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German Attempts at Mediation

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and

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Preface

While the dichotomy of "high" and "low," classical and popular, elitist and trivial has occupied theorists of culture for centuries, very few of them have paid more than scant attention to the various attempts at mediating between these two levels of cultural endeavor. Especially the cultural representatives of the German *Bildungsbürgertum,* that is, the educated middle classes of the last 250 years, have defended their own set of standards in questions of culture and aesthetics as the only exemplary one, and have therefore classified all forms of culture that were popular among the lower classes as substandard and irrelevant.

This attitude lasted in Germany at least until the end of the 19th century. It became problematic only after rapid industrialization and all its repercussions in the political, social, and cultural realms, such as the rise of big cities, the growing strength of the working-class parties and their cultural organizations, the formation of a white-collar class of *Angestellte,* the impact of the mass media on ever wider segments of society, etc. The first to problematize this dichotomy were the cultural theorists of those political parties to the right and left of the bourgeois center who began either (1) to usurp the cultural norms of the former bourgeoisie for themselves and their followers or, (2) to develop strategies for mediation between the older "high" art and the newly developing mass media. But these attempts to arrive at a unified *Volkskultur* in a socialist or fascist sense failed, since the political regimes behind them collapsed. After their failure, strategies of cultural mediation were regarded in a less positive light. Many even claimed that these were "undemocratic" because they seemed to violate the pluralistic concept of an open society.

The result of this development—in a way that was both positive and negative—was a general commercialization of all the arts in a free-market society. This development served to establish, within the field of culture, an aesthetic supermarket in which both the products of the older forms of high culture and the elitist products of modernist art were to be found in the gourmet corner, while, in all other sections of this aesthetic supermarket, other, totally commercialized forms of culture were offered to the general public. In contrast to the defenders of the older forms of high culture and to those who attempted to mediate between the High and Low, deploring this situation, adherents to pop art or to postmodernist views of culture see in this process, broadly speaking, the beginnings of a positive dehierarchization and deauratization, one that will lead to a culture without any dichotomies in the usual sense of class-orientation, gender-specificity, and eth-

nocentricity. Such a movement, in their eyes, will finally bring about a totally democratized culture.

It was the goal of the twenty-second Wisconsin Workshop, carrying the same title as this book, to remind those who are all too eager to overlook the losses occurring in this process, including all the former attempts at mediation in the fields of literature, music, film, and the pictorial arts, that this tendency can also—besides its positive democratic aspect—lead to one-dimensionality. All except one of the essays assembled in this volume, although presented here in a revised and considerably enlarged form, were delivered as lectures at the twenty-second Wisconsin Workshop on the University of Wisconsin–Madison campus in October 1991. Their authors are Hans Adler (UW–Madison), Michael Gilbert (Wake Forest University), Jost Hermand (UW–Madison), Anton Kaes (University of California–Berkeley), Ursula Liebertz-Grün (University of Cologne, Germany), Jochen Schulte-Sasse (University of Minnesota–Minneapolis), and, as usual, a Student Collective (UW–Madison). Since a lecture on architectural national monuments, given by John Czaplicka (Harvard University) could not be included, one of the editors contributed an article on a similar topic, to make sure that the important issue of "high vs. low" in the pictorial arts would also be represented in this book.

We again thank all the contributors as well as all the discussants for their lively participation in this conference. Last but not least, we are grateful, as in the preceding years, to the Vilas Fund of the University of Wisconsin–Madison for giving us the financial support that makes the publication of this volume possible.

High and Low Cultures

High/Low and Other Dichotomies

JOCHEN SCHULTE-SASSE

One of the truisms regularly expressed in the debate on the high/low dichotomy in the arts is that such a distinction informs the concept of art in *modernism,* whereas *postmodernism* ruptures all boundaries in its attempt to fuse the popular with the artistic. It thus seems that the issue at hand is intimately connected with discussions of modernism. In these discussions, Flaubert's *Madame Bovary,* Baudelaire's *Les Fleures du mal,* and the year 1856 serve as a somewhat ossified point of reference: that is, these two books and their year of publication are often considered as marking the definite arrival of modernism. It is not surprising, then, that it has often been implicitly or explicitly argued that the essence of the high/low dichotomy can best be grasped in relation to its function in high modernism. High modernism juxtaposed "high" and "low" while simultaneously genderizing these as masculine and feminine, respectively; both binary oppositions are often viewed as essential by-products of modernism's anti-modern stance in social matters, of its intention to *épater le bourgeois.* Thus, Andreas Huyssen states in his influential and seminal essay, "Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism's Other," that

> the repudiation of *Trivialliteratur* has always been one of the constitutive features of a modernist aesthetic intent on distancing itself and its products from the trivialities and banalities of everyday life

and that one

> aspect of the difference that is important to . . . gender inscriptions in the mass culture debate is that woman . . . is positioned as reader of inferior literature—subjective, emotional and passive—while man . . . emerges as writer of genuine, authentic literature—objective, ironic, and in control of his aesthetic means.[1]

The genderization of the high/low distinction is indeed one of its most essential aspects. However, gender is by no means the only binary opposition that informs the high/low dichotomy. Others include antiquity and modernity, public and private, imagination and fancy, North and South, reason and emotion, active and passive, sublime and beautiful. All of these form a network of binary oppositions that emerged at the end of the 18th century and that, to a certain extent and despite the ubiquitous rumblings concerning postmodernism, still structure the discourse on the arts today. They tend to obscure their very binarism by forming a meandering chain of oppositions that overlap with each other in such a way that

the closeness, for instance, of high and low and male and female sometimes condenses, at other times displaces, each set of oppositions. Thus, a whole range of linked dichotomies both centers and structures the differential systems with which individuals and collective cultures comprehend, or, at least, at one time comprehended, reality over the past two centuries.

The historical contexts in which particular clusters of binary oppositions emerge as interpretive schemata offer a chance to grasp the logic (in the sense of an ideo-logical force) struggling to organize such fields. I would like to pose two questions: first, exactly when and under which conditions did the high/low dichotomy emerge? and, second, what was the cluster of binary oppositions mentioned above designed to achieve at the moment of its inception? To repeat: We still carry the ballast of this design or moment in history. Huyssen touches on the chronological question only in passing when he contends that the notion of mass culture as somehow "associated with woman while real, authentic culture remains the prerogative of men" "gained ground during the 19th century" and culminated "around the turn of the [20th] century." I want to emphasize explicitly that I am not interested in chronology for chronology's sake. The historical context in which this dichotomy and its immediate genderization emerged is not at all peripheral to the theoretical issues involved. I will mention here just one aspect to support this claim. Huyssen speaks of fears expressed in the high/low dichotomy:

> The [male] fear of the masses in this age of declining liberalism is always also a fear of woman, a fear of nature out of control, a fear of the unconscious, of sexuality, of the loss of identity and stable ego boundaries in the mass. . . . The haunting specter of a loss of power combines with a fear of losing one's fortified and stable ego boundaries, which represent the *sine qua non* of male psychology in that bourgeois culture. (52–53)

Those fears surely informed aesthetic categories as well. However, emphasizing a male fear of the masses or of woman as a premise of modernism's aesthetic concepts or classifications locates the determining forces of modernism *outside* aesthetic culture; modernism, or culture in general, becomes in a sense a peripheral phenomenon that only reflects a male psychology determined primarily by social factors. However, the dichotomy of "high" and "low" and its interrelated dichotomies are part and parcel of a textual culture that is an essential and foundational component of modernity—in particular, of a new mode in which individuals constitute their subjectivity. The establishment of fortified and stable ego boundaries was possible only on the basis of a textual culture in which the text serves as a mirror that reflects unity—and, thus, identity—back to the individual, and in which interpretation is practiced as a way of safeguarding never fully established boundaries while simultaneously balancing different and somewhat contradictory aspects of human identity.

But before pursuing this argument further, I need to outline the historical constellation I discussed earlier. From the 1770s on, Western European countries have resonated with complaints about increasingly widespread addictions to reading

fiction, in particular, romances (the German term is "Lesesucht"), and about a deepening of the gap that separates "good" and "bad" literature. As an anonymous author writes in 1789, "die täglich größer werdende, täglich mehr sich ausbreitende Leselust unter allen Classen des Volks, die denn notwendig täglich neue Schmierer und neue Buchhändler hervorbringt, macht das Übel täglich größer."[2] Yet why should reading be an evil? An answer may be found in the following quote by James Lackington, an English bookseller who, in his memoirs of 1791, was searching for an explanation for why book production had increased fourfold since the 1770s. He writes:

> The poorer sort of farmers, and even the poorer country people in general who before that period spent their winter evenings in relating stories of witches, ghosts, hobgoblins etc. now shorten the winter nights by hearing their sons and daughters read tales, romances etc., and on entering their houses you may see Tom Jones, Roderick Random and other entertaining books, stuck up on their bacon-racks etc. . . . In short, all ranks and degrees now read.[3]

Lackington stresses three aspects of the development: (1) an unprecedented growth in book production; (2) a transition from a storytelling culture to a reading culture; and (3) a change in the nature of the reading material itself. All three aspects are constantly reiterated in thousands of documents published all over Europe, in particular, in Great Britain and the German-speaking countries. The Swiss bookseller Johann Georg Heinzmann maintains in 1795 that 5,850 novels were published in German between 1773 and 1794, of which, "wenn man gar nicht strenge richten will, kaum 20 . . . einen bleibenden, sittlichen und schriftstellerischen Werth haben."[4] Twenty out of 5,850 published novels allegedly are "good": discussions of the dichotomous structure of literary life thus often became tangible.

When the high/low dichotomy, which for nearly two centuries was widely accepted as fact, was first challenged in the late 1960s and early 1970s, a favorite argument against it was that literary life in the late 18th century was divided into many more realms than just "high" and "low." To a certain degree, this argument is a valid one. In addition to the "tales" and "romances" of which Lackington speaks, there was what the book historian Johann Goldfriedrich called the "Bodensatz der gröbern Volkslitteratur,"[5] Lackington's "stories of witches, ghosts, [and] hobgoblins." Additionally, for broad segments of the population, devotional literature was the main, or even the only, entertaining reading until far into the 19th century. However, a positivistic interest in actual partitions of the reading public completely misses what is at stake here: namely, an emerging set of binary oppositions that are about to structure not just *literary* life but the fabric of modern life *in general.*

Yet when these clusters of cognitive schemata developed, they gained ground only in small segments of the population: namely, in those segments that were professionally involved in the process of modernization, and which Reinhart Koselleck called "staatsunmittelbar," since they were directly subordinated to the state.[6]

The well-known secularization of reading habits documented by a wealth of statistics (the proportion between devotional literature and secular fiction in Germany was 77:23 in 1740 and 21:79 in 1800)[7] is therefore even more impressive if one concentrates on these segments of the population. Thus, a number of studies investigating the inventory of individual libraries have come to the conclusion that the "Hauptträger der 'Schönen Literatur' um 1800 sind die Kaufleute und die oberen Stände: höhere Beamte, Juristen, Ärzte u.a."[8] The binary oppositions I mentioned were used, within these social groups, as a conceptual tool intended to stabilize the effects of modernization.

One can conclude, therefore, with some confidence—and I will offer more evidence shortly—that the dichotomy is not an actual or social phenomenon, but an intrinsic feature of discourses developing in modernized segments of the population. Lackington's contention that the "poorer sort of farmers, and even the poorer country people," had begun to read extensively between the 1770s and the 1790s is not supported by facts. Lackington's assertion is also primarily a discursive phenomenon that says more about his anxieties than about actual events. To repeat: Only those professions which one could call, with Luhmann's term, functionally differentiated seem to have felt an urge to indulge in imaginary experiences of secular narratives.

The process I am outlining is parallel to, or even a component of, the one described by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*. Professionals actively involved in the development of a functionally differentiated society were expected to act more independently or autonomously. This, in turn, requires a reorganization of subjectivity: external authorities have to be replaced by internalized ones. In the literature of the times—in Lessing, for instance—this surfaces as "the ability to love virtue independently of the immediate presence of the father, which once made virtuous behavior a physical imperative."[9] The internalization of norms and values stipulates different modes of writing and reading; as writing, it privileges narratives with a secular normative structure. In theoretical parlance, one could say: One transcendent anchor of individual and collective identity—namely, an authoritarian and external one—is gradually being replaced by another—namely, an internal and imaginary one. For instance, God and His worldly representatives are replaced by imaginary scenes of completeness, be the latter the "high" unity of artistic form or the "low" experience of imaginary bliss in reading a happy ending.

The high/low dichotomy is instantly linked with narratives in which an alleged state of reconciliation serves as transcendent focal point for modern, fragmented subjects. This can be documented ad nauseam, as, for instance, in Friedrich Schlegel's essay "Vom Wesen der Kritik" of 1804. Here, Schlegel defines modernity as that period of human history in which "a good text is a rare occurrence and utterly bad ones are the rule"; he blames this development on "the discovery of the printing press and the expansion of the book market, conditions which have propagated a huge mass of utterly worthless and incompetent writ-

ings." In his attempt to define the essence of the high/low dichotomy, Schlegel employs throughout a topology that is narrative or historico-philosophical in nature—as when he asserts that ancient Greece did not know any partitions that undermined its unified culture. According to Schlegel, artistic sensibilities were a "very general" phenomenon among the Greeks. "The manner in which the natural sensibility founders with the moderns, [and] is repressed, confused and misled, had not yet occurred"; critics, therefore, simply "had to confirm and explain the general judgments of taste they encountered." Antiquity, thus, did not experience any difference or otherness in taste; "for Greek literature and poesy was a completely self-enclosed whole in which it could not be difficult to find the place where the universal is present in the particular. This nation never entirely lost its poetic sensibility."[10] Questions of taste and value are here grounded in questions of political unity and harmony. As a cognitive figure, the high/low dichotomy is the reverse of an imagined utopia in whose mirror the present dreams a sublation or elimination of its own differences.

Let us follow this meandering network of binary oppositions a little further. Schelling says in his *Philosophy of Art*: "the predominating factor in antiquity is the sublime, the masculine, that of modernity the beautiful and hence the feminine."[11] Antiquity, the masculine, and the sublime vs. modernity, the feminine, and the beautiful: in utterances like Schlegel's and Schelling's, the opposition of high and low is both displaced onto other oppositions and condensed by restricting its reading. In the tripartite scheme of philosophies of history that were popular at the end of the 18th century, antiquity serves primarily as a figure or discursive construct in the light of which alienated modern (male) subjects imagine their own completeness; it functions as a form of presence or fulfillment that once and for all has overcome desire. Antiquity is otherness with a lower case 'o'; that is, its Otherness is imagined as sublatable. As an imaginary construct, it helps individuals to endure what they experience as alienation (more in a Lacanian than in a Marxist sense). As is well known, the imagination of 18th-century writers from Rousseau to Schiller and the Romantics was captivated by the phenomenon of alienation, which was generally discussed in the context of an aesthetic foreshadowing of a utopian state of affairs. Such alleged foreshadowings, however, have nothing to do with history; they are not a temporal phenomenon. On the contrary, they are *present* constructs through which subjects manage and organize their desire.

Lacan maintains that the ultimate figure of male desire is Woman (with a crossed-out definite article), i.e., not empirical women but Woman as an imagined and discursively constructed site of reconciliation or redemption. This can indeed be amply documented for the late 18th century. For the moment, the quote from Schelling I cited must suffice as an example: why—if Woman herself, or itself, is the ultimate object of desire—is she/it first displaced onto antiquity, and then either turned into her/its opposite, a masculine object of desire, as in Schelling, or into an androgynous one, as in Schlegel's "On Diotima"?

The answer lies in the contradictory status of male subjectivity both as a dis-

cursive construct and as a social phenomenon at the end of the 18th century. The demands placed on the small segment of "modern" males serving a centralized, modernizing state included an increase in expectations regarding autonomous behavior, as numerous pedagogical treatises show. Men were expected to act independently and competitively in the public sphere and to define themselves in opposition to the private, which was seen as a feminine sphere in which emotional and "passive" behavior was acceptable. I am not talking here on the macrolevel of sociohistorical speculations—combining, synthezising, or abstracting observations that, as such, cannot be found on the microlevel of contemporary accounts. Not only were such expectations regularly expressed: they were very often linked with issues of quality in aesthetic matters. Christoph Friedrich Bährens, for instance, whose polemical treatise of 1786, *Ueber den Werth der Empfindsamkeit besonders in Rücksicht auf die Romane*, plays a major role in establishing the high/low dichotomy, discusses what he terms "natural" differences in the social mission of the sexes in the context of trying to define the nature of "Moderomane," or "novels of fashion":

> Der Würkungskreis der Frau ist also der Regel nach schon von der Natur nur um die Person des Mannes und seine Familie hergezogen, da im Gegentheil der Würkungskreis des Mannes Welt und Menschheit ist. Nur mittelbar durch diesen würkt jene auf Welt und Menschheit.

Referring to the cycle of menstruation, he continues: "So erstreckt sich der Einfluß des Mondes vorzüglich nur auf die Erde; aber in ihrer Gesellschaft durchläuft er die Bahn um die Sonne." At this point follows, without interruption or transition, the statement:

> Und nimt man *darauf* Rücksicht; so muß man allerdings gestehen, daß die Lektüre der Moderomane weit eher dem Frauenzimmer, als dem jungen Manne zu erlauben ist.[12]

What happened here? Surprisingly, the high/low distinction of value is abandoned where women are involved—which obviously indicates that what is really at stake are not questions of value or quality but of how to organize society and male subjectivity. Bährens's argument, which is rather puzzling at first glance, implies that the separation of the private and the public spurs or impels a partition of literature into "high" and "low." Women, whose "form" is guaranteed by earth's (man's) gravity, are able to consume formless, decentering, emotional narratives without much harm because they are already delimited by a social institution, the "family," which contains them—whereas men act and interact in the public without being bounded institutionally.

Men therefore have to delimit or organize themselves; they are supposed to do so in the framework of a textual culture where a contained, structured text serves as a mirror image in the Lacanian sense: that is, the unity and autonomy of the mirror image constitutes and reflects the unity and autonomy of male subjectivity. In order to achieve this, advocates of a "high" culture specifically feel com-

pelled to exclude femininity from this newly defined textual culture. One aspect of this gesture of exclusion is the constantly repeated allegation that only women read "low" literature. Thus, Justus Möser, in a 1780 satire on the book market, puts the following words into the mouth of a greedy bookseller (please notice the subtle shift in the gender of readers):

> die Zahl der Leser . . . hat in der Zeit von zwanzig Jahren und in manchen Provinzen so zugenommen, daß, wo vorhin kaum ein Exemplar abgesetzet wurde, jetzt hundert verkaufet werden; und ich ärgere mich über nichts mehr, als daß man anfängt, die Empfindsamkeit zu verschreien, die uns mehr wert ist als ein Bergwerk von Potosi. Wir haben mit ihrer Hülfe mehr als zwanzigtausend Leserinnen in Deutschland gewonnen, die alle verloren sein würden, wenn wir uns hierin nicht künftig besser vorsehen.[13]

There is no strong evidence available that supports the constantly repeated claim that women by far outnumber men as readers of so-called mass literature. As a matter of fact, available evidence suggests that men were equally avid readers of allegedly feminine narratives. Again, what we are facing here is not an issue of a sociology of literature interested in the empirical, but of a reorganizing of discursive practices taking place parallel to a reorganizing of societies and subjectivities in the last third of the century. We come, therefore, much closer to the true reason for the repeated allegations that women read romances (which means: formless, emotional narratives) when we read, "Religions-Verachtung und thierische Triebe der Wollust [sind] in unsern neu aufblühenden Geschlechtern durch die Romanenlektüre außerordentlich verbreitet worden."[14] Heinzmann expresses here a fear of a loss of norms and values that contain individual behavior—a loss that allegedly will set free uncontrolled pleasures. He therefore speaks of a "Total-Revolution" caused by a "Romanenseuche" (147) and "Lesebegierde" (441); contemporary readers allegedly "liegen alle im Spital der Empfindelei krank" (447). Metaphors of illness are more telling than the particular content of romances, i.e., sentimentality. The metaphors remain when the content changes; they are gestures of exclusion that say more about the nature of the cultural demands felt by the people using them than about the narratives and their readers at hand.

I do not suggest a linear, monocausal reading of this process of a reorganizing of discursive practices. On the one hand, some aspects of the *Sprachfeld* I am dealing with were fully developed long before the high/low figure took hold. Gottsched, for instance, as early as the 1730s, in his polemic against the opera, writes, "So wird die Weichlichkeit von Jugend auf in die Gemüther der Leute gepflanzet, und wir werden den weibischen Italienern ähnlich, ehe wir es inne geworden, daß wir männliche Deutsche seyn sollten"[15]—thus fusing a North-South opposition with questions of gender and aesthetic values. Such differential North-South juxtapositions, in which the South is devalued as female, even turn up in historico-philosophical discourses idealizing antiquity. Isaak Iselin, for example, a Swiss philosopher of history who advocated a linear model of historical progress and the superiority of modern times, writes:

> Griechenlands lieblicher und sanfter Witz schmückte sie [philosophy] mit einer reizvollen, und bewunderungswürdigen Blüthe; und erst die langsame, aber männliche Vernunft des Nordens konnte ihr die Stärke, und die Vestigkeit geben, durch welche sie eine wahre und dauerhafte Vollkommenheit erhalten sollte.[16]

To be sure, the high/low distinction is not *always* a genderized one. Heinzmann, for instance, writes: "Unsern jungen Leuten, Männern und Weibern, wird die Zeit lang, sie haben kein nützliches Geschäft unter Händen, und Müßiggang führt sie zur Romanen-Lektüre" (142). Nevertheless, the genderization of the dichotomy is definitely the rule; even in cases like Heinzmann's, the network of binary oppositions remains fundamentally the same: as when, for example, he writes that popular, or "low," narratives portray "überspannte täuschende Weiberliebe," or when he asserts in his polemic against "Lesesucht" (the addiction to reading) that "the divine force of poesy" should be employed to promote "the grand sublime vision [*Bild*] of nature," such as "the happiness of states, highmindedness, manliness" (133). Also, not everybody is as condescendingly generous as Bährens when it comes to women's indulgence in fiction. As a British author wrote in 1798: "A young woman, who employs her time in reading novels, will never find amusement in any other books. Her mind will be soon debauched by licentious descriptions, and lascivious images; . . . her mind will become a magazine of trifles and follies, or rather impure and wanton ideas."[17] Here and elsewhere the advice given, sometimes to men alone, at other times to both genders, is to study serious literature, which "fixes a wandering spirit, and fortifies a weak one."[18]

At this point, I would like once more to follow the meandering network of binary oppositions I mentioned, in particular, those of imagination and fancy, of the sublime and the beautiful, and of the public and private.

If, indeed, gender difference informs the fundamental categories of modern aesthetic theory, this should be reflected in definitions of creative imagination, one of the most central terms of modern aesthetic ideology. It is certainly not at all difficult to document that the creative imagination is generally perceived as masculine. *British Synonymy,* a dictionary published in 1794, defines the difference between "imagination" and "fancy" thus: "An intelligent stranger will observe . . . that although we give sex very arbitrarily to personified qualities—yet he will commonly find FANCY feminine, IMAGINATION masculine."[19] Imagination could be perceived as masculine because it had been functionally integrated into a concept of modernity dominated by instrumental reason; it formed a counterweight to instrumental reason for individuals interacting in the public sphere. Fancy is not an internally controlled activity, and therefore feminine. In the moment art was perceived as an autonomous activity, imagination was identified as a forming, a masculine one. In the discourse on the creative imagination, gender difference is present even if not directly expressed, as when a literary critic of the 20th century says: "The Creative Imagination spontaneously selects among the elements given by experience and combines them into new wholes. If this combination be arbitrary or irrational, the faculty is called Fancy."[20] Here the (active) act of combin-

ing elements of experience alludes to maleness and the (passive) act of combining elements arbitrarily or irrationally to the feminine.

The genderization of the high/low, imagination/fancy, public/private distinctions is strengthened by the discourse on the sublime. The first important theoretician of a modern concept of the sublime is, of course, Burke. In defining the sublime, Burke employs a conceptual juxtaposition, that of self-preservation and society (i.e., community), which utilizes gender differences as directly as possible. It is therefore not surprising that his distinction of the sublime and the beautiful is not simply a genderized one; rather, it often exhibits a sexual tenor. His definition of the sublime assumes an "unnatural tension and certain violent emotions of the nerves."[21] In its non-mediated plainness, this tension is "terror." However, it may be either relaxed or transformed into a feeling of supremacy and phallic authority. If it is thus transformed, it produces—as he calls it—"a sort of swelling and triumph" (50), a centripetal concentration of power. In case it is eased, the "characteristic effect of beauty" calls forth an "agreeable relaxation," a centrifugal dissolution of powerful authority (155). Kant holds forth in a similar vein, "Freundschaft hat hauptsächlich den Zug des Erhabenen, Geschlechterliebe aber des Schönen an sich."[22] The effect of beauty—not just in a figurative, but a literal sense—is relaxation or a dispersal of force (German authors speak in this context of "Zerstreuung"). For the German term, it has been documented that "Zerstreuungen heißen in der Sprache der Protestanten (von Luther bis Heidegger) Fehlleitungen von Blicken, Samen, Geldern, Informationen."[23] A similar context of associations is obviously present in Burke, who is searching for a way in which energies may be bound institutionally and thus transformed into cultural energies. The beautiful can, in and of itself, not achieve such a transformation, since it centers on "sentiments of tenderness and affection" (43). Burke regularly stresses beauty's "smoothness," "softness," "delicacy," and "fragility" (115–16). Shifting from the arts to the female body, he claims that beauty in "fine women" depends on a "smooth skin" (114). In a similar vein, Karl Philipp Moritz soon thereafter calls the beautiful the "Zartes," and attributes to it an "allerzarteste Beweglichkeit,"[24] while viewing the sublime as something solid; and Kant will write: "Die Nacht ist erhaben, der Tag ist schön. . . . Das Erhabene rührt, das Schöne reizt. . . . das Erhabene muß jederzeit groß, das Schöne kann auch klein sein. Das Erhabene muß einfältig, das Schöne kann geputzt und geziert sein."[25]

In itself and without some imposition of control, beauty would thus be a dangerous phenomenon. It must, therefore, be subjected to a masculine gaze—which from now on, by definition, is a sublime gaze. The sublime overwhelmingly denotes, not an object, but a look at an object and, thus, activity; beauty, on the other hand, denotes a looked-at object of desire and, thus, passivity. Half a century later, Coleridge will contend matter-of-factly: "I meet, I *find* the Beautiful—but I give, contribute, or rather attribute the Sublime."[26] Like the juxtaposition of high/low, the juxtaposition sublime/beautiful reflects the essentialization of female characteristics which historians like Ruth Bloch and Karin Hausen[27] have investigated;

they overlap with the genderized oppositions of "deed" and "being," "erwerbend" and "bewahrend," "gebend" and "empfangend."

