as Christa

1. Lesen und Schreiben, p.55.

2. This point is emphasized by H.H.Pomps, Christa Wolf: Nachdenken über Christa T. A Study in Human Development, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Colorado, 1973, p.169.

Wolf wrote in Lesen und Schreiben:

. . . die moralische Existenz der Menschheit ist unter den Bedingungen des Atomzeitalters zur Voraussetzung für ihre physische Existenz geworden. (1)

In her insistence that the quality of life in a society is to be measured in terms of its actual practised morality Christa Wolf helped to establish a widespread general conviction:

Moralische Denk- und Verhaltensweisen -- die Gefühlswelt des Individuums eingeschlossen -- werden in der entwickelten sozialistischen Gesellschaft zum untrüglichen Maßstab des gesellschaftlichen Fortschritts und sozialistischer Humanität. (2)

Because Christa T.'s socialist convictions are based so strongly on moral and emotional factors, she is extremely vulnerable to setbacks and disappointments. When she sees some of her pupils climb a tree and throw out nearly-hatched birds' eggs, she is not only deeply distressed, she also feels guilty because of her failure to intervene; years later, when another pupil bites off a frog's head, she feels the same distress and guilt: the memory of the black cat whose killing she witnessed as a child still haunts her, and her reaction is correspondingly disproportionate to its cause:

Und ich stehe da, habe meine Broschüren gelesen, sehe mir das mit an und möchte heulen. So dünn ist die Decke, auf der wir gehen, so dicht unter unseren Füßen die Gefahr, durchzubrechen in diesen Sumpf. (CT 41)

Talking to the narrator of the boy involved in the later incident, Christa T. reflects on the potential for evil in such unthinking youthful cruelty -- but she also realizes that her society at least gives less scope for such evil than other societies:

Fleißig und roh ist er . . . Er hat nur Glück, daß er hier lebt. Anderswo wäre er -- sonstwas. Sein Typ ist noch gefragt. Wenn wir uns bloß nicht täuschen lassen von seiner Tüchtigkeit! Denn -- wohin würde das führen? (CT 139)

Emotionally vulnerable as she is, Christa T. can derive little consolation from the rational advice of the experienced headmaster to accept human limitations and be satisfied with limited but real achievements. She feels compelled to keep alive in herself 'den gefährlichen Wunsch nach reiner, schrecklicher Vollkommenheit' (CT 185); she desires the immediate full materialisation of her dreams: 'Wann, wenn nicht jetzt?' (CT 127 et.al.). Her ethical rigour and perfectionism are understandable in the light of her past experience, but they entail the risk of dogmatism, as the narrator realizes. The incident in which their friend

1. Lesen und Schreiben, p.124.

2. K.Schuhmann, "Zu einigen Aspekten des Verhältnisses von Individuum und Gesellschaft in der sozialistischen Gegenwartsliteratur der sechziger und siebziger Jahre", in M.Diersch & W.Hartinger, op.cit., p.92.

Günter fails his teaching practice illustrates this risk: Günter was instructed to discuss, in a literary seminar, the personal and social factors which motivate Ferdinand's behaviour in Schiller's Kabale und Liebe, but fails, as a consequence of his personal unhappiness at the time, to provide the expected orthodox account, that is to say, to assert the primacy of social over personal factors. The narrator shows sympathetic tolerance towards Günter's lapse into what his teachers and fellow-students all condemn as 'bourgeois subjectivism'. But Christa T.'s uncompromising ethical integrity compels her to suppress her own sympathy for Günter -- she has suffered unhappiness in love herself -- and join with the others in condemning him for the undesirable effects which his inappropriate outburst had on the children and in separating the matter of principle from the individual circumstances:

Günter . . . würde nicht als Günter abgeurteilt werden, sondern als Beispiel, wohin ein Mensch gerät, der dem Subjektivismus verfällt. . . . der Mensch Günter und der Fall des Subjektivismus wurden voneinander abgetrennt . . . (GT 86f.)

Thus Christa T. in this instance acts exactly as her fellow-students act out of unthinking and unsympathetic dogmatism.

With her rational mind Christa T. accepts the claims of society as valid, even when they seem to be excessively severe; to this extent she is in harmony with her environment. But in practice she finds it impossible to make sacrifices which violate her instinctive feelings, and increasingly finds herself in a state of partly conscious, partly subconscious rebellion against society's demands. Her support for socialism rests on the belief that it provides a safeguard for free and full individual development, and although she understands that the goal can only be reached by struggle and that she has a responsibility to contribute to that struggle, she is also constantly aware that she has obligations towards herself also, which are equally legitimate and binding. She understands that the period in which she is living is a transitional period, that full socialism has not yet been achieved; but this is the time that has been given her, she has to live now, she cannot wait for the future. She at times feels regret at having been born too early. The present period makes demands on her which, try as she will, she cannot help but feel as irksome and excessive. She goes to University with as yet no plans for a specific career, and is unwilling to restrict herself by choosing a specific course of study. Instead she reads widely outside the syllabus and resents being asked what her plans for the future are. She prepares for examinations only reluctantly and under pressure, and when she is told that it is 'recht und billig' that society should expect 'eine Gegenleistung' for the free education which she has

enjoyed, she retorts that whilst it is 'recht', it is by no means 'billig': 'Ich würde sogar sagen: teuer' (CT 110). To restrict herself to a specific social role is deeply repugnant to her:

Sie zuckte davor zurück, sich selbst einen Namen aufzudrücken, das Brandmal, mit welcher Herde in welchem Stall man zu gehen hat. Leben, erleben, freies großes Leben! O herrliches Lebensgefühl, daß du mich nie verläßt! Nichts weiter als ein Mensch sein ... (CT 46)

The conflict between this desire for untrammelled freedom and the realization that it is wilful, impractical and from any rational, ethical standpoint rejectable, repeatedly brings Christa T. to the brink of despair; after the incident in the literary seminar she even contemplates suicide. She accepts that if she cannot meet the demands made on her, the fault must lie with her, but at the same time she is unable to compromise and insists on remaining true to herself. In the letter written to her sister and presumably intended as a farewell, she expresses her confusion that everything which had seemed so easy and natural had proved to be so difficult for her. She concludes that she must be unsuitable for a socialist society despite her commitment to its values, and accepts this with resignation. She sums up her predicament with bleak succinctness:

Keine Lücke für mich. An mir liegt es. Ich bin es, der die notwendige Konsequenz fehlt. (CT 90)

Her tragedy lies in the fact that she cannot change her nature, yet does not desire any of the available political alternatives:

Das alles ändert nichts, unlösbarer Widerspruch, an meiner tiefen Übereinstimmung mit dieser Zeit. (CT 91)

This awareness of her 'Übereinstimmung mit dieser Zeit' gives her the strength, at least for the time being, to continue living.

But not only does the very concept of a socialist society conflict with Christa T.'s desire for complete individual autonomy, the actual society in which she lives is manifestly less than perfect. Dogmatic orthodoxy has ousted the open-mindedness of earlier days, ideals have become petrified in slogans, calculation and opportunism have replaced genuine commitment:

Sie hat gefühlt, wie die Worte sich zu verwandeln beginnen, wenn nicht mehr guter Glaube und Ungeschick und Übereifer sie hervorschleudern, sondern Berechnung, Schläue, Anpassungstrieb. Unsere Worte, nicht einmal falsch -- wie leicht wäre es sonst! --, nur der sie ausspricht, ist ein anderer. (CT 71)

As a student Christa T. is never willing to accept ready-made views and interpretations in accordance with the by then established teaching methods; she cannot silence the inner voice of her own intellectual integrity:

Die Stimmen, die tagsüber nicht mehr stritten -- denn der heftige

Streit der früheren Jahre war in Einstimmigkeit übergegangen, Monologe nach dem immer gleichen Textbuch wurden gehalten -- nachts in ihr kamen sie wieder auf. (CT 74) (1)

Christa T. is a perfectionist, with what one unsympathetic critic described as a

. . . bis an die Grenzen der Egozentrik und Weltfremdheit gehendes Streben nach voller Selbstverwirklichung, nach Bestätigung der Visionen, die sie von sich und dem Leben hat . . . (2)

She refuses to close her eyes to reality, and insists on measuring that reality against her ideals. She not only accepts the notion of a 'positive hero' in literature, she also expects people in reality to behave 'positively' -- not just to think positively. Thus she reacts with baffled outrage to the schoolboy who writes an eloquent essay about how he could contribute to socialism if he were a 'Pionier', which he is not: he has already acquired the institutionalized hypocrisy which she so detests. Likewise she argues with a colleague who, in comparing words and dreams, bypasses reality altogether:

"Sie lachen nie, nein, das nicht. Aber ich sehe: Sie zweifeln."

"Nicht immer, sagt sie Christa T. So genau Sie hingesehen haben: Ich vergleiche. Ich vergleiche die Rede des Schulrats mit meiner Schule."

"Sehen Sie, sagt er heftig. Und ich vergleiche seine Rede mit meinem Traum von meiner Schule." (CT 51)

Christa T. believes in the 'Prinzip Hoffnung'³, but she rejects this unrealistic interpretation of it, even though at times she is also prone to escape into wishful thinking, as when she rewrites the incident involving the frog's head with a different ending in which the boy weeps with disgust and remorse (CT 138f.). But in the main she prefers the truth, however unpalatable.

Christa T.'s vulnerability does not decrease as she grows older, but she gains in self-confidence and clarity of perception. After the revelations of the XXth Soviet Party Congress concerning Stalin's crimes she is, like so many others, deeply shocked and distressed, but she does

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1. Cf. K.-H. Jakobs: 'Wir werden unsere Polemiken in der Presse nicht los, deswegen kommen sie in unsere Romane . . . Wir fressen unseren Meinungsstreit, der öffentlich geführt werden müßte, seit Jahrzehnten in uns hinein . . .' Quoted by M. Behn, op.cit., p.10.
 2. H. Richter, "Zur Rezeption deutschsprachiger Erzähler der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts in der Epik der sechziger Jahre", in M. Diersch & W. Hartinger, op.cit., (pp.248-274); p.258.
 3. Cf. Ernst Bloch, Das Prinzip Hoffnung (1959). Christa Wolf appears to have studied this intensively. Cf. A. Huyssen, "Auf den Spuren Ernst Blochs. Nachdenken über Christa Wolf", in M. Behn, op.cit., pp.147-155. The motto to the novel, taken from Johannes R. Becher, is also an allusion to Bloch.

not reject socialism or the GDR. Rather she resolutely decides to accept her share of responsibility for the state of her society, in order to be able to share also in the progress that has been achieved. That progress is, however, no longer seen with the optimism that is evident in Der geteilte Himmel; there, the successful launching of a manned spacecraft symbolized the triumph of socialism; but in Nachdenken über Christa T. the same symbol is used to indicate setbacks and disappointment -- the expected spacecraft does not appear in the sky (CT 181). During her first major breakdown, after losing Kostja, Christa T.'s doctor urges her to learn to adapt to reality, advice which she receives with increasing frequency as her life progresses. The university doctor diagnoses her malaise as 'Neurose als mangelnde Anpassungsfähigkeit an gegebene Umstände' (CT 92). Then as later she rejects this diagnosis and the proposed remedy, although it is many years before she is able to articulate her reasons. Soon after graduating she becomes aware that the schoolchildren to whom she hopes to give moral as well as academic education have already accepted the supposed necessity of adaptation and smile at her idealism and -- in their eyes -- excessively stringent standards: she expects them to express their personal opinions in their essays, but they know that high marks in their examinations are awarded not for originality but for knowledge of the orthodox slogans and arguments. It is one of these pupils who later tells her that adaptation is the essence of health:

Der Kern der Gesundheit ist Anpassung. . . . Überleben . . . sei das Ziel der Menschheit immer gewesen und werde es bleiben. Das heißt, ihr Mittel zu jeder Zeit: Anpassung. Anpassung um jeden Preis. (CT 141)

But by this time his words no longer make Christa T. insecure; she has the self-confidence to reject 'Anpassung', which for her means the abdication of personal responsibility and integrity.

Christa T. does not adapt; but nor does she cut herself off from society and withdraw into an attitude of resigned pessimism, a view which a number of West German critics were over-eager to take of the novel.¹ Erwin Pracht also misinterprets the novel in reproaching Christa Wolf for failing to do justice to the dialectical relationship between self-fulfilment and fulfilment of social obligation, and comments:

Denn der Mensch kommt nicht zu sich selber, indem er sich von der Gesellschaft isoliert und sich auf sein kleines Glück beschränkt. (2)

1. See A. Huysen, loc.cit.

2. E. Pracht, "Einführung in den sozialistischen Realismus", Berlin DDR 1975, pp.232f.

A number of incidents in the novel show Christa T. actively engaged in the attempt to improve the quality of life in her society. While in the maternity clinic awaiting the birth of her first child she meets a woman who has just undergone her third abortion, and feels outrage and frustration at the woman's apathetic acceptance of her wretched circumstances, her refusal of help and her inability to understand Christa T., who attempts to inform her of her civil rights. Similarly, when visiting local farmers with her husband, the veterinary surgeon Justus, she talks to the farmers' wives, attempting to explain the advantages of collective farming and raise their political consciousness. Her problem is not that she does not make such attempts to contribute to social progress, but that she is deeply disappointed when she fails to achieve tangible results. Her frustration and impatience doubtless increase with her growing physical weakness, and it is open to debate whether they actually contribute to her illness.

Christa T.'s retreat with her family into their isolated new house can be interpreted as a retreat into 'Innerlichkeit', as a means of evading the strains and disappointments of social life; many Western critics have suggested this interpretation. But Christa T.'s own words suggest a more positive interpretation: she hopes to write, not as an escape from the world, but as the means best suited to her of contributing to it:

Menschen, ja. Ich bin kein Einsiedler, Du kennst mich. Aber kein Zwang darf dabeisein, es muß mich zu ihnen drängen. Dann wieder muß ich allein sein können, sonst leide ich. Ich will arbeiten, Du weißt es -- mit anderen, für andere. Aber meine Wirkungsmöglichkeiten sind, soviel ich sehe, schriftlicher, mittelbarer Natur. Ich muß mich mit den Dingen in Stille, betrachtend auseinandersetzen können ... (CT 91)

While living in the country she makes a determined effort to write; but she does not finish anything, and we cannot know whether she would have achieved anything worthwhile if she had lived longer. Nor is she herself wholly convinced of the ethical validity of such a life of secluded creativity: her dissertation on Theodor Storm is a very personal analysis of the man and his work, concerned with the central question of her own life:

. . . wie man denn -- und ob überhaupt und unter welchen Umständen -- in der Kunst sich selbst verwirklichen könne. (CT 120)

Like Storm, she chooses local and provincial themes for her own writings, and ascribes to Storm her own weaknesses and doubts: 'Ihn hat der Konflikt zwischen Wollen und Nicht-Können in den Lebenswinkel gedrängt' (CT 123). At the same time she admires Storm's refusal to compromise, his 'ungebrochene Künstlertum, das sich als volles Menschentum auffaßt' (CT 121). But for herself she doubts the validity of such whole-hearted

commitment to the creative life, fearing that it would involve too great a sacrifice of social involvement. She doubts her ability to transcend, in her writing, the narrow limitations of her own experience, limited as it is to her family and immediate environment, and speak with relevance to other people through her work. It is a dilemma which she never solves; her early death leaves open the question of whether she might have found a solution.

It is here that the narrator's evaluation of Christa T.'s life and aspirations is of great importance. In an imaginary discussion with a former friend of Christa's, the narrator acknowledges the possibility of social withdrawal, but concludes that it was not Christa T.'s solution. Writing, the narrator decides, is a valid form of existence which can combine personal fulfilment with social involvement, and that Christa T., had she been given more time, might have succeeded in reconciling the two aspirations. The narrator defends Christa T.'s failure to adjust and conform: society needs well-adjusted citizens, but it also needs the stimulus of some non-conforming members. The narrator does not have the artistic creativity or the psychological problems of Christa T. -- in the figure of the narrator Christa Wolf retains indeed elements of the 'positive hero' -- but she has the confidence that, however difficult life was for Christa T. the time will come when such an individual will not feel so tragically alienated from socialist society. She sees quite clearly Christa T.'s defects of character, her wilfulness, instability and, sometimes, irresponsibility; she deplores her infidelity to Justus (CT 196). Yet she remains convinced that Christa T.'s way of life was right for her: "Wenn ich sie erfinden müßte -- verändern würde ich sie nicht." (CT 222). She defends Christa T.'s early optimism, however extreme and inappropriate it might appear, and however bitter a disillusionment was bound to follow it: 'Einmal im Leben, zur rechten Zeit, sollte man an Unmögliches geglaubt haben' (CT 67). For progress depends on such prophetic optimism: 'Weil nicht Wirklichkeit wird, was man nicht vorher gedacht hat' (CT 221).

When she is asked what she considers to be essential for the survival of mankind, Christa T. replies: 'Gewissen' and 'Phantasie' (CT 219): the imagination to perceive the possibilities open to man, and the conscience to make the right choice from amongst those possibilities. The narrator remains convinced that Christa T. held fast to these values, and that however disappointed she was at the lack of immediate fulfilment of her aspirations, she never abandoned her commitment to the socialist goal:

Denn die neue Welt, die wir unantastbar machen wollten, und sei es dadurch, daß wir uns wie irgendeinen Ziegelstein in ihr Fundament einmauerten -- sie gab es wirklich. Es gibt sie, und

nicht nur in unseren Köpfen, und damals fing sie für uns an. Was aber immer mit ihr geschah oder geschehen wird, es ist und bleibt unsere Sache. Unter den Tauschangeboten ist keines, nach dem auch nur den Kopf zu drehen sich lohnen würde ... Sie hat, jetzt spreche ich von Christa T., nichts inniger herbeigewünscht als unsere Welt, und sie hat genau die Art Phantasie gehabt, die man braucht, sie wirklich zu erfassen . . . (CT 66)

It is because of this conviction that the narrator can say that the only change she would have made to Christa T. would have been to give her more time: 'Ich, wenn ich uns erfinden dürfte, hätte uns Zeit gegeben' (CT 222). With these words the narrator underlines the author's unchanged faith in the possibility of creating a better society, in which even problematic characters such as Christa T. will be able to develop their individual personalities to the full while at the same time accepting full responsibility for that society. Hope and confidence are thus still to be seen in Nachdenken über Christa T. Notwithstanding the acute awareness which the novel articulates of the obstacles and problems which still stand in the way of the realisation of the ideal. That realisation may seem further away than ever before, but the hope has not been abandoned. The novel conveys the strong conviction that in the eventual realisation, creative intellectuals such as Christa T. have an essential part to play, even if it be only in the role of misunderstood prophets. Just as biological evolution requires, in Darwinian theory, random mutations, so too social evolution requires unusual and ill-adjusted individuals.¹

1. This is the theme of Christa Wolf's short prose piece 'Ein Besuch', an account of an interview with an eminent biologist. In Lesen und Schreiben, pp.161-194.

B. Hermann Kant: Die Aula and Das Impressum.

Die Aula

Die Aula, like Christa Wolf's Der geteilte Himmel, was one of the first novels to be published in the more liberal period in GDR cultural policy following the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961. Like Christa Wolf's novel, it is also concerned with the closer relationship between intellectuals and workers which is one of the aims of socialism. Written shortly after the second Bitterfeld Conference¹, Die Aula takes as its theme the emergence of a new, young socialist intelligentsia from the ranks of the working class, who are selected and trained in order to replace the old bourgeois intelligentsia. (Official policy in the GDR was -- and remains -- that 80% of the intelligentsia should be recruited from a working class background.) Die Aula gives a fictionalized -- but closely autobiographical -- account of this important piece of the social history of the GDR, scrutinizes the obstacles and difficulties which it entailed, and celebrates its eventual triumph. By setting this process in the past and allowing his central character Iswall to reflect on it, with the benefit of maturity, while it is being narrated, Kant shows how historical experience is integrated into a heightened awareness on the part of a representative socialist intellectual -- 'ein Held mit ausgeprägt intellektuellem und zugleich klassenrepräsentativem Charakter'² -- of his position in society and of the dialectical relationship between self-fulfilment and the fulfilment of social obligations.

The substance of Die Aula consists chiefly in the account of the years from 1949 till 1952, narrated from the standpoint of 1962: the motto, a quotation from Heine, makes it clear that the past is important because of its relevance to the present:

Der heutige Tag ist
ein Resultat des gestrigen.
Was dieser gewollt hat,
müssen wir erforschen,
wenn wir zu wissen wünschen,
was jener will.

The central characters of Die Aula, who all belong to the first generation of GDR citizens to receive higher education in the GDR, see themselves as representatives of the first German 'Arbeiter- und Bauernstaat': their life-histories parallel that of the new republic, with whose development their own is closely linked. The struggle of the students at the new 'ABF' against the opposition of bourgeois intellectuals reflects the

1. See p.182.

2. I. Diersen, "Humor und Satire und die Kunst vernünftig mit einander umzugehen: Zu Hermann Kants Roman Die Aula", Berliner Zeitung (DDR), 21.6.1966, Anhang.

struggle of the new socialist state to assert its identity and legitimacy.

Die Aula makes skillful use of 'modern' narrative techniques in its comparison and contrast of past and present: flashbacks, interior monologue and an associative linking of disparate episodes.¹ It is also characterized by exuberant wit and humour, which some critics have praised highly² while others have found it indiscriminate and not always appropriate to the subject-matter³, and others have interpreted it as a sign of Kant's self-confidence and 'Einklang mit der Gesellschaft'.⁴ As in Der geteilte Himmel, there are in Die Aula two time levels and a central character with a strong personal need to recall and re-assess the past, both at a subjective level in order to understand his own development and present position, and at a more general objective level in order to evaluate and present conditions of the society in which he lives. In Die Aula the impetus for this reassessment is the request to Robert Iswall to make a commemorative speech on the occasion of the closing of the 'ABF' after thirteen years of existence: its historic mission has been fulfilled, and it is time to take stock of its achievements. This recollection of the past is more than merely a literary device to facilitate the introduction of numerous episodes from the past. Kant exploits the narrative potential of the situation also to introduce developments on the present time level: during the months in which Iswall works at his proposed speech he becomes himself for the first time fully conscious of the part played by the three years of study at the 'ABF' in his personal development and in the development of society. He visits former friends, and communicates his developing ideas to various people: he does not merely prepare to narrate past events, he investigates and interprets them, so that although the invitation to make the speech is subsequently withdrawn by the authorities, who appear apprehensive at the possibility of a close and honest look at the early formative years of the GDR, the novel itself takes the place of the speech for the reader. The ending thus has both positive and negative implications: Iswall has learned much from the scrutiny of his past, and has communicated his insights to the reader through the novel itself; moreover, as

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1. See D. & S. Schlenstedt, "Modern erzählt: Zu Strukturen in Hermann Kants Roman Die Aula", NDL XIII, 1965/2, pp.5-34.
 2. See especially W. Neubert, "Komisches und Satirisches in Hermann Kants Aula", Weimarer Beiträge 12, 1966/1, pp.15-26.
 3. E.g. H. Kähler, "Die Aula -- Eine Laudatio auf die DDR", Sinn und Form, 18, 1966/1, pp.267-273 (p.272); and D.E. Jenkinson, "Zu den Romanen Hermann Kants", paper delivered at the Symposium Gegenwartsprobleme der DDR-Literatur at the University of London, 29-30.4.1981.
 4. M. Marquardt, "Gescheit mit Spaß", Neues Deutschland, 12.1.1966, p.4.

he asserts in the final sentence of Die Aula: '. . . hier wird schon noch geredet werden'. (A 317). Officialdom, on the other hand, does not appear similarly willing to learn from the past.

When Robert Iswall receives the invitation he is thirty/six years old and a successful journalist. During the following months he makes three journeys, one to Hamburg, one to his former University, which we may assume to be Greifswald, the 'ABF' which Kant himself attended, and one to Leipzig: all three journeys provide important material for the novel. The second and third are made directly in connection with preparations for the speech: at the University he studies the archives to collect material, and in Leipzig he visits his former friend Gerd Trullesand. The first journey is made for professional reasons: Iswall travels to Hamburg as a journalist to report on the 1962 flood disaster, but this episode, as well as giving the author the opportunity to present his view of West Germany, is linked to the novel's central concern, for in Hamburg Iswall visits a former friend and fellow-student, 'Quasi' Riek, who had -- apparently -- defected to the West shortly after graduating from the 'ABF' in 1952; this visit creates an associative context for Iswall to reflect on the possible reasons for Riek's 'Republikflucht' in particular and on the issue of 'Republikflucht' in general.

The novel is narrated in the third person by an omniscient narrator and in language whose simplicity and directness contrast with the sophisticated narrative structure: in this respect at least Die Aula conforms to the requirements of Socialist Realism. For most of the time the narrative point of view is that of Iswall; only occasionally is Iswall seen through the eyes of other characters. External events are frequently introduced by Iswall himself, in discussions between his 'inner' and 'outer' self, a variant of inner monologue that might perhaps be described as 'inner dialogue'. Thus Die Aula presents, in the main, Iswall's subjective experience of events and his later personal evaluation of them, although reported discussions with friends and Party representatives suggest to the reader that Iswall's views and interpretations are not necessarily correct, thus stimulating the reader to provide his own comments and evaluations.

The many flashbacks constitute a series of amusing episodes and anecdotes rather than a complete, coherent or chronological account of the three years which Iswall spent at the 'ABF'. Because these episodes are selected on subjective grounds according to their relevance for Iswall's private life, it is questionable how relevant or representative they are of developments in the GDR as a whole. Die Aula has been sharply criticized on this account: E.W. Herd accuses Kant of trivializing

serious events by reducing them to the level of personalized anecdotes and thus avoiding any real discussion of problems: 'Kant uses his gift for anecdote to talk his way out of the problems his novels claim to be dealing with'.¹ Schonauer expresses the same view: 'Kant . . . hat am Thema . . . bewußt und sehr virtuos vorbei erzählt'.² Marquardt however takes the view that the episodes do provide an authentic view of the social history of the GDR: 'In Lebensläufen verrät sich die Geschichte unserer Republik als Resultante des Handelns jener, die sie gemacht haben'.³ Kant himself has vigorously defended the episodic structure of Die Aula with the argument that the individual experiences history through his own personal experiences and that an authentic historic consciousness can only be rooted in personal experience; it is the argument of an intellectual who perceives the history of the GDR very much as his own personal history:

Geschichten und Geschichte -- ein Nebeneinander, das ein Durch-einander ist? Ich glaube nicht, denn ich sehe mich durch die einen in die andere verwickelt. Wer anders denn wir sollte Geschichte so persönlich nehmen? Es ist unsere Geschichte, weil die Geschichten unsere sind. (4)

It must be admitted, however, that there is considerable truth in the critics' objection that Kant has selected his episodes in a very one-sided way. Iswall recalls, fragmentarily at least, thirteen years of East Germany's history, but there is only the briefest allusion to the events of June 1953 (A 243) and no mention at all of any effect of or response to the events of 1956 in Hungary. Nor is the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961 mentioned, although Iswall would have had reason, with his propensity for associative thinking, to have some thoughts on this subject when crossing the border on his trip to Hamburg. There is clearly much truth in the view that Kant has no wish to broach these weighty and problematic subjects. This is not, however, to say that Die Aula does not imply in some respects a highly critical view of East German society.

The tone of Die Aula is undoubtedly on the whole affirmative. Indeed the enthusiastic reception of the novel by GDR critics tended to obscure its critical elements -- a one-sided reception which Kant himself noted with some surprise and disappointment:

Ich glaube Wert legen zu dürfen auf den kritischen Ton dieses Buches . . . das Merkwürdige aber ist, daß sich bisher niemand

1. E.W.Herd, "Narrative Technique in Two Novels by Hermann Kant", in H.Siefken & A.Robinson (eds.), Erfahrung und Überlieferung, Cardiff 1974, (pp.185-196); p.195.
2. F.Schonauer, "Hermann Kant/Die Aula", Neue Rundschau 77, 1966, pp. 308-312.
3. M.Marquardt, loc.cit.
4. H.Kant, "Verwickelt in Geschichte", Berliner Zeitung (DDR), 14.3.1973.

zu Wort gemeldet hat, der sich von dieser Kritik betroffen fühlt. Sollte es dabei bleiben, werde ich doch für mich mit diesem Buch nicht zufrieden sein. (1)

Iswall, for all his many criticisms of GDR society, emphatically identifies with that society: the celebrated 'Laudatio' to Jakob Filter expresses that identification in the most unmistakable terms (A 249-252). It is precisely from his unshakable loyalty that Iswall derives his right to criticize specific aspects of life in the GDR. Whilst sometimes ashamedly aware of past mistakes, Iswall neither dissociates himself from the past nor attempts to evade his share of blame. Like Jakob Filter he regards the three years at the 'ABF' -- which, be it remembered, fell within the last phase of Stalin's supremacy -- as the best years of his life. The incidents which he recalls all give emphasis to the positive spirit of that time, the friendship, loyalty and solidarity, the innocent enjoyment of life, the mutual help and support, especially the encouragement of the weaker by the stronger -- virtues which are particularly evident in the episode of Riek's convalescence under the care of his room-mates, where the repetition of lecture material for Riek's benefit becomes a tactfully disguised form of help for Jakob Filter.

The element of criticism in Die Aula -- and hence in the consciousness of the intellectual who is its central character -- is, however, more substantial than most GDR critics have recognized. Some West German critics, on the other hand, made the mistake of seeing only the critical elements in Die Aula and hence of categorizing Kant as a 'dissident' writer -- a view which has, of course, long since been abandoned. A more common reaction in West Germany was to overlook the critical implications of the novel and dismiss it as stereotyped propaganda, a view which can be seen at its most extreme in the remarks of Marcel Reich-Ranicki, which are vehement to the point of irrational prejudice:

Sogar die simpelsten Losungen der Propaganda und die faustdicken Lügen werden hier nicht ohne Geschick und nicht ohne Perfektion an den Mann gebracht. (2)

Kant directs his criticism above all at Party dogmatism in all its forms, in particular as practised by Meibaum and Angelhoff. The latter in particular is clearly condemned along with others like him, for his Stalinist harshness, such as causes not only considerable personal unhappiness but also a number of defections. Angelhoff himself drives Fiebach to defect, in an extended episode which clearly indicates his fanaticism and lack of sense of proportion. Similar behaviour by other, unnamed, officials, drive both Robert's mother and his sister Lida to the

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1. Quoted from F.J.Raddatz, Traditionen und Tendenzen, Frankfurt a.M.1972, p.333.
 2. M.Reich-Ranicki, "Ein Land des Lächelns. Hermann Kants Die Aula", in Zur Literatur der DDR, Munich 1974, (pp.83-89); p.83.

West.

The undesirable effects of Party dogmatism are treated with greater seriousness of tone than the activities of the other principal obstacle to the humane progress of socialism: the opposition of bourgeois students and intellectuals to the aspirations of the working class students at the 'ABF'. This obstacle is more easily overcome; Die Aula indeed demonstrates the triumphant defeat of the prejudices and reactionary attitudes of the bourgeoisie:

Die anderen haben gesagt, wir könnten all dies nicht, und wir haben ihnen gezeigt, was wir können. Ihnen ist das Grinsen vergangen, und wir lächeln. Wir können alles, was sie können und allein zu können meinten. Das ist bewiesen. (A 247)

It is for this reason that the anecdotes which show the aversion of the university traditionalists towards the uneducated but critically aware newcomers are written without bitterness and with exuberant wit and humour, for example the comic tour de force of the election campaign for the student committee. Even the episode in which the value-free conception of science of the physics teacher Schika is criticized and rejected by his students is narrated with a lightness of tone which might be thought inappropriate to a subject of such fundamental importance and seriousness (A 222-225). Schika's words show in an extreme form the lack of social and moral responsibility which is associated in this novel with the bourgeois intelligentsia, and which it is the obligation of all socialist intellectuals to combat:

Wissenschaftler, die sich mit Politik einlassen, sind in ihrem Fach meistens gescheiterte Existenzen . . . Wissenschaft geschieht in einem amoralischen Bereich. (A 222f.)

As in Der geteilte Himmel, the bourgeois intellectuals in Die Aula are unambiguously condemned. Their cooperation is of course necessary in the early stages of building socialism: Schika is not the only lecturer with bourgeois attitudes to be entrusted with the task of teaching the worker-students. But although they cooperate, they do not readily abandon their prejudices or their privileges, nor are they ever seen to lose their deep-rooted conviction of their intellectual superiority, a conviction which the novel shows to be based not on any genuinely superior intelligence but merely on acquired verbal skills: hence Riek realizes that he can impress his bourgeois audience during the student election campaign only by imitating -- indeed exuberantly parodying -- the rotund manner of classical rhetoric.

Both the dogmatic socialists and the bourgeois reactionaries are contrasted with positive figures such as the veteran Communist Haiduck, whose humanity and understanding embody the true values of socialism.

Die Aula makes it clear, however, that in those early years, such ideal socialists were less influential than the dogmatists. Haiduck, the Party secretary who once fought actively for socialism in the Spanish Civil War and is now a humane and enthusiastic bureaucrat, is, however, given the opportunity to give Iswall and others some basic lessons in the practice of socialism: he reacts with biting sarcasm to the circumstances leading to Fiebach's defection following Angelhoff's savage treatment of him, but he does not merely condemn Iswall and his fellow-students, he also explains why their behaviour in the incident was wrong: they had failed to realize that socialism is built by raising political consciousness, not by ill-considered local radical activity, and had failed to practise solidarity with Fiebach, whom they should have defended against Angelhoff (A 194f.). It is through the beneficial effect of Haiduck's constructive criticism that Iswall is later able to recognize his own share of guilt:

Wir haben Fiebach mit seiner Angst allein gelassen -- nicht nur mit seiner Angst vor Angelhoff, sondern auch mit der Angst vor uns. Wir waren nicht besser als Angelhoff. Wir waren unerfahrener als er, aber doch nicht dümmer. Aber wir waren auch nicht redlicher als er. (A 208)

It is also Haiduck who points out the important difference between 'Wachsamkeit' and 'Mißtrauen' -- a crucial difference for the socialist intellectual engaged in the construction of socialism against the opposition of the bourgeois class enemy; the appalling horrors of Stalinism were the result of vigilance becoming universal mistrust:

. . . Mißtrauen vergiftet die Atmosphäre, Wachsamkeit reinigt sie. Ein wachsamer Mensch beobachtet genau, rechnet scharf, denkt, denkt, denkt, fragt immer nach den möglichen Folgen seiner Schritte, aber er geht -- manchmal rückwärts, manchmal seitwärts, aber im ganzen immer vorwärts. Wachsamkeit hat mit Mut zu tun. Mißtrauen hat mit Angst zu tun. Mißtrauen schießt auf Gespenster. (A 113)

Kant includes in Die Aula a number of anecdotes which show that the Party in those early years of the republic was guilty of practising mistrust instead of vigilance; he uses the strategy of comedy to expose the inappropriateness, even ludicrousness of this attitude, as in the incident where the students needed to obtain a letter from Haiduck before the University authorities agreed to allow Riek to be treated there, on the grounds that Dr. Gropjuhn was not a Party member and had explicitly refused to become one, although choosing to live and work in the GDR: he was suspected of a counter-revolutionary plot to infect the entire faculty with tuberculosis.

Iswall's evolution as a socialist intellectual is not merely a matter of receiving enlightenment from wider and more experienced Party members; it involves also the recognition of his own ethical failings.

He has, on the private level, been guilty of the same irrational and disproportionate mistrust, which led him to behave in a humanly indefensible fashion when, on the flimsiest of grounds, he suspected his closest friend, Trullesand, of being in love with the same girl as he. Rather than discuss the matter with Trullesand he abused his influence in the Party to have Trullesand chosen, along with Rose Paal, for a lengthy period of study in China. Riebenlamm and Riek were both, as it later transpires, aware of Iswall's ulterior motives for nominating Trullesand, but neither of them spoke out against his action, an omission which may perhaps be seen as the product of misplaced loyalty similar to the failure of Iswall and others to speak out against Angelhoff's persecution of Fiebach. It is worth noting that a number of East German novels of the 1960s do contain criticism of the Party for such far-reaching interference in the lives of individuals over whom they have influence, e.g. Karl-Heinz Jakobs's Beschreibung eines Sommers and Erik Neutsch's Spur der Steine. During the ten years following this incident Iswall has remained silent about it, even to his wife Vera who was the unwitting cause of it. It remains as a repressed, unexamined personal guilt, which in the novel is made to parallel the wider failings of the Party in its frequent indifference to the rights and needs of individuals. On the personal level, as is pointed out by Trullesand later in the novel, Iswall's behaviour was all the more reprehensible because it was that of a socialist and intellectual who, as soon as he felt that his personal interests were threatened, immediately discarded both his socialist morality and his critical intelligence. Trullesand's bitter comment on the fragility of 'socialist morality' has relevance to more than this specific case:

So ist es also mit diesem Genossen! Eine einzige blödsinnige Grille in seinem Kopf genügt, um wieder einen Neandertaler aus ihm zu machen; drei Jahre hat der Putz gehalten, und jetzt fällt er ab; einmal nur mach diese Sorte glauben, du wolltest ihr in die Quere kommen, und schon zieht sie das Messer und gebraucht es. (A 311)

Looking back on the episode in 1962, Iswall realizes that it is not enough to believe in an ideal, it must also be put into concrete practice. It is in consequence of this realisation that he resolves to confront his past failures, first in his private life: hence his visit to Leipzig to discuss the incident, ten years too late, with Trullesand, but also in his public life.

Iswall's public role is that of a journalist and writer who has wide and close contacts with the literary life of the GDR. Through Iswall, Kant voices criticisms of that literary life which are more severe than any that had been expressed in public in the GDR hitherto. Iswall deploras in particular the effects of the theory of Socialist Realism: he mocks its

doctrinaire schematism, ideological sentimentality and tendency to produce black-and-white images of the world. His proposed speech gives him the opportunity to speak about the past of the GDR without succumbing to these dangers. The strategic lightness of tone with which Iswall attacks the 'sacred cows' of socialist literary theory does not conceal the weightiness of his objections. When he first tells Vera of the proposed speech, she is mildly interested and ironically sceptical; she tells him mockingly:

Du mußt natürlich vom schweren Anfang reden und von den Menschen an unserer Seite und davon, wie der Stahl gehärtet wurde . . . (A 16)

This sentence contains no less than three, and possibly four, allusions to the programmatic titles favoured for the literature of the 'Aufbau' period.¹ Such programmatic didacticism is further criticized by Iswall, in the same bantering tone, when he is given a story to review, written by one Frau Tuschmann -- the name clearly suggests 'vertuschen' and 'retuschieren' -- with the blatantly didactic and involuntarily comic title Du sollst nicht stehlen! Iswall condemns the over-simplified schematic portrayal of character that is all too often characteristic of Socialist Realism in the hands of its less imaginative practitioners:

Robert hatte sich vor allem über die polierten Charaktere in der Geschichte geärgert; sie waren so ebenmäßig wie Billardkugeln und rollten genau dahin, wo Frau Tuschmann sie haben wollte. Dazu gehörte natürlich auch schon etwas, und Robert gab durchaus zu, daß die Autorin mit dem Queue umzugehen wußte und sich auf Effekt und Winkelberechnung an der Bande verstand, aber es war eben Billard, angewandte Mathematik, und es klappte nur, weil die Kugeln glatt waren und auf einer samtbezogenen Fläche rollten. Mathematik war eine großartige Sache; . . . aber eine Geschichte schreiben konnte man damit auf keinen Fall, denn die hatte es mit dem Leben, und das hatte Buckel und Risse, und die Menschen hatten sie auch. (A 25)

Anticipating official reactions to his review Iswall foresees that although it will at first be denied that citizens of the GDR have 'Buckel und Risse', or at least that these are not 'typical', the review will eventually be accepted provided that the title is made a little less pointed: 'Schließlich brauchen wir den Meinungsstreit!' (A 26). Kant indicates here that although it is still not entirely easy for critical intellectuals such as Iswall to publish their views, considerable progress has been achieved in this respect since the early 1950s:

Robert glaubte sich zu erinnern, daß es das Wort Meinungsstreit noch nicht gegeben hatte, als er an die ABF gekommen war. Vielleicht lohnt es sich, da einmal nachzuboahren, dachte er, es geht ja nicht um das Wort, sondern um die Sache, um die Haltung, die man zu einer Meinung einnimmt. (A 26)

1. E.Claudius, Vom schweren Anfang (1950) and Menschen an unserer Seite (1951); N.A.Ostrovski, Kak zakalyalas stal (1932-34) (German title: Wie der Stahl gehärtet wurde. Possibly also M.Langner, Stahl (1949).

At the same time, however, it is clear that crude didacticism still has its supporters and dissenting opinions are not always easily tolerated. Meibaum is impervious to Robert's arguments and insists on an uncomplicated optimism in literature:

Ich weiß nicht, Genosse Iswall, ich glaube, deine Auffassung ist nicht völlig richtig; die neue Literatur die muß doch optimistisch sein, das ergibt sich doch aus unserer neuen Gesellschaftsordnung; das ist, möchte ich sagen, gesetzmäßig. (A 183)

This same uncritical view is taken by a number of complacent and self-important older writers at the Congress of German writers, of which Die Aula contains a sharply satirical and highly amusing account. But Iswall's speech becomes for him a matter on which he is no longer prepared to compromise. Resolved to give a truthful and unvarnished account of the past, he rejects all Meibaum's suggested modifications and ignores the request to submit two copies of his speech in advance, knowing very well what Meibaum's proposed 'co-ordination' would entail:

Könntest du dies nicht ein wenig anders sagen? Muß denn ausgerechnet davon die Rede sein? Könnte man hier vielleicht etwas allgemeiner ...? Sollte es nicht möglich sein, an dieser Stelle...? Könnte, sollte, hätte, wäre, dürfte, müßte... vor allem: müßte... (A 163)

Iswall categorically refuses to permit such censorship -- thus taking a bolder stand than Teo Overbeck in Günter de Bruyn's later novel Die Preisverleihung:¹

Den Film spielen wir nicht mehr, Meibaum. Entweder du willst eine Rede von Iswall, oder du willst keine Rede von Iswall, so liegen die Dinge, und eine von Meiwall oder Isbaum kriegst du nicht! (A 163)

In the light of this resolute stance there seems to be little justification for Barbara Einhorn's objection that Iswall's protest remains passive and ineffectual,² or G.D. Tate's criticism that in Die Aula Kant 'does not go on to reveal what progress the GDR has made beyond this Stalinist inflexibility in terms of his characters' development'.³ If the protest is in this particular instance ineffectual, this is because the speech is cancelled, not because of any passivity on Iswall's part; and the fact that Iswall sees the necessity for taking such a stance is a development in his character which marks very real progress since the earlier days of universal conformity.

Meibaum withdraws the invitation to make the speech on the grounds that one should look to the future rather than the past. 'Looking to the future' tends, in the language of GDR Party officials, to mean seeing

1. See p.270.

2. B. Einhorn, Der Roman in der DDR 1949-1969, Kronberg/Ts. 1978, pp.348f.

3. G.D. Tate, Identity, Community and Continuity in the East German Novel, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Warwick 1977; p.273.

reality as it ought to be rather than as it is. One critic¹ has seen this as Kant's sharpest criticism of life in the GDR: although the fictitious individual Iswall is prepared to admit the wrongs committed in the past -- which as long as they are not admitted remain part of the present -- officialdom refuses to do likewise. But this perhaps overstates the case: certainly there are still Party officials who prefer to close their eyes to unpleasant facts, but when Iswall complains to Trullesand of the possibility that his speech will not after all be delivered on the grounds that the occasion is not 'typical', Trullesand encourages him not to be too pessimistic:

Wenn du dich wirklich mit uns auskennst, dann legst du dein
Manuskript nicht so weit weg. (A 306)

Trullesand's faith in the socialist state is stronger than Iswall's. He is more readily prepared to accept setbacks to his personal ambitions and to accept the wishes and decisions of the authorities, because he is entirely in harmony with society. The same is true of Jakob Filter, who also finds himself serving society in a capacity other than that which would have been his own free personal choice. He has risen to an important leading post in the Ministry of Forestry, only to find himself less than fully contented in this position of authority and responsibility. (The same problem is faced by David Groth in Das Impressum.) Once a simple forester who loved trees and work in the open air, he now finds himself at a desk, planning forests which he rarely if ever sees. Yet he has become an ideal humane bureaucrat, in touch with the real world, entirely democratic in his relations with his subordinates, and in no way changed personally. Jakob Filter is the most positive embodiment in Die Aula of the contribution that can be made by the new intelligentsia to the realisation of the socialist ideal.

But not all those who have risen from humble origins to positions of eminence in the GDR share Filter's admirable qualities. To illustrate the danger that the new intelligentsia may become a new bourgeoisie, the danger of 'Verbürgerlichung', Kant introduces the figure of Trimborn, once a fisherman, now a famous industrial research chemist, who travels abroad (and brings back scarce goods such as onions from his travels), drinks wine instead of beer, and has in general adopted the manners and lifestyle of the former bourgeoisie. Iswall emphatically condemns men such as Trimborn, who seem more concerned to use their position of influence and privilege to indulge private tastes and preferences than to contribute to the socialist cause by resisting the lure of embourgeoisement and

1. M.Gerber, "Confrontations with reality in Hermann Kant's Die Aula", Monatshefte 67, 1975, pp.173-184.

remaining in contact with the working class. This theme is taken up at greater length in Das Impressum. A number of critics have felt, however, that Iswall himself becomes 'verbürgerlicht' to a greater extent than he, and perhaps the author, realizes. To object to Iswall's familiarity with the German and European literary heritage as 'bourgeois'¹ is to assume a monopoly by the bourgeoisie over this heritage which in no way exists. The mistakenness of this assumption is indeed a major theme of Die Aula. The transmission and cultivation of the 'Kulturerbe' is a major aspect of cultural policy in the GDR; Hans Mayer has indeed criticized what he sees as the 'epigonaler Neoklassizismus' of the 'Goethe-Kult' in the GDR.² But a reverence for Goethe, however disproportionate in the view of some observers, can scarcely be said to obliterate the difference between a bourgeois and a socialist intellectual. It is not here that the danger of 'Verbürgerlichung' lies, but rather in the insistence by the new socialist intelligentsia on defeating the bourgeoisie on its own ground³, in the 'Aula', with its heavy aura of the classical-humanist tradition. The danger is that in acquiring a 'bourgeois' education one may also acquire competitiveness, status-envy, personal ambition and indifference to the fundamental goals of socialism. Iswall can in no way be said to have acquired these negative qualities. The worst that can be said of him in this respect is that he has retained an extremely narrow conception of education: before he begins work on his speech he sees his years at the 'ABF' in restrictedly academic terms; the main question to be asked of that period is, he thinks, 'die Frage nämlich nach dem Gewinn, der der Wissenschaft aus sechsundzwanzig Arbeiter-und Bauern-Semestern zugeflossen war' (A 17). It is only in the course of preparing his speech that he comes to realize the far more fundamental importance of that period of his life as a training in socialist thinking and morality.⁴ It is with this fuller consciousness of what it means to be a socialist intellectual that Iswall reaches maturity.