In this sense, Burke explains beauty with constant reference to the female body, the sublime with reference to the spirit and eyesight of men. He seems to envision an orgasm without "Zerstreuungen," for instance, when he writes:

> Now whatever either on good or upon bad grounds tends to raise a man in his own opinion, produces a sort of swelling and triumph for which the human mind is extremely grateful, and this swelling is never more perceived, nor operates with more force, than when without danger we are conversant with terrible objects, the mind always claiming to itself some part of the dignity and importance of the things which it contemplates. (50–51)

The sublime constitutes itself on the *foundation* of the feminine; it both subjects the latter to its gaze and depends in its very livelihood on beauty's existence. In a fragment "On the Beautiful and the Sublime" dating from 1812, Wordsworth states "that, though it is impossible that a mind can be in a healthy state that is not frequently and strongly moved both by sublimity and beauty, it is more dependent for its daily well-being upon the love and gentleness which accompany the one, than upon the exaltation or awe which are created by the other."[28] If time would allow, it would be easy to show how this kind of discourse is directly linked with strategies of both social and cultural containment, and, furthermore, how the beautiful, the family, and Woman are viewed as compensatory counterweights to the public activity of males. It may suffice to refer to the philosopher Karl Heinrich Heydenreich, who in 1798 published a "Philosophy of Gender" in which he assigns natural and irreconcilable roles to both sexes: men were, according to Heydenreich, created to found, put in order, rule, and administer the state, whereas women are "als Mütter hülfloser Kinder Zweck an sich im Staate, ohne je, wie die Männer, sich zu Mitteln für den Staat hergeben zu müssen."[29] Women are "purpose in themselves," i.e., like art in Kant's formulation, purpose without purposiveness. Gender difference is here perceived as a difference between alienated and nonalienated existence.

I do not want to claim that the logic structuring this meander of binary oppositions is without contradiction. On the contrary, the oppositions often get caught in their own mechanism of displacing and condensing meaning. If the night is sublime and the day is beautiful, as Kant says, then the night must be male and the day female. However, thinking is also male, for "Denken ist Bestimmung des Mannes, wozu er sich schon als Jüngling vorbereiten soll, und wodurch er sich . . . einigermaßen vom weiblichen Geschlechte unterscheidet."[30] The qualification of thinking as male is probably the most commonly accepted association of the times; Mary Wollstonecraft denounced Rousseau and Burke for popularizing it. Thus, it should be no surprise that practically every theoretician of the sublime relates the sublime to intellectual activity. However, since thinking is associated with light and daytime, we must conclude that both day and night are ultimately

male and sublime. While Kant calls the night sublime, Herder promotes the associative chain "day, male, sublime, intellect": "Eine . . . Veranlassung fällt mir ein, die vielleicht zur Abtheilung des Erhabnen und Schönen einlud; es ist die zweigestaltige Natur selbst, ihr thätig- und leidendes Principium, Tag und Nacht, Mann und Weib. Dem Mann gebührt, sagt man, Würde (dignitas); dem Weib Anmuth (venustas)."[31] Yet, by obscuring a rather rigid binary logic, such casual inconsistencies reinforce, rather than destabilize, the logic guiding our conceptual meander.

Another possible objection to the argument developed here may be that the oppositions "active"/"passive" and "male"/"female" have since antiquity been fused with the opposites of mind and body. Thus, the Renaissance distinction of active "virtù" vs. passive "fortuna" was obviously perceived as a gendered distinction: "a masculine active intelligence was seeking to dominate a feminine passive unpredictability which would submissively reward him for his strength or vindictively betray him for his weakness. *Virtus* could therefore carry many of the connotations of virility, with which it is etymologically linked; *vir* means man."[32] Yet despite feminist claims that in modern societies "gender meanings [are] organized around [the] mind/body dualism," and that these "act as a stabilizing force . . . in the gender economies of Western discourse,"[33] it is precisely not the contrast of mind and body that has informed genderized distinctions since the 18th century. The polarization of Man and Woman characteristic of modernity depends on a projection of Woman onto another, imaginary place and on the stylization of this place as object of desire. Symbolic representations of this a-topic place displace the concrete corporeality of women into an imaginary scene. The imaginary nature of the feminine pole of genderized figures of perception is a very new quality of such figures. When a French lawyer says in 1617 that woman is "the doorway to the devil, the path of iniquity, the wound of the scorpion, and a kind of animal, greatly harmful to itself," indeed, that she is the incarnation of "concupiscence of the flesh,"[34] then his language does not display the slightest trace of a desire for a utopian space. His classification is, on the contrary, informed by a very concrete wish to rank cognitive faculties and social classes hierarchically, i.e., to establish a homology of cognitive faculties and social functions. Specific for the newly molded (i.e., modern) gender economies of Western discourse is the construction of a site of reconciliation. Woman, inhabiting the private sphere, is "purpose in herself," and not, like her male counterpart, "means for the state," to quote Heydenreich.

In his study of the changing semantics of love during the 17th and 18th centuries, Luhmann stressed an increasing concern with fantasy in the discourse of love:

> [The] adaptive capacity for enhancement is shifted and relocated in the *imagination*. The imagination allows one to avail oneself of the other's freedom, blends it into one's own wishes, and overlaps with the double contingency at the metalevel at which what one's own ego projects is attributed to both one's own ego and that of the beloved. But

> where does imagination come from, how does it create the space and time for itself? The answer . . . lies in its focusing on the last and final favor to be granted—and the deferral of such gratification. Idealization is replaced by a temporalization of love.[35]

The temporalization of love as a constant delay of gratification requires a particular textual culture that delays by investing the act of controlled reading as value, thus bounding and binding the human imagination. Witness Johann Adam Bergk, whose book *Die Kunst, Bücher zu lesen* represents one of the most influential attempts at institutionalizing this new mode of reading:

> Da beinahe in allen Romanen die Liebe die Haupttriebfeder ist, so wird sie durch Romanenlektüre stets geweckt und gereizt. Ist dies nun für die Menschen ein Nachtheil? So lange nicht die Geheimnisse des Begattungstriebes auf die frevelhafteste und grobsinnlichste Weise entweihet werden, ist es mehr ein Glück, als ein Unglück für die Menschen, daß ein magischer Schleier durch die Einbildungskraft über die Liebe geworfen wird, um sie zu vergeistigen und zu veredeln. [Denn spielt] die Einbildungskraft diesen thierischen Genuß in ein gewisses Helldunkel, dann wird er veredelt und humanisiert . . . Romane also, die den Begattungstrieb durch die Magie der Phantasie verschleiern, sind daher nicht schädlich, sondern nützlich: denn warum sollte ein Trieb, der das Band der Menschheit und der die Quelle alles Menschenlebens ist, keine Kultur verdienen . . .[36]

At stake is not simply a sublimation of sexuality, which, according to Freud, could not be achieved through reading anyway. What motivates arguments like this is a wish to institutionalize techniques of reading that mollify and soothe psyches.

The possibility of such techniques of appeasement rests on a particular gaze, on a particular subject position vis-à-vis representations of desire. Because the beautiful is feminine, a subject position or look that itself would be beautiful is impossible. The beautiful is institutionally bounded by a sublime and male gaze. It is truly amazing how often, in the debate on the beautiful, the male gaze is quoted as authority. In 1810, Uvedal Price writes the following in an essay which tries to enhance the binary opposition of the sublime and the beautiful by extending it with the category of the picturesque:

> The most enchanting object the eye of man can behold—that which immediately presents itself to his imagination when beauty is mentioned—that, in comparison of which all other beauty appears tasteless and uninteresting—is the face of a beautiful woman; and there, where nature has fixed the throne of beauty, the very seat of its empire, observe how she has guarded it, in her most perfect models, from its two dangerous foes, insipidity and monotony.[37]

As Mary Wollstonecraft so clearly observed, equality is impossible, "till the person of a woman is not, as it were, idolized."[38]

However, the idolization of Woman is only one among several emerging strategies for focusing on and, thus, binding the male gaze. In one of his seminars, Lacan says "that . . . the subject [must] constitute . . . his imaginary reality"[39] in the mirror of an Other. For the construction of the ego as imaginary reality, Woman

is not a very appropriate Other, since her image is intrinsically contradictory; it is torn between Woman as a discursively constructed site of reconciliation—something perceived as superior—and the inferior social and biological situation of actual women. Not surprisingly, the discourse on Woman/women oscillates between condescension and adoration at the end of the 18th century. For femininity, as it has been conceptualized since the 18th century, is both that which threatens the successful completion of the male's subjecthood and that which is the very precondition of that completion. It is this contradiction that is resolved in the debates on "high" and "low" and "sublime" and "beautiful." The dual nature of the feminine is disunited and separately projected onto different imaginary sites.

I stressed earlier the phallic nature, in Burke and many others, of the sublime or male gaze that is pointed at the beautiful. However, this centeredness and self-sufficiency of the male gaze may very well be considered a delusion. As Lacan has argued, no gaze originates in the looking subject. In a chapter titled "The Split between the Eye and the Gaze," Lacan stresses the difference between vision, or eyesight, and the gaze. He holds "that we are beings who are looked at, in the spectacle of the world. That which makes us consciousness institutes us by the same token as *speculum mundi*."[40] The gaze is integrated into a network of exchanges. Eyesight, or vision, suggests freedom (or self-sufficiency) of the individual; the gaze, in contrast, being woven into a network of interdependencies, shows a *lack* of autonomy. The gaze circumscribes us; we gaze as beings who are looked at. When our vision changes into a gaze we lose our independence. "In our relation to things, in so far as this relation is constituted by the way of vision, and ordered in the figure of representation, something slips, passes, is transmitted, from stage to stage, and is always to some degree eluded in it—that is what we call the gaze" (73).

Because the gaze tends to make us feel alienated or dispersed, we like to contain it in images, in imagined values with which we identify. The "satisfaction, not to say self-satisfaction, that diffuses," according to Lacan, from such specular images "gives the subject a pretext for . . . a profound *méconnaissance*," namely, that an independent gaze is possible that encounters "plenitude . . . in the mode of contemplation" (74–75). Specular images serve as objects of desire for the gaze. The gaze misrecognizes itself as autonomous by privileging an object on which it focuses as superior, as valuable, as existing outside any network of interdependencies. Art with a capital "A" may, in this sense, be described as a privileged object that organizes the gaze by misrecognizing it as contemplation. The gaze, misrecognizing itself, is displaced onto a privileged object that looks back at us in a non-antagonistic, intimate way. The artist, according to Lacan, "gives something for the eye to feed on, but he invites the person to whom [his art] is presented to lay down his gaze there as one lays down one's weapons. This is the pacifying, Apollonian effect of [art]. Something is given not so much to the gaze as to the eye, something that involves the abandonment, the *laying down,* of the gaze" (101). This "laying down" of the gaze does not amount at all to a disempowerment of the individual, as one might think at first glance; on the contrary, it enables the indi-

vidual to renew his identity. For art returns the reader's gaze in a non-antagonistic, even narcissistic fashion; it seemingly suspends the alienating effect of structure. It is this narcissistic short-circuiting of the gaze that is not only particularly satisfying for the subject, but also a reinforcement of his boundaries, his identity.

As a metaphor, this talk of a laying down of the gaze in art is almost ubiquitously present in the aesthetic discourse of modernity. In summary, I shall confine myself to only a few illustrations. Hegel's *Vorlesungen zur Ästhetik* is filled with references to the gaze:

> Der Gegenstand der Kunst aber soll angeschaut werden in seiner für sich selbständigen Objektivität, die zwar für das Subjekt ist, aber nur in theoretischer, intelligenter, nicht praktischer Weise—und ohne alle Beziehung auf die Begierde und den Willen. . . . Das Gesicht . . . hat zu den Gegenständen ein rein theoretisches Verhältnis vermittels des Lichtes, dieser gleichsam immateriellen Materie.

Shortly thereafter, Hegel speaks of the "begierdeloses Sehen" that characterizes aesthetic experience.[41]

In this context, "high" literature is designed to focus the gaze and transform it into a gaze allegedly without desire, which is only another way of saying a gaze without dependencies. After offering one of the most extreme descriptions of aesthetic autonomy, in which he declares the "essence and substance of beauty" to be founded on "Selbstgenügsamkeit," "innere Vollständigkeit," and a "Maximum der Autonomie,"[42] Friedrich Schlegel deals with the necessity of focusing the gaze in aesthetic experience:

> Weil . . . das empfangende Subjekt [das schöne Objekt] nicht allein empfängt sondern unter einem unendlichen All andrer Objekte, mit welchen seine Receptivität beschäftigt ist, so hat dieser Schein des Insichvollendetseyns Schwierigkeiten zu überwinden. Gegen diese giebt es zwey Hülfsmittel . . .; das erste ist *Isolirung* des Objekts von allen übrigen, das zweyte *Konzentrirung* der gesamten Receptivität des empfangenden Subjekts; so daß seine gesamte Kraft, so viel als möglich auf das Objekt gerichtet ist. (Ibid.)

The most common and fundamental argument against "low" literature is precisely that it cannot induce such a concentration of the gaze. As Bergk says:

> Unser Bewußtseyn darf bey der Lektüre nicht zerstreuet seyn, sonst können wir . . . [nicht] unsere Kräfte ins Spiel sezzen. Sind wir nicht streng aufmerksam auf das, was wir lesen, so gewöhnen wir uns an Zerstreuung, und betrachten und sehen alles nur mit einem dunkeln Bewußtseyn. Ein solcher Zustand wird uns bald zur andern Natur. . . . Denn da nun unsere Aufmerksamkeit durch solche Bücher nicht aufgeregt und angestrengt wird, so schweifen wir mit unserer Einbildungskraft wo anders herum, und verliehren die Besonnenheit. Wir sind bey allem, was wir unternehmen, zerstreuet, wir sind nicht bey Sinnen. . . .[43]

Bergk expresses anxieties when he repeatedly speaks of the dangers of being "zerstreuet," or "dispersed." It is this fear of a scattered identity, if not scattered semen,

that induces the notion of writing, or book as work, designed to arrest and focus the reader's gaze. However, the reverse of this statement is equally correct: It is the demand to focus one's identity that encourages the emergence of a new elitarian reading culture that excludes its material opposite, yet structural complement, as "low."

Notes

1 Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington, 1986), 46, 47.
2 Anon., "Schreiben an einen Freund über die Ursachen der jetzigen Vielschreiberey in Deutschland," *Journal von und für Deutschland* (1789): 139–43, here, 141.
3 James Lackington, *Memoirs* (London, 1791), 275.
4 Johann Georg Heinzmann, *Appel an meine Nation über Aufklärung und Aufklärer; über Gelehrsamkeit und Schriftsteller; über Büchermanufakturisten, Rezensenten, Buchhändler* [. . .] (Bern, 1795), 147.
5 Johann Goldfriedrich, *Geschichte des deutschen Buchhandels vom Beginn der klassischen Literaturperiode bis zum Beginn der Fremdherrschaft, 1740–1804* (Leipzig, 1909), 273 (vol. 3 of Friedrich Knapp and Johann Goldfriedrich, *Geschichte des deutschen Buchhandels* [Leipzig, 1886–1923]).
6 Cf. Reinhart Koselleck, *Preußen zwischen Reform und Revolution: Allgemeines Landrecht, Verwaltung und soziale Bewegung von 1791 bis 1848* (Stuttgart, 1967), 24–25.
7 Herbert Schöffler, *Protestantismus und Literatur: Neue Wege zur englischen Literatur des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen, 1922), 186, wrote: "Überhaupt können wir uns ja die Entlegenheit des Gedankens an ausgedehnte weltlich-schöngeistige Lektüre noch um 1700 gar nicht groß genug vorstellen." Beginning in the 1740s and gaining speed in the 1760s and 1770s, fiction started to dominate the book market. In the first half of the 18th century, devotional literature prevailed on the book market. According to Rudolf Jentzsch (*Der deutsch-lateinische Büchermarkt nach den Leipziger Ostermeß-Katalogen von 1740, 1770 und 1800 in seiner Gliederung und Wandlung* [Leipzig, 1912]), the market share of secular narratives increased from 5.2% in 1740 to over 13.4% in 1770 and 16.5% in 1800 (of the "beautiful arts and sciences" in general, from 5.8% to 16.4% and 21.5%). These figures are particularly interesting if viewed against the rapid and simultaneous decrease of the market share of devotional literature. In 1735, the latter had a market share of 40.5%; by 1800, it had decreased to a mere 6%.
8 Walter Wittmann, *Beruf und Buch im 18. Jahrhundert [. . .]* (Frankfurt am Main, 1934), 40.
9 See Kenneth S. Calhoun, "The Education of the Human Race: Lessing, Freud, and the Savage Mind," *The German Quaterly* 64 (1990): 184.
10 I use "official" translations wherever possible, otherwise quoting the original. This Schlegel translation is taken from a forthcoming critical edition of theoretical texts by early German Romantics in Minnesota's THL series. The original can be found in Friedrich Schlegel, *Kritische Schriften*, ed. Wolfdietrich Rasch (Munich, 1971), 392.
11 Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, *Philosophy of Art* (Minneapolis, 1989), 65.
12 Christoph Friedrich Bährens, *Ueber den Werth der Empfindsamkeit besonders in Rücksicht auf die Romane. Nebst einer Nachschrift über den sittlichen Werth der Empfindsamkeit von Johann August Eberhard* (Halle, 1786), 37.
13 Justus Möser, *Sämtliche Werke* 9 (Hamburg, 1958): 121–22.
14 Heinzmann, 139.
15 Johann Christoph Gottsched, *Versuch einer Critischen Dichtkunst*, 4th ed. (Leipzig, 1751), 741.
16 Isaak Iselin, *Über die Geschichte der Menschheit*, 5th ed. (Basel, 1786), 2:338.

17 Joseph Robertson, *An Essay on the education of young ladies* (London, 1798), 44.
18 Hannah More, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education,* 5th ed. (London, 1799), 1:184–85.
19 Hester Lynch Piozzi, *British Synonymy* (London, 1794).
20 C. T. Winchester, *Some Principles of Literary Criticism* (London/New York, 1919), 123–24.
21 Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful,* ed. James T. Boulton (London, 1968), 134.
22 Immanuel Kant, *Werkausgabe [vol.] 2: Vorkritische Schriften bis 1768,* ed. Wilhelm Weischedel (Frankfurt am Main, 1977), 830.
23 Manfred Schneider, "Chiffrierte Sekrete," in *kultuRRevolution: zeitschrift für angewandte diskurstheorie* 24 (January, 1991): 59.
24 Karl Philipp Moritz, *Werke* (Berlin/Weimar, 1973) 1:295, 298.
25 Kant, 827–28.
26 Samuel Coleridge, "Unpublished Fragments on Aesthetics," ed. T. M. Raysor, *Studies in Philology* 22 (1925): 532.
27 Cf. Ruth H. Bloch, "Untangling the Roots of Modern Sex Roles: A Survey of Four Centuries of Change," *Signs* 4.2 (1978): 237–52, and Karin Hausen, "Polarisierung der 'Geschlechtscharaktere': Eine Spiegelung der Dissoziation von Erwerbs- und Familienleben," in *Seminar: Familie und Gesellschaftsstruktur,* ed. Heidi Rosenbaum (Frankfurt am Main, 1978).
28 William Wordsworth, *Selected Prose,* ed. John O. Hayden (Harmondsworth, 1988), 263–64.
29 Karl Heinrich Heydenreich, *Mann und Weib: Ein Beytrag zur Philosophie der Geschlechter* (Leipzig, 1798), 98–99, as quoted in Friedrich Kittler, *Aufschreibesysteme* (Munich, 1986), 64.
30 Bährens, 9.
31 Johann Gottfried Herder, *Sämtliche Werke,* ed. Bernhard Suphan (Berlin 1877–1913) 22:229.
32 J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, 1975), 37.
33 Jacqueline N. Zita, "Transsexual Origins: Reflections on Descartes's Meditations," *Genders* 5 (July 1989): 86.
34 Jacques Olivier, *Responce aux impertinance de l'apostè Capitaine Vigoureux: Sur la dèfense des femmes* (Paris, 1617), 152–53, 68; quoted in Zita, 94.
35 Niklas Luhmann, *Love as Passion,* trans. Jeremy Gaines and Doris L. Jones (Cambridge, Mass. 1989), 51–52.
36 Johann Adam Bergk, *Die Kunst, Bücher zu lesen* (Jena, 1799), 267–68.
37 Uvedal Price, *Essays on the Picturesque as Compared with the Sublime and the Beautiful* (London, 1810), 104.
38 Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Women: with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects,* 2d ed. (London, 1792), viii.
39 Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* (New York/London, 1981), 144.
40 Ibid., 74–75.
41 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Ästhetik,* ed. Friedrich Bassenge (Frankfurt am Main, n.d.) 2:15.
42 Friedrich Schlegel, *Kritische Ausgabe,* ed. Ernst Behler et al. (Paderborn/Munich, 1958ff.) 16:31.
43 Bergk, 65–66.

Cinema and Modernity: On Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*

ANTON KAES

Opening Night

On 10 January 1927, all of Berlin's forty newspapers were abuzz with anticipation and excitement. *Metropolis,* the monumental new film by Fritz Lang, was to open—finally—after one and a half years in the making and an unprecedented advertising campaign that had run for several months. Everyone must have known by then that *Metropolis* was the most expensive and ambitious film production to date in Europe, with an unheard-of cost of 5.3 million Reichsmark (more than three times over budget—bankrupting UFA in the process); that it used a shooting ratio of 1: 300 (with over a million meters of film exposed); that it hired 36,000 extras, 7,500 children, and 1,000 unemployed whose heads had been shaved by 100 hairdressers for a scene that in the final cut lasted less than a minute. "A film of titanic dimensions," "The greatest film ever made, one of the most eternal artworks of all times," an "Über-film," and other such slogans promised a film that was out to compete with such American high-culture film spectacles as D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* and *Intolerance* or Douglas Fairbanks's lavish, four-hour epic, *The Thief of Bagdad,* which had been shown in Berlin in 1924.

Metropolis was also eagerly awaited as a sequel to Lang's successful megaproduction of 1924, the two-part *Nibelungen* film, which established him as the most daring filmmaker of the 1920s both in visual style and ideological ambition. Dedicated to the German people, the *Nibelungen* film translated the archetypal German myth into stunning images of architectural excess, flaunting gigantic medieval castles in contemporary Bauhaus style and complete prehistoric forests made of concrete.[1] Lang, who had studied architecture before turning to filmmaking, infused all his films with a rich spatial imagination; he molded his characters and their fictional world to fit his architectural design. Not surprisingly, it was the big-city architecture of New York that struck Lang first when he toured the United States in 1924. His first glimpse of the New York skyline at night from a ship near Ellis Island in fact inspired him to make *Metropolis:*

> I saw a street lit as if in full daylight by neon lights and topping them oversized luminous advertisements moving, turning, flashing, on and off, spiraling . . . something which was completely new and nearly fairy-tale-like for a European in those days. . . . The buildings seemed to be a vertical veil, shimmering, almost weightless, a luxuri-

> ous cloth hung from the dark sky to dazzle, distract and hypnotize. At night the city did not give the impression of being alive; it lived as illusions lived. I knew then that I had to make a film about all of these sensations.[2]

Upon his return, Fritz Lang's wife, the novelist and screenwriter Thea von Harbou, furnished him with a script that used a futuristic city of the year 2000 for a story that also dramatized latent social and sexual conflicts of 1925. Serialized in the magazine *Das illustrierte Blatt* and published as a novel at the time of the film's premiere, von Harbou's story managed to interweave many timeworn motifs with those specific to the mid-1920s. The traditional love story between the industrialist's idealistic son and a worker's daughter intersects with the fate of a megalopolis that is built on the exploitation of the working class. Love, revolution, communist class war and the Christian hope for a mediator, science fiction and science fact, biblical floods and apocalyptic destruction, and, at the end, the utopian dream of a community devoid of conflict—these narrative strands did not add up to a linear storyline but, rather, formed a complex, many-threaded tapestry. Both in the novel and the film, the narrative extends over a large intellectual terrain, touching on almost every debate of the Weimar Republic. If placed in the artistic and social history of modernity, *Metropolis,* I will argue, is Janus-faced, looking back to the revolutionary Expressionist avant-garde and looking ahead to quiet submission under a fascist leader. *Metropolis,* I contend, displays the modernist dimension in fascism and the fascist dimension in modernism; it creates a site where modernism clashes with modernity.