Kant's complete and contemptuous rejection of the West German bourgeoisie is made abundantly clear in his account of Iswall's journey to Hamburg. The occasion of the flood disaster gives the author the narrative context for a fiercely polemical and undoubtedly one-sided and over-

1. As does G.Friedrich, "Die Helden in Hermann Kants Roman Die Aula", Der Deutschunterricht 26, 1974/4, pp.81-98. See also L.Bornscheuer, "Wahlverwandtes? Zu Kants Aula und Heißenbüttels D'Alemberts Ende", Basis IV, 1973, pp.201-234. Bornscheuer speaks of Iswall's 'Ungebrochenes klassisch-humanistisches Bildungsbewußtsein' (ibid., p.209).

2. H.Mayer, Zur deutschen Literatur der Zeit. Zusammenhänge, Schriftsteller, Bücher, Reinbek 1967, p.393.

3. This is the theme also of Kant's Kleine Schachgeschichte.

4. See D.E. Jenkinson, loc.cit.

simplified presentation of the capitalist West, where no sense of social responsibility exists amongst the educated bourgeoisie, and where the poor are the principal sufferers from the disaster, not the rich warehouse owners with their insurance policies (who are, moreover, said in the novel to have in many cases received advance warning of the danger). The description of Iswall's sister's life with her husband, a gangster turned inn-keeper, holds up the materialistic values and immorality of Western society to contempt: Iswall's brother-in-law speaks with open pride of his adult life as 'Dreißig Jahre nur Kriminelles und keinen Tag Zet' (A 65, 106 et.al.). On his return journey Iswall meets -- in another splendidly comic episode -- an actor, a lonely eccentric individualist, whose main concern is his set of six white leather suitcases and whose behaviour and utterances provide a pointed comment on artistic life in the West, with its high evaluation of individual originality and indifference to social responsibility.

Iswall is never for a moment tempted by life in the West, with its offer of freedom without responsibility. His loyalty to the GDR and to the Party is absolute. But this does not mean that he believes that the Party's instructions and wishes should in all cases be accepted unquestioningly. He sees that both Trullesand and Filter have found fulfilment in their careers, but he wonders nevertheless where they would be now if they had made genuinely free personal choices. When he visits Riek in Hamburg he wonders how this most loyal of friends could possibly have betrayed them all. The only reason he can imagine is that Riek was so disillusioned by his, Iswall's, behaviour with regard to Trullesand that he had come to feel that a country which allowed such people to occupy positions of authority and influence did not deserve his loyalty. But such an explanation could only appear even remotely plausible to a person as egocentric and arrogant as Iswall: a dedicated Communist such as Riek, who had always taken full responsibility for his own actions, who had committed himself to the socialist cause before he even enrolled at the 'ABF', would never allow personal feelings to obscure what he clearly recognized as his social duty. Iswall never sees the real answer to the riddle of Riek's behaviour, although the reader can scarcely overlook the unmistakable and obtrusive hints which the author provides: Riek, there can be no doubt, is an espionage agent.¹ Riek has in fact made a greater personal sacrifice than

1. The textual evidence that Riek is a spy is conveniently assembled by G.Friedrich, loc.cit. and P.Hutchinson, Literary Presentations of Divided Germany, Cambridge 1977, pp.103f., footnote 37. In a stage version of Die Aula produced by the Kollektiv des Landestheaters Halle/Saale it was made explicit. Not all critics have realized it, however.

either Filter or Trullesand, and his case raises in an acute form the question of how far the State may legitimately go in the sacrifices which it demands from the individual. No such severe sacrifices are required of Iswall himself, but it is he who objects most strongly to any interference in his judgements and actions. He is in full agreement with the socialist principles of his society, he fully identifies with the working class and rejects bourgeois values unhesitatingly, but he insists on his individual integrity and cannot accept any absolute right of the State to abrogate the individual's right of self-determination. He thus embodies the possibility of a critical intellectual stance entirely within the commitment to socialism and loyalty to the Party.

The issue of the proposed speech is not brought to a point of crisis: the cancellation comes in good time and with reasons which are hard to reject. Iswall's initial reaction is one of bitterness: he wonders, somewhat over-dramatically, whether, if he were to die in an accident, anybody would find it worthwhile making a speech in his memory, or whether then too it would be insisted that one must 'look to the future'. But the novel ends on a more hopeful and conciliatory note: Iswall realizes that even though he will not make his speech as planned, what he wishes to say will be said. The voice of the critical intellectual will be heard: 'Hier wird schon noch geredet werden' (A 317). In Die Aula that critical voice is heard. Iswall thus faces the future with confidence, his faith in socialism is unshaken. He has not changed his position of loyal support, which remains as it was at the beginning of the novel. But he is now more conscious of the tensions inherent in that position. He recognizes that there are elements in the Party of which he does not approve, just as he recognizes his own past failings and the fact that the consequences of those failings can never entirely be made good; his friendship with Trullesand can never be fully restored, and he must live with the knowledge of his own capacity for deceit and opportunism. Critics have not always seen these negative elements in the ending of Die Aula: L. Bornscheuer¹ speaks of Kant's 'Abkehr von allen "tragischen" Aspekten', and E. Braemer² sees the ending as a wholly uncomplicated 'happy ending'. Hans-Jörg Rother³, on the other hand, rightly emphasizes that this view does not do justice to the author's intentions:

. . . der Roman klingt nicht in edler Harmonie aus . . . Es bleibt

1. L. Bornscheuer, loc. cit., p. 214.

2. E. Braemer, "Hier wird schon geredet", Forum (DDR) 1965/20, (pp. 7-9); p. 8.

3. H.-J. Rother, "Eine Bemerkung zum Menschenbild in Hermann Kants Roman Die Aula", Forum (DDR), 1966/2, (pp. 14-15); p. 14.

das Erschrecken über die Möglichkeit, zum 'Neandertaler' zu werden. Als eine Möglichkeit der Sicherung steht die permanente Kritik an sich selbst.

The element of permanent self-criticism must, as Iswall has learned, remain a major concern of the socialist intellectual.

Das Impressum

Seven years after Die Aula, Kant again presented, in Das Impressum, his view of the evolution of a socialist intellectual who learns to exercise his critical intelligence independently but in the service of socialism, and to understand the dialectical relationship of personal fulfilment and the fulfilment of social obligations: like Iswall, David Groth learns to accept the primacy of social obligation, but also comes to realize that genuine personal fulfilment can only come through the harmonisation of individual aspirations with the legitimate demands of society.

Das Impressum, which shows considerable similarity to Die Aula in tone, structure, narrative technique and intention, was in the main well received in the GDR¹, where it was the subject of lively critical discussion.² A number of Western critics dismissed it as facile and propagandistic³, objecting, as they had objected to Die Aula, that Kant's anecdotal technique had enabled him again to select, quite consciously, only those aspects of life in the GDR which are relatively unproblematic. This objection is, as in the case of Die Aula, justified to some extent, although Das Impressum, in addition to its sharply critical attitude towards all forms of dogmatism, also contains a vivid account of the events of 17 June 1953 (I 143f.) and a passage in a tone that is uniquely bitter for Kant, concerning the impact on East German Communists of Khrushchev's anti-Stalinist speech in 1956 (I 280). There is however no mention of events in Hungary in 1956, nor of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. Kant admitted⁴ that the latter omission warranted criticism, but explained that for him as a writer the subject was not as yet 'ausge-

1. See W.Liersch, "Hermann Kant: Das Impressum", Weimarer Beiträge, XVIII, 1972/10, pp.149-153; W.Neubert, "Impressionen zum Impressum", NDL XX, 1972/5, pp.119-122.

2. See K.Jarmatz, Forschungsfeld Realismus, p.38.

3. See M.Reich-Ranicki, "Die zusammengelegte Schlaueit. Hermann Kants Das Impressum", Die Zeit 28.4.1972; also in Zur Literatur der DDR, pp.90-93; A.P.Chiarloni, "Hermann Kant. Die Aula e Das Impressum", AION 16, 1973/3, pp.145-174 & 353-354; E.W.Herd, loc.cit., cf. p.244.

4. In an interview with Anneliese Große, published in A.Löffler (ed.), Auskünfte, p.308.

reift'. Since the view of East German society in general as presented in Das Impressum does not differ in any essential respect from that in Die Aula, the following analysis will not be concerned with Groth's general social experience, which does not significantly differ from that of Iswall; it will, however, be concerned with the specific personal relationships that are important to Groth in his evolution as a socialist intellectual.

For Das Impressum, as for Die Aula, Kant uses a quotation from Heine as a motto, but in this case it is the present, not the past, whose importance is emphasized:

Die Gegenwart ist
in diesem Augenblicke
das Wichtigere,
und das Thema...
ist von der Art,
daß überhaupt
jedes Weiterschreiben
davon abhängt.

Accordingly, in Das Impressum, less attention is devoted to the past than was the case in Die Aula. However, for the reasons stated above, the following account will be to a large extent concerned with the past of the central character, his development as an intellectual committed to socialism and active in a socialist society. David Groth, like the former 'ABF' students of Die Aula, is a member of the new intelligentsia of working-class origin, now occupying an influential and responsible position as a newspaper editor. As with Robert Iswall -- and indeed Kant himself -- his journalistic activity provides a focal point for a committed but critical monitoring of social developments. Groth identifies fully with the working class and the new republic, and is proud of his own contribution to the building of a socialist society, but at the same time he occasionally regrets the loss of that direct involvement in productive work which he knew as a worker. What he has to learn is that every man must serve society and the socialist cause to the best of his ability and in the function for which he is best suited by virtue of his capacities. No individual, and this includes the intellectual, has the moral right to evade that obligation.

When the novel opens in 1967 David Groth is forty years old and has just been offered a post as a government minister; he is, however, perfectly happy in his job as editor-in-chief of the newspaper for which he has worked throughout his adult life, and does not desire promotion to high political office. (A very similar situation is the subject of Erik Neutsch's Auf der Suche nach Gatt (1973), the title and style of which show the clear influence of Christa Wolf's Nachdenken über Christa T.)

This situation prompts Groth to look back on the course of his life: his childhood in the 1930s, his narrow escape from active service in the war, and his subsequent successful career in 'das bessere Deutschland'. He looks back with nostalgia to the 'Aufbau' period of the 1950s with its atmosphere of friendship and enthusiasm, its often unorthodox approach to problems, and the solidarity of the collective struggle for a common cause. Like many other East German novels of the 1970s, Das Impressum includes a critical stock-taking of those early years,¹ such as Kant had himself pioneered in Die Aula.

Since those early days Groth has had to learn to keep his spontaneous impulses in check and fulfil the requirements of his work. He has come to realize that as a journalist he has an important didactic function which entails a more comprehensive responsibility than the responsibility which every individual owes to himself: his successes and failures can have far-reaching consequences, as is illustrated by a number of examples from his journalistic activity. For example, his first series of interviews entailed asking citizens of the GDR what they wished for the new year; he learns to edit the material thus obtained in such a way that it will present a socially useful message concerning what people ought to wish for the new year, viz. peace, and a better world with better people: responsible journalism must both reflect and help to shape public opinion. Later, during a visit to West Germany with his colleague and mentor, the photographer Gabelbach, Groth's spontaneous impulse is to protest against the religious procession in which they find themselves participating, but Gabelbach explains to him that he is not there in the role of a political agitator, in which case protest would be appropriate, but in the role of a reporter, whose function is to observe and record, only afterwards selecting what is suitable for publication and comment.

This necessity of open-mindedness in the initial response to social experience, a vital pre-requisite of genuine intellectual integrity, is later discussed at some length when a new editor, Herbert Bleck, objects to some of the unpublished photographs in Gabelbach's private collection of oddities. The editor argues that journalists and photographers should gather only such material as accords with their specific didactic task as determined by the Party, but Gabelbach defends the freedom, indeed the necessity, for the artist to record whatever he finds interesting or significant and only afterwards to select what should or should not be published. The debate between Gabelbach and Bleck is strongly reminiscent

1. W.Hartinger speaks of the 'Bilanz-Charakter' of the East German novel in the early 1970s, in M.Diersch & W.Hartinger (eds.), Literatur und Geschichtsbewußtsein, p.9.

of that between Anna Seghers and Georg Lukács.¹ Bleck takes the view that journalism -- and the argument is clearly intended to apply to creative literature also -- should be directly didactic and give prominence to what is 'typical' in the Socialist Realist sense; he fears that Gabelbach's liking for the bizarre in his private collection is a symptom of incipient bourgeois decadence. But Gabelbach defends the need for open-mindedness in the perception of the world:

Ein Reporter muß, bevor er berichten kann, etwas zurückbringen: Eindrücke, Erfahrungen, Ansichten, Einsichten, Wahrnehmungen sinnlicher Natur, Bestimmungen gedanklicher Natur. Er ist ein Sammler, bevor er ein Ordner sein kann. (I 166)

He defends his private collection as a constant stimulating reminder of the colourful variety of human life:

Für mich ist sie ein Teil meiner Arbeit, ein heiterer Teil meines Lebens, ein Beleg zu meinem Glauben, daß nichts unmöglich sei, sie ist ein Stück von mir und auch ein Stück von meinem Nebenmenschen. (I 170)

This defence of creative freedom does not conflict with a sense of responsibility with regard to what is appropriate for publication in a newspaper: here, social responsibility takes automatic and unquestioned precedence over individual creative freedom. The ease with which photographs can be misused for propaganda purposes -- and hence the necessity for artistic freedom to be exercised with a due sense of responsibility -- is further illustrated in the episode concerning Franziska Groth's arresting and unusual wedding photograph which is used by the West German press as anti-Communist propaganda when it comes into their possession as a result of her brother's defection (I 128). With regard to the printed word also Kant emphasizes that editors are responsible for the consequences of what they publish; this is illustrated by the account of how Groth is rebuked by nurse Turo for approving the publication of a witty poem satirizing the birth control pill without regard to its reactionary and hence potentially damaging content.

Turo is indeed one of several exemplary characters in the novel from whom Groth learns important lessons, and the memory of whom helps him in the end to take the correct decision to accept power and responsibility at government level. Disfigured in an accident and deserted by her fiancé as a result, she has nevertheless become a kindly and compassionate nurse, caring for others more fortunate than herself. Gerhard Rikow is likewise an exemplary socialist, who does not allow personal misfortune to undermine his socialist commitment. Rikow was a friend of Groth's during their

1. See chapter 4, Excursus, p.205f. It was Anna Seghers who first urged the young Kant, then an electrician, to go to University, and thus set him on the path to his later literary career. She has remained his revered mentor ever since.

youth noted for his optimism and unshakable belief in the goodness of socialist man. As a prisoner of war in a Russian camp -- not the most favourable circumstances for sustaining that belief -- he gave a letter to his parents to a Russian soldier, and the letter was eventually delivered; Groth attaches great symbolic significance to this episode, with its message of faith in adversity: 'Wenn die Post ankommen soll, muß man sie erst einmal abschicken' (I 297). That is to say, socialism cannot be achieved unless men believe in it and actively contribute to its establishment, even when its realisation appears extremely remote. Like Christa Wolf's Christa T., Rikow dies young of leukaemia, but his illness is not presented in any way as a symptom of inner stress or dissatisfaction, as it is perhaps meant to be understood in the case of Christa T., nor did it for a moment detract from Rikow's courage and optimism. Rikow has had an exemplary socialist career, conscientiously fulfilling his duties at every stage and finally reaching government level. Like Groth, he had been happy working with labourers, but had struggled to meet the demands of the various educational courses which he was urged to attend, without ever objecting or refusing. After Rikow's death, Fritz Andermann eulogizes him as a model socialist, confident, hard-working, accepting his onerous duties not as a sacrifice but as a right; the tone of the passage is reminiscent of the eulogy of Jakob Filter, whose life was very similar to Rikow's, in Die Aula:

Der war doch ein eingelöstes Versprechen, der Gerhard. Der war doch so geworden, wie wir uns das gedacht hatten für die andere Welt und die neue Zeit. Der war doch so, daß wir uns sagen konnten: Gut, daß wir ausgehalten haben für solche wie den; die Sache wird in guten Händen bleiben. Es hat ihm Spaß gemacht, unseren Sozialismus eine Anmaßung zu nennen, aber verhalten hat er sich zu ihm wie zu einer Pflicht, und vor allem wie zu einem Recht -- mit Ahnung und Vollmachten. Und ich muß dir sagen, manchmal habe ich ihn gesehen . . . als einen, der vorwärts geht auf ein Ziel, das auch meines ist, als großen Grund zu großer Zuversicht. (I 301)

Another exemplary figure is the paper's first editor, Kutschen-Meyer, whose honesty and integrity have provided a standard for Groth to measure his own behaviour by: 'der war, was er [Groth] gerne gewesen wäre: kompromißlos und treu und mit einem Ziel versehen von lange her' (I 150). Kutschen-Meyer, like Meternagel in Christa Wolf's Der geteilte Himmel, has suffered the consequences of being placed in a position of high authority and responsibility for which he was politically suitable but not professionally qualified; however, he subsequently makes way for Johanna Müntzer without bitterness, and goes on, like Meternagel in Rita's, to play an important part in Groth's political education. It is he who urges Groth to curb his 'politisches Einzelgängertum' (I 222) and warns him against rejecting Party discipline in words that express more explicitly

than any others Kant's own loyalty to the Party:

. . . eines ist für einen Genossen die furchtbarste Scheiße, in die er geraten kann: daß er meint, er ist schlauer als die Partei. . . . Wenn ick [sic] dir einen Rat geben darf: Halte dich ruhig für schlau, halte dich von mir aus sogar für schlauer als jeden anderen, trotzdem das natürlich schon gefährlich ist, aber glaube nie, du kannst gegen die zusammengelegte Schlauheit der anderen ankommen. Die Partei ist . . . genau das: zusammengelegte Schlauheit. (I 234) (1)

The paramountcy of the Party is stated even more strongly by Johanna Müntzer when Groth tells her that he does not wish to become a minister:

Das bestimmst nicht du, . . . , das bestimmst du nicht. Du bestimmst nicht, ob du es wirst, und du bestimmst nicht, daß du es nicht wirst. (I 307)

She reminds him of one of the fundamental principles of dialectical materialism: the need for both a broad historical perspective and a sense of personal responsibility; it is important, she says:

Daß wir wissen, wie sehr wir in der Weltgeschichte stecken. Wir sind nicht immer an unseren Lagen schuld, aber wir müssen leben, als wären wir es. (I 308)

The main problem for Groth with regard to his impending promotion is not the question of Party loyalty, however; it is the awareness that such promotion will take him even further from the working class with which he still entirely identifies. The problem was raised in Die Aula, but there it was implied that the solution was entirely a matter for the individual.² In Das Impressum the issue is recognized as more complex: it is inevitable, given the stratified structure of an advanced industrial society, that different occupations create different personalities, with little direct contact between groups whose level of education and style of life differ substantially, notably between intellectuals and workers. The problem is discussed at great length by Groth and his younger

1. F.Schonauer, "Hermann Kant/Das Impressum", Neue Rundschau 83, 1972/3, pp.554-559, comments on this passage as follows: 'Im Hinblick auf die Schwierigkeiten, die die Partei während der 60er Jahre mit einigen ihrer Intellektuellen hatte (z.B. Havemann, Biermann) muß man in dieser Äußerung wohl mehr sehen als eine der obligaten Gesten an die Adresse der SED.' The reference to 'obligatory gestures' reveals an attitude which is surprisingly widespread among Western critics: the persistent refusal to believe that there are writers and intellectuals in the GDR who support the SED with complete sincerity and conviction, despite the faults and shortcomings which they clearly recognize in it. The same critics appear to have no such difficulty in believing that Günter Grass, for instance, is sincere in his support for the SPD notwithstanding his full awareness of its faults and shortcomings. The most extreme case of a Western critic who refuses to believe in Kant's good faith, preferring to accuse him of hypocrisy and opportunism, is M.Reich-Ranicki, who writes: 'Natürlich ist Kant nicht der Typ des gläubigen Kommunisten . . . Gleichwohl scheint es ihm richtig oder opportun, an diesem Dogma [scil. the infallibility of the Party] festzuhalten.' (M.Reich-Ranicki in Die Zeit, 28.4.1972).

2. See p. 253.

colleague Gldenstern, who once worked in industry but was selected for higher education and has now become a journalist. His problem, which Groth recognizes as his own, is that of alienation from his former friends. The resulting insecurity with regard to his social identity has led him to consider the term 'intellectual' as one of abuse, and he bitterly laments what he feels to be his estrangement from his former fellow-workers:

Wie ist das nun mit der Arbeiterklasse und unsereins? Ich hab doch nicht deshalb studiert, damit es eines Tages heit: Du gehrst nicht mehr zur Arbeiterklasse. Natrlich hat sich etwas gendert, aber so, da einer einen Gegensatz daraus konstruieren kann? Nee, bin ich nicht der Meinung. Ich mache keinen Fetisch daraus, aber wenn ich hre: Voran, du Arbeitsvolk!, meine ich mich selber immer noch mit, verstehst du? (I 244)

Groth agrees with him, but realizes that the problem is a real one, class differences, even if they are non-antagonistic, do still exist in a socialist society:

Das ist ja nicht schwer . . . aber das Problem ist schwierig genug. Weil wir doch tatschlich keine Arbeiter mehr sind, Handarbeiter nicht, und Proletarier schon gar nicht. Proletarier im klassischen Sinne gibt's sowieso nicht mehr bei uns, aber Arbeiter gibt es natrlich, und so tun, als wren wir und sie noch in allen Punkten ein Pott, ein Stlp, das wre unwissenschaftlich, aber, und das scheint mir der springende Punkt zu sein: Wer nun daraus etwas anderes machen will, aus dem Unterschied einen Gegensatz, dem gehrt eins auf die Nase. (I 244f.)

Gldenstern's desire to be posted for an extended period to a production plant in order to write regular reports for the paper from there, is rejected by Groth as both impracticable and egocentric. He explains to the younger man at length that each individual has his personal responsibility, which may not coincide with his personal preferences:

Revolutionr sein, das heit auch: den Platz suchen, finden und behaupten, von dem aus man ein Maximum an nderung durchsetzen kann. (I 250)

Groth argues as much to convince himself as for his colleague's benefit, for as a reporter he himself had direct contact with a wide variety of people, and is frequently beset by nostalgia for that time, for now he merely selects and edits the work of his subordinates. He recognizes such nostalgia as romantic self-indulgence, not only because he is needed where he is, but also because none of his subordinates would wish him to resign and revert to an earlier stage of his career. As his chauffeur tells Gldenstern:

. . . glaube blo nicht, die wrden sich freuen. Die machen vielleicht jetzt ihre kleinen Witze ber dich, wenn du sie besuchst, als ihr Studierter, aber richtig angenommen, du wirst wieder Holzarbeiter, dann hast du verspielt. Weil es nicht normal ist und, meine Vermutung: deine Kumpel wrden zwei Sachen denken: Du hast es nicht geschafft, als Persnlichkeit, und du hast es nicht geschafft als einer von ihnen. Das wre eine Beleidigung fr sie. --

Meine Meinung: Als studierter Redakteur bist du mit ihnen zehnmal mehr verbunden als wenn du ein Abgebrochener wärst, ein Wolltemal- undkonntenicht. (I 247)

After a lengthy inner debate on the subject Groth is able to realize and genuinely accept the primacy of social obligation over personal inclination in this issue, to see the force of his chauffeur's arguments, and to accept the need to move up to whatever position of responsibility his abilities best fit him for. Just as the messenger boy became a journalist, and the journalist editor-in-chief, so the editor-in-chief must become a minister if he is called on to do so, because in a socialist society social mobility is genuinely functional, enabling the leadership to be recruited from those with the necessary abilities, whatever their origins. Groth's inner self is thus now in harmony with the view of the Party: the intellectual is indeed different, in education, personality and life-style, from the workers, but it is in his capacity as an intellectual that he can best serve that class:

Denn was will deine Arbeiterklasse von dir? . . . du mögest bei deinem Leisten bleiben . . . Mach deine Sache, wie sie ihre Sache machen. Mach deine Sache auf deinem Platz, der jetzt, jetzt wenigstens, im Chefzimmer der Neuen Berliner Rundschau ist . . . da hast du deinen Kampfplatz. (I 259f.)

What the Party cannot tell the individual is how to come to terms with the awareness that being an intellectual inevitably entails a degree of estrangement from the working class, that is not easily outweighed by a theoretical sense of solidarity. Kant does not offer a remedy in Das Impressum, because for Groth no real sense of estrangement exists: for all his occasional nostalgia for the past, he, like Robert Iswall, is basically in harmony with the principles of socialism and accepts without great difficulty the right of society to expect self-sacrifices from its citizens. He does not feel the paralysing estrangement felt by Christa Wolf's Christa T., and it is not part of Kant's concern to address himself to the problems of individuals such as her. Like Hanna in Schneider's Das Glück, who moves from an asocial childhood background through higher education to professional status as a teacher without experiencing any sense of class insecurity or uncertainty of personal identity, Kant's characters are too fundamentally in harmony with their environment to suffer more than superficially from the dislocations caused by social mobility. For them conformity is not a weakness or an evasion of the individual's responsibility towards himself; it is, on the contrary, a form of self-fulfilment through self-discipline, a conquest by the rational, moral self of the self-indulgent inclinations of the individual. Of all the writers of major stature in the GDR, Kant is the only one to whom the relationship of the intellectual to society appears so unproblematic.

C.. Günter de Bruyn: Die Preisverleihung

Günter de Bruyn, born in 1926, published his first novel, Buridans Esel, in 1968, which surprised readers in the GDR by its choice of theme.¹ The central character, Karl Erp, is a successful librarian, a Party member and a married man, who, thanks to his wife's family circumstances, lives in material comfort. The novel is a story of adultery, presented with considerable irony and detachment: Erp eventually gives up his mistress, but he does so not because he bows to the objections of Party and colleagues -- who in fact come to accept his new relationship -- nor because of the promptings of his socialist conscience; he returns to his wife merely because he is dissatisfied with his reduced standard of living. He is not welcomed as a repentant sinner on his return, and it is left an open question whether or not he can be changed and whether or not the marriage can be saved. Buridans Esel was predictably criticized in the GDR for its concern with 'atypical' characters and hence the alleged 'triviality' of its problems.² The author rejected these criticisms on the grounds that society comprises a wide variety of individuals with differing subjective perceptions of their own life-experience, perceptions which determine their social behaviour, and thus cumulatively determine the evolution of collective social life also:

Ich halte es für wichtig, daß gerade das Individuelle . . . sehr aufmerksam beachtet wird; denn hier liegt ein ganz wesentlicher gesellschaftlicher Faktor. Auch dieser Bereich des Lebens gehört zur Gesellschaft, hier ist das, was die weitere Entwicklung beeinträchtigt oder beschleunigt, sehr genau ablesbar, und die Verhaltensweisen, die hier praktiziert werden, haben ihren Einfluß auch auf die Handlungen, die mehr im Licht der Öffentlichkeit stehen. (3)

Throughout the interview from which this statement is quoted, de Bruyn stressed the importance of the private sphere as a barometer of the quality of public life. Buridans Esel, he maintained, was not just the story of one individual's adultery, but raised 'das Problem von Stehenbleiben und Entwicklung der Persönlichkeit'⁴ and the important general question:

. . . inwieweit die gesellschaftlichen Normen schon fester Bestandteil des gewöhnlichen Lebens der Menschen geworden sind. (5)

1. See "Gegenwart im Roman. Heinz Plavius im Gespräch mit Günter de Bruyn über Buridans Esel", NDL XVI, 1968/6, pp. 9-13.
2. P. Gugisch, "Buridans Esel. Eine gewöhnliche Geschichte", NDL XVII, 1969/12, pp. 138-144.
3. S. Töpelmann, "Interview mit Günter de Bruyn", Auskünfte, op.cit., p. 42.
4. Ibid., p.45.
5. Ibid., p.45.

These norms of a socialist society he defined as:

Gerechtigkeitsgefühl, aufrechtes und kritisches Verhalten,
Rücksichtnahme, moralische Unbestechlichkeit, Selbstachtung,
Feingefühl . . . (1)

In connection with this concern with the ways in which private life reflects the quality of public life, Helmut Richter² has pointed to a widespread tendency in East German fiction to revert to themes and narrative forms familiar from nineteenth-century literature, in which this relationship of the private and public spheres was of central importance:

Im Zentrum steht das Ringen des Individuums um eine menschenwürdige Bewährung vor allem in seiner engeren Umwelt, um eine Einordnung in die Gemeinschaft, die im Einklang steht mit seinen als natürlich, vernünftig, menschlich erkannten Verhaltensnormen, die im Kern die humanistischen und demokratischen Ideale der bürgerlichen Aufstiegszeit sind. (3)

But whereas, Richter argues, in bourgeois society it was not possible for the individual thus to harmonize his personal ideals with social norms, socialist society does make such harmonisation possible. Thus the concern of East German writers in the 1960s with the private sphere is not to be seen as a symptom of withdrawal from public life as was so often the case with writers in the nineteenth century, but as an attempt to extend the investigation of socialist morality from the public sphere, in which it has already been firmly established, to the private sphere. Richter quotes de Bruyn, who spoke of his concern with private life as a concern with the 'Weiterentwicklung unserer Gesellschaft, das Eindringen sozialistischen Bewußtseins in die gesamte Lebenshaltung des Menschen'.⁴

A close look at even the most private sphere, love, can, de Bruyn insists, shed light on large social issues:

. . . wenn man genau genug hinsieht, genau genug beschreibt, wird auch das Privateste, die Liebe, zum Gesellschaftlichen, weil ja die Charaktere, durch die sie entsteht, sich bekanntlich im Strom der Welt bilden und ihre Folgen fördernd oder hemmend die Umwelt berühren. (5)

In his next novel Die Preisverleihung, de Bruyn again investigates the question of how far it is possible for the individual to adhere to the socialist 'norms', which would be better described as ideal values, while at the same time meeting the demands of his social role, that is to say, how far moral and intellectual integrity is compatible with the demands

1. Ibid., p.45.

2. H. Richter, "Zur Rezeption deutschsprachiger Erzähler der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts in der Epik der sechziger Jahre", in M. Diersch & W. Hartinger, op.cit., pp. 248-274.

3. Ibid., p.254.

4. S. Töpelmann, loc.cit., p.45.

4. Ibid., p.42.

and expectations facing the intellectual in East German society. His area of concern is now not just the private sphere, but the public sphere also, and the interaction of the two: Teo Overbeck faces three problems, one in the professional sphere (whether he should give the expected speech or not), one in the private sphere (the danger posed to his marriage by the threat of revelations concerning the past) and one which touches both spheres (his daughter Cornelia's rejection by the University and her plea to him to use his influence on her behalf.) Reflecting this greater complexity of content, there are in Die Preisverleihung three intellectuals as main characters, all belonging, like Erp the chief librarian in Buridans Esel; to the literary-academic sphere: Teo Overbeck, a University lecturer in 'Germanistik'; his colleague and Head of Department Professor Liebscher, and the novelist Paul Schuster.¹ Liebscher and Schuster have both opted for opportunistic conformity, Teo Overbeck finds himself impelled to question the acceptability of this behaviour and to offer a degree of resistance to it as he comes to realize the primacy of ethics as a guide to human behaviour.

To the question of how far an intellectual in the GDR can fulfil a social role without becoming guilty of uncritical conformity or hypocrisy, de Bruyn gives, in Die Preisverleihung, an ambiguous answer: his portrait of the small segment of GDR society which he has chosen to present is bleakly pessimistic, yet in Teo Overbeck's resolution to live more honestly there is an element of tentative optimism. The almost uniformly negative portrait of the literary-academic milieu in Die Preisverleihung prompted Engler², while acknowledging the need for 'Kritik an kleinbürgerlichen Erscheinungen . . . nicht nur an "Überbleibseln" sondern auch an neu entstandenen negativen Verhaltensweisen'³, to protest:

Zugleich kann sicher festgehalten werden, daß die "kleine Welt" dieses Romans nicht die "große Welt" unserer Gesellschaft repräsentiert. (4)

Plavius was even less kind in his review: he dismissed Die Preisverleihung sarcastically as bearing no resemblance to reality: 'Alle Ähnlichkeiten sind rein zufällig!'⁵ These critical responses bear witness to the harshness of de Bruyn's criticisms.

The central character of Die Preisverleihung, Teo Overbeck, is in

1. H. Plavius, "Gefragt: Wirklichkeit", NDL XXI, 1973/3, pp. 150-154; (p.153) objected to this concentration on an academic milieu and intellectual characters; it is a frequently heard objection to recent East German fiction.
2. J. Engler, "Günter de Bruyn: Preisverleihung", Weimarer Beiträge, 1973/4, pp. 153-161.
3. Ibid., p.159.
4. Ibid., p.159.
5. Loc.cit., p.151.

a situation somewhat similar to that of Robert Iswall in Die Aula: he has been asked to make a congratulatory speech on the occasion of the award of a literary prize to his friend Paul Schuster. Here, however, the action takes place on a single day in the late 1960s, the day of the speech, but in the process of writing his laudatio, Overbeck, like Iswall, recalls the past, reassesses both that past and his present values and position, and concludes that he does not honestly consider that Paul's book deserves praise: although it might have been worthy of a prize ten or twenty years previously, this can no longer, in the light of developments in literature since, be said to be the case. The author does not tell us a great deal about Schuster's novel¹, but it is clear that what Overbeck objects to in it is its lack of individuality and pedantic adherence to the stereotypes of Socialist Realism. It was in fact Overbeck himself who, some twenty years previously, urged Schuster to curb his individual imagination and insistence on a truthful account of his own experiences and perceptions -- his 'subjective authenticity' in Christa Wolf's phrase -- and to write instead in a 'socially useful' way, that is to say, to produce the required positive hero and 'typical' situations. But whereas Teo can now see the limitations of such writing -- however useful and necessary it may have been during the 'Aufbau' period -- Schuster has, over the years, become an opportunistic conformist willing to provide what the authorities require, and has presented his earlier novel, suitably amended, for which he has been awarded a prize by the literary officialdom which still rewards not creative originality or honesty but compliance with its cultural policies.

Overbeck thus faces the problem of whether he should obey his own conscience and refuse, at the last moment, to make the speech, or do his duty as defined by others, that is to say, provide the expected laudatory speech. He is well aware that the former course of action would jeopardize his prospects of a professorship which, although not himself ambitious, he hopes for for his wife Irene's sake, and because of the material benefits -- a home of their own and a car -- which promotion would bring. Thus, unlike Robert Iswall, he faces pressures to conform not only from the outside world, but also arising from his own material aspirations.

As de Bruyn stressed in the interview quoted above, he is concerned with the ways in which the behavioural pattern of a person's private life

1. H. Plavius, loc.cit., criticized de Bruyn for expecting the reader to accept Overbeck's evaluation of Schuster's novel rather than giving him enough information about it to allow him to form his own judgment. Like Plavius's other strictures, this is over-stated.

both influences and reflects his actions in public life. In Die Preisverleihung he examines Overbeck's parallel conflict between personal integrity and social expectations, the awareness of which he has hitherto suppressed, on both levels. Overbeck has learned, in his private life, to compensate for a lack of inner security by establishing a pattern of life governed by strict routine and tacit agreement. His marriage to Irene appears exemplary in its tranquility and harmony, but it is a harmony created at the expense of a truly close personal relationship. This is apparent from the opening paragraph of the novel, as are the author's irony and detachment:

Man hat mich aufgefordert, eine vorbildliche Ehe zu beschreiben und mir ein Model dafür gezeigt. Mit Vorbehalten habe ich zugesagt und das beispielhafte Paar beobachtet. Jetzt versuche ich, das Erforschte zusammenzufassen in der Beschreibung eines Tages, der damit beginnt, daß Teo Overbeck Gardinen aufzieht, Fenster öffnet and dabei denkt: Den Auftrag hätte ich nicht annehmen dürfen! Er sagt aber: "Ein schöner Tag heute!" (Pv 5)

It is tacitly understood between husband and wife that their life is not to be disturbed by problems or conflicts; only in their most intimate moments does Overbeck ever speak of his inner tensions:

Vor Jahren einmal, im Bett nach heftigen Umarmungen, wenn man gelöster als sonst über sich selbst reden kann, weil das Zusammengehörigkeitserlebnis noch frisch, der Persönlichkeitspanzer noch nicht wieder erhärtet ist, hat er Irene erzählt von seiner Unfähigkeit zum öffentlichen Reden, zu dem er sich früh verpflichtet gefühlt hatte. (Pv 113)

Irene is always cheerful and light-hearted; her husband rewards her by a display of unwavering and uncritical adoration. She is presented as a somewhat vain and superficial woman, fond of flirtation though entirely faithful to her husband, and concerned principally with status and material well-being: 'Ihr Seelenmeer ist immer licht und glatt; schwarze Gedanken versinken in ihm, die schweren natürlich schneller.' (Pv 6)

As the narrative progresses, however, it becomes apparent that her happiness and security are built on deceit and that Irene lives in constant concealed fear that this deceit may be exposed. When Irene left Schuster and married Teo Overbeck she was pregnant by Schuster; their daughter Cornelia is thus Schuster's child, and Irene fears that when they meet Schuster again after eighteen years he will realize this and betray her 'secret' to her husband. Overbeck knows the truth, of course, but he too has chosen to remain silent on the subject throughout these years in order not to disturb their happiness. Both have preferred to conform to a supposedly ideal conception of marriage rather than openly accept a less than ideal reality. This exactly parallels the attitude which Overbeck has opted for in his profession as a university teacher of literature, although he has done so with insufficient conviction to achieve

any substantial professional success; he has remained an 'Assistent', unlike his more determinedly careerist former colleague and present Head of Department, Professor Liebscher.

As Overbeck listens to one of his students rehearsing dutifully and at length the standardized interpretations required by official literary theory, he neither argues nor interrupts; he is fully aware of the pedantry, superficiality, predictability and total lack of originality or personal enthusiasm of the students' views, but his reflections are unspoken:

Richtig, richtig! Es ist alles richtig, was diese Art von Studenten als eigene Referate ausgeben. Sie haben in der Schule Literaturwissenschaft wie Mathematik zu treiben gelernt, vergessen Beweisführungen, lernen Formeln, die überall angewendet werden können. Da sie an sie gewöhnt sind, verlangen sie nach ihnen, kommen damit durch Prüfungen und in den Lehrberuf, wo sie sie unbearbeitet weitergeben . . . Daß er Eigenmeinungen mit Anerkennung honoriert, hilft wenig, da Risiko gescheut wird und sichere Wege mit Standards gepflastert sind. Und so bauen sie dann ihren späteren Schülern wieder die glatten, geraden, öden Straßen des Literaturunterrichts, auf denen erlebnis- und schönheitsgierige Kinder verdursten. Das ist eine Kette ohne Ende. Wer hält die Anfänge in der Hand? Wer hat die Kraft, sie zu zerreißen? Er? (Pv 38f.)

But although he sees these deficiencies, Overbeck does not feel that he has the means to remedy them; his critical consciousness thus exists in a separate sphere from his day-to-day activity; although he realizes that he is, along with all his fellow-teachers and lecturers, responsible for the way in which children are educated in his society, he does not regard himself as one of the 'Kraftmenschen mit Durchsetzungsvermögen' (Pv 39) who might have the strength of will to initiate change. He also realizes that, although he now tries, tentatively and with little success, to encourage independent thought in his students, in the past he played a part in propagating the conception of literature as didactic idealisation which he has now come to deplore. He recalls how as a younger man he was deeply impressed by a literature which showed reality as it should be, as an idealized fiction which reduced the real world as it actually was to a 'Schönheitsfehler' (Pv 41). The realisation that the inhabitants of the small provincial town where he worked as a teacher were less impressive than the positive heroes of such literature had been hard to accept. At first, when encouraging young workers to write, he had urged them to write in the manner of socialist realism. Schuster had refused to distort reality as he had personally experienced it in accordance with pre-conceived notions of 'typicality', but under insistent pressure from Overbeck, whose erudition greatly impressed him, Schuster had eventually betrayed his own natural talent; a further motive came from the desire to see his work published. As Overbeck confesses to Fräulein Hesse:

"Anstatt die chaotische Welt, die er entworfen hatte, zu ordnen, baute ich ihm eine andere auf, eine vorgeformte, in der alles aufging. Aus erschreckenden Dissonanzen wurden gefällige Harmonien, schreiende Farben wurden abgedeckt, gefährliche Tiefen mit nichtsagenden Worten gefüllt. Alles wurde glatt und richtig, langweilig und farblos."

"Er wehrte sich nicht dagegen?"

"Natürlich. Aber ich war stärker, und ich hatte Verbündete; seine Unsicherheit und seinen Willen, gedruckt zu werden. Ich wollte ein Werk fördern, das unserer Sache hilft. Ich sagte ihm: Was du schreibst, entscheidest du; was gedruckt wird, wir!" (Pv 83)

(This self-criticism on Overbeck's part is considerably sharper than, for example, Christa Wolf's admission¹ that the literary criticism which she wrote during the 'Aufbau' period was not what she would have written at a later time, but appeared to her at the time to be useful and necessary; in retrospect her sincerity was evidently more important to her than any damage her critical activities may have caused.)

Overbeck's attitude to literature has developed since those early years. Although he has achieved his present status, such as it is, by virtue of diligence and competence rather than originality or brilliance, he does have a genuine love of literature, unlike Professor Liebscher, who owes his success to the fact that for him, as for the society which employs him, literature is not an object of personal opinions and preferences but merely a subject to be taught; his response to Overbeck's appeal for advice in his predicament is predictable: the prize has been awarded, therefore the authorities consider Schuster's novel to be of value, and Overbeck is not required to express any personal opinion on the matter, merely to give public expression to the novel's official standing. Certainly, Liebscher tells him, there is no need for Overbeck to express any personal opinion which might harm him professionally. Overbeck however insists that his criterion is subjective honesty, and that to make the expected speech would violate his integrity; but this argument falls on deaf ears, is indeed immediately and complacently rationalised by Liebscher as a compensation for failure: 'Lebensuntüchtigkeit wird von Leuten wie Teo zu Moral umfunktioniert' (Pv 61). Liebscher should not, however, be seen as no more than a hypocritical conformist; in voicing the necessity for a degree of acceptance of official cultural policy and conformity to its demands, Liebscher expresses a legitimate point of view: the general cause is more important than individual moral scruples, subjective opinions are not always reliable, opposition to conventional expectations can easily be a form of arrogance. But the author leaves no doubt that his sympathies lie with Overbeck in his insistence that in the long run society will be damaged more if individuals compromise their own integrity than if they

1. See p.213.

fail to respect convention:

"Haben wir Besitzverhältnisse, Gesellschaftsformen geändert, um vor Konventionen haltzumachen? Du willst dich ihnen anpassen, ich will sie uns anpassen."

"Und dabei politischen Schaden stiften."

"Langfristig gesehen ist der Schaden größer, wenn Unehrlichkeit sich breiter macht." (Pv 63)

Just as Christa T. cannot accept her headmaster's argument in favour of conformity, so Overbeck rejects Liebscher's advice -- in their conversation. But in the event Overbeck does in fact compromise in precisely the manner suggested by Liebscher: he makes a lengthy speech in which he neither praises Schuster's novel outright nor explicitly utters any reservations regarding its quality. Only later, at the party, do his thoughts become clearer and his statements more explicit.

Overbeck's previous confusion is mirrored and symbolized in the disturbances to his usually well-ordered daily routine. Though usually immaculately dressed, he appears in the Great Hall of the University wearing two different shoes, and very conscious of this embarrassing lapse, 'der komisch-symbolische Ausdruck seiner inneren Unentschiedenheit'.¹ Shortly before this, Overbeck has a discussion with Cornelia, who has been distressed for several months as a result of an infatuation with a boy whom she hardly knows. (Sympathetic understanding of such irrational adolescent behaviour was something new in East German literature; it is also to be seen in Jurek Becker's Der Boxer, and in the most famous literary portrait of East German youth, Ulrich Plenzdorf's Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.) The boy's values and aspirations prove to be as entirely materialistic as those of Cornelia's mother, and no relationship is established between them, but her infatuation leads Cornelia to neglect her schoolwork and thus fail to achieve the examination marks required for university entry. News of her rejection reaches her on the day of Overbeck's speech, thus confronting him with a further challenge to his integrity. When Overbeck tells Cornelia of his predicament, she urges him to follow his own conscience; to his question as to what would happen if everybody refused to carry out official instructions, she replies:

Dann hätten wir Anarchie antwortest du dir und hast ein Alibi, aber ein gefälschtes; denn deine Frage muß lauten: Was geschähe, wenn alle Leute, die es besser wissen, es schlechter machten, weil es bequemer ist, zu gehorchen als besseres Wissen durchzusetzen. (Pv 102)

This reply precisely defines Overbeck's moral failure, for choosing the path of least resistance is precisely what he has done for many years.

1. J. Engler, loc.cit. p.155. M. Reich-Ranicki, "Zwei verschiedene Schuhe", in Zur Literatur der DDR, Munich 1974, pp.94-101, suggests an interesting further interpretation of the symbol: 'Wollte gar de Bruyn mit diesen Schuhen nicht nur die beiden Standpunkte symbolisieren, sondern zugleich sagen, daß man der Lächerlichkeit nur entgehen kann, wenn man sich von dem einen oder von dem anderen trennt?' (p.101).