Two thousand five hundred guests attended opening night, among them the Reichskanzler, members of the diplomatic corps, leaders of finance and industry, and the entire Berlin intelligentsia. The newspapers commented on the unprecedented glamor of the gala premiere which resembled the festive opening of a new opera and certainly rivaled the glitter of a major Hollywood premiere. When the first images of the film conjured up the vision of what for us today has become the prototypical cinematic city, *Metropolis,* spontaneous applause broke out. Director Fritz Lang and his team, scriptwriter Thea von Harbou, cameraman Karl Freund, set designers Otto Hunte and Erich Kettelhut, took bows before the curtain already at the intermission.

After its premiere at the Ufa Palast am Zoo, the film played at the refurbished Ufa Pavillon at the Nollendorfplatz for several months. The theater's exterior walls were covered with a gleaming silver coating that made the whole building look metallic and unreal. Brilliantly shimmering at night and faintly glistening during the day, it radiated an eerie other-worldliness. Futuristic technology was displayed not only in the film's fictional world but outside, in the public space, which thus itself became part of a movie set. Half advertising gimmick, half technological feat, the silvery building projected a modernity associated with metallic machines. Upon approaching the movie theater, Berliners were also confronted with a gigantic steel sculpture that had been taken from the film set and mounted on top of the theater's entrance. The gong-like sculpture signified a beating heart,

thus representing an idealistic counterpoint to the cold machine-like appearance of the exterior walls. The central tension of the film between machine-like modernity and the sentimentality of the heart was thus alluded to even before one entered the theater.

Metropolis, the Film

Metropolis, the event, clearly overshadowed *Metropolis,* the film. The expectations after a year-long barrage of advertising, publicity, and hype were so great that probably no film could fulfill them. The papers on the following morning were almost unanimous in their criticism of the film, pointing out its glaring contradiction between the strikingly innovative visual style and its atavistic, if not reactionary, ideology. The solution to the plight of the working class (namely, to be suppressed by a kinder, more gentle management) seemed either too facile or too cynical, and the Expressionist love story (oedipal son rebels against rich father to win the hand of a working-class girl) appeared to be incongruent with the technical fetishism characteristic of science fiction films.

"There is altogether too much of *Metropolis,*" the film critic of *Life Magazine* commented in exasperation when the film opened in New York in March 1927, only two months after its premiere in Berlin. "There is altogether too much of *Metropolis*—too much scenery, too many people, too much plot and too many platitudinous ideas."[3] It is true that intertextual references and resonances abound on every level. Take, for instance, the set design that runs the gamut from the abstract cityscapes in the tradition of the futurist architect Antonio Sant'Elia to cavernous Christian catacombs, from art deco to the mythical Tower of Babel, from the abstract moving machine parts at the beginning of the film to the Gothic cathedral at the end. The film has, as it were, extended coordinates: it reaches into the mythical past and forward into the year 2000; its upper extremities stretch into the sky and its lower reaches go deep into the bowels of the earth. The overdrawn vertical structure of the film underscores the class difference between the wealthy in the timeless pleasure gardens high above, and the working class down below, vegetating in subterranean darkness where time is counted according to 10-hour shifts. The human bodies of the working class are depersonalized to the point of being part of the film's architectural design; they are choreographed in the tradition of the agitprop and *Sprechchor* theater of Erwin Piscator, forming what Siegfried Kracauer has called a "mass ornament," in which the individual is radically submerged in highly structured formations. Kracauer saw the same process at work in the marching columns of the military as well as in the calculated, mechanized dancing style of the popular American girl revues which mesmerized Berlin in the mid-1920s.[4] These lavish revues often had more than a hundred dancers who all performed identical movements; they were, in Kracauer's words, veritable "girl machines."[5] Less than ten years later, Leni Riefenstahl would organize the masses similarly in her documentary of the Nazi Party Congress, *Triumph of the Will.*

In its narrative as well as visual motifs, Lang's *Metropolis* quotes from, and carries on, the Expressionist theater of the early 1920s. Georg Kaiser's anti-industrialist, anti-military two-part play *Gas* (written at the end of World War I), which depicts an apocalyptic explosion of a gas factory, as well as the subsequent plea of the billionaire's son to the working masses to leave behind the terrifying technology in favor of a rural paradise, and Ernst Toller's 1922 play, *Die Maschinenstürmer (The Machine Wreckers)*, which deals with the Luddite revolt of the 1830s—both provide the stylistic as well as ideological blueprints for the construction of *Metropolis*. In addition, numerous allusions are made to Karel Čapek's *R. U. R.*, a play of 1921 about robots used as mechanical workers; to *Aelita*, a Russian science-fiction film from 1924; and to H. G. Wells's science fiction novels *The Sleeper Wakes* and *The Time Machine*.[6]

In 1927, the nearly three-hour German film which ironically was made with at least one eye on the American market, was considered simply "too much" for American audiences; it was cut and reedited by an American team headed by the playwright Channing Pollock. Seven out of seventeen reels were left on the cutting room floor; no copy of the original version has survived. Laborious efforts have been made to reconstruct the film from still pictures, censorship cards, and, of course, Thea von Harbou's novel *Metropolis*.[7] Although the book is able to explain a few of the obscurities and gaps in the film, its social message, perpetually criticized, does not differ from the film. "Metropolis, the city of the future," proclaimed Thea von Harbou in an essay in 1927, "is the city of eternal social peace—the city of cities in which there is no animosity, no hatred, but only love and understanding."[8] Having gone into production only about five or six years after the failed workers' revolution in 1918–19, *Metropolis* is a film clearly utopian in its desire for social peace. While it was true that the relationship between the classes had finally reached a point of relative stabilization after the end of hyperinflation in 1924, the reconciliation between labor and management at the conclusion of the film still seemed like a happy ending made in Hollywood. Looking back at the film's social message in the 1960s, Lang himself confided, "the main thesis was Mrs. Lang's [Thea von Harbou's], but I am at least fifty percent responsible because I made the film. You cannot make a social-conscious picture in which you say that the intermediary between the hand and the brain is the heart—I mean that's a fairy tale—definitely. But I was very interested in machines."[9]

Machine Aesthetics

"But I was very interested in machines." This sentence reveals precisely Fritz Lang's own contribution to the novel's predictable love story. In fact, the machine represents the underlying metaphor that places this film within the 1920s discourse on modernity and technology. The city, the workers' body, and the film itself are associated with the machine. The city draws its energy from the machines below ground; lights flicker and flashes of lightning shoot across the sky after the

workers destroy the gigantic machine that generates the electricity for the city far above. The city itself is organized like a machine which self-destructs as soon as parts of it malfunction. As the workers revolt against their dehumanized status, they are presented as those malfunctioning parts in the city's machinery. Thus management's plan to replace these workers with mechanized robots is only logical: "Machines will be the workers of the future," proclaims Rotwang, the cabbalistic scientist.

The film begins with an abstract montage of machinery in motion, set against tall skyscrapers which fill up the entire frame. The image is energized by close-ups of pistons in motion, a turbine engine turning in opposite directions as more gears and movements are incorporated into the frame to create a crescendo of complexity further heightened by the intercut of a ten-hour clock, yet another machine, that indicates the imminent start of a new ten-hour cycle. When the steam whistle sounds, the pressure that had built up is released, and a new shift—as announced by the title card—can begin.

The opening montage demonstrates a fetishization of machines, moving by themselves and without outside referent—we do not know what they produce or generate, nor do we know who set them in motion (except, of course, the film projector, another machine). This fascination with mechanization, which Lang shared with futurism, Russian constructivism, and the machine aesthetics of Fernand Léger, also paralleled the work of Ernst Jünger, who hailed the cold elegance and metallic energy of the steel-made, impersonal machine. In 1925, Jünger wrote:

> Standing in great glass-roofed halls, amid pistons and gleaming flywheels, where the mercury columns of manometers rose and fell, the red dials of dynamometers quivered against the white marble of wall panels, we sensed that some surplus lived and breathed there, a luxury, an excess of energy, a will to transform all of life into energy.[10]

This fusion of technology and vitalistic Nietzschean *Lebensphilosophie* corresponds to what Joseph Goebbels would later call "stählerne Romantik." It was an intoxicating mixture, putting modernity (steel technology) at the service of romanticism defined as irrationality. Ernst Jünger and Goebbels—and one might add Fritz Lang—reinvested modernity with the mythical dimension that had been repressed since the 18th century.

"Ours is the first generation to begin to reconcile itself with the machine and to see in it not only the useful but the beautiful as well."[11] Jünger refers here to the "front" generation of World War I, who experienced and survived the new symbiosis of man and machine in the trenches of the war. The front generation was one that "builds machines and for whom machines are not dead iron but rather an organ of power, which it dominates with cold reason and blood. It gives the world a new face."[12] In Jünger's view, the war machine transformed a group of individuals into a cohesive mass that left behind the "grey, frightful world of utilitarianism" for the sake of higher values, community, and primordial passion.

It was precisely the war, however, that also showed the destructive potential

of modern technology, and it was the experience of bombing raids, machine-gun fire, and poison gas (invented and first used by Germans in 1915) that informed the deep split in the 1920s between technology and humanity. As Jünger put it:

> The war battle is a frightful competition of industries, and victory is the success of a competitor who managed to work faster and more ruthlessly. Here, the era from which we come shows its cards. The domination of the machine over men, of the servant over the master, becomes apparent, and a deep discord which already in peacetime began to shake the economic and social order emerges in a deadly fashion. Here, the style of a materialistic generation is uncovered, and technology celebrates a bloody triumph. Here, a bill is paid which seemed old and forgotten.[13]

More than eight years after the war machine had ground to a halt, the bill was still being paid. In *Metropolis* in 1927, representations of large numbers of men dressed alike in dark uniform and shuffling along in formation must have resonated with memories of war in which workers were marching off to the front, giving their bodies over to the god-like war machine. It was the first modern war in which machines (from machine guns to bomber planes) decided the outcome. The consequences of World War I—13 million dead, 11 million crippled—were not forgotten by the mid-1920s. The war and its aftermath provided the ultimate context of modernism. Eleven million veterans with artificial limbs, protheses, and mechanical bodyparts—half-machine, half-human—walked the streets, stark reminders of the cruelty of modern warfare.[14] Modernity, one began to realize, had its price.

Wartime mobilization, in which the soldier sacrificed his individual freedom to the demands of autocratic planning, also seemed the ideal model for industrial production; it was Ernst Jünger's contention, as expressed in his 1932 book-length treatise *Der Arbeiter* ("The Worker"), that one day the worker would in fact become a worker-soldier of the type that Lang imagined in *Metropolis*. In his futuristic project, Jünger blended feudal imagery of service and sacrifice with a modernist celebration of efficiency and vitality.

Metropolis offers a hallucinatory vision of the relationship between man and machine. The gigantic turbine machine that dominates the machine room transforms itself before the horrified eyes of Freder into the gaping jaws of a monster, identified in a title card as the biblical god Moloch. Taking the visual motif of the man-eating machine monster from the famous 1914 Italian film *Cabiria,* the film uses superimposition to make the machine take on the features of a fuming god.[15] The sudden metamorphosis from futuristic machinery to ancient myth uncovers the underlying ideology of *Metropolis* that associates machines with man-eating monsters, and the inventor Rotwang with the evil powers of black magic. Both in dress and habitus close to Rabbi Loew in Paul Wegener's film *Der Golem* (1920), Rotwang displays on his door and in his laboratory a five-pointed star, a pentagram associated with the occult and only vaguely with the star of David, even though Thea von Harbou's novel wrongly identifies the pentagram as "the seal of

Solomon," i.e., the Star of David. The film dramatizes Rotwang's role as uncanny stranger and outsider by linking him to a tiny and bizarre-looking medieval house surrounded by huge skyscrapers. The inventor of the artificial machine man as sorcerer and magician: Rotwang represents the repressed archaic and non-synchronous dimension of modernity. "[T]he more plain and advanced the technology," Ernst Bloch wrote in his perceptive 1929 essay "Die Angst des Ingenieurs" ("The Engineer's Fear"), "the more mysteriously it intersected with the old taboo region of vapors, supernatural velocity, Golem-robots, blue thunderbolts. Thus it touched what was once thought of as the realm of magic. An Edison is much closer to Doctor Faustus than a Herbert Spencer. Much of what the old fairy tales of magic promised has been realized by the most modern technology. . . ."[16] Film was predestined to represent technical progress and modernization as the intrusion of the horrific and uncanny.

Like most science-fiction films, *Metropolis* is highly self-conscious about the representation of technology, because it is technology that produces the special effects and tricks characteristic of the genre ever since Georges Méliès made his first science-fiction film, *Trip to the Moon,* in 1902. It was paradoxically the status of the film camera as a machine that kept film for a long time, particularly in Germany, from being admitted to the temple of art. For how can a machine produce more than a mechanical reproduction of reality? The invention of moving pictures itself was seen at the time as a fiction of science, and it is no coincidence that H. G. Wells's classic science-fiction novel *Time Travels* appeared in 1895, the same year the moving pictures were inaugurated.[17]

In what was visually probably the most stunning scene, Rotwang's transformation of the robot into the likeness of Maria, only briefly mentioned in von Harbou's novel, demonstrates the creation of a replica with the help of enormous electrical machines and chemical apparatuses—a dazzling display of scientific as well as cinematic magic. The process is associated with machines, electricity, and chemicals—all elements that are also needed to create a lifelike image in the photographic process on film. The robot as machine and simulacrum comments on the materiality of image production and the properties of the cinematic apparatus.[18] Technology is able to conjure up machine-made images that cannot be distinguished from reality. Thus, the robot's lascivious dance in front of a male audience attracts and at the same time deceives the spectators' desirous gaze.[19] Indeed, the female robot becomes an emblem for the cinema as such: a product of technical ingenuity, an incarnation of visual pleasure, and a temptress out to delude anyone who falls for the illusion of a replica.

The split of Maria into an asexual "good" Maria and an overly sexual "bad" Maria, which Andreas Huyssen has perceptively analyzed, can also be read as a reworking of historical developments about which Thea von Harbou and Lang may have felt some threat—the newly perceived dominance of emancipated women and the emergence of organized feminist activity in the mid-1920s. The robot Maria as "The New Woman" rips the social fabric asunder, incites the workers to

rebellion, and seduces them to engage in self-destructive acts. Her punishment once she is uncovered as an agent provocateur is to be burned at the stake. The machine woman as witch: the film collapses the fear of women and machines into one. This nexus of technology, visual pleasure, simulation, and fantasy world is also at the core of modern American mass culture, which, some male cultural critics insisted, had seduced Germany into renouncing its classical canon of high culture. While American modernity conquered the economy, culture, and life-style of the entire western world, German intellectuals appeared transfixed, powerless, floundering between fascination and repulsion.

"The number of people who see films and never read books is in the millions," theater critic Herbert Jhering wrote in 1926. "They are all subordinated to American taste, they are made identical, made uniform. . . . The American film is the New World militarism which inexorably marches forward. It is more dangerous than Prussian militarism because it devours not only single individuals but whole countries."[20] The fear that mass culture might be the secret American weapon to enslave the world by distracting it found a particular resonance in Germany, where cultural identity too long had compensated for a lack in national identity. Linked to technology, mass consumption, and mass media, American modernity had become a powerful agent in the economic and cultural modernization of Germany after the war.

American Modernity

"How boring Germany is," wrote Bertolt Brecht in a short diary entry dated 18 June 1920. After finding fault with all classes of German society—peasants, middle class, and intellectuals—he concluded by saying: "But there is still America."[21] For Brecht, as for other avant-garde writers of the early 1920s, America was the only modern, progressive alternative to the still semifeudal life-style of Germany. America—more than Russia—was consistently represented as the New World, the alternative, the Other. The relationship between Germany and America was understood as a historically momentous encounter between two radically different cultures, two ways of perceiving and interpreting the world, a battle between two divergent cultural languages and systems of signs. The Berlin avant-garde saw American mass culture as a vehicle for the radical modernization and democratization of both German culture and German life. It stood not only for Charlie Chaplin and the movies, for jazz, the Charleston, boxing, and spectator sports: it represented above all modernity and the ideal of living in the present.

No other country embraced American modernity more feverishly than did Germany after the war. "America was a good idea," a German intellectual remarked, looking back in 1930,

> it was the land of the future. It was at home in its century. We were too young to know it for ourselves; nevertheless, we loved it. Long enough had the glorious discipline of technology appeared only in the form of tanks, mines, shell-gas, for the purpose of the

> annihilation of man. In America, it was at the service of human life. The sympathy expressed for elevators, radio towers, and jazz demonstrated this. It was like a creed. It was the way to beat the sword into a plowshare. It was against cavalry, it was for horsepower.[22]

This infatuation with America implied a rejection of the recent German military past and a disillusionment with the old European humanist values that had proved to be powerless against the misuse of technology for the purposes of war. After the collapse of the old political order with the military defeat and the demise of the Kaiser's authoritarian rule, all traditional aristocratic notions of culture inherent in the old political system were called into question. The German avant-garde used early American mass culture as a model that could undermine and subvert all pretensions of traditional high culture. In a 1923 article, ironically entitled "Book Review," Hans Siemsen boldly admits that instead of reviewing some books as he was supposed to, he would rather review new popular jazz records with titles like "California, Here I Come," Negro spirituals, and American folk songs.[23] He called jazz "the undignified expression of a new untragic sense of life filled with the youthful energies of America."[24]

American mass culture had a worldwide appeal. It implicitly undermined the concept of the nation-state as "Kulturnation" and was seen by German intellectuals as an antidote to the belligerent patriotism of World War I. The popularity of Charlie Chaplin transcended national boundaries and seemed virtually to transform different nations into one big simultaneous audience united in the common enjoyment of Chaplin's comedy. American mass culture was regarded in Germany as democratic and egalitarian. In a 1926 essay, the art critic Adolf Behne argued that the European idea of culture was dictatorial, whereas American civilization was "built upon the hearts and minds of the masses." He suggested destroying the elitist principle of art and turning from "luxury production" to "utilitarian production." He preferred film over literature because "the film is, from its hour of birth, democratic." Film began as mass art, and could not, therefore, exist as an "individualistic work of art." (At least in the United States, film was indeed, during its first ten years, directed at twenty million illiterate immigrants who enjoyed a form of entertainment that did not require any knowledge of English. Early American films also catered to these masses by being critical of authorities—as in the Keystone Kops or early Chaplin movies). According to Behne, the German masses flocked to see the films of Charlie Chaplin precisely because his films were in tune with the needs and desires of masses everywhere.

By the middle of the 1920s, a new mass audience had developed in Germany. It consisted mainly of white-collar workers: secretaries, clerks, and salesmen who lived in the big cities and had an assured income, fixed working hours, and much leisure time at their disposal. Berlin, as the largest industrial and high-technology center in Germany, had the highest share of Germany's white-collar workers (with 31 percent of its labor force). In the words of Siegfried Kracauer, the white-collar workers constituted "the masses whose existence in Berlin and other big cities in-

creasingly takes on a *unified* tendency. Uniform occupational and collective contracts determine their style of existence." In the process, Kracauer says, there evolved a "homogeneous metropolitan public which, from bank director to sales clerk, from film diva to secretary, has one mentality." Kracauer sees Berlin as "the city of the most explicit white-collar culture today, that is to say, a culture which is made by white-collar workers for white-collar workers and accepted as culture by the majority of white-collar workers." Kracauer is obviously critical about this alleged culture which we would now call middle-brow, the kind of culture that Adorno and Horkheimer also targeted in their famous 1944 essay on the culture industry.

In 1927, Thomas Mann was asked to endorse and introduce a new series of international adventure novels for the Knaur Verlag. In the introduction to the series, he refreshingly admitted: "It does breathe rather wild and democratic from this world of adventurous modernity . . . but let's not be snobbish about it! Let's not flee into the ivory tower. . . . All right then, let's be part of it. Let's stand at the forefront. . . . Let's help and be useful by serving the times and defending the standards which are being attacked. Could that possibly be hopeless? Couldn't the masses and what is made for the masses at least once be good?"[25] Mass culture—*Trivialliteratur,* theatrical revues, film, and so on—offered imaginary escape routes from the tedium of clerical jobs that often consisted of routine mechanical tasks with little or no responsibility and satisfaction; the declining status of the individual clerical worker was compensated for by increased attention to leisure, consumption, and entertainment, most of which was imported from the United States.

The influx of American films after the mid-1920s can be attributed to the effects of the American Dawes Plan of 1923, which was designed to help Germany repay its war debts. A clause in the plan that stipulated the curtailment of all German exports had disastrous consequences for the German film industry. Numerous independent film companies went bankrupt, and German film production decreased sharply. Hollywood took advantage of the opportunity to pour more films into the German market, buy up theaters, and even set up distribution outlets in Germany. When UFA was close to collapse in 1925, the American studios Paramount and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer came to the rescue and lent money in exchange for collaborative rights to UFA studios, theaters, and personnel. Many UFA film directors and artists, among them Ernst Lubitsch, F. W. Murnau, Berthold Viertel, Conrad Veidt, and Greta Garbo, to name only the most famous, took on temporary assignments in Hollywood. Some would stay, others returned to Germany only to go back a few years later when Hitler came to power.

The increasingly obvious and seemingly irreversible domination of Hollywood over German film and mass culture did not go unnoticed among German intellectuals and may account for the growing criticism of the so-called cultural Americanism after the mid-1920s. By the mid-1920s, at the beginning of a five-year period of relative political and economic stabilization, a noticeable shift in the

image of America began to take place in Germany. America continued to connote the mass culture of jazz, sports, and cinema, but it increasingly became associated with inhuman technological progress and industrial rationalization. Americanism in the economic sphere meant efficiency, discipline, and control, and both the Right and the Left began criticizing what they considered the encroachment of instrumental rationality and cost-effectiveness into all areas, including culture, which in Germany had always been defined as the antithesis of the world of commerce. Culture and the masses were mutually exclusive (despite torturous claims to the contrary). "Mass-Culture" must have sounded like a contradiction in terms in a country that proudly proclaimed itself a nation defined by its classical culture. Adolf Halfeld, a conservative cultural critic, states this unmistakably on the cover of his polemical book *Amerika und der Amerikanismus,* published in 1927, the same year in which *Metropolis* premiered: "Indebted to tradition, the culture of Europe, in particular of Germany, is threatened by America with its concentration on materialism and the mechanization of life. Rationalization in the American example triumphs, even if it kills the human side in mankind."[26] And in 1928, when asked by the avant-garde journal *Transition* about the influences of the United States in Europe, the German poet Gottfried Benn answered (in English):

> [The American] influence is enormous. There is a group of lyric poets, who think they have composed a poem by writing "Manhattan." There is a group of playwrights, who think they reveal the modern drama by having the action take place in an Arizona blockhouse and by having a bottle of whiskey on the table. The entire young German literature since 1918 is working under the slogan of tempo, jazz, cinema, overseas, technical activity by emphasizing the negation of an ensemble of psychic problems. The influence of Americanism is so enormous, because it is analogous in certain tendencies with other currents forming the young German today: Marxism, the materialistic philosophy of history, the purely animalistic social doctrine, Communism, whose common attacks are directed against the individualistic and the metaphysical being.[27]

Benn particularly objected to "the purely utilitarian, the mass article, the collective plan" and concluded his critique, not surprisingly, by saying: "Personally I am against Americanism." In his view, Americanism had conspired with Communism in promoting collectivism and crass materialism against the German ideals of individualism and idealism—a polemical juxtaposition that structured the cultural debates in the Weimar Republic and also inscribed itself in *Metropolis.*

By the mid-1920s, then, the term "Americanism" had come to signify two intricately related phenomena: scientific management of labor and industrial mass production (known as Taylorism and Fordism, respectively), on the one hand, and commercial mass culture, on the other. To speak of America meant to evoke an image of a country in which economic productivity, technology, modernity, and democracy went hand-in-hand with a new urban culture. But to speak of America also meant to conjure up a nightmarish picture of a materialist, mechanized society ruled by exploitation, commercialism, and a low brow mass culture cynically catering to the largest possible audience. These contradictory attitudes prevailed

throughout the Weimar Republic, with the critical view becoming dominant after the stock-market crash of 1929.

Henry Ford, car manufacturer and *philosophe populaire,* whose autobiography of 1922 became an instant bestseller in Germany, was generally regarded as the official spokesman of American modernity. German union leaders and businessmen never failed to include a visit with Ford in Detroit whenever they travelled to the United States. His book *My Life* became a bible for all those in Germany who wanted to understand the success of American big business, and so be able to lift Germany out of its own semifeudal backwardness. Ford preached the gospel of scientific instrumental rationality couched in humanitarian terms. In one of his chapters, entitled "The Terror of the Machine," he writes: "I have not been able to discover that repetitive labour injures a man in any way. I have been told by parlour experts that repetitive labour is soul- as well as body-destroying, but that has not been the result of our investigations."[28] On the contrary, even if offered another activity, most workers, says Ford, would prefer to stay and keep doing the same work over and over again. Taking this principle to the extreme for the sake of mass production, Ford had the different jobs in the production of his cars classified. "There were," Henry Ford says in his autobiography,

> 7,882 different jobs in the factory. Of these, 949 were classified as heavy work requiring strong, able-bodied, and practically physically perfect men; 3,338 required men of ordinary physical development and strength. The remaining 3,595 jobs were disclosed as requiring no physical exertion and could be performed by the slightest, weakest sort of men. In fact, most of them could be satisfactorily filled by women or older children. The lightest jobs were again classified to discover how many of them required the use of full faculties, and we found that 670 could be filled by legless men, 2,637 by one-legged men, 2 by armless men, 715 by one-armed men, and 10 by blind men.[28]

And Ford prides himself on the employment of the deaf or dumb as well as the tubercular who, he suggests, should be used mainly outdoors. Despite this shameless display of mechanical numbers, he concludes by saying: "Yet it is not true that men are mere machines."[29] Maybe not, but the way they are counted and portrayed, they certainly appear as parts (expendable ones at that) of a machine called industrial production, which after all managed to cut the time of assembling a car from 14 hours in 1912 to 93 minutes in 1914 (after the assembly line was installed). By 1925, after further refinement, a new car rolled off the assembly line every ten seconds.