His appeal to the notion of duty is vehemently rejected by Cornelia as a disguise for moral cowardice:

Pflichten! Ein Wort, das ich hasse, weil es immer ertönt, wenn Feigheit regiert. Man hat auch Pflichten gegen sich selbst. (Pv 103)

Later, at the party after the speech, Overbeck's lame and embarrassing compromise, Cornelia tells him that she has been rejected by the university and appeals to him to use his influence to have the decision reversed. This direct challenge to his integrity, in the personal sphere where no evasion and compromise are possible, forces him to face the issue squarely. He insists that Cornelia has not, as she bitterly claims, been the victim of an injustice, but must blame her rejection on her own neglect of her studies and bear its consequences. In an earlier conversation with their landlord Birt -- the only character in Die Preisverleihung to urge a socialist viewpoint in a world otherwise characterized by petit-bourgeois materialism, careerism and moral apathy¹ -- Cornelia had objected to the impersonality of the selection procedure and accused the authorities of making exceptions for the children of prominent people (pv. 71f.). She uses the same argument with Overbeck, but he realizes, and tries to make her also realize, that a fundamental ethical principle is at stake: in formulating for Cornelia the primacy of ethical principles Overbeck comes to realize that primacy fully and clearly for himself. It is more important to uphold general principles, he tells her, than to compromise one's integrity, however plausible and compelling the arguments in favour of such compromise may appear; this is indeed both axiomatic and self-evident:

Einem Mädchen, das Philosophie, also auch Ethik studieren will, brauche ich meine Gründe doch wohl nicht zu erklären. (Pv 137).

He counters her bluntly pragmatic argument with the view that it is precisely because of the imperfections of their society that individual integrity is so vital, for it is the only means by which those imperfections can be diminished:

Glaubst du vielleicht auch wie der alte Birt, daß es Schiebungen dieser Art bei uns nicht gibt?
Ich glaube, daß es gut wäre, wenn es sie nicht gäbe. (Pv 137)

It is, however, important to realize that Overbeck is not urging a real and permanent sacrifice on Cornelia's part, for he is convinced that they live in a fundamentally just society, in which temporary setbacks can be accepted in the confidence that no long-term injustice will be allowed to occur:

Wenn du die Überzeugung hast, daß du die Richtige bist, wirst du

1. J. Engler, loc.cit., p.159, describes Birt as 'eine Korrektivfigur mit geringem Wirkungsradius'.

auch die anderen überzeugen können. Sei hartnäckig, laß ihnen keine Ruhe. Sei auch hartnäckig zu dir selbst. Wenn du deiner selbst sicher bist, besteht kein Grund zur Resignation. (Pv 138)

Overbeck's conversation with Cornelia brings him the clarity of moral perception which, earlier the same day, he had struggled to find in his argument with Liebscher. Compelled by the necessity of writing his speech to reflect on the function of literature and the obligations of the writer and critic, he realizes more fully the responsibility that he bears for what Schuster has become. It was he who urged the young novelist not only to conform to the requirements of Socialist Realism, but to practise self-censorship, to place a sieve between himself as observer and as writer, a self-censorship which, Overbeck realizes, has now become unnecessary, for Schuster has internalized the mechanism for selecting only those aspects of reality which do not challenge official stereotypes. He has fallen victim to the danger pointed out by Christa Wolf¹ of not only writing, but of seeing only what is required, and no more. This internalized restriction of perception is in Liebscher's eyes demanded by loyalty to the cause of socialism, a loyalty which he accuses Overbeck of lacking; for him it is all ultimately a matter of whether one has or has not the correct ideological standpoint, and he utters the familiar reproach of officialdom to intellectuals who find their loyalty in conflict with their moral scruples:

[er] will das aber ideologisch, nicht psychologisch verstanden wissen, nicht als Seelen-, sondern als Klassenfrage, als Problem des richtigen oder falschen Bewußtseins, des festen oder schwankenden Standorts. (Pv 148)

But by this time, after his encounter with Cornelia, Overbeck is able to reject this argument firmly. Rather than speak openly of honesty and personal integrity, concepts to which he knows Liebscher to be impervious, he resorts to a technological analogy to make the point that society cannot afford to disregard those values; he points out -- to Birt, but his words are meant for Liebscher's ears also -- that he

. . . wie jeder andere Fachmann auf technischem, ökonomischem oder sonstwelchem Gebiet zur Güterkontrolle verpflichtet sei und daß er sich gegen Anordnungen zu wehren hat, die Qualitätsverlust zur Folge haben müßten. (Pv 150)

Having achieved this clarity and firmness vis-à-vis Cornelia and Liebscher, Overbeck now finds that he has the moral courage to bring a long-absent honesty into the most intimate area of his life, his relationship with Irene and the matter of Cornelia's parentage. It is Schuster who provides the occasion for this honesty by his unmistakable wooing of

1. See Chapter 4, p.189. This theme is also given prominence in Jurek Becker's Irreführung der Behörden, see pp.275-284.

Cornelia and his clear hope of putting her in the place of his wife, whom he has reduced -- as he once reduced Irene -- to little more than a compliant domestic servant. Schuster's behaviour provides an ironic gloss on the notion of honesty and personal integrity by reminding the reader that for a person such as Schuster it may be no more than a rationalisation of extreme egocentricity. But it also gives Overbeck the final impetus which he needs to extend his hard-won integrity to this last problematic sphere of his life, by telling Irene that he has informed Schuster that Cornelia is his child. A simple but determined act of moral courage thus removes a long-standing source of guilt, fear and confusion. A painful truth is faced for the first time, and a new trust is established between husband and wife, giving Irene an inner security which she has never known before, and which may enable her, as well as her husband, to reassess the relationship between private and public life and to transcend the unrealistic view which they have held hitherto of private life as an intact sphere insulated from the tensions and conflicts of the outside world.

Overbeck is left to reflect on the momentous implications of his new-found commitment to truth:

Teo . . . versucht solange vom Wirrwarr der Tageseindrücke das Wesentliche zu sondern. Er will Bilanz ziehen, Erfahrungen summieren, hofft auf Resultate, möchte Urteile fällen, Lehrsätze formulieren, den Qualen Sinn geben. Sein überreiztes Gehirn aber ist dieser Aufgabe kaum noch gewachsen, jagt die Gedanken hierhin und dorthin, gehorcht nicht dem Befehl zu systematischem Vorgehen, wird von der durch Tabletten gesetzten Frist nicht zur Ordnung gerufen, sondern in Panik getrieben. (Pv 167)

Overbeck is left in a state of confusion and uncertainty bordering on panic. But he has looked into his own heart and mind and has made important discoveries, even if he has as yet scarcely begun to comprehend the import of those discoveries. He realizes that he has neglected the prime moral obligation to be true to his own principles. To remedy this omission in future will present him with formidable difficulties; there is no reason to believe that he will easily convince Liebscher of the correctness of his new stance, and the author gives no indication of how Overbeck's new commitment to honesty will affect his work as a university teacher. The brevity of Die Preisverleihung does not allow any examination of how the problems which face Overbeck might be solved. De Bruyn has admitted his dissatisfaction with the work on that account¹, and Engler has made the further important observation that Overbeck's position is presented as a defensive

1. See "Notizen zu einem Gespräch, Werner Liersch sprach mit Günter de Bruyn", Sonntag 39/72, p.4.

position rather than one allowing any active initiative, with the attendant danger that he may be evaluated more in terms of what he believes in than of what he actually achieves:

Persönliche Aufrichtigkeit bildet hier tendentiell die bloße Gegenposition zu einer Welt der Anpassung, wird als erwünschte Gefährdung eines bequemen Wohlstandslebens beschworen. Und damit ist die Gefahr verbunden, daß Teo vom Autor weniger an seinem -- natürlich durch Moral vermittelten -- Tun für den realen Sozialismus, als vielmehr an seinen Idealen gemessen wird. (1)

But in the author's view the question of how Overbeck should act is a question not for him to answer but for the reader to ponder; the novel offers not a 'Vorbild' but a stimulus to critical thought:

Bei aller Identifizierung muß nach meiner Ansicht ein Raum zum Denken bleiben. Die Urteilsfähigkeit darf nicht ausgeschaltet werden. (2)

Die Preisverleihung remains open-ended. But it tells us clearly that the individual is responsible for himself and for those near to him, as well as for the society in which he lives. Hitherto the principles of socialism have not been fully upheld, nor have its goals been fully achieved. It is the obligation of the intellectual to expose these deficiencies and to commit himself to remedying them as best he can, even though he may have to pay a high price in material and psychological terms for doing so. However, the parallel between Overbeck's private and professional situations is used by the author not only to suggest the indivisibility of genuine moral and intellectual integrity, but also to imply an optimistic expectation that, in the long term at least, integrity will have results as fruitful in the professional as in the personal sphere. That these two spheres cannot be wholly separated from each other but exist in a dialectical relationship is a fundamental socialist principle.

1. J. Engler; loc.cit., p.156.
2. S. Töpelmann, loc.cit., p.58.

D. · Jurek Becker: Irreführung der Behörden and Schlaflose Tage.

Irreführung der Behörden

Günter de Bruyn's view that the quality of socialist morality is visible in both private and social life, is shared by Jurek Becker: they both see social and political commitment in the widest sense as a moral issue. In his first novel Jakob der Lügner (1969), for which he was awarded the highly coveted Heinrich Mann Prize and which brought him great fame and popularity, Becker created a character whose sense of solidarity and humane compassion led him to risk his personal safety and to 'lie' in order to sustain the hope and optimism of his fellow-Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto. The central character of his second novel, Irreführung der Behörden, by contrast, is an intellectual who, although he accepts the principles of socialism, has not thought out the implications of those principles for his personal conduct, and who practises deceit by maintaining a pretence of conformity for purely opportunistic reasons. As the critic of Neue Deutsche Literatur neatly formulated the contrast:

Jakob sagte bewußt falsches und war kein Lügner, Gregor sagt nichts Falsches und ist doch verlogen. (1)

But in the course of the novel Gregor Bienek is led to reconsider the ultimate desirability of such pretended conformity. Throughout the novel he has lived entirely for the gratification of his individual desires and impulses, with no sense of social responsibility and only a minimal degree of morality and integrity in his personal relationships. But by the end he comes to realize that this 'deception of the authorities' is self-defeating: it is himself he has 'mised' and harmed.

Structurally, Irreführung der Behörden is divided into three parts, Erste Geschichte, Roman, and Zweite Geschichte, all three parts being narrated in the first person and with a linear plot. The Erste Geschichte of 150 pages is set in the winter of 1959/60 in Berlin and its immediate surroundings, and introduces the reader to the young Gregor Bienek, a poorly motivated law-student with literary aspirations, and his girl-friend Lola Ramsdorf, a student-teacher. This early phase of Gregor's life is marked by energetic effort, little success and a series of personal crises; Gregor writes stories, most of them unfinished, which he tries unsuccessfully to sell to publishers. Lola becomes pregnant, Gregor borrows money for an abortion, Lola is involved in a serious car accident in which her father dies. The second section, Roman, summarises the important developments in the lives of Gregor and Lola in the period 1960-66 in a mere eight

1. H.J. Bernhard, "Gregor, der Lügner", NDL XXI, 1973/10, pp.118-123 (p.120).

pages: the designation 'Roman' is ironically inappropriate to the more detached and concise narrative manner, which contrasts with the immediacy and detail of the two 'Geschichten'. Lola recovers from the accident, Gregor and she marry; Gregor, who has abandoned his law studies, is commissioned through the influence of Lola's mother to write articles and stories for a journal; he also writes a novel, which is rejected because he refuses to make any modifications as requested by the publisher; he becomes instead a successful script-writer for the cinema and television, while continuing to work on his novel. At the end of this middle section the novel is accepted for publication and its sales are moderately successful. Gregor is left, however, feeling disappointed, though unable to articulate the reasons for his disappointment. The Zweite Geschichte deals in some eighty pages with the years 1967-68 approximately. It shows us a successful and wealthy Gregor, who is not, however, happy with his success and whose relationship with Lola has deteriorated. By the end of the novel he has come to realize that he has not only 'misled the authorities': his deception has been essentially self-deception, for he has failed to realize his true needs.

The author's intention in this tri-partite structure is clearly to contrast the vitality and authenticity of the youthful Gregor with the tedious conformity and disillusionment which characterize his later life, the central section sketching the process that leads from the one to the other. Opinions have differed regarding the degree of Becker's success in carrying out this intention. Bernhard¹ was very enthusiastic about the novel, praised its intentions, and was impressed by the witty and vivid portrait of student life in the first part, even obliquely comparing the novel to Plenzdorf's stylistic tour de force, Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.² Reich-Ranicki, while dismissing the novel's subject-matter as banal, admired Becker's wit and narrative invention³; he over-simplified Becker's supposed conclusion, however, as 'Der Kulturbetrieb macht den Künstler kaputt', seeing -- as in most of his utterances concerning East German literature -- the fault entirely in the nature of East German society rather than partly in the attitudes adopted by individuals towards the requirements of that society. The GDR critic Hähnel⁴, on the other hand, found the novel readable on the whole, but was less impressed by the first part and declared the novel unsatisfactory on the grounds that the problems which it raised were not fully examined, and reproached the author for not making his evaluation of Gregor more explicit. But Becker's evaluation is

1. Loc.cit., p.122.

2. Ibid., p.122: 'Auch Becker hat seinen Salinger gelesen.'

3. M. Reich-Ranicki, "Die Liebe, die Literatur und der Alltag", in Zur Literatur der DDR, pp. 149-156; p.150.

4. K.-D. Hähnel, "Jurek Becker, Irreführung der Behörden", Weimarer Beiträge 1974/1, pp. 149-153.

clear enough if the novel is read carefully.

The title of the novel is first alluded to in the Erste Geschichte, by one of Bienek's lecturers, Professor Gelbach who, aware that Bienek's real ambition is to be a writer, advises him to complete his law degree first, telling him that he is sufficiently intelligent to become a competent lawyer, but that other qualities are needed to become a successful writer. Whilst ironically admitting that such pragmatism goes against his own better judgment, he recommends that Gregor should conceal his disaffection and secure his future livelihood by conforming to the pressures of a society which rewards a competent if unenthusiastic lawyer more highly than a writer who is unable or unwilling to produce works palatable to the authorities. Gelbach's words reveal a pragmatic conformism that can be observed throughout East German literature in the presentation of academics, especially those in senior posts (cf. Professor Liebscher in Die Preisverleihung, and Manfred's colleagues in Der geteilte Himmel):

'Na gut, gegen all Erfahrung und wider besseres Wissen gebe ich Ihnen jetzt einen Rat. Führen Sie die Behörden weiterhin in die Irre, studieren Sie in drei Teufels Namen zuende, mit Ihrer Gerissenheit werden Sie das Examen schon schaffen. Studieren Sie zuende, und betrachten Sie das Diplom als Notgroschen. (IB 60)

When Gregor, however, decides shortly afterwards to give up his law studies, he does so not because of moral scruples about accepting a student grant without the intention of repaying society with his professional services, but simply out of boredom and frustration with a subject to which he feels no commitment, having chosen it for no better reason than that with his poor school reports it was the easiest subject to be accepted for. Nor does Gregor -- quite unlike, for example, Kant's 'ABF' students in Die Aula -- show any enthusiasm for political activity: when the Party organizes an afternoon of political propaganda in West Berlin he goes about the task of distributing leaflets with little relish, concerned principally with the danger of being arrested by the West Berlin police -- although at least he does not, like one of his class-mates, throw his entire batch of leaflets into a dustbin.

Bienek's only enthusiasm is for his writing. (Becker has said that in making Bienek a writer he did not wish to imply that all writers shared his apolitical attitudes, merely that writers should not be regarded a priori as morally superior to other citizens.)¹ The stories which Bienek writes in these early days are highly imaginative, even surrealistic; but they are out of harmony with the political climate of the GDR and are frowned upon for their lack of an acceptable political message. One of

1. See H.J. Bernhard, loc.cit., p. 122.

these stories concerns a man whose teeth are found to consist of a highly valuable material; gradually the State convinces him that he owes it to society to part with some of his teeth, and eventually he is left completely toothless. The editor of a journal to which he submits this witty and ironic parable predictably objects to its implication that the concept of social responsibility is used to manipulate the individual into making extreme and unacceptable sacrifices.¹ Another of Bienek's stories is a highly amusing persiflage of a crime story with a socialist message: three would-be bank robbers volunteer for road building work because the road in question will provide an escape route after the planned robbery: the sooner the road is finished, the sooner they will be able to commit their crime. Everything goes according to plan, but when they rob the bank they discover that they have earned more as road-workers than they found in the small bank. Lola points out that this story, whilst highly entertaining, will never be accepted for publication because it suggests that the characters work solely for material motives and without any sense of social responsibility, but conceal their real motives, and also, in the words of an imaginary editor:

. . . wie einfach es Ihrer Ansicht nach zu sein scheint, die Behörden . . . zu täuschen. (IB 148)

The entire novel is concerned with precisely these twin issues: whether such 'deception of the authorities' is possible, or in the long run worthwhile, whether the attempt to conceal selfishness and irresponsibility behind a façade of calculated conformity does not in the end harm the individual concerned as much as it harms society.

Bienek's initial attitude to this question is unself-critical: he thinks solely of his own interests, in his work as well as his private life. Although fond of his parents he has little contact with them, and he is no more committed to fidelity in his relationship with Lola than he is to self-exertion in a socially useful career. He shows scant sympathy for Lola's distress during her pregnancy and abortion or her wish to conceal these from her parents, and has only minimal scruples about borrowing the money to pay for the abortion from the old-age pensioner Hensel, who can ill afford the loan. He subsequently forgets about the loan, and remains indifferent to the welfare of others in general except for sporadic moments of short-lived concern. Becker does not however present Bienek as a cruel or callous man; on the contrary, he is presented as quite likeable in many ways. The tone of Becker's writing is cool, ironic and detached rather than overtly moralistic, though his intention is undoubtedly

1. K.-D. Hähnel claims to find the 'Zahnparabel' unsatisfactory because 'unbestimmt vieldeutig' (loc.cit., p.151), but it is hard to detect any ambiguity in it.

to offer a moral evaluation of Bienek's behaviour. Bienek is self-centred but not, Becker's tone implies, to an unusual degree; he is an average citizen rather than an especially egocentric individual. The effectiveness of the novel lies in showing, without didactic over-emphasis, how such average people are collectively responsible for the quality of life in society at large.

In the Erste Geschichte Bienek has at least the virtues of spontaneity and an authentic creative imagination. But as he grows older he learns to adjust these qualities to the demands of a society in which there is little place for them. Lola explains to him that to make his story of the bank robbers turned roadworkers saleable he should portray them as spiritually improved by the pride they take in honest work and hence desisting from a life of crime to become loyal socialists instead. To begin with Bienek reacts with urbane amusement to the to him evidently preposterous notion that he should produce such sentimental propagandistic stereotypes. But gradually he does begin to write in such a fashion, and because he has intelligence and imagination he is able to produce politically acceptable material with sufficient literary merit to become popular. He attempts to compensate for this sacrifice of artistic integrity by continuing to work on his novel which, he persuades himself, will express honest criticisms of society notwithstanding the caution necessary to ensure publication. But when the novel is finally published and praised, Bienek is disappointed. The middle section Roman ends with the following interior monologue in which he begins for the first time to reflect critically on his aspirations and motives, his abilities and limitations, and on the general question of the social role of literature:

Warum bin ich enttäuscht? Liegt es an meinen überspannten Erwartungen? Vermisse ich das laute Jubelgeschrei, das natürlich nirgendwo zu hören ist? Was kann ein Buch überhaupt, und was kann ich? Ich habe eins geschrieben, und weiter? (IB 168)

But Bienek is here still less than fully honest with himself. It is not 'Jubelgeschrei' he had secretly hoped for, but that people would take heed of his criticisms. He also suppresses his awareness that Lola is sceptical of his success and disappointed by the degree to which he has compromised his integrity -- 'Lola nennt mich Hans im Glück, aber ihre Augen gefallen mir nicht dabei' (IB 166) -- and chooses to attribute her discontent to more mundane causes: his success has brought them a comfortable home, a car, and has removed the necessity for Lola to work, leaving her with the child and housework to occupy her while he is busy writing and meeting colleagues, publishers, film producers and attractive women. Bienek silences his awareness of the real underlying discord by arranging a holiday in Rumania, and continues to provide for Lola generously in

material respects, considering this adequate compensation for his occasional infidelity. Thus Bienek uses his material success as a means of suppressing his awareness of his ethical shortcomings with regard to both his professional activity and his marital relationship.

It is interesting to note in this context how little the treatment of sexual morality has changed in East German literature. Whereas West German authors -- most notably Martin Walser -- present aberrations in the sexual sphere as symptoms of the individual's alienation from both his own real nature and his society, East German writers uphold the ideal of marital fidelity as the hallmark of a healthy personality, and present departures from that ideal as violations of socialist morality. In the 1950s, for example in Neutsch's Spur der Steine or Anna Seghers's Die Entscheidung, sexual fidelity was shown to be an essential element of socialist morality and it was seen as part of the Party's responsibility to ensure that it was preserved. Party officials had the right and duty to bring pressure to bear on individuals who seemed to be infringing this sexual code -- Robert Iswall in Die Aula still regards this as one of his responsibilities -- adultery was severely disapproved of and could lead to dismissal at work. Karl-Heinz Jakobs suggests in Beschreibung eines Sommers that such vigilance on the Party's part may sometimes be an excessive interference in individual liberty and moral autonomy, but he nevertheless shows the Party's intervention as bringing about a change of heart in the individual concerned, Tom Breitsprecher, a reinforced affirmation of the necessity of socialist morality in the private as well as the public sphere: he accepts at least a temporary separation from his mistress Grit. Christa Wolf's first work, Moskauer Novelle, also shows the prevention of an adulterous relationship by the intervention of well-meaning Party members and the acceptance of the Party's verdict by the two individuals involved. Even in Nachdenken über Christa T., with its insistence on the rights and freedom of the individual, the narrator urges Christa T. to remain faithful to her husband. In Günter de Bruyn's Buridans Esel Karl Erp's adultery is likewise seen as a betrayal of his obligations as a socialist; in Kant's Das Impressum great importance is attached to David Groth's marital fidelity, and in Schneider's Das Glück Hanna comes to realize that her relationship with a married man was not the road to happiness that she had thought it to be.¹ This fundamental belief in the desirability of orderly monogamous relationships was, of course, shared by Marx and Lenin, who both regarded sexual permissiveness as a symptom of the moral decline of the bourgeoisie.

In Irreführung der Behörden this sexual code is also implied; Becker

1. See p.299.

presents Bienek's laxity in this sphere as reprehensible and allows him in the Erste Geschichte (but not in the Zweite Geschichte) to feel, albeit momentarily and belatedly, intense self-disgust at his abortive sexual encounter with Winfriede Lieber (IB 155). (In the Zweite Geschichte his successfully consummated encounter with the wife of a former fellow-student causes him no such self-disgust.) But Becker's presentation suggests that Bienek's behaviour is the product not of a fundamental weakness of character but of an irresponsible failure to think seriously about the ethics of personal conduct. This indifference to ethical issues extends to the political sphere also: before 1961 Bienek had thoughtlessly indulged in visits to cinemas and other officially prohibited excursions to West Berlin, and in August 1961 had almost paid a very heavy price for this irresponsibility:

Um ein Haar hätte mich die Mauer auf der falschen Seite erwischt. Ich bin mit Bekannten im Kino und anschliessend in einer Wohnung, in der viel getrunken und diskutiert wird. Lola ist zu Hause geblieben, zum Glück dreht einer am Radio. (IB 162)

The casual tone of this passage is entirely characteristic of Gregor's mentality, but it does not conceal his basic acceptance of the socialist way of life: not for a moment does it occur to him that being in West Berlin at that time might be regarded as a piece of good luck. He would like to have the best of both worlds, but when he is forced to choose, he makes the correct choice. Thus in the brief casual relationship in the Zweite Geschichte he gives no thought to the moral aspects of the matter, nor to the feelings of the various other people involved, but when he receives a letter from the woman's husband imploring him to stay away from his wife, Bienek's conscience is troubled and he begins to realize that his egoistic behaviour has consequences for others. As Bernhard points out¹, the fact that the Zweite Geschichte is written, like the preceding two sections, in the first person, conveys that the author has not abandoned his sympathetic attempt to understand Bienek's behaviour and motives; he is not to be regarded as 'lost'.

As in de Bruyn's Die Preisverleihung, this realisation on Bienek's part affects his decisions in the professional as well as the private sphere. He begins to understand that Lola is disappointed not in her life as a wife and mother, but in him as a writer, that it was his youthful rebellious spirit that attracted her and that she despises his self-deception and conceit. For years she has silently observed his moral decline, but when he makes an evident attempt to improve their marriage she takes a renewed interest in his work. Her casual but honest dismissal of his latest story as 'nicht der Rede wert' (IB 242) infuriates him, but

1. H.J. Bernhard, loc.cit., p. 122.

it triggers off a lengthy discussion between them, in which the issue of moral integrity is at last brought explicitly into the open. Lola challenges her husband to make his motives and ambitions clear: does he write simply for success, or does he believe in the social effectiveness of literature?

Ob dich Absichten treiben, ob du in Vorgänge eingreifen willst, weil du findest, das und das sollten die Leute wissen und bedenken. Oder spielt das für dich keine Rolle? . . . Schreibst du Überzeugungen auf, und zwar deine eigenen, oder richtest du dich nur nach Marktaussichten? (IB 245)

Bienek and Lola go on to discuss the past: just as, in Die Preisverleihung, Overbeck had urged Schuster to subordinate his individual creative talent to the needs of the socialist cause, so Lola had tried to channel Bienek's writing in more socially useful directions. But she had never intended, as she now tells him, to urge on him a general uncritical conformity of the kind which he now practises:

Wann habe ich dir je gesagt, du sollst dich anpassen um der Anpassung willen? Anpassung ist überhaupt ein scheußliches Wort, ich glaube, ich habe es nie in den Mund genommen. Ich habe dich höchstens gefragt, ob du dir in jedem Fall das richtige Schlachtfeld ausgesucht hast, ob es lohnt, für dies und jenes in den Krieg zu ziehen. Denn längst nicht alles, was von dir verlangt wurde, waren schäbige Kompromisse. Du hast es nur so empfunden, weil du nie daran denken wolltest, daß auch die anderen einmal recht haben könnten. (IB 246)

Lola goes on to tell him that, like Schuster in Die Preisverleihung, he has exchanged one mindlessly extreme position for another:

Früher hast du nie Zweifel an deiner eigenen Ansichten aufkommen lassen, das war falsch. Heute läßt du nie Zweifel an den Ansichten der anderen aufkommen, in keiner deiner Geschichten. Wenn man sie liest, hat man den Eindruck, dein einziges Motiv zu schreiben wäre, niemandem zu nahe zu treten, keiner soll etwas dagegen haben. Du berechnest alle Einwände im voraus und umgehst sie. (IB 247)

Bienek retorts that he might have made such a decision out of the conviction that to do otherwise might help the enemies of the GDR, whose writers should first help in the construction of a socialist society before using their gifts to criticize it: this is, of course, the argument used by the authorities when demanding uncritically supportive literature. Lola's answer is that if that were the case, if he had actually made an independent and considered decision, then -- but only then -- she would respect him for it. She tells him bluntly, however, that she does not believe this to be so, and accuses Bienek of despising his colleagues and writing in the way he does for purely opportunistic reasons, in a manner harmful to both himself and his readers. Lola makes here the crucial distinction between a genuine concern for the moral well-being of society and the opportunistic pretence of such concern -- precisely the distinction which Martin Walser makes in his condemnation of those West German intellectuals

who make a comfortable living by pretending to a social concern which they do not in fact feel.¹ Like Walser, Becker here points out, in Lola's words, that such pretence is positively harmful to Bienek's readers:

Sie erwarten von dir Aufrichtigkeit, und sie haben ein Recht darauf, denn deine Arbeit wird fürstlich bezahlt. Aber was tust du? Du führst sie in die Irre und lieferst alte Hüte ab, die du in deiner Werkstatt mit ein bißchen Talent aufpolierst. Hältst dich gar noch für nützlich dabei, aber du bist es nicht, weil die Sorgen dieser Gesellschaft nicht deine eigenen sind, du hast nur irgendwann beschlossen, so zu tun. (IB 248)

Bienek has been misleading not only the authorities and himself, he has been misleading society at large. Such fraudulent concern is more harmful than no concern at all. Bienek searches for counter-arguments but is forced finally to ask himself how true Lola's criticisms are. The abrupt -- and aesthetically unsatisfying -- ending of the novel leaves Bienek, like Overbeck at the end of Die Preisverleihung, in a state of confusion as he asks himself painful questions: is he the man that Lola takes him to be? If he is, how much does this matter to him? Should he simply demand that she should accept him as he is? Or should he accept her reproaches -- which he knows to be justified -- and attempt to change his life:

. . . natürlich hat sie recht, alles in allem. Und ich weiß das schon lange, wahrscheinlich länger als sie, stets trug ich um die Wunde einen geschickten Verband, der hin und wieder sorgfältig erneuert wurde, jetzt hat sie ihn abgerissen, ich kann mir einen frischen anlegen, oder ich kann darauf verzichten und eine neue Zukunft beschließen. (IB 249)

No answer to Bienek's questions is given; no future course of action is indicated, the reader is left only with Bienek's moral insight that a writer's prime obligation both to himself and to his readers is honesty, regardless of the price to be paid in terms of material success or social prestige. But Lola's assurance that she does not desire a separation from Bienek gives the open ending an implied optimism, again very much in the manner of Die Preisverleihung. The conclusion of Irreführung der Behörden is that self-fulfilment can only be found through integrity, and that it is impossible to separate one's private life from one's social role, to 'mislead the authorities' without misleading oneself at the same time. Like de Bruyn, Becker makes it clear that in his society as it is at present it is easier to speak of integrity than to practise it. Just as it is quite possible that Overbeck will be dismissed from his post, and almost certain that he will not be promoted in the foreseeable future, it is equally likely that Bienek, if he changes course as drastically as honesty demands, will have no more novels or filmscripts accepted. Becker himself was to undergo a similar fate shortly after the publication of

1. See pp.76ff.

Irreführung der Behörden. There is no indication in this novel of any alternative way of life open to Bienek, or of whether he would or would not find any such alternative acceptable; this question was to be explored in Becker's next novel Schlaflose Tage, in which the demand for intellectual integrity was voiced so forcefully and explicitly that that novel was not accepted for publication in the GDR, with the result that Becker left the GDR to live, for the time being, in the West.

Schlaflose Tage

In Schlaflose Tage Becker again portrays an intellectual who, in middle-life, abandons the conformity which has hitherto secured a comfortable and stress-free existence for him. But the consequences are now much more radical, and the tone of the writing much less detached, more insistently moralizing, indeed in places disturbingly didactic. Becker's personal experiences clearly had a profound effect on the conception of this novel: although he had been a loyal Party member since 1957, Becker was expelled from the SED in 1976 as a result of joining the protest at the government's withdrawal of GDR citizenship from Wolf Biermann; in 1977 he left the DSV as a further gesture of protest. Schlaflose Tage was written under the direct impact of these experiences, as a decade earlier Christa Wolf's Nachdenken über Christa T. had been affected by similar though less far-reaching experiences, also involving Wolf Biermann.¹ Schlaflose Tage was not published in the GDR, although Becker had hoped that it would be. He then left the GDR, with government permission and with the possibility of returning later.

Before proceeding to an analysis of Schlaflose Tage it is important to make it clear that Becker still regards himself as a socialist. After his expulsion from the Party but while still resident in East Berlin he told Der Spiegel in an interview:

. . . was mich betrifft, würde ich es nicht einen prinzipiellen Bruch nennen. Ich bin bloß nicht mehr bereit, in einigen Punkten aus einer -- wie ich heute meine -- falsch verstandenen Solidarität zu schweigen. (2)

He went on to emphasize that in a socialist society the writer enjoyed a position of influence quite unattainable in the West, which he would be very reluctant to abandon:

Ich glaube, daß ein Schriftsteller in einem sozialistischen Land eine Funktion hat, wie er sie im Westen nie erreichen kann. Das macht es im Grunde faszinierend, hier zu sein. Vielleicht klingt das Wort zu groß: Von einem Schriftsteller wird Lebenshilfe erwartet. . . . in unserem Land hat ein Literat eine Machtfunktion

1. See pp.223f.

2. J. Becker, "Ich glaube, ich war ein guter Genosse", Der Spiegel, Nr. 30, 1977, pp. 128-133; p.130.

von der er im Westen nur träumen kann. (1)

Becker went on in this interview to say that he still considered himself as working for the goals of socialism, but no longer with the same methods or the same friends and comrades; he did not, he said, wish to leave the GDR because there he had the feeling '... mich einmischen zu können, an etwas beteiligt zu sein, das mir wichtig ist' but added that he would not accept silence as a price for staying: 'Wenn es allerdings darum geht, den Mund zu halten, dann halte ich den Mund lieber auf den Bahamas.'² Shortly afterwards Becker discovered that silence was indeed the price demanded by the authorities, and left the GDR, initially for the USA; he later settled in West Berlin where at the time of writing he still lives.

Both structure and narrative technique of the short novel Schlaflose Tage are simple in the extreme. The style is succinct but unremarkable, the plot is a linear account in the third person of approximately one year in the life of a thirty-six year old schoolteacher Karl Simrock. The narrative manner is direct, explicit, without any attempt at sophistication, complexity or obliquity, a fact which is in itself a significant symptom of one line of development in East German literature. It exemplifies one response to the growing dissatisfaction amongst the intelligentsia regarding the continuing dogmatism of the authorities: direct and unmistakable condemnation, in an often bluntly didactic manner. (Another response is to turn away from the present altogether and write about the past, either the National Socialist past, as in, for example, Christa Wolf's Kindheitsmuster, or the more distant past as in her kein ort. nirgends.) The fact that Becker has here abjured all literary sophistication and abandoned the coolly ironic tone of Irreführung der Behörden, is an indication of his bitterness and the urgency of his protest.

As in Irreführung der Behörden, a life of compromise and apparent contentment is called into question by a personal crisis which reveals acute frustration and dissatisfaction beneath the façade of social adjustment. But in Schlaflose Tage the crisis comes at the beginning of the novel, not at its end, and the novel is concerned not primarily with what had preceded and led to the crisis, but with its consequences. A sudden chest pain causes Simrock to become conscious of his mortality and gives him the impetus for self-analysis and a thorough review of his life to date, which makes him aware of his bitter dissatisfaction.³

1. Ibid., p.131.

2. Ibid., p.133.

3. The author also spoke of a crisis coming at a similar age to Simrock's: 'Vielleicht mag einer der Gründe darin bestehen, daß ich jetzt 39 Jahre alt bin und plötzlich die Furcht spüre, mich mit 60 Jahren immer noch taktisch zu verhalten -- zugunsten von etwas, das dann gar nicht da ist.' Loc.cit., p.130.

Simrock disagrees with both the syllabus and the teaching methods at his school, and hates himself for his docility vis-à-vis the headmaster and the teacher-parent committee. He is well aware of his reasons for compromise in the past: being not particularly ambitious he had decided that to accept the recurrent sense of dissatisfaction with life as it was would be easier than to incur the strain and stress of active opposition. But in the face of what he fears may be his imminent death, he realizes the importance of living in accordance with one's own principles and convictions. He forces himself to reflect honestly on his marriage and his profession; what he ought to do, he concludes, is to try to cultivate a permanent vigilance and authenticity of response, falling into neither permanent conformity nor permanent rebellion:

. . . sich mühen, endlich nach dem neuesten Stand seiner Erkenntnisse zu leben. Und sich mühen, aufrichtig zu sein. Nicht nur in Zeiten, da Aufrichtigkeit erlaubt ist, sondern immer. Oder fast immer, oder so oft wie möglich. Sooft es die Kraft erlaubt. Und dann: Das Widersprechen nicht zum Prinzip machen, nicht zum Regelfall, wie die Übereinstimmung nicht zur Ausnahme. Nicht aus dem Extrem des ausnahmslos Zustimmenden in das Extrem des ausnahmslos Ablehnenden fallen. Jedesmal neu entscheiden, immer wieder entscheiden, aus dem Entscheiden nie mehr herauskommen. (ST 29)

Simrock's first decision is to leave his wife, not because he is unhappy with her -- it is indeed emphasized that their relationship is a successful one -- but because there is nothing left in his life with her which he would positively choose now, were they not already married. He feels the need for change, of any kind, and believes that within their marriage no change is possible. Ruth understands that her husband's crisis arises not from their marriage as such but from his professional frustrations:

Weil du so unglücklich darüber bist, daß sie dir in der Schule das Rückgrat gebrochen haben, trennst du dich von uns. Du hältst die Trennung für einen ersten Schritt, gleichzeitig steckt dir die Angst in den Gliedern, niemals den zweiten zu tun. Diese Angst macht dich jetzt um so entschlossener. (ST 39)

Simrock, however, although unhappy, lonely and insecure, abides by his decision, with predictable consequences. The initial sympathy of the headmaster of his school, who tries to persuade him to be sensible and not allow his personal problems to adversely affect his career, soon weakens. The first clash occurs when Simrock reminds his pupils that their presence at the May Day demonstrations is voluntary, with the result that a mere nine attend. When Kabitzke reproves Simrock for this, he refuses to co-operate in the hypocritical pretence that freedom exists where the reality is compulsion:

Du wünschst dir offenbar, daß die Teilnahme an gewissen Veranstaltungen freiwillig heißt, daß ich aber dennoch für vollzähliges Erscheinen der Kinder zu sorgen habe. Diese Aufgabe überfordert mich, und darum werde ich in Zukunft einen Unterschied zwischen

tatsächlicher und angeblicher Freiheit nicht mehr anerkennen. (ST 55)
 Although Kabitzke -- who shares the prudent conformity of Professor Liebscher and Christa T.'s headmaster -- warns Simrock that this attitude is self-destructive, as well as being, in his eyes, irresponsible, Simrock is determined to practise what he regards as the characteristics of a good teacher: reliability and honesty towards his pupils.

Simrock, like Gregor Bienek, does not reject the principles of socialism; on the contrary, he explicitly defends socialism, despite its defects, in discussions with his new mistress Antonia, whose apolitical attitudes are the product of disappointed idealism, as was the case with Manfred Herrfurth in Der geteilte Himmel. Antonia has realized, as she sees it, that:

. . . Aufrichtigkeit hierzulande nur dann gefragt sei, wenn der Aufrichtige und die Vielzahl seiner Vorgesetzten übereinstimmen. (ST 73)

Her pretence of conformity was sufficient for her to be admitted to university but broke down when, as a student, she openly declared political education to be futile, with the result that she was expelled. Simrock, however, refuses to accept that the socialist ideal is discredited by such imperfections and abuses in practice:

Davon, wie Sozialismus um uns herum betrieben wird, sollte ein gescheiter Sozialist sich nicht abschrecken lassen . . . Du wirst nicht so dumm sein, den elektrischen Strom abzulehnen, nur weil dir das Licht einer bestimmten Lampe nicht gefällt. (ST 74f.)

But Simrock's attempts to persuade Antonia to think differently merely convince him of the powerlessness of the individual to bring about change by means of rational argument.

Realizing that, just as he has failed to change Antonia's views, so he may also fail to bring about any improvement in his school, Simrock decides during a summer vacation to work as an unskilled labourer. In doing so he is of course acting in accordance with the socialist principle that direct experience of manual work helps to prevent the alienation of the intellectual from the common people. But he is also putting himself to the test to ascertain whether he would actually be capable of earning his living by manual labour if this should ever prove necessary, should his efforts to put his convictions into practice as a teacher meet with opposition strong enough to deprive him of his job. Here, unlike Die Preisverleihung and Irreführung der Behörden, an alternative is explored to passive conformity, should active resistance fail, and the question is asked whether the intellectual is capable of renouncing his privileges of income, life-style and job satisfaction and choosing humble industrial work instead as a means of preserving his integrity. The related question is also raised of whether any genuine community of interest and attitude exists between intellectuals and workers in a socialist industrial society such as the GDR. This episode also enables the author to take a critical

look at the cherished socialist notion of the 'dignity of labour'.

Whatever illusions Simrock might have had regarding both the dignity of labour and his own capacity for it, are soon dispelled by his actual experience of manual work. His experiences are utterly unlike those of Rita in Der geteilte Himmel, who discovered both personal satisfaction and solidarity with her fellow-workers in the railway carriage works. Becker turns a mordantly ironic eye on the stereotypes of socialist realism: Simrock finds the work at first physically exhausting, and the ideal socialist worker's mentality which he had come to expect through reading socialist realist novels, is nowhere to be found. The first reactions he encounters are spite and mockery; only the truck driver Boris shows him sympathy and helps him to obtain less exhausting work. Simrock's grateful reaction to Boris's kindness: 'Was für ein gutes Herz doch die Arbeiterklasse hat' (ST 92) mocks the ideological sentimentality so often to be seen in the depiction of working-class characters in socialist literature. Simrock soon discovers that his own attitude to work, formed not by experience but by idealism and intellectual reflection on the concepts of social usefulness and responsibility, is quite alien to Boris, whose attitude is purely pragmatic and instrumental: he has to earn a living, and his work is no worse than most other occupations. Boris has no trace of the commitment to or identification with the production process that are central goals of socialism in its concern to liberate men from the alienation forced on them, according to Marxist thinking, by the capitalist system. Alienation is shown to be as severe here as in any capitalist industrial environment and, it is implied, the product not of economic organisation but of the nature of industrial work itself, especially unskilled and highly labour-divided activities. As Boris tells Simrock:

. . . ihre Arbeit sei beim besten Willen nicht so, daß man sie lieben könne. Wenn jemand behaupte, es verschaffe ihm Genugtuung oder erfülle ihn mit Stolz, gefüllte Kästen von einem Ort an einen anderen zu schaffen, dann sei dieser Jemand entweder ein Lügner oder ein Idiot. Das Beste, was man mit dieser Arbeit anfangen könne, sei, sie sozusagen nebenbei zu tun, damit sie einem nicht allzusehr auf die Nerven gehe. (ST 99)

Nor is the idealism apparent in written commitments to fulfil specific work norms anything more than an opportunistic response to official pressure:

Da hat für mich den Ausschlag gegeben, daß sie mich in Ruhe lassen, wenn ich unterschreibe, und daß sie nicht nicht in Ruhe lassen, wenn ich nicht unterschreibe. (ST 99)

Simrock's attempts to talk to Boris, whom he likes, about socialist morality, job satisfaction and commitment, to bridge the gap between intellectual and worker, are completely unsuccessful.

During the four weeks that Simrock works in the bread factory he also

realizes that although he could, if necessary, earn his living there, such work could never provide a genuine alternative for him to his work as a teacher, because it cannot offer him the stimulation and satisfaction which as an intellectual he needs. This insight reinforces his resolve to fight his battle on his own ground. Not only his experiment with manual work but also his relationship with Antonia is exposed as a means of escape rather than a genuine alternative to his unsatisfactory marriage, or to loneliness. When Antonia, during their holiday in Hungary, attempts, without Simrock's prior knowledge, to cross the border into Austria and is arrested, her relationship with him is revealed as less important than her political disaffection.

For Simrock, Antonia's attempted 'Republikflucht' is a turning point; he turns in rage against the State which confines its citizens within its borders:

Dann ergriff ihn . . . eine erdrückende Wut auf die Umstände, die Antonia von ihm trennten. Er hielt es plötzlich für ihr gutes Recht, dorthin zu gehen, wohin sie gehen wollte, und für ein ebenso gutes Recht zurückzukehren, wenn es ihr an dem anderen Ort nicht mehr gefiel. Sie daran hindern zu wollen, so kam ihm heiß zu Bewußtsein, sei eine unerhörte Anmaßung, und nur der konnte sie auf sich nehmen, der Glück für etwas hielt, wofür der Tag noch nicht gekommen war. (ST 114)

Such unrestrained condemnation, which breaks one of the fundamental taboos of GDR society, is a long way from the defence of the Berlin Wall in Der geteilte Himmel, from the forceful rejection of Western society and its values there and in Nachdenken über Christa T. and in the novels of Hermann Kant, and even from the matter-of-fact tone in which Gregor Bienek in Irreführung der Behörden accepted his commitment to the GDR. It is true that Simrock himself does not express any wish to leave the GDR, and that the above outburst is made in an embittered and over-wrought state of mind; but the reader clearly sees that Simrock may himself soon find it impossible to sustain his commitment to his society. Simrock's outrage is not, however, shared by his fellow-citizens: when he tells a group of strangers in a bar that he understands that a certain level of population is necessary for society to function properly, but that in his view the State should ensure that conditions are sufficiently attractive for people to choose freely to live and work there, this expression of indignation finds no echo: the majority prefer, the implication is, to accept their lack of freedom without complaint.