In *Metropolis,* the workers are portrayed as a uniform, regimented, dehumanized mass, stripped of any identity, dressed in black, not much more than extensions of the machines they operate. Following the commands given to them by blinking lights, they perform mechanical movements a robot could indeed do more efficiently. This highly stylized, almost dance-like image of rationalized and fully alienated labor visualizes and critiques basic principles of Taylorism and Fordism: repetitive work under the dictate of the clock is bound to build up pres-

sure that can only be released in an explosive revolution, which the film represents as a natural catastrophe of the order of earthquakes and floods. Technology's repressed humanity returned with a vengeance.

The Dialectics of Modernity

The much-maligned ending of the film—the reconciliation between capital and labor, which has been called simplistic, foolish, reactionary, and worse[31]—is in fact an accurate expression of contradictory tendencies in the mid-1920s that have to do with German reactions to modernity, technological progress, and instrumental rationality.

Modernity in Max Weber's often-quoted definition meant above all the progressive "disenchantment" *(Entzauberung)* of the world, a result of myth and religion being superseded by rational and secular thought. Intertwined with the rise of capitalism, free-market economy, democracy, and mass culture, modernity had a more destabilizing effect in Germany than in France, England, and the United States, because Germany lacked an established democratic tradition. Everything capitalist modernity stood for—its challenge to authority, its drive for unbridled economic competition, its disavowal of spiritual and religious values, and its commercialization of culture—collided head-on with still intact patriarchal, feudal, and authoritarian structures. The German battles against modernity, which go back to the middle of the 19th century, culminated in World War I and flared up time and again during the Weimar Republic. Soon, however, the contradictions within modernity itself became apparent. In their magisterial *Dialectic of Enlightenment,* Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer voiced the suspicion that the rationality characteristic of the joint projects of enlightenment and modernity might rest on a logic of domination and oppression. Written in the face of two world wars, of Hiroshima and the Holocaust, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* argued that the desire to dominate nature entailed the domination of human nature; the quest for human emancipation thus transmuted and hardened into a system of universal oppression. The legacy of the enlightenment spirit that informed modernity often meant, in short, the triumph of instrumental rationality.[32]

Metropolis lays out a host of reactions to the nexus of modernity, capitalism, and rationality—ranging from religion, superstition, irrationalism, sexual abandon, expressionist idealism, and revolutionary zeal—only to reaffirm finally a somewhat modified instrumental rationality. Both the failed socialist revolution of 1918–19 and the successful fascist takeover in 1933 responded to the forces unleashed by modernity in Germany. *Metropolis* incorporates both reactions to modernity, the failed workers' revolt (in the film cynically masterminded by capital) as well as the insidious right-wing takeover which stands for what might be called "oppression with a heart." At the end of *Metropolis,* the workers march again in formation—depersonalized as in the beginning—to watch their foreman shake hands with management, as Freder and Maria, the young idealistic couple, look on.

Who, then, is left out of this harmonious ending? It is Rotwang, the half-crazed scientist and occult magician, dressed like an Eastern Jew or like Rabbi Loew in Paul Wegener's 1920s *The Golem,* associated in the film repeatedly with Semitic hieroglyphs (and in the novel, with the Star of David), who falls to his death from the rooftop of the Gothic cathedral while fighting with Freder; it is also the female robot, who is burned at the stake. Eliminating the double threat of a "scheming Jewish scientist" and the new woman as femme fatale (both marked as menacing outsiders) means, within the narrative logic of the film, eliminating the archetypes of cold intellectualism and uncontrollable sexuality, both seen as mortal dangers to the spirit of community. What remains is a transformed community that again embraces technology—a technology that is now free, the film insinuates, from "Jewish control" and infused instead with German spirituality. What remains is the kind of community (*Gemeinschaft,* not *Gesellschaft*) reactionary modernists such as Werner Sombart, Oswald Spengler, and Ernst Jünger had valorized in their writings throughout the 1920s. *Metropolis*'s linkage of modern technology, cultural pessimism, and totalitarian ideology prefigures the resolve of National Socialism to emancipate technology from capitalist exchange and "Jewish materialism."[33] Hitler, who once defined Aryan culture as a synthesis of "the Greek spirit and Germanic technology,"[34] did not oppose modernity (unlike *völkisch* ideologues). Goebbels summed up the dominant Nazi position vis-à-vis technology in a speech at the opening of the Berlin Auto Show on 17 February 1939:

> National Socialism never rejected or struggled against technology. Rather, one of its main tasks was to consciously affirm it, to fill it inwardly with soul, to discipline it and to place it in the service of our people and their cultural level. We live in an age that is both romantic and steel-like, that has not lost its depth of feeling. On the contrary, it has discovered a new romanticism in the results of modern inventions and technology. While bourgeois reaction was alien to and filled with incomprehension, if not outright hostility to technology, and while modern skeptics believed the deepest roots of the collapse of European culture lay in it, National Socialism understood how to take the soulless framework of technology and fill it with the rhythm and hot impulses of our time.[35]

This type of romantized modernity was meant to cover up the contradictions of the national socialist political agenda which built high-tech weapon systems while insisting on the values of blood and soil.

The reaction to capitalist modernity was itself perceived as revolutionary in the 1920s. The ideological trajectory of *Metropolis* is part of a larger debate among German sociologists and philosophers about the "intellectual and spiritual revolution" which, according to Ernst Troeltsch in 1921, "is the revulsion against drill and discipline, against the ideology of success and power . . . against intellectualism . . . against the big metropolis and the unnatural . . . against the rule of money and prestige. . . ."[36] Troeltsch put his hope in the youth movement, and it is no coincidence that *Metropolis* places the spiritual renewal of modernity also into the hands of the young.

Lang's *Metropolis* offers one of the most fascinating and complex interventions in the vigorous 1920s' discourse on modernity. It gives an ambivalent account of this discourse, suggesting that the undoing of modernization and technological progress would only bring self-destruction. The film's interesting ambivalence about its own message stems from the images that fetishize technology even as they display its cataclysmic power. Ideology normally associated with the machine is in this film the object of fascination and terror, of savagery and myth; its anonymous power contrasts with the individualist terms of the German Expressionist subplot. That this "German" solution to an American problem was not satisfactory everyone realized in 1927. Still, the resistance of German Expressionism, with its idealistic, impractical, and old-fashioned emphasis on the heart (and, in a wider sense, on idealism and community), against the unrestrained instrumental rationality of Americanism has to be registered not as a "fault" of the film, but as a historically explicable and valid attempt to fight those tendencies of modernity that have undeniably shown themselves to be cruel and dehumanizing. Seen in its historical context, the film thus dramatized the reaction of German modernism against an overpowering modernity.[37] It was a modernist reaction to a modernity which had negated its own emancipatory potential.

Notes

1 See Sabine Hake, "Architectural Hi/stories: Fritz Lang and *The Nibelungs*," *Wide Angle* 12.3. (July 1990): 38–57.
2 Fritz Lang, "Was ich in Amerika sah," *Film-Kurier* (11 December 1924).
3 R. E. Sherwood, "The Silent Drama: Metropolis," *Life* 89.2316 (24 March 1927): 24.
4 See Siegfried Kracauer, "The Mass Ornament," *New German Critique* 5 (Spring 1975): "The structure of the mass ornament reflects that of the general contemporary situation. Since the principle of the capitalist production process does not stem purely from nature, it must destroy the natural organisms which it regards either as a means or as a force of resistance. Personality and national community perish when calculability is demanded . . ." (69).
5 See Siegfried Kracauer, "Girls und Krise," *Frankfurter Zeitung* (27 April 1931).
6 It may have been precisely this gigantic "pre-postmodern" pastiche of motifs ranging from the catacombs to skyscrapers that led Hollywood producer and composer Giorgio Moroder to rediscover *Metropolis*. In 1984, he reedited the silent film (emphasizing the love story at the expense of the social drama) and added—MTV style—a soundtrack of rockmusic and songs to accompany the images. *Metropolis*, maybe, has already become a cult film in the sense of Umberto Eco: "I think that in order to transform a work into a cult object one must be able to break, dislocate, unhinge it so that one can remember only parts of it, irrespective of their original relationship with the whole. . . . It should display not one central idea but many. It should not reveal a coherent philosophy of composition. It must live on, and because of, its glorious ricketiness" ("Casablanca: Cult Movies and Intertextual Collage," *Travels in Hyperreality: Essays*, trans. William Weaver (New York, 1986), 198.
7 In English translation: Thea von Harbou, *Metropolis* (Norfolk, 1988).
8 Press book brochure *Metropolis* (1927), n.p.
9 Fritz Lang, as quoted in Peter Bogdanovich, *Fritz Lang in America* (Praeger, 1967), 124. For the

production history of *Metropolis* and interviews with Fritz Lang, see also Fred Gehler and Ulrich Kasten, *Fritz Lang: Die Stimme von Metropolis* (Berlin, 1990); Enno Patalas, "Metropolis, Scene 103," *Camera Obscura* 15 (1986): 165–73.

10 Ernst Jünger, "Feuer und Blut: Ein kleiner Ausschnitt aus einer großen Schlacht" (1925), *Tagebücher I* (Berlin 1926; repr. Stuttgart, 1960), 465. On "The Soldierly Body, the Technological Machine, and the Fascist Aesthetic," see Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies* 2 (Minnesota, 1989): 197–210.

11 Quoted in Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge, 1984), 81.

12 Ibid., 79.

13 "Feuer und Blut," 466.

14 See Peter Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason,* trans. Michael Eldred (Minneapolis, 1987), 443–59.

15 Chaplin alludes to this motif in a more playful, fairytale-like way in his film *Modern Times,* made in 1935, when the machine he operates first devours him and then spits him out.

16 Ernst Bloch, "Die Angst des Ingenieurs," in *Gesamtausgabe* 9 (Frankfurt am Main, 1965), 353. See also Bloch, "Nonsynchronism and the Obligation to Its Dialectics," *New German Critique* 11 (Spring 1977): 23–38.

17 For a contextualization of *Metropolis* within the context of science fiction in Germany, see Peter S. Fisher, *Fantasy and Politics: Visions of the Future in the Weimar Republic* (Madison, 1991); Götz Müller, *Gegenwelten: Die Utopie in der deutschen Literatur* (Stuttgart, 1989), 212–17.

18 On the importance of the motif of the machine-woman in Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's 1889 novel *L'Ève future* for cinema, see Annette Michelson, "On the Eve of the Future: The Reasonable Facsimile and the Philosophical Toy," in *October: The First Decade, 1976–1986,* ed. Annette Michelson et al. (Cambridge, Mass., 1987), 417–34; Raymond Bellour, "Ideal Hadaly," *Camera Obscura* 15 (1986):111–34.

19 For a discussion of the sexual politics of *Metropolis* in general and the nexus between machine and female sexuality in particular, see Andreas Huyssen: "The Vamp and the Machine," in *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington, 1986), 65–81; Patricia Mellencamp, "Oedipus and the Robot in *Metropolis*," *Enclitic* 5.1 (Spring 1981): 20–42; Stephen Jenkins, "Lang: Fear and Desire," in *Fritz Lang* (London, 1981); Roger Dadoun, "*Metropolis*: Mother-City-'Mittler' Hitler," *Camera Obscura* 15 (1986): 137–64; Peter Wollen, "Cinema/Americanism/the Robot," *New Formations* (1989): 7–34.

20 Herbert Jhering, "UFA und Buster Keaton," in *Von Reinhardt bis Brecht: Eine Auswahl der Kritiken von 1909–1932,* 3 vols. (Berlin, 1961), 2:509.

21 Bertolt Brecht, *Gesammelte Werke* (Frankfurt am Main, 1967) 20:10.

22 Hans A. Joachim, "Romane aus Amerika," *Die neue Rundschau* 41 (September 1930): 397–98. See also the extensive debate about cultural Americanism in *Weimarer Republik: Manifeste und Dokumente zur deutschen Literatur 1918–1933,* ed. Anton Kaes (Stuttgart, 1983), 265–86. See also Anton Kaes, "Mass Culture and Modernity: Notes Toward a Social History of Early American and German Cinema," *America and the Germans,* ed. Frank Trommler and Joseph McVeigh (Philadelphia, 1988), 317–31. On Americanism in the economic sphere, see Charles S. Maier, "Between Taylorism and Technocracy: European Ideologies and the Vision of Industrial Productivity in the 1920s," *Journal of Contemporary History* 5 (1970): 27–61.

23 Hans Siemsen, "Bücherbesprechung," *Die Weltbühne* 21 (June 1923): 858.

24 Ibid.

25 Thomas Mann, "Romane der Welt: Geleitwort," in Hugh Walpole, *Bildnis eines Rothaarigen* (1927); quoted in *Weimarer Republik: Manifeste und Dokumente zur deutschen Literatur 1918–1933,* ed. Anton Kaes, 287.

26 Adolf Halfeld, *Amerika und der Amerikanismus* (Jena, 1927).

27 Gottfried Benn, "Inquiry," *Transition* 13 (1928): 251f. Reprinted in *Gesammelte Werke* (Wiesbaden, 1968) 2:218.

28 Henry Ford, *My Life and Work* (New York, 1923), 105.

29 Ibid., 108.

30 Ibid., 209.

31 H. G. Wells, for instance, begins his 1927 review as follows: "I have recently seen the silliest film. I do not believe it would be possible to make one sillier. . . . It gives in one eddying concentration

almost every possible foolishness, cliché, platitude, and muddlement about mechanical progress and progress in general served up with a sauce of sentimentality that is all its own." Quoted in *Authors on Film*, ed. Harry M. Geduld (Bloomington, 1972), 59.

32 See Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York, 1972); see also Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, 1987); Michael E. Zimmerman, *Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity: Technology, Politics, and Art* (Bloomington, 1991).

33 The relationship between Fritz Lang and National Socialism is still under debate. Hitler and Goebbels liked *Die Nibelungen* as well as *Metropolis* and wanted to make Lang the head of the entire Nazi film production in 1933. Lang declined and went to Hollywood instead. A glimpse at Lang's passport shows, however, that he actually returned to Germany on several brief sojourns after 1933. See Gösta Werner, "Fritz Lang and Goebbels: Myth and Facts," *Film Quarterly* 43.3 (Spring 1990): 24–27; Willi Winkler, "Ein Schlafwandler bei Goebbels," *Spiegel* 48 (26 November 1990): 236–42.

34 Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, as quoted in Ernst Jäckel, *Hitler's World View: A Blueprint for Power*, trans. Herbert Arnold (Middletown, Conn., 1972), 28.

35 Quoted in Herf, 196.

36 Ernst Troeltsch, "Die geistige Revolution," *Kunstwart und Kulturwart* 34 (1921): 231. The translation is from Fritz Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins: The German Academic Community, 1890–1933* (Cambridge, Mass., 1969), 346.

37 *Metropolis* also dramatizes the battle that raged behind the scenes between the German and American film production companies for the German market. By pitting German Expressionist visual style and feverish "O-Mensch" ideology (represented by the revolutionary fervor of Freder, the oedipal son, and the religiosity of Maria) against cold, "Americanist" industrialism, the film puts up a defiant posture, only to realize at the end that Expressionist idealism can merely temper, not conquer, instrumental rationality.

Art for the People: The Nazi Concept of a Truly Popular Painting

JOST HERMAND

> Art which does not rely on gleeful and intimate consent of the vast, healthy masses is intolerable.
>
> Adolf Hitler

I

One can hardly speak of any specific national-socialist culture policy in the pictorial arts before 1928. There were, to be sure, numerous propagators of a "volkish" movement prior to this date, represented by men like Julius Langbehn, Carl Vinnen, Ferdinand Avenarius, Theodor Alt, and others, who incessantly attempted to stem the tide of the so-called modernists, be it of the impressionist or, later, of the expressionist persuasion. But it was only after the foundation of the "Kampfbund für deutsche Kultur" ("Combat League for German Culture") by Alfred Rosenberg in 1928 that these old nationalist endeavors received their unmistakable Nazi flavoring. A convincing proof of this turning point is signaled by the 1928 publication of Paul Schultze-Naumburg's *Kunst und Rasse* ("Art and Race"), in which the author, the former president of the "Bund Heimatschutz" (i.e., the league for the protection of the German landscape from commercial intrusion), suddenly began to draw comparisons between the figures of expressionist painting and photographs of the insane and mentally ill, in order to deal the political and aesthetic deathblow to all modern art. Another symptom of this tendency is the sudden intensification and fascistization of the vocabulary of the "volkish" guard. While the nationally conscious circles had previously attacked the moderns for their "un-German" attitudes, they now began to use with increasing frequency such invectives as "degenerate," "subhuman," "Jewish-seditious," and "cultural-Bolshevik" to discredit their cultural opponents. It is not surprising, therefore, that in Thuringia in 1930, when the Nazis gained political power for the first time within the framework of a bourgeois coalition government, Wilhelm Frick (with the support of Paul Schultze-Naumburg) ordered the immediate removal of all "modern" paintings from the Weimar museum and the former Bauhaus, calling them the infamous expression of an un-German "Nigger culture."[1]

The real breakthrough, however, occurred only after full power had been transferred to the Nazis on 30 January 1933. Most modern art movements since the turn of the century, such as impressionism, expressionism, art nouveau, futurism, cubism, or dadaism, were suddenly considered inimical to the German peo-

ple in the leading art journals of the new Reich. Expressionism, which received the brunt of these attacks, was labeled "at variance with natural instincts," "subhuman," "alien to the race," "racially impure," and "Papuan-like." Nolde's figures were termed "negroid," Barlach's were described as "idiotic," and Hofer's were condemned as "decadent."[2] In light of these developments, many artists, among them Kurt Schwitters, Lyonel Feininger, Paul Klee, Heinrich Campendonk, Johannes Itten, Hans Purrmann, Max Beckmann, Oskar Kokoschka, Wassily Kandinsky, Lea Grundig, and John Heartfield, preferred to emigrate. George Grosz had prudently chosen to leave Germany well before 1933. Those who did not leave voluntarily, among them Otto Dix, Karl Hofer, Käthe Kollwitz, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, and Oskar Schlemmer, were ruthlessly removed from their positions and honorary posts, and although certain individuals, such as Emil Nolde, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, and Max Pechstein, attempted to resist these measures by avowing Germanic attitudes, their protests were fruitless.[3] As Hitler declared at the Nazi Party Congress in 1933, "novelty for novelty's sake" was no longer to be tolerated in the arts.

The official policy of bringing this group into line was so complete that opportunities for direct or even indirect opposition hardly existed.[4] Instrumental for suppressing resistance in this area were institutions such as the "Department for People's Enlightenment and Propaganda" established on 30 June 1933 under the leadership of Joseph Goebbels, the "NS Culture Community" headed by Alfred Rosenberg, and the "Department of Pictorial Art" under Adolf Ziegler. That artists were subjected to such severe repression, in comparison, for example, to the relative tolerance which existed towards musicians, is partially attributable to the fact that both Hitler and Rosenberg considered themselves "painters." A notorious Nazi joke concerning a painter and a composer bears witness to this discrepancy. "Consider yourself lucky," quips the painter, "that Hitler didn't want to become a pianist!" In order to stress this turning point in the cultural climate with the appropriate degree of propaganda effects, an exhibition in Karlsruhe in 1933 even deigned to display the "degenerate" art of the past few years; the exhibition was significantly titled "Systemkunst" (i.e., official government art 1918–1933).

The almost apocalyptical condemnation of every sort of "un-German" art was programmatically expressed in a vast variety of printed material.[5] Most of the pamphlets dealing with this matter derived their inspiration from Rosenberg's books *Der Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts* ("The Myth of the 20th Century," 1930) and *Revolution in der bildenden Kunst?* ("Revolution in Pictorial Art?" 1934), in which the modern industrial city is seen as the root of the "mongrel art" of expressionism and the "spiritual syphilis" and "perversion of nature" that were said to accompany this movement.[6] A similar jargon prevails in Schultze-Naumburg's booklet *Kunst aus Blut und Boden* ("Art from Blood and Soil," 1934). The most spectacular publication, however, was Kurt Karl Eberlein's *Was ist Deutsch in der Deutschen Kunst?* ("What is German in German Art?" 1934), which reads like a catalogue of all the "sins" of modern painting. For Eberlein, the low point in Ger-

man art falls unequivocably in the years of the Weimar Republic. According to him, this was the era of the "sybaritic artists," the "aesthetic rabble," the "international snobs," and the "art speculators," all of whom degraded even fine art by viewing it as an "end in itself," "a whoredom of the senses," and an "object of sensationalism."[7] The artistic production of these years, we read here, was pure "elitist" art, "big city art," alien to the masses, "arty art," "fashionable art," in short, an art corrupted by an abhorrent commercialism,[8] separating the formerly unified sphere of art into two camps, the high and the low, i.e., the consciously shocking and the outright trivial. According to Eberlein, the chief culprits were not leftist artists like Käthe Kollwitz or the member of the ASSO (Association of Revolutionary Artists), but rather the snobbish expressionists with their disdain for dignity and their constant flirtation with Jewishness, Blackness, and other forms of "subhuman" life.[9] The figures they painted, claimed Eberlein, consisted mainly of "wooden idols, criminals, ulcer victims, South Sea islanders, Slavic and Russian peasants, village idiots, schizophrenics, naked Indians, spiritual mystics, whores, pimps," and, finally, "godless Jewish criminals" portrayed as Christ and "consumptive welfare strumpets" *(schwindsüchtige Fürsorgenutten)* depicted as the Virgin Mary.[10]

However, even such tirades could be outdone, as the speeches and writings of the following years demonstrate. Hitler, for example, at a Nazi Party Congress in September 1934, scornfully railed against the "artistic and cultural stammering of the cubists, futurists, and dadaists." He played only a variation on the same theme in 1935 when he rebuked the "moderns" for their "cultural-Bolshevik ism-art." Similar thoughts were expressed at an expressionist art show in 1936 which carried the title "Anti-Comintern Exhibition." And finally, in 1937, as a crowning blow to this series of condemnations, there was the notorious Munich monster show "Entartete Kunst" ("Degenerate Art"), which had the avowed purpose, as the official guide to the show clearly stated, to open the public's eyes to the "disintegration of culture" and the "Jewish and Communist pandemonium" which had existed before 1933. The formlessness, the defamation of the religious, the anti-bourgeois shock effects—practically all of the expressionist criteria for form and content—were publicly ridiculed as "monstrosities of insanity, insolence, degeneracy, and a complete lack of talent," to quote Adolf Ziegler, one of the organizers of the exhibit.[11] "These prehistoric Stone-age painters and art stammerers," sneered Hitler, "can for all we care join their troglodytic ancestors and scrawl their primitive international scribblings on the walls of caves."[12] With this exhibition, proclaimed Bruno E. Werner triumphantly in the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* on 20 July 1937, "the will of the *Führer* has once and for all put an end to the epoch of depravity in art." One day later, in the *Berliner Tageblatt,* Karl Korn stressed the degeneracy of the expressionist paintings even more firmly. Nevertheless (or perhaps because of this), over two million people attended this exhibition.

Further developments are easy to predict. In 1937, for instance, Wolfgang Willrich published a "Militant Cultural and Political Pamphlet for the Recupera-

Fritz Erler, *Portrait of the Führer* (1939). Reprinted from *Kunst im dritten Reich* 3 (1939), 239.

tion of German Art through the Spirit of Nordic Ways," in which he denounced the "cultural Bolshevism" of the expressionists, the November group, the cubists, the dadaists, and journals like *Die Aktion,* in order to discredit completely what he termed the "anarchist-Bolshevik art degeneracy" and the "red art contagion."[13] In 1938, at the opening of the "Second Great German Art Exhibition" in Munich, Hitler once again railed against the ridiculous "November artists from the dadi tribe and the cubi tribe." One year later, Bettina Feistel-Rohmeder and Adolf Dresler published two pamphlets, *Im Terror des Kunstbolschewismus* ("Under the Terror of Bolshevik Art") and *Deutsche Kunst und entartete Kunst* ("German Art and Degenerate Art"), in which the painting of the Weimar Republic was again labeled "Jewish-Bolshevik" or "cultural-Bolshevik."[14] The art of this era, according to the authors, consisted of the "scrawlings of subhumans," "blasphemies," "the sordid scribblings of cretins," and the depiction of "whores, pimps, murderers, traitors, and lunatics."[15] In the same year, the Nazis passed the "Law concerning the Confiscation of the Products of Degenerate Art," which led to the removal of approximately 16,000 works of art from public institutions. All objects which were not burned or destroyed (in Berlin alone in March 1939, 1,004 paintings and 3,825 works of graphic art were reduced to ashes) were auctioned off under Goebbels's orders at the Fischer Gallery in Lucerne in 1939. Needless to say, art dealers from many Western countries jumped at the opportunity to acquire modern masterpieces at such a reduction; according to one commentator, "the gleeful atmosphere of a shooting match" could be discerned amid the throng of bargain hunters.[16]

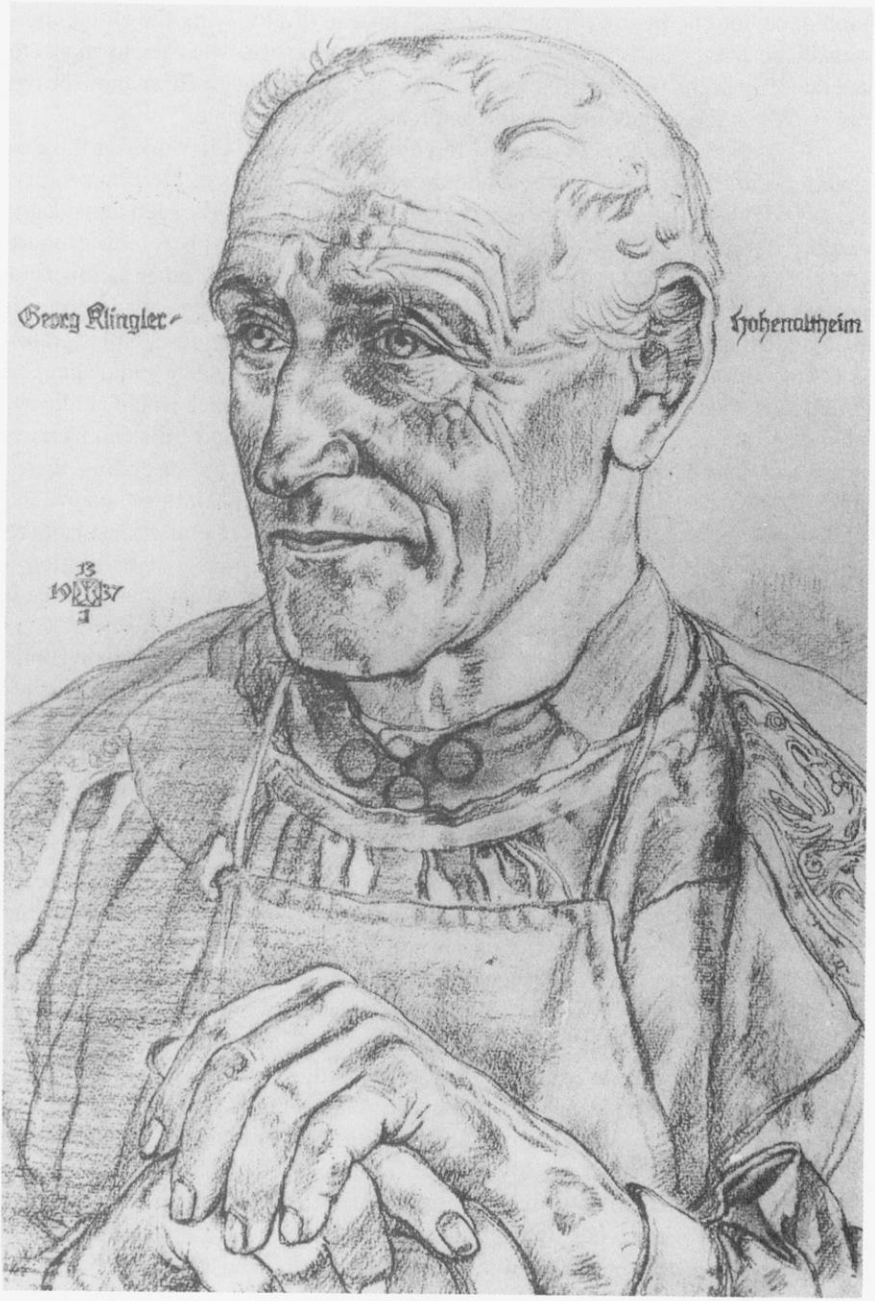
In most of the Nazi proclamations and programs, bourgeois liberalism is portrayed as an especially debilitating ideology—next to, of course, the worst offender in the eyes of the Nazis, Bolshevism. But the major representatives of this liberalism are rarely the capitalists; instead, the Nazis consistently viewed the Jews and the intellectual left as the chief propagators of this ideology. It is "they," according to Hitler and Rosenberg, who wanted to hurl Germany into a bastardized chaos of races and to sink the fatherland into the mire of urban, international civilization. In order to rescue Germany from these libertine, putrifying elements, the Nazis relied primarily not on attacking capitalism but on preaching *religio,* that is, a return to the "essential greatness and profundity of the German spirit," as Hitler put it.[17] While rejecting the liberal ideals of a pluralist society based on classes, parties, and interest groups as only promoting a further disintegration and atomization of the Nordic essence, they emphasized communal ideas such as family, national unity, and race. In the area of culture, therefore, the Nazis repeatedly asserted that every significant accomplishment rested on ideas of community, while modern individualism and psychologizing led necessarily to indifference, apathy, and decadence. Art should not be autonomous, Goebbels wrote in 1933 to Furtwängler, who was suspected of liberal leanings; it must once again become conscious of its "responsibility to the people."[18] In art as well as in politics, the Nazis wanted to inculcate the ideas of comradeship, community, and "the com-

mon good coming before private interests." Instead of glorifying the elitist, individualistic artist, they officially supported only those artists who tried to appeal to the majority of the people. "For the only true art," according to Hermann Göring, "is art which the common man can comprehend and appreciate."[19]

As a result, the Nazis promoted in painting primarily the works of the Romantics, the Biedermeier painters, and the bourgeois realists of the 19th century, because of their supposedly inherent proximity to the people. They felt that the unhealthy development of a division of art into two separate spheres, an esoteric ("high") art for the cultural elite and a trivial ("low") art for the other members of society, had first appeared after the decline of these three movements. In order to break down the barriers between the elite and the masses, therefore, Hitler propagated the ideal of a new "common art," or "community art," which would again be oriented on the best elements of the eternally German, and which would eradicate, on the one hand, everything foreign, snobbish, modernistic, and elitist, and, on the other, everything trivial, frivolous, and commercialized. It is not surprising, therefore, that he focused—in discussing the higher aspirations of painting—on just the dichotomy between "modern" art and "German" art in his opening speech at the Erste Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung ("First Great German Art Exhibition") held in Munich in 1937. "Modern," according to Hitler, represents decay since it continually moves away from the essential greatness of the German spirit; "German," on the other hand, stands for the rebirth of the invariable and unchangeable: namely, the Nordic, Teutonic, and German elements. The German, of course, is always presented as the positive, the ideal, the elevating. This new-old German art is envisioned as uplifting, easily comprehensible, national, and conscious of its responsibility, as opposed to the critical, international, and commercial art of the preceding era. Works of art should be so "meaningful," Goebbels stated in 1936, that they cannot be criticized, but merely appreciated.[20]

Although, at first glance, the entire policy behind these statements appears extremely concerned with really creating an art for the people, it was at the same time a clever disguise for an authoritarian control. For this concept of an art for the masses rested, in turn, on one principle: namely, the indissoluble synthesis of the masses and the Führer. What mattered was not what the people wanted, but, rather, what Hitler wanted, since he embodied the will of the entire German nation. Therefore, Martin Heidegger was simply proceeding "logically" when he explained to a group of students on 3 November 1933: "Tenets and ideas should not be the guidelines for your lives; the Führer and the Führer alone is the present and future German reality and its only law."[21]

Heidegger's statement can be further supported by witnessing the transformation of the various "positive" programs propagated by earlier German chauvinists such as Paul de Lagarde, Julius Langbehn, Adolf Bartels, Josef Nadler, or Paul Schultze-Naumburg[22] into cultural policies more in line with the Hitler-Rosenberg position. In the first years of Nazi rule, we still find such expressions as "Nordic expressionism" (Wilhelm Worringer) and "Gothic volkish art"



Wolfgang Willrich, *Old Peasant from the Ries* (1937). Reprinted from *Kunst im dritten Reich* 3 (1939), 335.

(Richard Benz) or the emphasis on "thousand years of Romanticism" as cornerstones of the fascist history of ideas.[23] Thus, Robert Böttcher wrote in 1933: "The path to the future for the German artist and the German people can be most clearly and purely traversed by a complete immersion in the great creations of our ancestors."[24] Böttcher favored above all the works of Gothic sculptors or of painters like Dürer, Grünewald, Friedrich, Leibl, Böcklin, and Thoma as eternal models for a genuine German art. For, according to Böttcher, there exists among "the classes of working people" a "profound longing" for works which are capable of exalting and "elevating."[25] Similar thoughts were expressed by Kurt Karl Eberlein, who in addition to propagating such old volkish ideals as the "eternal Gothic" and the "Faustian German," also reveled in fantasies about a type of "socialism" which runs in the blood of all true fascists.[26]

Others even went one step further in the direction of these fundamentalist or populist tendencies. A good example is the pamphlet *Der Arbeiter und die Bildende Kunst* ("The Worker and Pictorial Art," 1933), published by the NS association "Kraft durch Freude" ("Strength through Pleasure"), where we read that the chief aim of Nazi policy is "to arouse interest in the workers for the pictorial arts" in order to counteract the corrupting effects of the sale of cheap reproductions for mass consumption in the Wilhelminian era and the Weimar Republic.[27] Artists should be sent into the factories, we read a few pages later, to show workers that painting is also hard work, and, in this way, convince the wage earners of the value of real art.[28] The same attempts were made with regard to farmers. In 1936, for example, the Eifelkreis Mayen (the county of Mayen in the Eifel Mountains) invited a group of painters to live for a year in camaraderie with peasants and agricultural workers. Benefits would accrue to both parties: the farmers would learn how to appreciate painting, and the painters, enraptured by the beauty of agricultural life, would give up painting exclusively for the snobs and aesthetes of the urban centers, who consider art nothing more than a luxury item.[29]

After 1937, however, these apparently "positive" programs demanding more contact with the masses were gradually buried under a gibberish of empty Nazi phraseology. Wolfgang Willrich, for example, in his book *Säuberung des Kunsttempels* ("Cleansing of the Art Temple," 1937), although still adhering to the ideas of people-oriented art and craftsmanship, raves mostly about the natural superiority of the Nordic spirit. Adolf Dresler in *Deutsche Kunst und entartete Kunst* ("German Art and Degenerate Art," 1938) and Georg Schorer in *Deutsche Kunstbetrachtung* ("The German Way of Viewing Art," 1939) take the same position and can hardly say enough about the necessity for the eternal-Germanic in art. With the outbreak of World War II, the emphasis on the "heroic" pushed the earlier concepts of community or socialist cooperative even further into the background. It is not surprising, therefore, to find Hermann Stenzel in 1943 equating the "Nordic concept of destiny" with the "militant" and postulating the "myth of the heroic" as the highest goal for all consciously German painting.[30] Wilhelm Westecker, in his book *Krieg und Kunst* ("War and Art," 1944), even called on his

countrymen to celebrate the turmoil of the battlefield as a "grandiose, spectacular drama."[31] For this "Great German War of Liberation," as it was officially called, represented for the Nazis an ideal symbiosis of all earlier concepts: from the idea of a volkish union, the cult of the Führer, and the heroic heights of Wagner's *Götterdämmerung* ("Twilight of the Gods") to Nietzsche's outline of the "tragic-dangerous" life.[32]

II

But these slogans and phrases, although illuminating for the Nazi ideology, say little about the reality of fascist painting. The essential questions remain: What was portrayed? Who viewed this painting? And who bought this art? To avoid false generalizations in these areas, it is again necessary to view matters in chronological order. Shortly after the Nazis were handed the reigns to the government, there existed, despite many attempts at unifying the cultural sphere, a certain lack of direction. Next to the representatives of the old volkish movement (Ludwig Fahrenkrog, Franz Stassen, Fidus) and the painters of the right wing of the New Objectivity (Werner Peiner, Georg Schrimpf, Alexander Kanoldt), there were even a few expressionists claiming to be the heirs to a genuine German art. The more ecstatic faction of the latter was supported by Goebbels, while Rosenberg prompted the cause of the volkish-oriented groups. These conflicts, however, were abruptly terminated by Hitler himself during the 1934 Nazi Party Rally. On this occasion, he lashed out against both the expressionist enthusiasts and the backward romanticists in deciding the issue with the Solomonic verdict: "To be German means to be clear!" To avoid taking sides in this matter, Hitler simply asserted his function as "leader" and proclaimed his own taste as the official cultural policy. And in the realm of painting, Hitler preferred the "realistic" genre painting of the 19th century represented by such artist as Eduard Grützner and Franz von Defregger;[33] in other words, he demanded not an overthrow, but rather a strengthening of the traditional in art. This led necessarily to a cultural victory for the mediocre, third-rate artists over the more committed factions which had viewed national "socialism" as more than a mere question of power. The consequences of this decision were evident in painting as well as in the other arts as early as 1934; the opportunists, the "fellow travelers," and the untalented artists, the painters from the provinces and the villages, the Schmidt-Lausitzes and the people from Braunau had triumphed over the volkish idealists within the Nazi movement. In literature, the Führer's policy resulted in a resurrection of the traditional peasant, war, and family novels. In painting, this change of direction led to a conspicuous restoration of the old genre painting,[34] which meant the promotion of the same type of painting which had been dominant since the 17th century: namely, landscapes, portrait paintings, group scenes, animal studies, and still lifes. In 1934, the masses would have rejected all volkish, heroic, and Nordic motifs in painting, or, for that matter, the so-called "Thing" plays as something alien or elitist. The old

Richard Schwarzkopf, *German Passion,* plate 4 (1936). Reprinted from *Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung* (Munich, 1937), pl. 47.

genre painting, however, was received with the same enthusiasm as the novels of Ludwig Ganghofer, Hermann Löns, Bruno Brehm, or Werner Beumelburg. It proved to be truly "popular" and sold like wildfire.[35] And thus, even in this area, Hitler had the overwhelming majority of the people completely on his side.

Perhaps the most convincing evidence for the popularity of this type of painting is provided by the huge success of the "First Great German Art Exhibition," which took place in Munich in 1937. Billed as a representative display of the accomplishments of National Socialist art, this exhibition provided the necessary counterpoint to the monster show "Degenerate Art." The paintings which dominated at the Munich exhibition, comprising approximately forty percent of the total, were pastoral landscapes, i.e., an outmoded variety of painting which depicted a pre-industrial, "healthy" world unblemished by ugly telephone wires, railroad tracks, and factories. Portraits and country scenes (35%) and animal pictures (10%) were quantitatively the next largest genres represented. Only 5% of the paintings dealt with a strictly Nazi theme such as SA pictures or portraits of leading functionaries. The chief emphasis, therefore, lay heavily on depictions of the "simple life," on idyllic and uncomplicated genre studies: in other words, on a type of painting which flourished in 19th-century Germany and which we still encounter today in many frameshops and art supply stores. Thus, it is hardly surprising that the works of Angelo Jank, Fritz Mackensen, Otto Modersohn, Leo Samberger, Rudolf Schramm-Zittau, Raffael Schuster-Woldan, and Heinrich von Zügel, all of whom depended on motifs from the turn of the century, were not considered old-fashioned by the audiences of the late 1930s at the "Great German Art Exhibitions." Indeed, anyone unfamiliar with these painters could have easily mistaken them for Nazi artists. This is especially true with respect to motifs dealing with peasant life, which comprised about 20% of the total in 1937. But the opposite is equally evident. The works of painters like Adolf Wissel, Oskar Martin-Amorbach, Carl Baum, Sepp Hilz, Thomas Baumgartner, or Hermann Tiebert could just as well have been painted by Ernst Haider, Hans Thoma, Fritz Boehle, Albin Egger-Lienz, or Johann Cissarz over thirty or forty years earlier. More significant perhaps is the fact that the world of the factory was represented by a meager two percent; this insured that there were no conflicts with the exhibition's leitmotif of a "reassertion of the primeval forces of the German spirit."[36]

The hypocrisy evident in this glorification of the "simple life" became increasingly apparent in the following years. As the Nazi functionaries began to secure their hegemony over the population, their penchant towards luxury became more obvious—a phenomenon described by Berthold Hinz as the "retreat of the fascist elite from the masses" and the growing indulgence in the ostentatious "Makart-spirit."[37] The most blatant illustration of this trend is the growing preference for female nudes, i.e., pictures resembling in many respects the so-called salon painting of the late 19th century.[38] Again, we encounter the dramatic rise of a "new class" which experiences a parvenu-like satisfaction in allowing its prized art treasures to be exhibited publicly. While at the beginning of the movement the

Nazis spoke constantly about the "property of the people," the paintings of the most famous National Socialist artists—when appearing as illustrations in books or journals—now began to include captions containing such phrases as "From the Private Collection of the Führer" or "Courtesy of Commander-in-Chief Göring." This insatiable greed for property became even crasser after the outbreak of the war. Almost all of the Nazi VIPs attempted unabashedly to profit from the art treasures confiscated from occupied countries; even the products of the despised "degenerate art" were appropriated for their own private palaces.[39] The national "socialism" that so many of the older volkish idealists had believed in was now completely exposed as a farce.

III

How did the Germans respond to these paintings and the cultural polices of the Nazis after 1945? Immediately after the war, a rather embarrassing silence prevailed, since most art critics had been closely associated with various NS organizations. It became a taboo to discuss these works publicly; indeed, these paintings were treated as if they did not belong to the realm of art or culture at all. In the rare cases when critics did express their opinions, the products of Nazi culture were depicted as a ridiculous and temporary hindrance to the unremitting development of Western modernist, i.e., nonrepresentational, art. A return to normalcy in painting meant, therefore, a promotion of what the Nazis considered "degenerate art." Consequently, all forms of abstract painting became the vogue of the day.

The first significant and well-documented depiction of the National Socialist "dictatorship in art" appeared in 1949. In accordance with Western concepts of freedom, Paul Ortwin Rave proclaimed here that all "true" art was elitist in character, thereby reevaluating and promoting precisely those artists and movements which the Nazis had previously denounced. He rejected the Nazi slogan "art for the people" as pure foolishness. For Rave, as for most middle-class liberals, art is an occupation of the elite, by the elite, and for the elite. "The isolated artist," he writes, "creates works which speak only to other isolated individuals."[40] In the early 1950s, such conceptions became an increasingly important part of the phraseology of the cold war in the cultural sphere. In accordance with the popular concept of totalitarianism, the Communists and the Nazis, red and brown, were equated, and any form of state "interference" with cultural activities was viewed as dictatorial. In this manner, one could reject both NS art and socialist realism while hailing the nonrepresentational painting of a Kandinsky or a Mondrian as the most significant accomplishment of 20th-century painting. This is exactly the method used by Werner Haftmann in his book *Malerei im 20. Jahrhundert* ("Painting in the 20th Century," 1954), the West German bible of abstract painting. Of the more than five hundred pages on the first five decades of this century, Haftmann devotes only two to NS paintings.[41] Like Rave, he reaffirms the necessity of the isolated genius and rejects outright any considerations of immediate utility. Ac-

Werner Peiner, *German Soil* (1938). Reprinted from Berthold Hinz, *Die Malerei im deutschen Faschismus* (Munich, 1974), pl. 25.

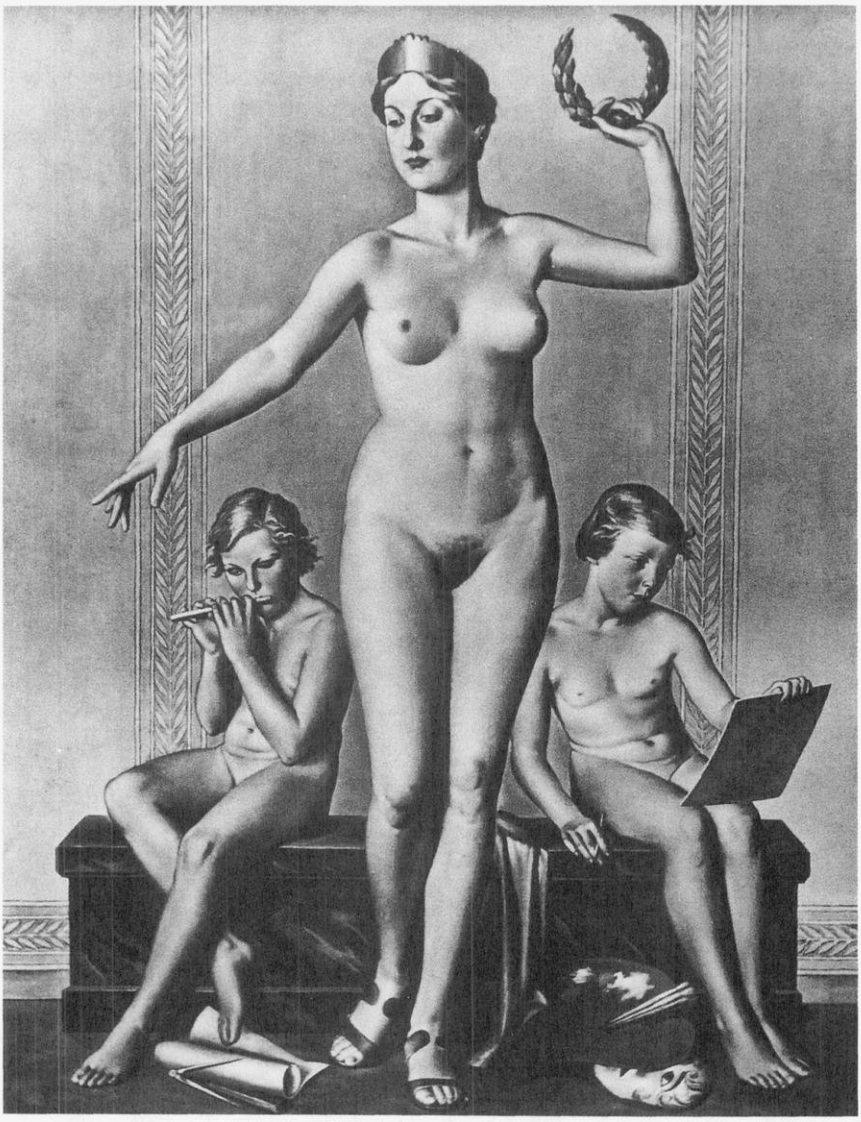
cording to Haftmann, to compromise one's genius for the sake of the masses, or even to attempt to educate the people in the aesthetic pleasures of "fine" art, necessarily leads to a return to the so-called "cliché realism" of the 19th century. Thus, he makes no effort to distinguish between Nazi art and socialist realism. For Haftmann, the "official style of art in all totalitarian states" is "always the same."[42] Similar thoughts can be found in Joseph Wulf's documentary study *Die Bildenden Künste im Dritten Reich* ("The Pictorial Arts in the Third Reich," 1963) and in Paul Vogt's *Geschichte der deutschen Malerei im 20. Jahrhundert* ("History of German Painting in the 20th Century," 1972). Both bemoan the lack of aesthetic quality and originality in Nazi painting while regurgitating the banal theory that "brown equals red," thereby degrading without qualification any policy which attempts to make even high culture accessible to the masses.

However, as early as the 1960s, other studies examined the phenomenon of Nazi painting in a much broader historical and sociopolitical context. The first book in this regard was Hermann Glaser's *Spießer-Ideologie* ("Philistine Ideology," 1964), which begins with the premise that National Socialist aesthetics represented not a break with tradition, but rather the continuation of a long German heritage. Glaser maintains that Nazi art was rooted in the mentality of the petit bourgeoisie, whose taste he describes with such phrases as "mediocre and provincial, fanatic and brutal, narrow-minded and sentimental," as well with the more complimentary terms "refined and introspective." From this perspective, Ziegler and Hitler are merely intensified versions of Böcklin and Wilhelm II. Glaser sees, therefore, the most important manifestations of Nazi painting in beer mysticism, Philistine romanticism, unsophisticated *Gartenlaube* literature, neurotic idylls,

blood and earth bombast, and national kitsch, all of which serve to raise a facade behind which there are no genuine feelings.[43]

While this kind of interpretation remains largely in the realm of intellectual history, "New Left" studies of the early 1970s demonstrate a clear tendency towards a materialist analysis of Nazi phenomena. Good examples are Berthold Hinz's *Die Malerei im deutschen Faschismus* ("Painting in Fascist Germany," 1974) and the controversial exhibit *Kunst im 3. Reich: Dokumente der Unterwerfung* ("Art in the Third Reich: Documents of Oppression"), which was shown in several West German cities during the winter of 1974–75. Hinz interprets NS art socioeconomically as the expression of a stage of intensified exploitation, that is, of an era of declining real wages and rising profits, in which even art was called

Oskar Martin Amorbach, *Harvest* (1938). Reprinted from Berthold Hinz, *Die Malerei im deutschen Faschismus* (Munich, 1974), pl. 39.



Adolf Ziegler, *Goddess of Art* (1938). Reprinted from *Was sie lieben: Salonmalerei im 19. Jahrhundert* (Cologne, 1969), pl. 7.

upon to legitimize the oppression by the ruling class. He thereby replaces the cold warriors' "brown-equals-red" theory with the thesis "brown equals bourgeois." In his opinion, it is not fascist and socialist art which should be equated, but rather fascist and liberal art, since both merely represent interchangeable expressions of "bourgeois hegemony." Like Glaser, therefore, Hinz views NS art as a mere con-

tinuation of the established heritage, as the expression of an unbroken continuity, rather than as a break with the past or a genuine cultural revolution. He asserts, as Max Horkheimer did, that "Anyone who speaks about fascism cannot refrain from talking about capitalism." But for Hinz, this motto carries greater implications than it did for the members of the Frankfurt School. He views painting as well as other forms of Nazi culture as only an episode within the framework of bourgeois propaganda and art production, whose basic tenets rest on a principle of "permanence in change."[44] Or, as Hinz himself stated this proposition in what might be called his "continuity thesis": "The function of the fascists' sham revolution is to delude society into believing that the liberal capitalist epoch has ended—a strategy whose anti-capitalist, anti-bourgeois facade merely permits the reinstitution of the late capitalist phase after the overthrow of fascism."[45]

Not only is this thesis rather debatable, but the question was raised whether the themes contained in Hinz's book should be handled in such a direct manner. For certain critics were afraid that, by exposing the public to even minute doses of Nazi culture, certain less critical segments of the population might identify with the content of these pictures. It was for this very reason that the West German Communist Party, upon learning of the theme of the Frankfurt exhibition in the fall of 1974, reacted strongly against the idea of displaying the tabooed products of NS culture.[46] When it became apparent, however, that the exhibition was intended to present a leftist-oriented, historical documentation of National Socialist art and propaganda, the mainstream bourgeois press quickly joined in the sharp condemnation of this show, although, quite obviously, for different reasons than the Communists. Thus, Wilfried Wieland in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* defamed the exhibition as "inept," since it played upon the psychosis of denazification and, in its zeal for "moralizing" evaluations, failed to focus on the real "artistic" issues.[47] Hinz's book suffered even sharper attacks, especially his thesis concerning the "furtive conspiracy of capitalist and fascist politics," which Joachim Fest, also of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,* labeled as utter nonsense.[48]

Though discussion of such issues continued with little indication of agreement until the late 1970s, it is obvious that one of the main results of these debates was an increased amount of public attention on the formally tabooed Nazi art. And although these debates have diminished, it is still important to face the central questions which were posed by the phenomenon of NS culture. Above all, we must consider a question which both conservatives and leftists have deftly sidestepped—namely, the reason for the astonishing success, the "overwhelming effectiveness" of this type of art. How was it possible that a highly industrialized and highly educated nation like Germany could have been taken in by such a crude maneuver? Can this be explained merely by a thesis based on the continuity of the Philistine, the petit bourgeois, or the capitalist mentality? After all, the petit bourgeois and capitalist classes were present in other countries as well. Moreover, it was not only the German petit bourgeoisie that allowed itself to be deceived by Nazi slogans, but also large sectors of other classes and segments of society. We

should, therefore, formulate the question more concretely: How could Nazi art and the entire realm of Nazi ideology experience such a tremendous success in *Germany* in the years after 1933?