After his return to school Simrock is confronted with a letter in which the father of one of his pupils complains of Simrock's presentation in class of Brecht's 'Lob des Zweifels': he had told the children that doubt should always be their guiding principle. The father's outrage shows how far the original critical spirit of Marxism has been lost sight

of in the authoritarian education fostered in the GDR:

Meine Frau und ich haben uns stets die größte Mühe gegeben, Zweifel von unseren Kindern fernzuhalten. Wir wollen sie zu guten Staatsbürgern erziehen, die in verantwortungsbewußter Arbeit und nicht in ständiger Krittelei die Antriebsfeder zur Entwicklung des Sozialismus sehen. (ST 117)

Nor do the pupils themselves support Simrock in his quest for radical change. They, like Christa T.'s pupils, have already recognized the advisability of conformity. Simrock's request for suggestions is met with caution and apathy, and even cynicism: the pupils do not even come to the meeting which Simrock arranges because, as one of them admits, they are certain that everything will remain unchanged whatever is said. As the months pass Simrock becomes increasingly aware that he as an isolated individual is powerless to affect a system which has been devised in such a way that it undermines any influence the individual teacher may attempt to exert. The changes which he desires could, he sees, be made only if the entire education system were changed. His main hope was to encourage teachers to display their individuality in such a way as to make their pupils aware of the personality differences that exist between different human beings and thus to encourage them to develop their own individual personalities, abilities and qualities, rather than conform to a narrow stereotype. But Simrock realizes that this is impossible because the academic requirements of the syllabus leave no time or energies for such individual influence; he realizes also that this is neither an accident nor the result of any conviction on the part of the authorities that all the material in the curriculum is essential, but a calculated means of ensuring conformity:

Der Ballast in den Plänen ist absichtlich dort und genau kalkuliert. Er soll genau das verhindern, was mir so wichtig wäre: daß Lehrer Zeit finden, Kinder auch nach ihren eigenen Vorstellungen zu unterrichten und zu erziehen. (ST 135)

The implication of this, Simrock realizes, is that although the State expects absolute loyalty and trust from its citizens, this trust is not reciprocated:

[Es] wuchs ihm der Verdacht, seiner Lehrerpersönlichkeit werde ganz schön mißtraut; sie werde als unberechenbares Risiko angesehen, und darum habe man Umstände geschaffen, die sie nicht zur Entfaltung kommen ließen. (ST 135)

Simrock's final demonstration of non-conformity, which leads to his dismissal, occurs during the visit of an Army recruiting officer.¹ When the visitor's invitation to the pupils to ask questions elicits no response, Simrock attempts to encourage them by asking questions himself: not the expected questions regarding honour, socialist duty and the like,

1. Cf. the similar episode in Martin Walser's Halbzeit; see p.68.

but important factual questions: what salaries Army officers earn, how they spend their leisure time, what alternative careers are available if one should choose to leave the Army, and what the relevant procedures are, whether restrictions are imposed on Army officers' freedom of association and on the radio and television programmes which they are allowed to hear or see. Apologetically -- or provocatively -- he assures the officer that:

. . . er wolle mit seinen Fragen die Schüler nicht etwa davon abhalten, die militärische Laufbahn einzuschlagen. Nur meine er, diese Informationen müßten offen und rechtzeitig gegeben werden. (ST 140)

This demand for factual information rather than eloquent abstractions, for truth rather than ideology, proves wholly unacceptable to Simrock's superiors, who regard it as provocative and subversive, and dismiss him from his post. Simrock regrets having forfeited the opportunity of working in a field where he feels he could have been useful, and, back at the bread factory, he occasionally wonders whether his stance is too extreme, whether it is perhaps he who is guilty of intolerance or dogmatism. But he comes to the conclusion that he is not being dogmatic, merely consistent, and that this consistency is necessitated and justified by the consistency of his authoritarian adversaries:

. . . es gibt in meiner Umgebung für das Unangenehme so viele konsequente Verfechter, daß auch ich ruhig konsequent sein kann. (ST 153)

Thus when the authorities offer to reinstate him in his post on condition that he apologize and admit that his individualism is disruptive rather than productive, he declines the offer, despite his inner commitment to the career of teaching. He realizes that to accept such an offer would make him an accomplice in behaviour of which he profoundly disapproves, and for which he is indeed partly responsible, because he, like so many others, has done nothing to try to change it in the past. It is this insight into his own abdication of ethical responsibility which fills Simrock with the greatest revulsion:

Den größten Ekel hat mir wahrscheinlich gemacht, daß ich mich nicht gewehrt habe. Ich habe getan . . . als sei es nicht meine Sache, mich gegen Bevormundung und Ungerechtigkeiten aufzulehnen. Und das bedeutet: Ich habe mich nicht zuständig gefühlt für mich selbst. (ST 157)

This, he now recognizes, is what he has gained from the experience: he has learned to accept responsibility for himself. His ethical norms remain firmly those of socialism, but within the framework of those norms he must, he realizes, be himself the guide and judge of his own actions. Thus although he has lost his post and with it his social life, he is able in retrospect to consider that he has taken a step forward.

This bleak conclusion exemplifies a development in the literature of the GDR towards an extreme pessimism with regard to the position of the intellectual in society. In his interview with Der Spiegel Becker spoke of the stifling of dissenting voices by officialdom through its control of the mass media and the publishing process:

Ich habe einen unguuten Eindruck, wenn ich mir die Kulturseiten unserer Zeitungen in den letzten Monaten ansehe. . . . Es wird solche Literatur hervorgehoben, wie unsere führenden Genossen sie schreiben würden, wenn sie schreiben könnten. . . . Es gibt eine Art, Bücher zu publizieren, die einem Verschwindenlassen mehr gleicht als einer Veröffentlichung.

The intellectual in Schlaflose Tage has re-discovered the sources of his integrity, but at the price of being deprived of any opportunity to voice his convictions in areas where they might be usefully heard, indeed at the price of complete alienation from the society in which he lives and to which he is ideologically committed. Simrock -- and Becker -- have not as yet lost all hope: Simrock is left at the end of the novel hoping that change will be possible one day; that the authorities will admit that they were in the wrong, and reinstate him. Becker has left the GDR, but without renouncing or being deprived of his GDR citizenship, and appears to hope that he might return to live there if and when conditions improve. At the time of writing cultural and political policies show little sign of change in any positive direction², so that this hope appears to be based more on idealism than on real prospects of improvement.

1. Loc.cit., p.131.

2. See Chapter 4, Excursus, p.208.

E. Rolf Schneider: Das Glück.

Honesty and courage in the face of oppressive authoritarianism and personal misfortune is the theme also of Schneider's Das Glück. It is surprising that this novel, with its very bleak view of life in the GDR, was published there at all. Although Schneider is a well-known author in the GDR,¹ Das Glück was paid little attention by critics there: only Neue Deutsche Literatur appears to have reviewed it², though the reviewer clearly assumed it to have been widely read by the general public.³ He declared it unsatisfactory because the psychology and motivation of the central character were left unclear and because it presented 'untypical' characters and relationships in an excessively gloomy portrait of life in the GDR, a portrait which lacked, moreover, depth, resonance or literary quality. Das Glück was published in the Federal Republic shortly after it appeared in the GDR, but it appears to have received little attention there either. It is certainly not a work of outstanding literary quality, but it is nevertheless of interest with regard to the subject of this thesis, as it presents a bleaker view both of life in East Germany and of the social effectiveness of the intellectual there, than any other novel by a major East German writer to be published there.⁴

The style of Das Glück is terse, abrupt, and simple in the extreme, frequently repetitive but creating an overall effect of detached precision. It is narrated in the third person, has a linear plot, and is prefaced by two mottos which indicate the problematic nature of human happiness: a passage from the Book of Job to the effect that 'der Mensch wird zu Unglück geboren', and an utterance by Agnès Varda, the laconic 'Le Bonheur. Oui, le bonheur.' The life of Hanna, the central character, a girl of working class origin who becomes a school-teacher, seems to vindicate Job's view rather than Ms. Varda's. But she is, and remains to the end, determined to seek happiness, not to be like Job in his fatalistic acquiescence, not to resign herself to her misfortunes but to struggle against them. But throughout the novel all she finds is temporary alleviation by escaping into inauthentic relationships which ultimately only exacerbate her loneliness. She is forced to realize that the individual stands alone in a world ruled by opportunism and selfishness. Happiness is defined in the novel (by Gerhart) as 'die vollkommene Überein-

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1. Cf. K.Franke, Die Literatur der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik; H. Kähler, Der kalte Krieg der Kritiker; and K.Jarmatz, Kritik in der Zeit, where Schneider is listed several times together with Wolf, Kant, Becker, de Bruyn, Fries, Noll and other well-known writers.
 2. J.Hannemann, "Leben im Widerstreit", NDL XXV, 1977/2, pp.159-161.
 3. Ibid., p.159.
 4. Schneider left the GDR in 1979, with permission of the authorities, on a 2-year visa, and is expected to return by the end of 1981.

stimmung . . . zwischen den eigenen und allgemeinen Haltungen und der Wirklichkeit' (G 169), but Gerhart adds that it is 'sehr vorübergehend, überhaupt kein Zustand auf Dauer' (G 169). The question is raised whether life is at all worth living if it is to be lived only for the sake of some brief moments of happiness. But the conclusion of the novel would appear to be not entirely pessimistic: although this is reality as it is now, man must not and need not resign himself to it, since unhappiness is not imposed on him by a God, as it was for Job. The wrongs in Hanna's world are man-made; man is responsible for creating them, and therefore for removing them. The task of the individual, and especially the intellectual, who has the means of influencing others, is to struggle against the obstacles to happiness by setting an example to others and holding fast to his own principles of honesty and integrity, in both private and professional life. Though the ending of Das Glück is abrupt and inconclusive, there are grounds for interpreting it as a hopeful ending.

The critic of Neue Deutsche Literatur was right in pointing out that Hanna is not presented as typical or representative of the citizens of the GDR. Her social disadvantages are unusually severe -- so severe indeed that the writer of the publisher's blurb describes her (in good faith?) as growing up in West Berlin.¹ She is also unusually unfortunate with regard to her friends and relationships. Her sources of strength are, however, considerable: an instinctive honesty, and an indestructible, if residual, optimism. Her background is indeed highly unusual for an East German novel: born in 1948 as an illegitimate child, she grows up in the asocial environment created by her slovenly mother and shiftless step-father, who prior to the building of the Berlin Wall works in West Berlin, refers to the GDR as 'die Zone', takes his family to West Berlin for occasional shopping and entertainment, and after 1961 becomes an embittered and unemployed alcoholic. When in 1961 Hanna's favourite brother Werner moves to West Berlin permanently, Hanna happens to be with him when the border is closed, but decides, in confusion, to return home despite Werner's entreaties. Her decision is entirely instinctive -- even more so than Gregor Bienek's in Irreführung der Behörden: she is of course considerably younger than he -- and there seems to be little in her circumstances to justify it. Thanks to the personal efforts of one of her teachers Hanna is selected for the 'Oberschule' despite the fact that she comes from a non-socialist family and despite her step-father's objections. This teacher is the only character in the novel committed to humane socialism, but it is this 'intellectual' who influences Hanna's choice of career

1. The error is pointed out by Hannemann, loc.cit., p.161.

and inspires her commitment later on to her own pupils.

Living in dire poverty, one of Hanna's numerous half-brothers and sisters grows up to become a juvenile delinquent, towards whom little interest or compassion is shown by the authorities; neither the Court officials nor the social worker to whom Hanna turns for help show more than perfunctory concern and offer no real help. These 'intellectuals' show none of the social responsibility that might be expected of them. There is in this novel none of the warmth of socialist morality which is shown or assumed in most East German literature, and the occasional sympathy which Hanna encounters is presented as a rare piece of good fortune rather than an indicator of the general moral climate. It is this lack of concern which drives Hanna into a truculent, defensive individualism; as she says to the village priest who tells her the story of Job: 'Er hätte sich wehren sollen' (G 48). With scant resources of resistance she becomes proud, embittered and defiant. She does not, however, become cynically opportunistic, as does Stefan, who comes from a more privileged background -- his father is an engineer -- and who, after an initial phase of youthful rebelliousness, decides to conform to social expectations in order to be accepted for university education, to Hanna's bitter disappointment:

. . . da es verlangt werde, habe er geliefert, was verlangt werde; er wolle weiterkommen, das wisse sie doch; er sei schuldlos an den Umständen. (G 66)

Events bear him out: he goes to University and makes a successful career, in which he continues to display the same cynical prudence, which is paralleled in his unfeeling behaviour towards Hanna during her pregnancy and abortion. Hanna, on the other hand, despite her confusion and continuing adversity, rejects this hypocrisy. She retreats instead into a position of self-conscious isolation, defending herself against hostile fellow-pupils -- with physical force where necessary -- and refusing to volunteer for Party activities. Nevertheless, she succeeds in being accepted by the University, having decided to become a school-teacher, influenced by the beneficent role played in her life by her own primary school-teacher, but with little more than a nebulous hope that she may find happiness in this career. As a teacher, however, Hanna finds no sense of integration in the new community nor any scope for fruitful cooperation with her colleagues. There is no consciousness of a common goal, almost everybody is guided by private interests and motives, pettiness and vindictiveness are rife, as illustrated by the general prejudice amongst teachers and pupils alike against one of Hanna's pupils, Torsten, who is victimized for the wrong-doings of his father, a well-known

artist whose work is popular in the West, where he has had a number of exhibitions, whilst his works are not in favour in the GDR because they do not satisfy the criteria of Socialist Realism. When Hanna defends Torsten she finds that almost everybody in the school is against her, and she is unable to prevent the continuing discrimination against the boy, which eventually leads his father to defect with him to the West. As in the case of Fiebach and Iswall's mother and sister in Kant's Die Aula, Torsten's father gains the unequivocal sympathy of the reader; his 'Republikflucht' is blamed not on any weakness of character on his part but on persecution by his fellow-citizens of the GDR.

Hanna's struggle for humanity and decency brings her into confrontation with the forces of doctrinaire bigotry at their most vicious and damaging in the figure of Mutzek, the leading spirit behind the campaign against Torsten and, after Torsten's departure, another boy in the class, a man reminiscent of Mangold in Der geteilte Himmel and Angelhoff in Die Aula and a character whose presence in this novel implies that Stalinism has not disappeared from the schoolroom of the GDR. Mutzek is presented by Schneider as motivated by a frustrated love of power: formerly a fanatical National Socialist¹ he was disappointed that the war ended before he could prove himself, and transferred his fanaticism to the new cause, being one of the first and most ardent supporters of the new SED. It is, however, to the Party's credit that Mutzek has not achieved any real power or popularity:

. . . ihn faszinierte die Macht, er wurde süchtig nach ihr, er vergötterte die personifizierte Macht, er verärgerte die Leute, mit denen er zu tun hatte, durch seine Grobheit, durch seine Uneinsichtigkeiten, sie mochten ihn nicht, und da er nicht ihre Zuneigung haben konnte, machte er das Mißtrauen zu dem Mittel, das ihn an sie band oder sie an ihn. (G 211f.)

Mutzek compensates for this lack of real power or influence by petty viciousness in the small sphere where he does have influence, and Hanna, lacking deviousness or hypocrisy, is powerless against him. She realizes that people of his kind do great damage in society, but are able to do so only because so many others are too afraid, weary, cautious or apathetic to resist them; they acquiesce 'aus Kleinmut, Müdigkeit, Berechnung, grundloser Furcht, Gewohnheit' (G 212). Hanna's entrenched but largely fruitless struggle against Mutzek's inhumanity is paralleled in the unhappy nature of her next important personal relationship, her liaison with Gregor, who she knows to be married but whom she does not question about his wife.

Gregor belongs to the same generation as Mutzek, he too was once a member of the Hitler Youth and experienced the corruption and inhumanity

1. The National Socialist era is dealt with in Schneider's novel Der Tod des Nibelungen (1970).

of National Socialism: his father had prospered in business after taking over the premises and clients of an ousted Jewish rival. But unlike Mutzek, Gregor was not a fanatical supporter of National Socialism. In a story very reminiscent of Grass's Katz und Maus Gregor tells of a visit to his former school as a wounded soldier, telling of his exploits in the war, of German triumphs and honour, and of his awareness that for all its factual truth his story was in essence a tissue of lies. Following a pattern very common in East German fiction, Gregor had deserted to the Americans towards the end of the war, joined the SED after his release from the prisoner-of-war camp, full of a regained sense of purpose and enthusiasm for the new era of socialism, to which he then contributed actively as a construction engineer, gradually rising to an influential position in the technocratic hierarchy of the GDR. The knowledge of the National Socialist past which Hanna acquires from Gregor makes her feel a stronger affinity to the socialist state: there is still inspiration to be drawn from that source, but Gregor himself, like his friend Gerhart, has largely abandoned his earlier hopes and ideals. The developments of the last twenty-five years have left them disillusioned; Gerhart tells Hanna of the young people in whose minds the 'Aufbau' period has become a sentimentalized source of inspiration, who long for revolutionary action and are as yet unaware of the disenchantment which follows the euphoric enthusiasm of the early days of socialism:

. . . manchmal treffe ich junge Leute, die davon träumen, ein Gewehr zu nehmen und in südamerikanischen Dörfern Revolution zu machen. Ich muß ihnen erklären, daß sie nicht in Südamerika leben. Ich muß ihnen erklären, daß ihr Che auf eine schrecklich folgenlose Art gestorben ist. Ich beneide sie um ihre Ideale und alle Irrtümer, die solche Ideale enthalten. (G 169)

The problem of disillusionment following on youthful enthusiasm becomes very prominent in East German literature in the 1970s. Gerti Tetzner identified it as a widespread problem when, while working on her novel Karen W. (1974) she wrote to Christa Wolf:

Vor allem beschäftigt mich schon seit Jahren die Beobachtung, daß viele junge Menschen (Studenten) im Laufe der Jahre an Begeisterungsfähigkeit verlieren, und nicht selten ohne ihre früheren Ideale durchs Leben trotten . . . (1)

It is a theme which Ulrich Plenzdorf has made particularly his own. Hermann Kant recognized the potential problem, but his David Groth in Das Impressum is able to accept the 'Mühen der Ebenen' as part of the continuing struggle towards the ultimate goal, lacking the excitement of the revolution, but no less important. Gregor and Gerhart have lost that ability. What optimism

1. Correspondence published as "Alltägliche Befindlichkeiten", NDL XXIII, 1975/8, pp.117-140 (pp.121/2).

there is in Das Glück lies in the fact that by the end of the novel Hanna appears to have gained something of it.

Hanna does not see what Gregor and Gerhart see very clearly: that their generation, the first generation of socialists in the GDR, have failed to create the society of which they dreamed. They have failed as social beings because they have failed as private individuals. Mutzek's 'socialism' was based on entirely wrong foundations; Gregor's socialist principles are sound, but he has not had the strength of character to conduct his life in full accordance with those principles. Although with an admirable record of achievement in the professional sphere, Gregor has failed in his personal life: Hanna learns from his wife that she is not Gregor's first mistress, that his commitment to society has been fulfilled at the expense of his family life as well as his health, and that his infidelities have driven her to a nervous breakdown. Her deprivation is the counterpart to his social success. Hanna is thus forced to realize that she owes her 'happiness' with Gregor to his wife's incapacitation and misery. This pattern of failure is, moreover, not an isolated case: bitterly, the wife tells Hanna that there were ten other women in hospital with her with similar case histories. When talking of Gregor's professional successes, his wife uses words which perceptibly echo the title of Erik Neutsch's widely acclaimed novel Spur der Steine:

Er arbeitet allein so viel, wie sonst kaum drei Menschen miteinander arbeiten. Er hat eine regelrechte Spur hinterlassen in diesem Land. Man kann ihm nachreisen. Er kann seine Hand auf Mauern und Straßen legen und sagen, daß dies alles vielleicht nicht so wäre ohne ihn. (G 217)

Neutsch's novel was widely praised in the GDR for its positive portrait of life in the GDR and its optimism: the story of Gregor's wife suggests the other side of this much praised social achievement and casts a fundamental doubt on it, emphasizing that the goals of socialism entail more than political and economic reform, and that as long as the ethical values of the individual have not changed, those goals have not yet been attained.

As with Christa T. and Teo Overbeck, Hanna's escape from social tensions into private happiness has proved illusory, and she returns to the arena of her work in the school, breaking off her relationship with Gregor. The conflict with Mutzek reaches crisis point when his daughter displays grossly anti-socialist attitudes and values by taunting a tram conductress with her low-grade work, and Hanna finds little support among the school staff for her protest. She realizes that a fundamental moral issue is involved, that she is fighting the most intractable social malaise: the egocentricity of individual affections and interests:

Mutzek war krank. Vieles an Mutzek war krank. Die Liebe zu seiner Tochter war krank. Sie war keine Liebe. Sie war Eigennutz. Es war Liebe für eine einzelne und gegen andere. Es war eine unmenschliche Liebe. Sie war ohne Erbarmen. Sie war ohne Rücksichten. Hanna wußte, wenn Mutzek recht hatte, wenn Mutzek recht behalten würde, war alles, was sie tat und wollte, was sie und andere wollten, es wäre sinnlos, ein leerer Wunsch, eine Lüge. Sie wollte das nicht. Sie wollte nicht, daß es so wäre, hier oder anderswo. (G 223)

Hanna does not as yet realize how much of her criticism of Mutzek's selfish and anti-social love for his daughter is also applicable to her own love for Gregor; nor does she realize the full implications of her unobtrusive mention of the 'others' who share her desires. It is her growing realisation of these two important facts which provide the element of optimism in the novel's ending: Hanna's realisation that happiness is not to be found in selfish illicit love-affairs, and that even in such a hostile environment as hers, solidarity with like-minded colleagues is possible.

Hanna finds this solidarity with her faithful admirer, the colleague known jocularly as 'D.D.', but only after her feeling for Gregor has been revived for one last time after she learns that he is seriously ill in hospital after a heart attack. She travels for almost a whole day in the hope of seeing him; but it is during the fruitless journey that she admits, in an imaginary conversation, her self-disgust at her thoughtless egoistic behaviour:

Ich war verrückt, Gregor, ich war so, als ob ich in den Nächten Opiate genommen hätte. Ich war wie eine läufige Katze. Ich habe alles ruiniert. Ich habe gelebt. Ich war so, daß ich alle Leute hätte anbrüllen mögen und ihnen sagen, daß ich mein gottverdammtes egoistisches Recht hätte. Ich wollte es auch wieder nicht für gottverdammte und egoistisch halten. Du hättest mich verachten sollen, Gregor, warum hast du mich nicht fortgeschickt? Ich bin Hiob, der in Sack und Asche sitzt und vor dem sich jeder ekelt. (G 242)

This powerfully eloquent self-indictment prepares the way for a turn towards new and better sources of happiness. Hanna returns to Berlin in a state of numbed desolation, but still there is in her a residual vitality which refuses to sink into despair and apathy:

Und Hiob starb alt und lebenssatt. Sie war nicht alt. Sie wollte nicht lebenssatt sein. Sie wollte nicht Hiob sein. (G 255)

When D.D. meets her at the station she is at first indifferent to him when he speaks only of himself, telling her how he discovered her travel arrangements and waited for her; but when he speaks of his sympathy and willingness to help in her struggle against Mutzek, she begins to answer him: the ending of the novel shows the dawning of Hanna's awareness that she has in D.D. not only an admirer and potential suitor but also -- more importantly to her at the present -- a reliable ally.

Until this ending, it would seem that Gerhart speaks for the author when he defines 'happiness' as something possible only in fleeting moments. Hanna certainly appears to have failed in her quest for it. But Schneider has confirmed that his novel is intended to convey more: the insight that happiness is not a goal but a by-product, that it is to be found not in an achieved state but in a quest:

Das Buch, das ich geschrieben habe, trägt den Titel Das Glück und handelt überwiegend von Unglück. Ich will damit das Titelwort nicht denunzieren. Ich will nur darauf aufmerksam machen, daß Glück kein abrufbarer Zustand ist, vielmehr ein stimulierendes Ziel ist, eine Utopie. (1)

Hanna has begun by the end of the novel to realize that happiness is to be found by committing herself to a goal: the realisation of socialist values against the opposition of men such as Mutzek in their pursuit of power. Permanent happiness can come only when her values are generally accepted and her principles put into practice. To hope for this is perhaps, as Schneider suggests, to hope for Utopia. Hanna has little but hope and idealism to guide her, for the materialisation of this Utopia seems to lie in the very distant future. But she has made an important step towards that goal in her realisation that socialist values must be put into practice in daily life if they are to be at all meaningful. Gregor -- like his namesake in Becker's Irreführung der Behörden -- illustrates the individual and social damage that is done when socialist values are worked for in the larger sphere but not truly internalized and hence not applied to private behaviour.

In comparison with the novels written before the 1970s which have been examined in this chapter, Das Glück is a harsh and bitter portrait of life in a developed socialist society. It shows intellectuals such as Hanna alienated from that society, opposed to its mainstream and with little hope of being able to bring about change in the foreseeable future. But it is not a work of despair. Like all the other novelists dealt with in this chapter, Schneider demonstrates that socialism has not yet been achieved but remains a goal worth struggling for, and that it is the task of the individual, and in particular of the intellectual, to ensure that the struggle continues, both by waging his own personal struggle against adverse influences and by encouraging others to do likewise.