It is obviously not easy to give a simple answer to this question. With regard to Nazi painting, however, we may say that the following factors must be taken into consideration. Let us begin by making a few general observations, before handling problems which are relevant to Germany alone. It can easily be established that the so-called modernist movements, that is, expressionism, futurism, cubism, and dadaism, were in decline in all Western countries after 1925, and that they were gradually being replaced by new tendencies such as "new realism" or "new objectivity." This development was not restricted to the Soviet Union or Nazi Germany. There was also a general feeling in countries such as France, England, and the US that the aforementioned movements, which had their origins in a bourgeois anti-bourgeois revolt, were beginning to pass into a mannerism of the abstract, and were thereby becoming less interesting. Thus, during the second half of the 1920s, many socially concerned artists, whether they belonged to the left, the right, or the liberal center, moved closer and closer to a critical—or, at least, a new—"realism" characterized by the use of documentation, folklore, and social analysis as well as by traditional representational elements. In this respect, the Nazis were not different from many other groups of this era. They were more successful, however, in utilizing this turn towards realism for consciously propagandistic purposes and, therefore, were able to lure into their camp a considerable number of young idealists who naively viewed the NS ideology as something progressive.

Hence, the question of a "new realism" in the painting of the late 1920s is more complex than some critics have previously assumed. To brand this "new realism" as "reactionary," as the proponents of the totalitarianism theory did, is hardly justified any longer. It would be equally snobbish to denigrate it, as Theodor W. Adorno did, with the label "Hotel art." For if this "realistic" painting had really been as reactionary as certain critics have maintained, then it would never have been condemned so sharply during the period of restoration after 1945. In fact, many postwar critics recognized that this sort of art contained elements which appealed to large segments of society, and attempted to degrade it for this very reason. For every type of "realism," even an affirmative one, has the latent potential of turning from an acceptance of society into a critique of society.[49] This line of reasoning, however, could not be so bluntly expressed. Most critics chose to defame all types of realism by using derogatory criteria like "unoriginal," "bourgeois," "19th-century," i.e., "aesthetically old-fashioned," since such terms express the most deadly of all verdicts for a fashion- and commodity-oriented mentality.

The consequence of this verdict was a conscious resurrection of the modernist movement which had apparently slackened some thirty years earlier. By utilizing the cold war formula "brown equals red," thereby legitimizing the modernist/elitist notion of total abstractness, postwar critics not only eliminated the danger of "realism," but also degraded and reduced any form of socialism to the level of Nazism.

Both strategies were extremely effective and led—with the help of journals such as *Monat* and *Das Kunstwerk*—to a complete reversal in regard to former modernist movements. The very modernists who had been considered revolutionary (or, at least, anti-bourgeois), in the early 1920s were now used as aesthetic camouflage to justify the restoration of the status quo. Nazi painting was opposed and replaced by a type of nonrepresentational art whose principles displayed a complete neglect of the masses, a disregard for portraying real objects, and a reliance on formal aesthetic criteria—a type of painting euphemistically labeled as "abstract" in art history books. The 1950s were especially important for promoting this dictatorship of the restored modernists, and many art critics even today harbor fond memories of the golden age of stripes, circles, and lines. It was only with the coming of the 1960s that realism made new inroads in the forms of Pop Art and Photorealism, although these movements were soon corrupted by a turn to the formalistic, effectively stifling any potential tendency towards social criticism.[50]

This new wave of realism, however, began to arouse interest in older forms of realism: first, in new objectivity, then, in the salon painting of the Bismark era,[51] and, finally, in Nazi realism. The success of almost all of these "realism" exhibits took the West German snobs of abstract art by surprise.[52] Other segments of society, though, were simply fascinated by the rediscovery of "realism." For this type of painting appealed to the majority of the people more than the monotonous nonrepresentationalism which critics had tried to pass off as the only genuine modern art. In "realism," the public found communication, stimulation for thought, and visual satisfaction. And it is the very success of such exhibitions which serves as an indirect proof that, despite frequent attempts, "realism" cannot be done away with so easily. In viewing these paintings, many had the feeling that much more is lost by abstracting from the "real" reality than by the more traditional techniques of trying to capture reality. Hence, those who continued to defend the stripes, circles, and lines in the face of such reactions, and who derided the realism of Nazi painting, appeared in the eyes of the broad public not as responsible art critics but, rather, as esoteric aesthetes. For although propagators of modernism have repeatedly and relentlessly sought to convince the public of the "aesthetic" superiority of nonrepresentational art, people continue to prefer realistic painting. They demand something descriptive, something positive, something that relates to them. It was not by accident that the Nazis experienced such a huge success with their art policies, for they had promoted precisely those popular realistic elements which the modernistic art theoreticians had rejected. Indeed, what is the use of art produced in an intellectual ghetto by isolated artists who merely express their discontent with the increasing social alienation and isolate themselves even more from the rest of society by withdrawing into the realm of nonrepresentationalism? To counteract the Nazis' demand for a mass-oriented culture with an elitist concept of art is not an alternative, but sheer arrogance.

We should be careful, however, not to confuse the issue by posing a false opposition such as Nazi art vs. nonrepresentational art. Even though we have spo-

Bernhard Dörries, *Young Woman* (1935). Reprinted from Berthold Hinz, *Die Malerei im deutschen Faschismus* (Munich, 1974), pl. 59.

ken of a general descriptive nature with respect to Nazi painting, we should not conclude that each and every brand of "realism" has the same descriptive quality and is, therefore, of equal value. There are critical types of descriptiveness and there are affirmative or positive ones. Nazi realism had no desire and no intention to be a critical one. It wanted, rather, to depict ideals, to offer elevating values, to lend an air of significance to real life. And who would be so narrow-minded as to condemn all such endeavors? The decisive question to be asked in this regard is only that of how "positive" and how "mass-oriented" these ideals actually were. Were these notions really based on positive values, or were the notions of solidarity, altruism, and communal spirit expressed in NS painting only used as a camouflage for a basically inhuman ideology? The answer to this question is a difficult one. For Nazism, in contrast to communism, was not a tightly organized and coherent ideology, but allowed—because of its highly irrational character—for many contradictions. In other words, the question we just posed cannot be answered with a simple "yes" or "no." It must be answered in both a positive *and* a negative manner.

Granted, there is an undeniable, almost bestial inhumanity in Nazi ideology, but there is also an undeniable, if misguided and even blind, idealism in it—and Ernst Bloch belonged to the first to admit this. In short, the ideological strategy of the German fascists would never have met with such a success—to return to the theme of the "overwhelming effectiveness" of Nazi art—had they only preached the ideas of war, annihilation of entire nations, and racial purity. Their success can only be understood through a consideration of "positive" elements of Nazi ideology: namely, the endeavor to achieve a mass popularity, the emphasis on realism and content, and the promise of a new socialism. These factors serve to clarify both the fascination and the danger of Nazi ideology. For only by propagating and co-opting the slogans of the Social Democrats and the Communists were the Nazis able to increase their own popularity between 1929 and 1933, something they could have never accomplished with a program based solely on anti-Semitism and militarism. Aside from the obvious sinister elements, therefore, the specific attraction of Nazi art, including Nazi painting, is to be found in the corrupted ideals of a worker's culture (Robert Ley) or a culture based on a real community of the people, a "Volksgenossenschaft." It is, therefore, no wonder that we find among Nazi artists not only narrow-minded opportunists but also young idealists and, in the ranks of the SA and the so-called Strasser group,[53] even socialists who, at the beginning of the movement, felt they were participating in a genuine "revolution." Like the communists, they sought to change the world in a fundamental manner, to eliminate capitalism, and to erect a genuine people's republic in which true equality would reign and everyone would work for the good of the whole society. For this reason, a man like Bertolt Brecht repeatedly called German fascism a phenomenon which can only be understood as a degraded and depraved "socialism."

Viewed in this manner, Nazism was a double tragedy. First, for those idealists who, after 1933, quickly recognized that the National Socialists had no intention of doing away with the competitive free-enterprise system and that, therefore,

Ferdinand Staeger, *We Are the Work Soldiers* (1938). Reprinted from Jost Hermand, *Old Dreams of a New Reich: Volkish Utopias and National Socialism* (Bloomington, Ind., 1992), 218.

the same class would remain firmly in control. And second, because fascism made it so easy for the same class, after 1945, to defame the corrupted concepts of community spirit, people's art, and realism by branding them as fascist or as an expression of the "mob"—and, thereby, halting any further debate on these matters until the early 1960s.

Translated by Robert C. Holub

Notes

1 Cf. Hildegard Brenner, *Die Kunstpolitik des Nationalsozialismus* (Reinbek, 1963), 22ff.
2 *Die Bildenden Künste im Dritten Reich*, ed. Joseph Wulf (Gütersloh, 1963), 50ff.
3 Ibid., 309.
4 Cf. Richard Hiepe, *Gewissen und Gestaltung: Deutsche Kunst im Widerstand* (Frankfurt, 1960).
5 Cf. Franz Roh, *"Entartete" Kunst* (Hannover, 1962), 68ff.
6 Alfred Rosenberg, *Der Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts*, 55th ed. (Munich, 1935), 68ff.
7 Kurt Karl Eberlein, *Was ist Deutsch in der Deutschen Kunst?* (Leipzig, 1934), 3, 11.
8 Ibid., 19ff.
9 Ibid., 4, 51.
10 Ibid., 33.
11 Quoted in Brenner, *Die Kunstpolitik*, 202.
12 Quoted in Wulf, *Die Bildenden Künste*, 322.
13 Wolfgang Willrich, *Säuberung des Kunsttempels* (Munich, 1937), 39f.
14 Adolf Dresler, *Deutsche Kunst und entartete Kunst* (Munich, 1938), 3f.
15 Ibid., 11, 30, 36, 42.
16 Cf. Roh, *"Entartete" Kunst*, 56.
17 For the prehistory of these ideas, see my articles "Germania germanicissima" and "Meister Fidus: Vom Jugendstil-Hippie zum Germanenschwärmer," in Jost Hermand, *Der Schein des schönen Lebens: Studien zur Jahrhundertwende* (Frankfurt, 1972), 39-54, 55-127.
18 Quoted in Brenner, *Die Kunstpolitik*, 179.
19 Quoted in Wulf, *Die Bildenden Künste*, 228.
20 Cf. ibid., 125.
21 Quoted in Brenner, *Die Kunstpolitik*, 189.
22 Cf. Paul Ortwin Rave, *Kunstdiktatur im Dritten Reich* (Hamburg, 1949), 12ff. and Berthold Hinz, *Die Malerei im deutschen Faschismus* (Munich, 1974), 18ff.
23 For the inflationary use of terms such as "gothic" and "romantic," cf. Jost Hermand, *Literaturwissenschaft und Kunstwissenschaft: Methodische Wechselbeziehungen seit 1900*, 2d ed. (Stuttgart, 1971), 34ff.
24 Robert Böttcher, *Kunst und Kunsterziehung im neuen Reich* (Breslau, 1933), 15.
25 Ibid., 107.
26 Eberlein, *Was ist Deutsch?* 50, 52.
27 *Der Arbeiter und die Bildende Kunst* (n.p., 1935), 6.
28 Ibid., 27.
29 *NS-Gemeinschaftswerk Kunst und Künstler*, ed. Gustav Simon (Mayen, 1936), 17.
30 Hermann Stenzel, *Die Welt der deutschen Kunst* (Munich, 1943), 259, 282.
31 Wilhelm Westecker, *Krieg und Kunst: Das Erlebnis des Weltkrieges und des Großdeutschen Freiheitskrieges* (Vienna, 1944), 7.
32 Ibid., 6. See, in regard to depictions of the war, also my article "Heroic Delusions: German Artists in the Service of Imperialism," in *1914/1939: German Reflections of the Two World Wars*, eds. Reinhold Grimm and Jost Hermand (Madison, 1992), 91–115.
33 Cf. George L. Mosse, "Hitler's Taste," in his *The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany, from the Napoleonic Wars through the Third Reich* (New York, 1975), 183–206.
34 Cf. Hinz, *Die Malerei*, 61ff.
35 Cf. Brenner, *Die Kulturpolitik*, 113, and the chapter "'Schönheit' in Kunst und Alltag des Dritten Reichs," in my *Der alte Traum vom neuen Reich: Völkische Utopien und Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt, 1988), 267–78.
36 Cf. Dieter Bartetzko, Stefan Glossman, and Gabriele Voigtländer-Tetzner, "Die Darstellung des Bauern," in *Kunst im 3. Reich*, ed. Frankfurter Kunstverein (Frankfurt, 1974), 144–61, and Jost Hermand, "The Agrarian Ideology: Fascism as Utopia and Hypocrisy," *University of Dayton Review* 12 (Spring 1976): 93–98.
37 Hinz, *Die Malerei*, 127.
38 Cf. Christian Groß and Uwe Großmann, "Die Darstellung der Frau," in *Kunst im 3. Reich*, 182–93.

39 Cf. Brenner, *Die Kulturpolitik,* 142ff.
40 Rave, *Kunstdiktatur,* 5f. In regard to the following, see also my article "Neuordnung oder Restauration? Zur Beurteilung der 'faschistischen Kunstdiktatur' in der unmittelbaren Nachkriegszeit," *Kritische Berichte* 12.1 (1984): 78–83, and 12.2 (1984): 69–79.
41 Werner Haftmann, *Malerei im 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 1954), 424f.
42 Ibid., 421, 425.
43 Hermann Glaser, *Spießer-Ideologie* (Freiburg, 1964), 11, 33, 281.
44 Hinz, *Die Malerei,* 1, 11, 16.
45 Hinz, "Malerei des deutschen Faschismus," in *Kunst im 3. Reich,* 122.
46 Cf. Peter Maiwald, "Dagegen, daß der Faschismus sich äußern darf," *Deutsche Volkszeitung* (28 November 1974).
47 Wilfried Wieland, "Wer hat Angst vor Nazi-Kunst?" *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (27 October 1974).
48 Joachim Fest, "Kunst dem Volke—Kunst des Volkes," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (16 November 1974).
49 Cf. *Realismustheorien in Literatur, Politik, Musik und Malerei,* ed. Reinhold Grimm and Jost Hermand (Stuttgart, 1975), 7ff.
50 Cf. Jost Hermand, "Die 'wirkliche' Wirklichkeit: Zum Realismus-Streit in der westlichen Kunstkritik," in ibid., 118–37.
51 Cf. my article "Der lebende Leichnam: Zur Neubewertung der sogenannten Salonmalerei," *Kritische Berichte* 2 (1974): 106–19.
52 As to the reactions by the public, cf. *Ästhetik und Kommunikation* 19 (1975): 76ff., and *Reaktionen: Kunst im 3. Reich,* ed. Frankfurter Kunstverein (Frankfurt, 1975).
53 Cf. Reinhard Kühnl, *Die nationalsozialistische Linke 1925–1930* (Meisenheim, 1966).

"Ich habe von einem Esel gelernt": Eisler Pro and Contra Schönberg

MICHAEL GILBERT

I

In a series of conversations with GDR scholar/journalist Hans Bunge, published under the title *Fragen Sie mehr über Brecht* (an allusion to a passage in which Eisler states: "Fragen Sie nicht so viel über Schönberg—Fragen Sie bitte mehr über Brecht!"), composer Hanns Eisler mentions a cantata text which he presumably talked his friend and collaborator Bertolt Brecht into writing on the occasion of Arnold Schönberg's seventy-second birthday in 1947, and for which he, Eisler, evidently prepared at least a few musical sketches.[1] Eisler had previously referred to this intriguing birthday present in a brief article "Brecht und die Musik" (written for a special issue of the journal *Sinn und Form* in 1957), in which the story behind the cantata is explained.[2] In the article, Eisler notes that the text was based on Schönberg's own description of an incident in which he was able to climb a steep grade in spite of heart condition by emulating the serpentine manner in which a donkey made it to the top. As related by Eisler, the end of Schönberg's story went as follows:

> Da habe ich ihm [dem Esel] das nachgemacht, und so kann ich sagen: ich habe von einem Esel gelernt.

Interestingly, this anecdote reportedly dates from the first occasion on which Eisler introduced his friend Brecht to Schönberg, something which made Eisler very nervous, given Brecht's reputation for "behaving badly" (Eisler's words). In any case, the cantata title "Ich habe von einem Esel gelernt" is clearly intended as a provocatively humorous comment on Eisler's difficult but close relationship with Schönberg and his music.

In his conversations with Bunge, Eisler also emphasizes the fact that the text had never been located again (that is, as of the late 1950s and early 1960s, when Bunge conducted the interviews) though the composer was convinced that Schönberg's widow could find it if she only looked hard enough. In any event, since that time the birthday cantata has not been found—neither the text nor the musical sketches; Joachim Lucchesi and Ronald Shull's recent exhaustive documentation volume *Musik bei Brecht* (1988) makes no reference to it at all.[3] But whether the cantata ever turns up or not, its title—"I learned from an ass"—remains and serves

to represent the essential two-sidedness of Hanns Eisler's relationship with his teacher/mentor Arnold Schönberg, the point being that Eisler *did* learn from Schönberg. Indeed, he learned a great deal and seldom failed to acknowledge the enormous debt of gratitude he owed to his former teacher both musically and personally, even if he regarded Schönberg politically and ideologically to be an *Esel.*

Before addressing Eisler's association with Schönberg and its aftermath, some preliminary theoretical consideration should be given to the matter of "mediation between high and low culture" specifically in reference to the art of music. Musical culture represents a particularly significant example of this issue, for in no other (traditional) art form has the modern split between high and low culture assumed such extreme proportions, and created such devisiveness among producers and consumers of culture, as in the case of music. Moreover, this state of affairs has everything to do with the difficulty Eisler experienced in coming to terms with both the musical-artistic and ideological stance of his teacher Schönberg; indeed, this is what eventually caused Eisler to seek a very different path from that of his mentor, one which, in many respects, represents an attempt at mediation. The various dimensions of that attempt and the question of how successful Eisler was in his efforts to mediate or reconcile the so-called "new music" and workers' culture, the bourgeois avant-garde and socialist *Volkstümlichkeit,* constitutes the core of the following discussion.

First, however, the thesis stated above merits elaboration and closer examination: Why is music the example *par excellence* of the high/low culture phenomenon? One key aspect of this is the fact that even before the advent of what, properly speaking, constitutes musical modernity—i.e., the dissolution of traditional form, abandonment of traditional principles of harmony and tonality, etc.—in fact, beginning as early as the mid-19th century, the art of music, especially in the German tradition, comes to be celebrated by many for its presumed "lack of content" *(Inhaltslosigkeit).* This is a perspective which found its best-known defender in the Viennese music critic Eduard Hanslick (in particular, with his book *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* [*"On the Musically Beautiful,"* 1854]). Without delving into the often overstated absolute vs. programmatic music debate of the later 19th century, we may say that the issue pertinent to the emergent high/low culture split is that the ideological underpinnings of musical modernity are already contained in this perception of music as the quintessentially autonomous art form, one essentially disinterested regarding reality and existing in a world of its own as "absolute sounding form." The notions of Hanslick and others in his camp were subsequently institutionalized and/or radicalized (aesthetically speaking) in the early 20th century, yielding a doctrine of esoteric, avant-garde, high-cultural formal experimentation. By the 1920s, this segment of musical culture had come to be referred to generally as "die neue Musik," and Arnold Schönberg and his so-called "New Viennese School"—consisting primarily of himself and his pupils Alban Berg, Anton von Webern, *and* Hanns Eisler (frequently overlooked in this context because of his later conflict with Schönberg)—counted themselves among its

most prominent and pioneering representatives. In considering the outlook of the musical avant-garde of that time, it is intriguing to note that, in defending their modernist agenda, certain key figures in the *pictorial* arts—for example, painter Wassily Kandinsky—appeal in their writings to music as the quintessentially modern medium of artistic expression, one which by its very nature is (presumably) "abstract" and, at least in the minds of those in the tradition of Hanslick, consists of little or nothing more than its own virtually infinite permutations of pitch, rhythm, and timbre: what one could call "sound for sound's sake."

While this factor alone cannot account for the extreme gap between high and low musical culture which manifests itself even before the end of World War I, the modernist sensibilities of the elite musical-cultural avant-garde of the time, drawing on the *Autonomieästhetik* of the preceding era, certainly help to explain why Schönberg, as of 1930, could legitimately claim that he no longer had a public at all: "called upon to say something about my public, I have to confess: I do not believe I have one."[4] Eisler, similarly, could legitimately state that modern music (that is, "die neue Musik") was an art that "nobody wanted." In his words, "hardly any other form of art leads the phantom existence that modern music does. . . . of all the arts, it is *music* which most emphatically expresses the dissolution of bourgeois culture."[5]

Eisler's concern about this "dying patient" (he likens modern art music to a death rattle) centered around his perception of a fundamental loss of "community" *(Gemeinschaft)* and the extreme isolation of serious music: "Der Musiker, der seine Kunst liebt und dem sie zwingendstes Bedürfnis ist, wird mit Entsetzen die völlige Isoliertheit seiner Kunst erkennen."[6] And while Eisler approached this matter of music's concrete social function (i.e., the apparent loss of such a function) from the basis of his ever-deepening political convictions as a Marxist, composers and critics from across the political spectrum (except for those like Schönberg, who didn't seem terribly concerned about the lack of an audience) engaged in a debate about a genuine crisis in the art of music that fills the musical journals of the Weimar years and continues on into the post-World War II era. It was this situation that led composer Ernst Křenek, for example, to remark that music in the modern era had lost its "intrinsic value," by which he meant "its ability to appear as an obviously necessary element of human life, something which the public demands and which is offered spontaneously"[7]; while Paul Hindemith, a leading figure of the so-called *Gemeinschaftsmusik* movement, observed in the journal *Melos* in 1929: "Der Musiker hat es heute schwer. Schwerer vielleicht als zu irgend einer anderen Zeit. Was uns alle angeht ist dies: wie und was müssen wir schreiben, um ein größeres neues Publikum zu bekommen; und wo ist dieses Publikum?"[8] Indeed, virtually every composer working from that point on, assuming that he/she was interested in any sort of more broadly based "musical community," has been confronted with this extreme high/low culture split in the realm of musical culture, and has engaged in various attempts at mediation, either for the sake of survival or, in the case of those with a more politicized agenda, for the sake of being able

to contribute something of "intrinsic value" to society (to borrow Křenek's phrase).

In summarizing this first consideration with regard to the roots of the extraordinary high/low culture problem in music, it is fair to say that, as great a gap as there may be between high and low literature, or high and low art, the high end of the spectrum in those instances has been assimilated into the bourgeois cultural mainstream to a far greater degree than high modernist music (something which, moreover, appears to be true to only a slightly lesser extent of Western European culture than of American culture). In other words, it is not at all uncommon that the same people who decorate their walls with the art of Picasso or even Jackson Pollock (indeed, whose business spaces are often replete with abstract designs, and housed in the most modern architecture) and who appreciate the writings of Joyce and Kafka, Stevens and Ginsberg, are by and large skeptical of, or even averse to, modern art music. Another aspect of this is the fact that the works of modern music that *have* succeeded in making it into the mainstream concert repertoire (for example, early and "neoclassical" Stravinsky, or Berg's quasi-Romantic Violin Concerto, or the folk-idiom based works of Béla Bartók) are precisely those which are not as far removed from traditional musical values. In comparison, much of what Arnold Schönberg or Anton von Webern wrote in the 1920s is still distinctly too "far out" for many audiences. By the same token, modern art attracts hordes of people to museums and commands exorbitant prices on the art market, while at the same time the programming of so-called "avant-garde" music is in all but academic communities (in which modernism has typically been canonized if not enshrined) or the most advanced centers of culture (Berlin, Paris, New York, etc.) still a serious financial risk for musical ensembles, most of which are already in debt.

Another related dimension of this situation is the fact that musical life in our time has broken down into a multiplicity of subcultures to a degree unprecedented among the arts. With slight exaggeration, one could argue that the defenders or representatives of the high-cultural musical avant-garde may as well be dealing with an entirely different medium than those who perform rock or produce music video, to say nothing of the fabricators of "Muzak"; or one thinks, for example, of the phenomenon of "formatting" in musical broadcasting on radio. In that sense, one can truly no longer speak of music, but only of music*s*, a phenomenon which also reflects the advanced commodification of our culture, specifically, the development and cultivation of different markets for those different musics. The essential point to be emphasized here with respect to "attempts at mediation" is this: in such a cultural-ideological climate, attempts at mediation between high and low culture are inherently difficult, perhaps even impossible; in the context of advanced or radical cultural pluralism, it is very difficult to define any longer what constitutes "intrinsic value" as Křenek spoke of it as late as the 1920s; and, in any case, such attempts at mediation are courageous, requiring a great deal of vision, determination, and (perhaps) idealism. One of the points I wish to make about

Hanns Eisler is precisely this: as worthy as his attempts at mediation often were—Eisler wrote much good music—his greatest legacy may well be the vision he left behind of a new *intrinsically mediated* musical culture that didn't yet and perhaps couldn't yet exist.

I turn now to a second preliminary consideration with regard to the dimensions of the high/low culture situation in music, and, by way of that, to the story of Eisler's association with Schönberg, his subsequent break with him, and his efforts to find some socially productive middle ground between high and low musical culture. Hanns Eisler was born in 1898, the same year as Brecht, into a national-cultural tradition (Viennese/Austrian/German) at a critical moment in its historical development: namely, on the threshold of cultural modernity. The emphasis here is on the phrase "national-cultural tradition," for art music, from the point of view of Austrian/German national-cultural identity (and/or national-cultural ideology) was not merely perceived as high culture, but rather as *highest* culture, the supreme achievement of German intellectual and cultural life and, in the minds of some (young Thomas Mann, for instance) as its very soul or essence. Many factors contribute to this prominence of (high) music in the German tradition; not least of all it has to do with the uniquely difficult and repressed development of modern German civilization, that peculiarly German "Mißverhältnis von Geist und Macht." From the perspective of cultural philosophy and ideology, it is clearly linked as well to the legacy of German Romanticism, extending back at least as far as E. T. A. Hoffmann and culminating in Richard Wagner's reception of Schopenhauer, in which music becomes the supreme art precisely because it is supremely ineffable. As Isolde says in her grand apotheosis at the end of Wagner's *Tristan:* "höchste Lust, unbewußt"—those three words, for better or worse, suggest the sublime (and sublimely irrational) position occupied by music in the German national artistic canon and consciousness. Another way to put it would be to say that the familiar characterization of Germany in the 19th century as "the land of poets and thinkers" ("das Land der Dichter und Denker") is, with all due apologies to Madame de Stäel, essentially misguided; it was above all the land of musicians and composers, where poets and thinkers were preoccupied with music to a degree not found in other European cultures. Indeed, as far as high musical culture in the era of Romantic nationalism is concerned, one could easily speak in terms of a "German century" extending from Beethoven to Mahler.

How does this tie in with Eisler's work with Schönberg and the former's subsequent attempts at mediation? The point is that Eisler was born into a national-cultural tradition in which the very concept of music (specifically, musical high culture) was laden with extraordinary cultural-historical and ideological baggage. Around the turn of the century—one thinks of Thomas Mann, Hofmannsthal, Nietzsche, the phenomenon of Wagnerism, the sheerly monumental "musical-philosophical edifices" *(Gedankengebäude)* of Gustav Mahler and Richard Strauß—high music had become the object of a veritable national-mythological-intellectual cult. It is therefore necessary to keep in perspective that Eisler's break

with Schönberg as of 1926 was not merely a personal act of rebellion by an outspoken and at times impudent pupil, but rather a conscious act of outright sacrilege. Schönberg, after all, in spite of his radical technical innovations, was rooted as deeply as one could possibly have been in that great tradition of German music, and was in that sense truly a conservative if not reactionary figure (something the sophisticated, critically-minded pupil Eisler realized from early on).[9] To Schönberg, a work like Eisler's "Zeitungsausschnitte" (newspaper clippings) of 1925–26 (with which, in the words of Albrecht Betz, Eisler "bid good riddance to the lyricism of the concert hall"[10]), to say nothing of his efforts to reconcile Schönberg's compositional standards with socialist political ideals, represented nothing less than the debasement of art, or, in the parlance of the young, apolitical Thomas Mann (whether Schönberg would actually have spoken in such terms or not), the ultimate corruption of culture by mere "civilization." This, too, was part of the burden with which Eisler was dealing in being an Austrian-German, *and* a socialist, *and* composing in the wake of Schönberg's advance into musical modernism, in his efforts to mediate between high and low musical culture. To reenforce this observation from another angle, one could well argue that mediation between high and low musical culture was easier (that is, intrinsically less of a challenge) for an American composer like George Gershwin (given the more democratic, pluralistic cultural ideal of America and the pervasiveness of indigenous popular traditions such as jazz and spiritual music), or even for an Eastern European composer like Bartók, whose musical identity as a Hungarian national was strongly linked to popular folk tradition. Obviously, such traditions existed in Germany as well, but apart from the fact that they became virtually impossible for Eisler and others to draw on in the wake of National Socialism, Eisler was rooted and educated overwhelmingly in the high cultural tradition, meaning the extraordinary achievements of Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms, Bruckner, Wagner, Mahler, and all of the others: i.e., music as *highest* culture. That represented an additional complication and, in the end, had at least something to do (I suspect) with the relative effectiveness of Eisler's attempts at mediation.

II

The story of Eisler's apprenticeship to Arnold Schönberg is related in several standard sources (most notably, the Eisler biographies of Fritz Hennenberg and Albrecht Betz) and need not be related in detail here. (Another crucial source for this are Eisler's many documented conversations; he liked to talk.) It should therefore suffice to highlight the most essential chapters in this story vis-à-vis Eisler's eventual attempt to mediate between high and low musical culture.

By the time Eisler came to Schönberg as a pupil at the New Viennese Conservatory in 1919 on a tuition-free basis (a matter which from the outset complicated things emotionally for Eisler in dealing with Schönberg), Eisler had already developed a keen interest in socialism, partly for personal reasons (his mother had

a working-class background). He began working with workers' choruses that same year and taught at the Verein für volkstümliche Musikpflege, a kind of musical *Volksschule* for working-class people.[11] In general, from early on, Eisler had a tendency to be very outspoken (also quite witty) and politically inclined. He also had a serious critical interest in literature (his early poetic sources were writers such as Klabund, Morgenstern, Trakl, and even Rilke) and composed an antiwar oratorio ("Gegen den Krieg") already during his school days, one reflecting his pacifist inclinations. In addition, as of the time he entered the conservatory, his older brother and sister (Gerhart and Elfriede, the later Ruth Fischer) had already embarked on their long, problematic careers as professional socialist revolutionaries; the tendency toward political radicalism clearly ran in the family. Thus, without citing further evidence, given Schönberg's emphatic political conservatism, it is clear that the Eisler-Schönberg connection was from the very outset a *Spannungsverhältnis.*

It is also noteworthy that Eisler's apprenticeship with Schönberg dates from precisely that point in Schönberg's career at which he embarked on the twelve-tone (dodecaphonic) method of composition (ca. 1922–23, beginning with the op. 24 Serenade), a new, daring, untried proposition—and in the end, Eisler's skepticism about the potential of this latest musical experiment of the bourgeois avant-garde was among the things that led Schönberg to feel so betrayed when they had their great falling-out in 1926. At the same time, this strong sense of personal betrayal on Schönberg's part cannot be understood without reference to the fact that their personal relationship was fairly close and rather father/son-like in nature. Consequently, it is not surprising that, later in his life, Eisler humbly acknowledged how Schönberg had reacted with such "generosity" at the time of their break, in response to his own "ungrateful, rebellious, irritable, crude, and insulting" behavior (Eisler's own words).

Examining the Eisler-Schönberg connection from a more positive angle, Eisler clearly had in Schönberg a gifted and very strict teacher with the highest technical standards. In reflecting on this in the latter years of his life, Eisler wrote:

> Das Hauptsächliche, was ich Schönberg verdanke, ist, ich glaube, ein richtiges Verständnis der musikalischen Tradition der Klassiker. Ich kann sagen, daß ich überhaupt erst dort musikalisches Verständnis und Denken gelernt habe. . . . Dann lernte ich bei Schönberg etwas, was heute gar nicht mehr richtig verstanden wird: Redlichkeit in der Musik, Verantwortlichkeit . . . und das Fehlen von jeder Angeberei. . . . Diese unerbittliche Strenge, dieses Streben nach musikalischer Wahrheit . . . die strenge, saubere, ehrliche Handwerkslehre, die Schönberg gab . . . das ist eben eine große geschichtliche Leistung von Schönberg.[12]

Indeed, for all of his innovations as a composer, Schönberg the teacher and theoretician was tradition-minded to the nth degree: instruction consisted largely of analysis of the works of the great German canon—Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms, etc.—but absolutely nothing modern. There was, interestingly

enough, some common ground between Eisler and his teacher musically; above all, both shared an affinity to the "logic and clarity" of the work of Johannes Brahms, in particular his chamber music.[13]

Eisler's early work in the shadow of Schönberg included some atonal and twelve-tone writing, also the use of *Sprechstimme,* a Schönbergian technique; and the young composer was quickly recognized for his talent, receiving, for example, the prestigious Kunstpreis der Stadt Wien in 1925 for his Piano Sonata op. 1. From there, he went on to have numerous successes at so-called "new music festivals" such as those held at Donaueschingen and at Baden-Baden, one of the most important forums for the "neue Musik" movement at that time, as well as abroad. His first regular teaching appointment was in Berlin, at a private conservatory.

Given the personal and professional support Schönberg had given him (at no charge), it was a reasonably nasty affair when Eisler finally parted company with his teacher in 1926. The essential problem, notwithstanding the personal dimensions to this, was that Eisler could no longer take Schönberg's political attitudes seriously—or, rather, his *apolitical* attitudes—for even if he had monarchist sympathies, Schönberg was more than anything else a classic *Unpolitischer.* Above all, Eisler had become convinced that something had to be done about the extreme isolation of modern (high) music and its creators, which in his judgment rendered music impotent as a means of social and cultural regeneration and change. In the words of Albrecht Betz, "in short, it was the fact that music turned a deaf ear to the conflicts of the times, its social confrontations, that disturbed him and made him want to break away from Arnold Schönberg."[14] With that, Eisler emancipated himself and embarked on his journey to create "socially and politically useful" music. His intent was to restore some social purpose or function to an art which he regarded as inherently communal (going back to the dawn of civilization), but to do this without abandoning the sophisticated compositional standards and techniques to which he had been held by his teacher Schönberg—or, for that matter, neglecting the historical reality of musical modernity. It would be fair to say that, if some of Eisler's music was less than great, it was very seldom less than impeccably composed and logically conceived, just as it possessed genuine historical integrity, something which would have been unthinkable without Schönberg's influence and the kind of rigorous training he received under his tutelage. There is much of Schönberg which therefore remained *aufgehoben* in Eisler's music—as different as much of that music was on the surface, most notably in its distinct lack of sentimentality or subjective emotionality, either in music or choice of text, and its more restrained application of modernist compositional techniques.

Just as the Eisler-Schönberg story has been told in detail elsewhere, the development of Eisler's career has been extensively documented and discussed. Hence, it should suffice here to outline the major phases of his life and work, although it is true that Eisler's name (in contrast to those of Schönberg's other two pupils, Alban Berg and Anton von Webern) is still found primarily in the footnotes of music history books, if it is to be found at all. This, of course, is the price he

paid for breaking company with Schönberg and becoming a "socialist composer." Following this brief overview, a series of key issues pertinent to the question of mediation between high and low culture will be addressed as they relate to Eisler's music. Finally, by way of concluding, a few remarks will be made concerning the last phase of Eisler's career: in particular, the impact of Schönberg's death on Eisler, who at the time (1951) was coming to grips with the repressive Stalinist cultural climate of the early GDR.

As noted above, Eisler's break with Arnold Schönberg came in 1926, not long after his relocation to Berlin. Later that same year, he applied for membership in the KPD (German Communist Party), and by 1927 his involvement in the *Arbeitermusikbewegung* (leftist workers' music movement) had also increased significantly. Eisler became a musical columnist for *Die Rote Fahne,* worked with the agitprop group "Das Rote Sprachrohr," and taught music at the Marxist Workers' School in Berlin beginning in 1928. This was during the time when his future collaborator Bertolt Brecht was still working with left-liberal composer Kurt Weill (as well as, for a brief time, Paul Hindemith)—which is to underscore the fact that when Brecht turned to Eisler as of 1930, he encountered someone who had a head start on him both politically and aesthetically. (This is not the place to go into Eisler's influence on Brecht, but it is worth noting the decisive influence Eisler had on Brecht's political and intellectual/artistic development at this early stage of their association.)

The next few years leading up to Eisler's exile from Germany witnessed the first of several productive periods of collaboration with Brecht, resulting in, among other works, the Lehrstück *Die Maßnahme* (1930), the film *Kuhle Wampe* (1932), and the play with music *Die Mutter* (likewise 1932). While in exile, Eisler became deeply committed to the antifascist cultural "Volksfront" (popular front) concept; indeed, he represents a far better example of that ideal than Brecht, as Eisler maintained close ties to many people and groups whom Brecht rejected or from whom he remained quite distant—most notably, Thomas Mann, with whom Eisler enjoyed a warm personal friendship; the Horkheimer-Adorno circle, about which Brecht was very skeptical; and, of course, Arnold Schönberg himself. In 1935–1936, Eisler made the first of several trips to the United States and began teaching at the New School for Social Research in New York City. He moved to the U.S. "to stay" in 1938, but not before he encountered considerable difficulty obtaining a visa and a residency permit—a matter in which Thomas Mann personally intervened. Eventually, like so many other German exiles, and after further problems with U.S. immigration authorities, he wound up in Hollywood in 1942 and remained there until 1948. Prior to his relocation to California, Eisler had begun one of his most important projects, a book on film music *(Composing for the Film)* that was supported by a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation. While the juxtaposition of the names Rockefeller and Eisler may seem a bit amusing, the project resulted in a volume now considered a classic in its field, as well as a remarkable piece of instrumental music, "14 Ways of Describing Rain," composed for the Joris Ivens documentary film *Rain* (1940).

Interestingly, the music Eisler wrote during the Hollywood years consisted largely of songs—lieder in the great German tradition of lieder—at times, quite personal and rather lyrical, though inevitably resistant to undue sentimentality. There were, for example, the *Hollywood Elegies,* the *Anakreon-Fragmente* (based on Mörike's translations) and the set of *Hölderlinfragmente,* written, as Eisler put it, "für die Schublade," in the darkest days of exile (1943). But he also wrote a fair amount of stage music, keeping up with Brecht's prolific output during those years: in particular, scores for *Furcht und Elend des Dritten Reiches, Schweyk im Zweiten Weltkrieg, Leben des Galilei,* and the film score for *Hangmen Also Die.* Most of these were composed for voices and small orchestra or chamber ensemble, yielding that kind of antisentimental musical transparency which both he and Brecht preferred (a style often referred to as "Brechtian music"). Apart from his impeccable musical logic, the most distinctive hallmarks of Eisler's style, consistent with his rational, politicized, anti-Romantic outlook, are his economy of musical means, transparency of texture, predominance of the text/vocal line (i.e., the distinct primacy of the text), and general conciseness of form.

In 1948, facing deportation in the wake of the HUAC witch-hunt, Eisler left for Europe, following a gala farewell concert in his honor in New York City sponsored by the likes of Leonard Bernstein, Aaron Copland, Randall Thompson, Roy Harris, Roger Sessions, and Walter Piston—in short, the entire progressive American musical elite of the 1940s. His travel paper arrangements were, once again, looked after by Thomas Mann, who in this instance went far out on a limb to assist him.[15] As of 1949, he was back in Berlin; he began lecturing at the Humboldt Universität and settled in Berlin/GDR the following year. It was at this time that he became known as the composer of the GDR national anthem "Auferstanden aus Ruinen" (text by Johannes R. Becher).

The next and final chapter—life under Stalinism—was not unlike what Brecht experienced, but it took a greater toll on Eisler. In particular, in the wake of the controversy over his libretto for an opera based on the Faust legend, a project of tremendous personal and artistic significance to the composer, Eisler spent most of the years 1953–1954 in Vienna, while Brecht, back in Berlin at the Berliner Ensemble, was genuinely concerned that his friend and chief musical collaborator might not return. The remainder of Eisler's life was spent in a fairly privileged position within the framework of GDR culture but, nevertheless, in a continuous *Spannungsverhältnis*—a veritable cultural-political tug-of-war—with the Stalinist cultural bureaucracy. As Wolf Biermann has pointed out, in spite of what they made of him—a *Staatskomponist*—the Stalinists generally considered his aesthetic inclinations too modern, too critical, too reminiscent of "late-bourgeois decadence"; in other words, in spite of the way his music was promoted, he was in fact more tolerated than liked, which to an extent was true of Bertolt Brecht and his work with the Berliner Ensemble as well. Eisler's last years saw the completion of some of his best-known works: a set of some forty songs to texts by Kurt Tucholsky, the *Deutsche Sinfonie* (based on poetry by Brecht), and his *Requiem*

for Lenin. His last work, which bears the title *Ernste Gesänge,* is set for baritone and string orchestra, with (adapted) texts by Hölderlin, Leopardi, and Stephan Hermlin. He died on 6 September 1962.

This latter period in Eisler's life and work will be taken up again at the conclusion of my discussion. However, as noted above, a series of key issues pertinent to the matter of mediation between high and low culture as it relates to Eisler's music must first be considered. These are five: (1) the impact of fascism on Eisler's attitudes as a composer and his role in the so-called Expressionism debate; (2) Eisler's emphasis on the primacy of vocal music and the implications thereof for his compositional aesthetic; (3) the matter of subjectivity and emotionality in Eisler's music vis-à-vis his attempt to mediate between high and low musical culture; (4) aesthetic mediation in relation to Eisler's pronounced emphasis on the building of a new musical culture; and (5) mediation in relation to the general issue of political or politicized art, as exemplified by Eisler's music.

First, in understanding the path Eisler took that lay somewhere between the Schönbergian and post-Schönbergian avant-garde, on the one hand, and popular and/or traditional means of musical expression, on the other, it is crucial to remember that, within the framework of leftist cultural debates of the exile period, Eisler, together with Ernst Bloch, Brecht, and others, was an outspoken defender of musical and cultural modernism. Specifically, Eisler emphasized the need for an explicitly *antifascist* aesthetic: that is to say, one that would counter the cultural conservatism of Nazism, and one with a dialectical conception of music history: "wir [leben] nicht nur in einer Fäulniszeit . . ., sondern in einer dialektisch übergehenden, in einer Zeit und Gesellschaft, die von der künftigen schwanger ist."[16] In this sense, Eisler, like Bloch, saw an element of *anticipation* in the music of Arnold Schönberg; or, as he stated elsewhere about his former teacher: "Aus der Geschichte der Musik ist er nicht wegzudenken. Verfall und Niedergang des Bürgertums, gewiß; aber welch eine Abendröte!"[17]

Second, from early on, in his critical writings and in his work as a composer, Eisler stressed the inherent conceptual clarity and the consequently enhanced functionality or utility of music with text. In other words, he stressed the need, as he perceived it, to reestablish the primacy of vocal music in opposition to instrumental-symphonic music as it had prevailed in the preceding era.[18] The crucial point to be emphasized here is that Eisler, the defender of musical modernism (on the one hand, against the conservative "aesthetic barbarism" of the Nazis, and, on the other, against Stalinist anti-modernism), relied to a considerable extent upon text to "ground" his works conceptually and ideologically, in conjunction with his efforts to "refunction" modern musical culture. Initially, around the time of his break with Schönberg (c. 1925–1928), he did so partly to make a critical statement about the poetic inclinations of Schönberg and his "high modern" music; but later, in connection with an explicitly socialist agenda, text played a crucial role in helping Eisler achieve the compositional balance he sought in terms of aesthetic mediation. Eisler had exceptionally high musical values (a legacy of his studies with

Schönberg); given his sense of history, he simply would not have resorted to writing epigonal *Schlag*. The textual foundation, as advanced or "difficult" as the music may have been at times, provided an immediate route of access for his listeners to the content he sought to convey. Thus, the textual dimension was crucial to Eisler's efforts at mediation; without it, working in a purely instrumental medium, he would have faced a far greater, if not insurmountable, challenge in attempting to reconcile form and content. Tellingly, his output of instrumental music is very limited compared to his output of songs, choruses, and other vocal works.

With regard to the third issue, of subjectivity and emotionality in both high and low music, it should be noted that, from early on, Eisler was distinctly *dis*inclined toward post-Wagnerian musical grandiloquence as exemplified by composers such as Strauß, Mahler, etc.—as well as the early works of Schönberg. As noted above, he was "attracted more to Brahms's academic stringency."[19] The pertinence of this aesthetic outlook for his subsequent attempts at mediation is that, in attempting to mediate the gap between high and low cultures, Eisler sought to counter the excessive subjectivity and emotionality associated with the former (which had reached a peak around the time he was born) without embracing the sheer banality or "canned" emotionality of the latter. One of the factors at work here was the advent of modern mass-cultural pop musical "hits" *(Schlager)*. But Eisler was also turned off by the "low" music of the preceding era—for example, 19th-century ballad songs, sentimental male chorus numbers, etc., due to their prevalence in the old workers' choruses, all of which he saw as a means of perpetuating "musikalische Dummheit" or "Barbarei in der Musik," and of perpetuating, along with this, the oppression of the working class. In short, in Eisler's case, mediation also represented a quest for some kind of musical middle ground in which emotion is contained or "packaged" more responsibly than in either the high(est) or low(est) traditions/forms of musical culture. In this respect, he was fairly successful in much of his music—the primary reason why he became Brecht's composer of choice, even though Eisler felt Brecht went too far at times in his insistence on "rationality in music." While the following generalization is true to a greater or lesser extent depending upon the specific piece or type of piece involved (with Eisler's works forming a continuum ranging from hard-core *Kampflieder* to lyrical *Elegien*), it may nevertheless be said that the best of his music is sophisticated yet accessible, multilayered but transparent, and, generally, emotionally restrained without denying the significance of emotion as an intrinsic factor in the way music operates, and in people's response to it.

Fourth, related to Eisler's quest for "musical intelligence" as an aspect of aesthetic mediation was his recurrent emphasis on the need to eliminate "musical illiteracy," and to build a new musical culture upon new social foundations. In other words, the pedagogical factor and instinct behind Eisler's work are exceptionally important; figuratively speaking, one could look at his compositions as the musical equivalents of Brecht's concept of *Lehrstück*. Like Arnold Schönberg, he was throughout his life a composer, theoretician, *and* teacher; and much of the exten-

sive body of critical writing he left behind has an implicit pedagogical function, directed as it is towards stimulating people to rethink their traditional musical assumptions and values. The "new musical culture" Eisler envisioned could simply not be realized by resorting to the standards of contemporary low musical culture; but it was just as unthinkable on the basis of modernist, avant-garde high cultural music alone. In other words, Eisler harbored no illusions about whether or not the masses were ready for Schönberg; clearly, they were not:

> Eine Milliarde Arbeiter und Bauern . . . werden vorläufig mit Schönberg nichts oder nur sehr wenig anfangen können. Sie haben andere und dringlichere Aufgaben. Auf dem Gebiet der Musik ist es die Liquidierung des Musikanalphabetismus. Erst nach solcher Liquidierung und erst nachdem auch die kompliziertesten Werke der Klassiker volkstümlich geworden sind [!], kann Schönberg wieder neu zur Diskussion gestellt werden.

However, to this position statement Eisler added: "Über das Resultat einer solchen Diskussion bin ich nicht ohne Optimismus."[20]

Finally, the matter of "political art." Here, it is crucial to emphasize that, while ultimately the political agenda was primary to Eisler, he never consented to the abandonment of high artistic standards; that is to say, Eisler's approach to "mediation" is intrinsically a question of how to create good art which at the same time is politically effective (or, as Brecht would have said, art with genuine *Gebrauchswert*). This is not intended as an apology for Eisler's political views, nor is it said to appease those who as yet maintain that art and politics (let alone music and politics) do not mix. Rather, the point is that, like his friend Brecht, Eisler saw in his work something born of the necessity of a difficult time; in considering the judgments of others about his music, he would undoubtedly have endorsed Brecht's poetic plea "Gedenkt unsrer / Mit Nachsicht."[21]

Breaking with his mentor in 1926, Eisler set out to be Schönberg's antithesis, though having assimilated a great deal of Schönberg's musical thinking and values. But, in true dialectical fashion, what he ultimately sought to create and be was the valid synthesis of the two; the concept of dialectical synthesis seems useful in considering the matter of mediation in Eisler's case. In the end, Eisler was not able fully to realize the aesthetic solution he was after; it remained a vision, as is evident from the final, at times difficult, chapter in his life and work.

III

Schönberg's death in 1951 had a profound personal impact on Eisler. As he wrote at the time:

> Mit Schönberg ist die spätbürgerliche Musik gestorben. Er war ein Genie, der [*sic*] den Weg der bürgerlichen Kunst bis zum Ende gegangen ist. Neben ihm können nur bestehen: Bartók . . . und Strawinsky.[22]

And further:

> Der Tod Schönbergs hat mich aufs tiefste erschüttert. Es war gar nicht leicht, bei ihm zu lernen, denn vieles durfte man nicht lernen, und es war schwierig, gegen einen solchen Meister zu bestehen.[23]

By some remarkable coincidence, if Eisler is to be believed, the death of Arnold Schönberg on 13 July 1951 coincided precisely with Eisler's completion of the first draft of his controversial opera libretto *Johann Faustus,* and the conjunction of these two events serves as fruitful basis upon which to conclude my discussion.