1. Quoted from the dust-jacket of the West German edition of Das Glück, Luchterhand Verlag, Darmstadt/Neuwied 1976.

Chapter 6. Summary and Conclusion.

It has been seen that the traditional liberal conception of the intellectual entails the independent exercise of the individual critical intelligence to scrutinize, searchingly, sceptically and with an awareness of responsibility, the assumptions and practices of contemporary society, and to measure the empirical reality of that society against general ethical norms. Depending on circumstances, the position of the intellectual may or may not entail party-political commitment. In modern industrial societies intellectuals are to be found principally in the spheres of education, the arts and the communications media: a sociological finding which is amply reflected in imaginative literature, for it is precisely from these spheres that the novelists under discussion choose their central characters. Their activity is essentially oppositional, for it is in the nature of the intellectual to question the actions and decisions of authority from an ethical, often indeed from a Utopian standpoint.

Alongside this liberal tradition there exists also a more recent socialist conception of the role of the intellectual which stresses loyalty and commitment to the socialist cause and, where appropriate, the Communist Party, a conception which is not only often in conflict with the more deep-rooted liberal conception, but which has also in practice entailed an acute mistrust of intellectuals within the socialist movement.

Intellectuals and writers returning to West Germany after 1945 were united only by their shared revulsion from the National Socialist past; what sense there was of shared goals and attitudes, a sense which was seen at its strongest in the Gruppe 47, had vanished by the 1960s, when a new generation of writers emerged, less concerned with the past and more radically committed to political change in the present, but holding widely disparate views as to how such change could best be effected. There was intense and widespread debate concerning the meaning and possibility of 'engagierte Literatur', and different positions were taken up by the various novelists selected for examination in this thesis: Günter Grass consistently and energetically supported the political programme of the SPD; Siegfried Lenz did so rather less committedly; Martin Walser moved further to the Left out of disenchantment with the pragmatism of the SPD and expressed support for the DKP, though without becoming a member of it; Alfred Andersch, a former KPD member, chose for the time being to withdraw from political activity altogether, although he was to re-emerge as a radically committed figure in the mid-1970s.

All these writers, however, whatever their political affiliations or lack of them, stressed the need for the exercise of independent critical judgement. None of them showed any enthusiasm for the direct political action called for by the more extreme members of the younger generation, although they were all interested in the phenomenon of the radical New Left and subjected it to sceptical scrutiny in their novels. (Among major German writers, only Hans Magnus Enzensberger -- not a writer dealt with in this thesis -- shared the view that literature should be replaced by direct political action of a revolutionary nature.) The four novelists under discussion also all looked very sceptically at the pop culture which gained such a mass following among the youth of the 1960s; they were unanimous in rejecting it as mindlessly escapist and inimical to the values of the rational intellectual. After the political upheavals of the later 1960s, the 1970s by contrast saw, partly as a result of a growing sense of political powerlessness on the part of the intellectuals, a turn away from socio-political activity to a renewed concern with the individual, which should not, however, be interpreted as a retreat into inwardness, but rather as a reorientation of the analysis of social ills towards the psychology and circumstances of the individual.

In East Germany, the older generation of émigré Communists who returned after 1945 to undertake the construction of socialism under strict Soviet supervision, were firmly committed to the Marxist-Leninist conception of the intelligentsia as the Party élite. Intellectual and cultural life was rapidly brought under strict Party control, and for literature the theory of Socialist Realism was officially adopted in 1951 and, to begin with, strictly imposed on writers. In the 'Aufbau' period most socialist intellectuals, whether Party members or not, were willing to subordinate their individual preferences and aspirations to the cause of building socialism; this did not, however, mean that writers all accepted the prescriptions of socialist realism. Many of them were on the contrary concerned to point out that ever since the time of Marx and Engels there had been differences of opinion within Marxist thinking concerning the nature and function of literature, and that the inflexible criteria of socialist realism were of dubious value. Whereas the Party demanded literature that -- unlike its Western counterpart, literature written by intellectuals for intellectuals -- would be accessible to a wide reading public, and called for novels with a 'positive hero' and a clear social message, writers themselves increasingly rejected the over-simplification and ideological sentimentality which these demands implied, and insisted, from ca. 1960 onwards, on a

more truthful, complex, and hence problematic presentation of human experience, both personal and social. All the East German novels examined in this thesis move beyond the stereotypes of socialist realism; they introduce a strongly critical element into their portrait of life in the GDR -- this is true even of Hermann Kant, the most loyal Party supporter among the writers selected -- and give the 'positive hero' a critical rather than the officially required affirmative function: the 'positive hero' is increasingly re-defined by these novelists as a character who does not solve problems but who identifies them by the use of his critical intelligence, leaving it to the reader to seek a solution. Friction between the Party and intellectuals in the GDR over the latter's insistence on this critical activity has been a constant feature of life there since the early 1960s, and continues undiminished to the present day.

The Bitterfeld programme, which called for a renewal of proletarian literature and urged writers of non-proletarian origins to familiarize themselves with the world of industrial work and make it the subject of their literary writings, produced some impressive results, but could not curb the growing desire of writers to put intellectuals rather than workers at the centre of their novels, a practice which they defended vigorously. By the late 1970s intellectuals had become as firmly established as central characters of novels in East Germany as they were in West Germany. Since the 1960s the more significant East German writers have also insisted on depicting social conflict in their novels, despite the Party's pleas not to over-state this aspect of social life, and have declined to offer ready-made solutions to these conflicts, though this is an essential requirement of socialist realism. They have insisted on producing a literature which is truthful rather than exemplary, critical rather than inspirational, while the Party accuses them of subjectivism, apolitical individualism and disloyalty. Writers have continued to resist censorship -- both censorship by the authorities and the more insidious internalized self-censorship. The ideological struggle with the West, in particular the immediate proximity of the hostile Federal Republic, has repeatedly been adduced by the Party to justify its demand for uncritical loyalty, but writers have more and more refused to allow this appeal for solidarity in the face of the ideological enemy to suppress their critical voices.

The four West German authors selected for examination employ the resources of prose fiction to explore imaginatively the character, attitudes and experiences, personal and social, of a wide variety of intellectuals. In all cases the novels under discussion reflect, but do not simply restate, the socio-political standpoints of their authors

in their capacity as private citizens. The novel form is used to explore the subtle ramifications and potential implications of their attitudes, and the hidden tensions, conflicts and uncertainties which underlie them. The authors experiment, as it were, with more extreme forms of their own attitudes; they cast ironic doubts on positions to which they are publicly committed. The distance between the author and his fictional characters is perhaps greatest in the case of Martin Walser, slightest in the case of Günter Grass's Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke. But all the authors use complex narrative forms as a means of distancing themselves from contemporary reality in order to scrutinize it critically and imaginatively. Many of the 'intellectuals' portrayed are thus negative examples of what an intellectual ought not to be: the novels examine their inadequacies, shortcomings and the pitfalls of their various situations. Thus these authors turn an analytical and explorative eye not only on themselves but also on the world around them. The novels do not merely confirm, they also deepen and enrich the reader's understanding of the public positions of their authors.

All these authors are concerned with the effect on an intellectual's activity of his economic dependence, the interaction of his private and public life, and with the problems which they consequently face in asserting their intellectual and moral integrity. Martin Walser uses intellectuals as focal points for a wide-ranging critical scrutiny of West German society. He describes in a highly critical manner the activities of a variety of intellectuals whom he exposes as essentially supportive of the status quo for all their ostensibly oppositional intentions. Walser offers no remedies, but by means of his richly detailed and vivid writing he stimulates the reader to ponder the underlying essence and structure of the society which he depicts. From the intricate proliferation of detail in the Kristlein trilogy a radically critical view of West German society emerges, with clear political implications, though these have not always been recognized: Walser's novels constitute a plea for socialism, albeit a very oblique plea: only Die Gallistl'sche Krankheit treats the subject of Communism directly, and indeed at some length and in a serious vein, but tentatively and within a whimsically bizarre narrative context which undermines its seriousness. Some of Walser's intellectual characters suffer from the ruthlessly competitive nature of the society in which they are compelled to live and work; but their activity is an integral part of that society, helping to sustain it: their nonconformity is spurious, though economically profitable. They see the deficiencies of their society clearly, and some take tentative steps towards solidarity as a means of resisting its demands. In his

portrayal of the private lives of his intellectuals, Walser gives great prominence to distorted sexuality as a symptom of social alienation: compulsive infidelity, licentiousness and perversion, and sexual confusion and inadequacy of various kinds are presented as indicators of a deep-seated social malaise, a failure to establish authentic and fruitful bonds between the individual and society. Walser also castigates the triviality and superficiality of the intellectual establishment: most of the intellectuals in his novels are ignorant and indifferent as regards the National Socialist past, banal and ill-informed in their assessments of contemporary issues, and violently and irrationally prejudiced against Communism. What genuine political insights they do achieve are either short-lived or lead to no positive action. For the most part, intellectual debate is either a spurious show of concern engaged in for economic motives, or else a form of personal status-seeking and competitiveness.

Alfred Andersch, in Efraim, widely misinterpreted as a work of complete social and political withdrawal, in fact embodies imaginatively the implications of such withdrawal, but ends with a partial return to a kind of commitment in the form of Efraim's decision to communicate his insights and experiences in the shape of a novel. In Efraim Andersch gives full expression to the despairing, nihilistic component of his creative imagination, and only minimal expression to its socially committed component. But Efraim does attain a degree of insight into the possibility of human responsibility: his flight from the world leads him to the threshold of existential self-determination, although he does not cross that threshold. Though a work of self-analysis in the first instance, Efraim also implies an analysis of contemporary society: a clearly left-wing view of the state of contemporary West Germany is to be discerned, despite Efraim's avowed lack of interest in politics. As in Walser's novels, social and political disaffection and an existential sense of the absurdity of human existence are mirrored in Efraim's unhappy emotional and sexual experience.

Günter Grass examines, in örtlich betäubt, with great inventiveness and mastery of narrative techniques, the inner tensions and confusions of a liberal intellectual with an underlying desire for violent action, against the background of political unrest and student activism of the late 1960s. The novel is a multi-faceted fictional presentation of Grass's view of West German society during those disturbed years, and of the place of the intellectual there. The novel is a plea for moderation and sanity, but it also articulates a sense of dissatisfaction with rational liberalism and the personal psychological complexities of its central character, whilst other characters reflect various aspects of

Grass's many-sided creative personality, and collectively embody the author's process of self-education in the values of social democracy. Grass asserts the necessity of reason, logic and humanity in the face of the anarchic destructivity to be found not only in the excesses of radical youth but also uneasily underlying the liberal intellectual's own stance: the novel shows the limited but real scope for rational humanism in curbing the ambitions of ideological fanaticism, but ends in doubt and pessimism. In Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke Grass again presents a fictionalized embodiment of humanism tempered by rational scepticism, combined both with aesthetic meditation and with an autobiographical account of his political campaigning for the SPD: a brilliantly inventive extension of the formal possibilities of the novel to bring together the different components of his personality. Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke is a plea for the exercise of independent critical judgement, for cautious reformism held in check by doubt, for utopianism tempered by melancholy, once more against the background of a critical stocktaking of the state of West German political life at the end of the 1960s: here Grass's aversion to the radical Left, including an explicit condemnation of Communism, is even more pronounced than in örtlich betäubt. Here too Grass's cautious optimism and belief in progress, at a snail's pace, coexists with a melancholy pessimism.

Siegfried Lenz is also concerned with complexities, not of personal psychology but of moral evaluation. Through the imaginative account of an unsuccessful search by a group of intellectuals for an exemplary figure whom men and women of different political persuasions could agree to choose for the moral inspiration and guidance of young people, Lenz embodies his conviction of the ultimate impossibility of making firm moral judgements of human behaviour. An intricate nexus of morally ambiguous actions and situations conveys this sense of ethical relativism. In the course of Das Vorbild various intellectual standpoints are examined and contrasted; the conclusion to which the novel leads is that life, both private and social, consists of a continuous series of moral decisions in which there are no fundamental principles to provide guidance and which therefore demands the unremitting exercise of moral vigilance and the critical intelligence: to communicate the necessity of these qualities is the task of the intellectual.

The East German novels which have been discussed reveal a similarly wide range of attitudes and concerns. Christa Wolf's first novel, Der geteilte Himmel depicts the evolution of a socialist intellectual during a turbulent and critical phase of the development of the GDR. The values and behaviour of a 'bourgeois' intellectual are also depicted

by way of contrast, and the novel portrays the effect of the experience of industrial work on the making of a socialist. It also traces the complex interplay of thought, emotion and ideological conviction in the formation and motivation of a socialist intellectual, and asserts the fundamental socialist values of solidarity and individual ethical responsibility for the well-being of society. This novel obeys the call of the Bitterfeld movement to make the world of work the subject of fiction, but here it is already apparent that that world is interesting to the author not so much in itself as by virtue of the ways in which individual characters experience it and react to it. Nachdenken über Christa T. takes this concern with individual experience and reactions to much greater lengths: here the world of industrial work is absent, the professional sphere of the central character is a source not of satisfaction but of constant conflict and disillusionment, and the individual, now an intellectual with little contact with working people, is seen in a highly problematic relationship to a society of which a sharply critical view is given. Nachdenken über Christa T. stresses, with an insistence that incurred severe official disapproval, the importance of the private sphere, the need for subjective honesty in the appraisal of human experience regardless of ideological stereotypes and expectations, and the interest and importance of a wholly 'untypical', indeed highly complex and problematic intellectual.

Hermann Kant, in Die Aula reconciles the call for literature to concern itself with working people with his interest in the role of the intellectual in society by narrating the formative experiences of the new socialist intelligentsia which was recruited from the ranks of working people and trained to become the new élite of the GDR, without -- in most cases -- losing their sense of direct contact and solidarity with working people. The problem of maintaining the bonds between intellectuals and workers, the danger of embourgeoisement, is seen more acutely in Das Impressum, which traces the evolution of an exemplary socialist intellectual and his rise to the political élite, but here too it is insisted that there is no antagonistic conflict between the interests of intellectuals and those of the working population. In both these novels Kant presents a conception of the nature and social role of the intellectual which is in close harmony with official Party conceptions; but within that orthodox conception he asserts the necessity for the intellectual to maintain his personal moral integrity and exert his individual critical faculties in the interest of the humane development of socialism. Kant thus explores the possibilities of individual intellectual freedom and critical vigilance wholly within the parameters

of loyal obedience to the Party.

The other authors of the East German novels examined in this thesis are considerably less bound by such Party loyalty, and much more outspoken in their criticisms of their society. In the novels of the 1970s by de Bruyn, Becker and Schneider intellectuals are portrayed in roles and situations not dissimilar to some of those depicted in the West German novels under consideration: they are teachers such as Overbeck, Simrock and Hanna who struggle to assert their personal moral integrity and foster individual thought and responsibility within an education system which is inimical to the development of individuality, whose prime function is to instil uncritical conformity; or they are writers (Schuster and Bienek) who either adapt opportunistically to social pressures and economic inducements, or attempt to break out of their comfortable and profitable 'Anpassung' and assert an individual integrity at the cost of their security and comfort. Just as in the West German novels discussed there are no unambiguous 'Vorbilder', so in these later East German novels there are no 'positive heroes' in the sense constantly demanded by the Party; in the novels of both West and (in the 1970s) East Germany there are only intellectuals who are emphatically presented as fallible men and women, often with unsatisfactory private lives, who attempt within severely circumscribed limits and with only partial success to assert a degree of moral autonomy, who expose problems to which they cannot provide solutions, but who in so doing illuminate the vital need for individual moral and intellectual integrity.

The characters in the East German novels of the 1970s (with the exception of Das Impressum) undoubtedly voice the dissatisfactions felt not only by their authors but also by large numbers of East German citizens with a social system which, whilst undoubtedly conferring on them substantial social benefits, has so far failed to foster those essential liberties without which individual moral and intellectual integrity can only be practised with severe struggle and hardship. De Bruyn, Becker and Schneider have all striven in their novels to push back the barriers of censorship and express their critical discontent.

Thus the East German novels chosen for consideration reveal attitudes ranging from the complete Party loyalty of Hermann Kant, through the defiant subjectivity of Nachdenken über Christa T. to the vehement and entrenched protest of the younger writers. It must be emphasized once more, however, that all these writers are socialists who have repeatedly asserted that they are not fundamentally hostile to the social order of their country. They do not write against their society but for it, in the hope of activating its inherent capacity for fruitful development.

The uncritical support of the intellectuals for the socialist programme of reconstruction in the 1940s and 1950s in the GDR, which produced a literature very different in themes, styles and aesthetic aspirations from that which was being produced at the same time in West Germany, has been followed since the early 1960s by a critical stance which has found expression in a literature which is much less dissimilar to its Western counterpart: a literature in which intellectuals rather than workers are the central characters, and in which the problematic position of the intellectual in society is a dominant theme. In both East and West German novels, the critical function of the intellectuals is both asserted and recognized as circumscribed and threatened by economic exigencies and the power of a socio-political establishment which, whether it is openly authoritarian or ostensibly libertarian, effectively defuses intellectual criticism either by stifling it or by institutionalizing it. But in both Germanies writers continue, simply by virtue of continuing to write, to assert the 'Prinzip Hoffnung'¹, the faith, however Utopian it may appear to be, in a better future, and the related faith in the effectiveness of literature as a medium not only for the articulation of individual discontent but also for the raising of general public consciousness of social shortcomings, by fostering doubt and critical alertness instead of dogmatism and complacent conformity. Thus Alfred Andersch spoke of the cultural unity of the two Germanies as an:

. . . Einheit der Kultur als kritische, als zweifelnde, als ständig revolutionierende Substanz. (2)

Gerhard Kaiser also speaks of a 'Utopian' factor which links two literatures that are otherwise very disparate.³

Thus after the divergence of the 1940s and 1950s, a degree of convergence between the two German literatures can be observed in the last two decades. The investigation undertaken in this thesis suggests that this convergence is more than a matter of shared Utopian aspirations. Other observers have noted what they see as a convergence of quality, that is to say the emergence of an aesthetically more ambitious literature in East Germany which no longer addresses itself to an aesthetically unsophisticated readership and which is hence worthy of comparison with the literature of West Germany.⁴ This thesis has not

1. Cf. p.236.

2. A. Andersch, Öffentlicher Brief an einen sowjetischen Schriftsteller, das Überholte betreffend, Zürich 1975, p.212.

3. G. Kaiser (ed.), Die deutsche Literatur in Text und Darstellung, Bd. 16: Die Gegenwart, Reclam, Stuttgart 1975, new revised edition 1978, p.18.

4. For a wide-ranging discussion of this question see E. Mannack, Zwei deutsche Literaturen?, Athenäum Taschenbuch, Kronberg 1977.

been more than marginally concerned with questions of aesthetic quality, but its findings suggest that a significant convergence of a quite different kind has been taking place, a thematic convergence: in both literatures the nature, social role, personal and social problems, and ethical responsibility of the intellectual is now a recurrent major theme. To state this is not of course to deny that substantial differences still remain between West and East German literature: much of East German literature continues to be concerned with working class life, much West German writing remains unconcerned with the contemporary social sphere. Even with regard to the presentation of intellectual characters considerable differences can be observed. Only in East German literature are such wholly committed characters as Kant's Iswall and Groth imaginable, only in West German literature could one encounter the degree of withdrawal and solipsism of Andersch's Efraim. But for all that, both East and West German literature now have in common the widespread use of the figure of the intellectual as a focal point for a critical scrutiny of their respective societies.

A further convergence can also be observed in respect of fundamental values -- a convergence which does not imply simply an increasing similarity of East German literature to its West German counterpart but entails changes in both: in West Germany writers portray their intellectual characters within the conceptual framework of a liberal tradition that sets supreme value by individual freedom and integrity; but they have come increasingly to acknowledge also the importance of social and collective values. In East Germany the starting point is the conception of the intellectual as playing either a leading or at least an important supportive role in the building of socialism; but increasingly it is the liberal individual values which these intellectuals find themselves defending. In each of the two societies, critical intellectuals, slowly and painfully, discover the values of the other.

The 'convergence theory', as it is known to sociologists: the view that all advanced industrial societies tend to develop increasingly similar patterns of social life and organisation, whatever their political or economic systems, is rejected in the GDR entirely, just as it is rejected by many Western Marxists, on the grounds that it is an offshoot of anti-Communist ideology.¹ Just as the government of the GDR insists that there are two quite separate German states for whom no ideological coexistence is possible, so it rejects any notion that the two German

1. J. Kneissel, "The Convergence Theory: The Debate in the Federal Republic of Germany", New German Critique, No.2, 1974, pp.16-27, gives a useful summary of the West German debate and a brief outline of the reception of the convergence theory in the GDR.

societies are becoming in any way more similar. In the West, the convergence theory finds support amongst those who believe that a synthesis of liberal and socialist values is (both) desirable^{and possible}, and are thus happy to take cognisance of what evidence there is to suggest that the forms of social life to be observed in the two Germanies are in fact becoming more rather than less similar. Thus Martin Walser writes:

Aus meinem historischen Bewußtsein ist Deutschland nicht zu tilgen. . . . In mir hat ein anderes Deutschland immer noch seine Chance. Eines nämlich, das seinen Sozialismus nicht von einer Siegermacht draufgestülpt bekommt, sondern ihn ganz und gar selber entwickeln darf; und eines, das seine Entwicklung zur Demokratie nicht ausschließlich nach dem kapitalistischen Krisenrhythmus stolpern muß. Dieses andere Deutschland könnte man, glaube ich, heute brauchen. . . . Wir dürfen, sage ich mir vor Kühnheit zitternd, die BRD so wenig anerkennen wie die DDR. Wir müssen die Wunde namens Deutschland offenhalten. (1)

For Walser this vision of a society that would unite socialism without compulsion and democracy without capitalism remains a Utopia, and none of the proponents of the convergence theory have suggested that a reunification of the two Germanies on any such basis is more than the remotest possibility. But this does not preclude taking note of what signs there are that there is at least some common ground between the two Germanies. The convergence theory appears hitherto to have found little to say about the role of the intelligentsia in socialist societies.² This thesis is concerned with literature and raises no claim to fill a gap in sociological studies by deriving sociological evidence from literary texts -- though this procedure is not unknown to sociologists themselves. But it does provide grounds for the tentative hypothesis that, if prose fiction is at all reliable as a reflection of social reality, then a certain degree of convergence can be observed here in the real world as well as in literature. In both Germanies the traditional role of the intellectual, living on the periphery of society and attempting -- in all modest awareness of his own limitations -- to fulfil a self-imposed critical function that is anything but modest, as the conscience of the nation, observing, exposing and bringing to public attention the shortcomings of his society, without providing ideologically prescribed remedies, appears to have reasserted itself.

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1. M. Walser, "Deutschland. Das Kind mit den zwei Köpfen", speech made in 1977, published in Wer ist ein Schriftsteller? Aufsätze und Reden, Frankfurt a.M. 1979, (pp. 94-101), p. 100.
 2. Cf. J. Kneissel, loc.cit., p. 22.

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Chapter 3.

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Chapter 5.

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