In a sense, Eisler set out to accomplish via his *Johann Faustus* opera what Thomas Mann had previously envisioned through the character Leverkühn in his *Faustus* novel, which Eisler so deeply admired; indeed, Eisler quotes from the novel in a statement to West German musicians written in 1951, in which he attempts to clarify what he, the new socialist composer, was attempting to achieve:

> Es geht um sehr viel, um das, was Thomas Mann den 'Durchbruch' nennt. Ich will die schöne Stelle aus seinem *Doktor Faustus* hierher setzen: 'Die ganze Lebensstimmung der Kunst, glauben Sie mir, wird sich ändern. Es ist unvermeidlich, und es ist ein Glück. Viel melancholische Ambition wird von ihr abfallen. Wir stellen es uns nur mit Mühe vor, und doch wird es das geben und wird das Natürliche sein: eine Kunst ohne Leiden, seelisch gesund, eine Kunst, mit der Menschheit auf Du und Du.[24]

Elsewhere, in his "Notes on the *Faustus* Project," Eisler laid out the extraordinary task he perceived to have before him at this moment in history:

> Mit meiner Oper hoffe ich einen neuen Weg gehen zu können, der uns aus dieser Verwirrtheit herausbringt. Ich kann das nur tun, wenn ich nicht experimentiere, wie mein Freund Brecht, oder gar provoziere und schockiere, wie es ebenfalls Brecht liegt, sondern indem ich mit einer reifen, runden, gültigen Leistung komme; sie muß begriffen werden von den unerfahrenen Ohren und den erfahrensten, und der Text muß begriffen werden von den Unerfahrensten und den Gebildetesten. Die Schwierigkeiten dieser Aufgabe sind enorm.[25]

In his efforts to realize this ambitious concept of a "new path," Eisler had at least two major things working against him: a Stalinist cultural bureaucracy which lacked his depth of sophistication and a dialectical perspective on musical history and aesthetics; and, arguably, his own idealism and ambition, i.e., the sheer magnitude of the task which he had set for himself. It is therefore not surprising that, in the decade or so that followed, leading up to the composer's death in 1962, the *Johann Faustus* project was shelved. As far as we know, not one note of music for the opera was ever written, and whether the work could ever have lived up to Eisler's extraordinary expectations of ushering in a new, intrinsically mediated, musical culture—of a highly refined culture but, nevertheless, "eine Musik mit der Menschheit auf Du und Du"—necessarily remains a matter of speculation.

On this final point, some element of skepticism or reservation seems prudent, as worthy and noble as Eisler's aspirations otherwise may have been. In conclu-

sion, it may fairly be said that Eisler, like his contemporary and compatriot Johannes R. Becher, died with a dream of "künftige Vollendung"; his concept of a new synthesis inherently mediating "Musik mit der Menschheit auf Du und Du" ultimately remained a vision. It appears that Eisler himself realized that his outlook was somehow *unzeitgemäß,* out of synch with historical, political, and cultural reality. Perhaps this is what he had in mind when adapting Hölderlin's poem "Der Gang aufs Land" for his final work, the *Ernste Gesänge*: the movement in question, entitled "Komm! ins Offene, Freund" (the opening words of the poem), contains the revealing lines "aber kommen doch auch der segenbringenden Schwalben / Immer einige noch, ehe der Sommer, ins Land." But this is not to diminish the historical significance of Hanns Eisler, Arnold Schönberg's forgotten pupil. Having learned from an *Esel-Meister* (which is explicitly not to say: "ein *Meister-Esel*"), he left behind a remarkable legacy of his own, as one who sought to create a mediated, "spiritually healthy," musical culture—a legacy that has been grossly underappreciated and unjustifiably marginalized in the annals of modern music history.

Notes

1 Hans Bunge, *Fragen Sie mehr über Brecht: Hanns Eisler im Gespräch* (Munich, 1970) 173–74.
2 Hanns Eisler, "Brecht und die Musik," *Sinn und Form: 2. Sonderheft Bertolt Brecht* (1957): 439–41.
3 See Joachim Lucchesi and Ronald Shull, *Musik bei Brecht* (Berlin, 1988). According to Dr. Milton Peckarsky of Milwaukee, there is also no material pertaining to the Brecht-Eisler birthday cantata at the Schönberg Institute in Los Angeles.
4 Arnold Schönberg, "My Public" (1930), in *Writings of German Composers,* ed. Jost Hermand and James Steakley (New York, 1984), 217. This is not to dismiss the fact that, at an earlier stage in his career, Schönberg did manifest some concern about the emerging gap between high and low musical culture. In particular, recent research by British scholar John Willett has shown that, in conjunction with his brief engagement as musical director of Baron Ernst von Wolzogen's "Superstage" cabaret in Berlin, Schönberg did a number of song settings (for example, a set of seven "Brettl-Lieder" to texts from the *Deutsche Chansons*) which, in Willett's opinion, "suggest that Schönberg, too, wished to see a revival of good popular music to unpretentious texts such as had been lacking during the greater part of the nineteenth century. . . . This concern with breaking the barriers between 'high' and 'low' in the arts was a quarter of a century before its time. . . . But it anticipated an attitude that would be characteristic of the Weimar Republic, even though by then Schönberg himself was . . . following contrary directions."
5 Hanns Eisler, "On Modern Music" (1927), in *Writings of German Composers,* 254.
6 Hanns Eisler, "Zur Situation der modernen Musik" (1928), in his *Materialien zu einer Dialektik der Musik,* ed. Manfred Grabs (Leipzig, 1973), 55.
7 Ernst Křenek, "New Humanity and Old Objectivity," in his *Exploring Music,* trans. M. Shenfield and G. Skelton (New York, 1968), 45.
8 As quoted in Alfred Rubeli, *Paul Hindemiths a capella Werke* (Mainz, 1975), 37. Hindemith's article was entitled "Über Musikkritik."
9 See Albrecht Betz, *Hanns Eisler: Political Musician,* trans. B. Hopkins (Cambridge, 1982), 8. Betz cites the following statement by Eisler from a special issue of the *Musikblätter des Anbruch* published on the occasion of Schönberg's fiftieth birthday: "It is imperative for the musical world to

rethink its ideas and to see in Schönberg not a saboteur and revolutionary but [rather] a master. It is now clear that he created for himself a new kind of material so that he could make music that was as rich and self-contained as that of the Classical composers. *It is he who is the real conservative: he even created his own revolution in order that he could then be a reactionary.*"

10 Betz, 45.
11 Cf. Betz, 20–21.
12 Nathan Notowicz, *Wir reden hier nicht von Napoleon. Wir reden von Ihnen: Gespräche mit Hanns und Gerhart Eisler* (Berlin, 1971), 45–47.
13 Cf. Betz, 21–22.
14 Betz, 43.
15 Cf. Betz, "A Victim of the Witch-Hunt," 194–207.
16 Hanns Eisler and Ernst Bloch, "Die Kunst zu erben" (1937), in Eisler, *Materialien zu einer Dialektik der Musik*, 162.
17 Eisler, "Arnold Schönberg" (1954), in Eisler, *Materialien*, 231.
18 Eisler's views on this are laid out in detail in his essay "[Gesellschaftliche Umfunktionierung der Musik]" (1936), in Eisler, *Materialien*, 130ff.
19 Betz, 22.
20 Eisler, "Arnold Schönberg," 243f.
21 Cf. the closing lines of Brecht's poem "An die Nachgeborenen" ("To Posterity").
22 Eisler, "Notizen zu *Dr. Faustus*" (1951), in Eisler, *Materialien*, 204.
23 Eisler, ibid., 209.
24 Eisler, "Brief nach Westdeutschland" (1951), in Eisler, *Materialien*, 223.
25 Eisler, "Notizen zu *Dr. Faustus*," in Eisler, *Materialien*, 209.

The Case of the Well-Crafted Novel: Lion Feuchtwanger's *Goya*

JOST HERMAND

I

Feuchtwanger seems to have first conceived the plan to write a novel about Goya as early as the late 1920s or early 1930s. Not only was he fascinated by Goya's paintings, which he had first encountered in the Prado in 1926, but he was equally intrigued by the checkered career of this man, which lent itself to a suspense-filled novelistic treatment of an artist's life. Although he looked forward to devoting himself fully to this project, he had to postpone it repeatedly because of his expulsion from Germany in 1933, his protracted exile, his literary turn to Jewish themes, his political involvement with the Popular Front, his journey to Moscow, his internment in Gurs, France, and his escape to New York via Spain and Portugal. In January 1943, when he was residing in Los Angeles, he wrote somewhat prematurely to Arnold Zweig that he was ready to "settle down to work on *Goya*."[1] But then other projects came up, such as his collaboration with Brecht on *Simone* and his own works relating to the United States, such as *Waffen für Amerika* and *Wahn oder Der Teufel in Boston*. And thus it was not until 1948, when the political situation seemed to ease up, that Feuchtwanger could finally turn to actually writing the *Goya* novel, which would occupy him until 1950.

But the "peace and quiet" he had counted on turned out to be an illusion. After all, Feuchtwanger had been shadowed because of his leftist past since arriving in the United States in 1941. And with the onset of the Cold War in 1948, this surveillance was intensified. Following numerous government interrogations, his repeated applications for US citizenship were ultimately turned down in 1957,[2] making him feel like an undesirable alien in Los Angeles. Beyond that, Feuchtwanger knew full well that he—along with others in German exile circles—was constantly tailed by the FBI, which categorized him, along with Thomas Mann, Heinrich Mann, and Albert Einstein, as an affiliate of an intellectual group that maintained "ties to communist front organizations."[3] And when the young congressman Richard M. Nixon, first in California and later in Washington, joined in this smear campaign against pinkos and fellow travelers, Feuchtwanger's situation was even more imperiled. He witnessed his friend Brecht being called before the House Un-American Activities Committee in Washington, and there subjected to such an inquisitorial interrogation that he chose to leave the country one week

later. Suddenly, many of Feuchtwanger's American friends and acquaintances likewise found themselves being interrogated in star-chamber proceedings.[4] Things became even worse a short time later when Joseph R. McCarthy, the senator from Wisconsin, initiated his campaign against all so-called reds. This led to a right-wing hysteria in the course of which—according to studies by the American sociologist Samuel A. Houffer—77 percent of all Americans favored revoking the citizenship of any communist, and 51 percent endorsed simply locking them up. In his typically laconic manner, Feuchtwanger responded to these events by writing to Lola Sernau on 28 August 1950 that "semifascist measures" were "on the upswing" in the US since the war.[5]

For Feuchtwanger himself, this meant that he could no longer travel beyond the borders of the United States; otherwise, he faced the prospect of being prevented, like Charlie Chaplin, from reentering the country. Yet he did not let himself be intimidated by these measures, as a few of his leftist friends did. Feuchtwanger was aware that the civil authorities deeply mistrusted him because of his book *Moscow* and his public statements on behalf of socialism, but he knew that they had no firm grounds to act against him, because he was not a member of the Communist Party. And he also knew that he was highly regarded by his publishers because of his international prestige and the sales figures of his works. Feuchtwanger considered his status in the literary world not just a personal distinction but a privilege that obliged him not to cave in under outside pressure, not to abandon his convictions, not simply to write his *Goya* "con amore" as a suspense-filled artist's novel packed with erotic adventures and court intrigues. But in the complex political situation he faced between 1948 and 1950, how could he possibly fashion a novel that would both sell and convey a political message? Up to this time, whether in the Weimar Republic or in exile, when leftist and left-liberal books had still been regarded as praiseworthy, he had always succeeded in both. But now—given the repressive climate of the Cold War—how could he achieve a commercial success without sacrificing his political views? Was it still possible to earn money with leftist opinions? Would he have to conceal his views behind a smokescreen—a ploy that Feuchtwanger, as a world-renowned author, was ill-prepared to carry out?

Without this historical background, Feuchtwanger's *Goya* novel cannot be fully appreciated. When he turned to working on it, Feuchtwanger realized that this novel, which was supposed to be a labor of love, was simultaneously going to be a work of political obligation. It posed formal and ideological demands that he, as a leftist author, could not evade if he did not want to be branded as an opportunist. And he faced up to these demands even at the cost of envisioning being forced to leave America and to return to Europe after completing the novel.[6] In the course of his strategic considerations concerning the possibility of combining mass appeal with a political message, two things were working in his favor: firstly, that the form of the historical novel selected for *Goya* had long proven, along with the biography and the novel of society, to be among the most popular literary

genres; and, secondly, that in his protagonist Goya he wanted to portray a social climber who at the beginning of his career exploits his tremendous talent only as a personal privilege, but who later comes to think of it as a political obligation as well, thus thematizing Feuchtwanger's own development as an artist.

For Feuchtwanger, the historical novel had been an important means of expression from the very beginning of his literary career, and in exile—as for Heinrich Mann, Bruno Frank, Hermann Kesten, Alfred Neumann, Stefan Zweig, and many others—had become his principal genre. Probably the most telling document of this predilection is his address "Sinn und Unsinn des historischen Romans" delivered at the 1935 Paris Congress on the Defense of Culture. Contrary to critics who equated the historical novel only with "adventures, intrigues, costumes, rich colors, pathos-ridden gestures, the mingling of politics and love, the playful reduction of important events to minor personal experiences," Feuchtwanger declared on this occasion that it was precisely this genre that would be one of the best vehicles for raising a given "subject matter from the sphere of the personal and the private" to the higher level of the sociopolitical. "I have never considered," he said in Paris, "portraying history for its own sake." Instead, he added, "I used historical facts" only as a method of creating distance, as a "parable," in order to show that history has always been the "struggle of a tiny, critical minority against the huge, compact majority of the blind, of those with no sense of judgment and led solely by instinct." Precisely in the area of the historical novel, he continued, it was the task of the politically conscious author to "activate the events of the past for the present and the future." Indeed, because it "recalled earlier victories and defeats," he termed the historical novel an ideal "weapon that we can make use of in our phase of the eternal struggle." "For my part," Feuchtwanger concluded, "I have been at pains since I began writing to produce historical novels in the service of reason, against stupidity and violence, against what Marx called lapsing into ahistoricity."[7]

This standpoint was vehemently attacked by critics such as Kurt Hiller, who sought to brand the authors of historical novels written under the conditions of exile as "poetasting riff-raff" led by "greed and cowardice to escape the challenge of the day,"[8] who, in other words, criticized the historical novel for its irrelevance.[9] Nevertheless, Feuchtwanger—like Ludwig Marcuse and Georg Lukács[10]—clung to the conviction that it was entirely possible to use historical material to make political statements pertinent to the present. Even after the war, when many critics insisted on higher aesthetic standards, Feuchtwanger continued writing historical novels, since he expected this genre to have a broader political effect than most other genres, especially drama and poetry.[11]

With the same obstinance, Feuchtwanger clung to his Goya theme, for he hoped that, with a universally recognized artist figure, he would draw more interest to his work than by picking a topic, in an elitist-modernist manner, from the purely private sphere. In Goya, he believed he had found an artist who had been concerned in his own work with that "idioma universal" which—so Feuchtwanger

claimed—could bridge the fateful chasm that in Goya's time existed between the courtly and the popular and in Feuchtwanger's between the forced avant-gardist and the trivialized entertaining—in brief, between high and low. By making the Goya figure the protagonist of one of his most important novels, his goal was not to escape into the hermetic world of a lonely genius but, on the contrary, to portray an artist who in an almost exemplary fashion strove to overcome his privileged isolation.

II

But let us now turn to the novel itself. What did Feuchtwanger concentrate on when conceiving this work, in order to give it those appealing qualities that would render it broadly accessible? To begin with purely formal aspects, the plot of the novel proceeds in a smoothly linear fashion and irritates the reader neither through flashbacks nor foreshadowing. The language of this work is equally smooth, remaining in the realm of a clearly defined vocabulary by consciously avoiding esoteric words as well as literary allusions. The same is true for the structuring of the subject matter, which is of exemplary clarity. The reader is never distracted by pointless excurses; the action never moves too quickly toward a climax; plot threads are never left dangling. On the contrary, everything fits evenly into the overall outline and is so skillfully interwoven that suspense is always present. A well-disposed reader who forges ahead with the book will therefore never have the feeling of being bored during the novel's 613 pages.

But how does Feuchtwanger actually deal with the historical facts? Does he use them simply to enliven the book with a colorful background, or does he use them in a deeper, philosophical way to illustrate a certain worldview? As we know, when doing the groundwork for this novel, he consulted at least sixty works of history and art history, including such compendious tomes as Hermann Baumgarten's *Geschichte Spaniens,* F. D. Klingender's *Goya and the Democratic Tradition in Spain,* Kurt Bertel's *Francisco Goya,* Hugh Stokes's *Goya: A Study of the Work and Personality,* August L. Mayer's *Francisco de Goya,* André Malraux's *Goya,* Fritz Nemetz's *Ich habe gesehen,* Antonio Bellestero's *Geschichte Spaniens,* H. R. Madol's *Godoy: Das Ende des alten Spanien,* and E. B. d'Auvergne's *Godoy: The Queen's Favourite.* [12] As important as all these sources were for detailed information, they were of only minor importance for the novel's overall conception, which Feuchtwanger based, as always, on his own straightforward understanding of history as a struggle between reason and ignorance, not on any profound theories of the mass psychological or socioeconomic roots of history. As an experienced best-seller writer, he knew full well that any novel aiming at direct appeal had to be based on the dramatic unity of the plot, rather than on historical accuracy. Thus, Feuchtwanger simplified and rearranged the facts he found in his sources until they fit exactly into his overall design.

That is not to say that Feuchtwanger was consciously arbitrary when dealing

with the historical truth. Rather, he occasionally rearranged the historical facts to make them fit smoothly into his plot outline. With all his fidelity to history, he had no scruples about inserting earlier and later events into the five-year span he was dealing with: namely, from 1795 to 1800.[13] He was interested, not in the archival truth but in the poetic, "experienced" truth which could serve as a mirror of his own worldview. Thus, he portrays the actual impact of historical events on feudalistic Spain during these years—ranging from the French Revolution via the victory of the Gironde to the rise of Napoleon—but these events do not serve as the backbone of the narrative. Typically, these historical events are touched upon only briefly, in introductory sentences such as: "By the end of the eighteenth century, the Middle Ages were over almost everywhere in Western Europe. On the Iberian Peninsula, bounded on three sides by the sea and on the fourth by mountains, the Middle Ages continued" (1).[14] And such sweeping statements are rarely followed by more detailed commentaries. In order to avoid drawing the reader out of the action-packed plot into the relatively slow and, therefore, dry history, Feuchtwanger is generally content to sketch out with broad but colorful strokes an image of the prevailing situation under Spanish absolutism. He is content to convey to his readers that this country—in contrast to France under the sway of reason and enlightenment—is still dominated by "faith in throne and altar," and that in their enthusiasm for "the king, his grandees, and his priests," the Spaniards are willing to be "slaughtered fighting off the godless French" (11).

Given this image of history, built as it largely is on vivid contrasts, there is obviously little room for differentiated analyses of concrete situations of the sort that might be expected from a "leftist." Not even the dialectic of enlightenment, which so preoccupied Theodor W. Adorno at this very time, is alluded to. Feuchtwanger is equally disinclined to delve into the philosophical, historiographical, and theological debates of the era he is dealing with. Names such as Rousseau and Voltaire are mentioned, but they do not become the jumping-off point for further speculation on the ends and meaning of history. One can repeatedly sense how Feuchtwanger is restraining himself from introducing his own knowledge of the political, social, and ideological debates of this era in order not to divert the reader from the overarching figure of Goya and the plot turning around him. As in all novels aiming at immediate accessibility, Feuchtwanger concentrates on creating scenes that are brimming with emotions or experiences, making it easy for his readers to identify as closely as possible with the events and, thus, to experience the act of reading as a personal enrichment.

Goya, the protagonist, is therefore portrayed in many scenes—in spite of his being an artist—as a "typical" man, with whom as many male readers as possible can identify, and who can also exercise a strong appeal on women readers as a possible love object. Especially at the beginning of the novel, Goya unites all those qualities we might think of as being typically macho: he is egocentric, instinctual, driven, hedonistic, ambitious, and status-oriented. His main goals in life seem to be wealth, prestige, power, influence, and sexual conquests. And he succeeds in

Goya, *Self Portrait* (1799). Reprinted from *Sämtliche Radierungen*, introduction by Enrique Lafuente Ferrari (Vienna, 1961), pl. 1.

achieving almost all of these. When we first encounter him in the novel, he is about forty-five years old and already stands at the zenith of his career. He is rather well-to-do, can afford a beautiful house, is married to the sister of the court painter Bayeu, has three "nice, healthy children" (21), is the center of attention of high-society ladies, is considered the best portraitist of Spain, is driven to his appointments in his own coach, is on his way to becoming the "premier court painter," has at his disposal a beautiful but "uncomplicated" mistress by the name of Pepa Tudo (21)—in short, he is one of those who "sit at the golden tables of life and art" (361).

In all these passages, Feuchtwanger's depiction is by no means unrealistic. In the late 1780s and early 1790s, Goya did act like a parvenu who felt obliged "to imitate an aristocratic bearing."[15] Feuchtwanger, however, tends—especially when dealing with Goya's desire to climb socially—to deviate from the historical record to create certain effects. Thus, he repeatedly refers to Goya as "the son of peasants" (15), whereas in reality Goya was born to a respected middle-class family in Zaragoza.[16] Feuchtwanger uses this trick to make it clear to his readers why the ladies of the court, who are frustrated in their marriages, are irresistibly drawn to the earthy muscularity of Goya. In these passages, too, there is no recourse to depth psychology. As in most historical novels that, in typical best-seller fashion, turn on power, court intrigue, and the possession of beautiful women, Goya's main qualities seem to be his personal preeminence and his sexual potency. Indeed, in some respects these passages are reminiscent of the ever-popular, ever-successful clichés of *Dallas* and *Dynasty* of the sort exploited by virtually all best-seller writers.

Goya's behavior, beyond the artistic sphere, is therefore at times that of a rugged, intriguingly seductive man of pleasures and business who knows full well how to advance his own interests. Thus, at the beginning of the novel, he takes his pleasure with "plump" little Pepa, whom he handles like a "pretty, charming piglet" (35), but whom he is immediately willing to cede to Don Manuel de Godoy, the prime minister and favorite of the queen, as soon as she comes to his attention, in order to ensure himself the necessary protection at court. And this move pays off for him. Altogether, Godoy and Goya have much in common: the two have both risen from the lower orders, and they share the mentality and manner of typical social climbers. "Fortune had elevated both of them"—we read in the first book of the novel concerning their "parallel and divergent destinies"[17]—"from the depths to the towering heights and had cast at their feet everything any man could dream of: wealth, power, prestige, desirable women" (73). But it is not just in regard to women that Goya is a clever tactician. His business dealings also have parvenu-like traits. We read over and over again of his haggling with patrons until he has arrived at the highest price; even when painting the royal family, he works out payment according to the number of heads and hands.

Goya's calculating temperament fails at one point only: when confronted with Cayetana, the seductive Duchess of Alba. He falls for her head over heels even though he correctly senses from the very outset how perilous this passion might turn out to be. In this narrative strand, which is based purely on wild speculation,[18] Feuchtwanger plunges into the realm of fiction and gives free rein to his fantasy. And in order to give his novel the necessary erotic frisson, his stereotyped portrayal of Cayetana the "woman" matches that of Goya the "man." Whereas he is the bull-necked rustic, she is the refined, educated, and elegantly turned-out lady; she is, in other words, the typical representative of courtly largesse, polish, and trickery. And because of these provocative contrasts, an irresistible attraction arises between the two, though no real understanding. For Cayetana, Goya is no more than a favorite, a *cortejo,* a flattering portraitist, and a lusty lover whom she

Goya, *The Duchess of Alba* (1797). Reprinted from José Guidol, *Goya: 1746–1828* (Paris, ca. 1950), pl. 534.

offers her "small, slender body" in a shameless but elegant way after weeks and months of leaving him uncertain about her intentions (189). From the very outset, on the other hand, Goya sees in Cayetana—in keeping with the most trivial male fantasies—"lust, sheer lust, never to be satisfied, with all its numbing happiness and dangers" (367). "Her every hair, every pore in her skin, her strong, high eyebrows, her half-exposed breasts under black lace," we read at one point, "stirred in him a passion without measure" (17). For him, she is Eve, temptress, witch, "slut," and "goddess" all at once (377); in short, a woman with many "endearing" but also "uncanny, evil" faces (333), making him blissful and miserable at the same time.

Their love act is therefore likened by Feuchtwanger to the "union of the steer Francisco with a small, delicate Dona" (234). Again and again, Goya "drags" her to his bed (288) and enjoys observing how this formerly cold and unapproachable lady gradually "melts under him, dissolves in orgasmic pleasure" (259). But a deeper relationship between the two does not develop. They are unable to reach an understanding about anything. All remains unspoken, making his addiction to her even "darker, wilder, more dangerous" (291). The more unrestrained their embraces become, the more alien they are to one another. "She was closer to him than any other person, farther away than any other person," we read in the middle of the second book (374). Even the days on which she models for him as the draped and the nude Maja do not bring the two of them any closer. On the contrary, during these days he realizes that "even her nudity was a lie" (371). Nevertheless, he cannot detach himself from this woman. He even accepts that she is scarcely interested in his art and dismisses his *Caprichos,* after fleetingly leafing through them, as "tasteless" (533). This strangely exciting "love-hate relationship"[19] comes to a violent end only when she—who never wanted to be pregnant in order to keep her seductive beauty—aborts a child evidently conceived by Goya, and dies during the procedure.

III

So much for the Goya-Cayetana plot, which occupies about half the novel. Anyone who expects primarily erotic escapades and court intrigues from a historical novel will not have wasted his money on this one. In some of these sections, this novel almost reads like a boilerplate bestseller. But Feuchtwanger should not be reproached for this out of hand. For, ultimately, he knew all too well that the political message had to be packaged with particular skill in order not to disappoint reader expectations of this genre. Granted, there are plenty of alluring passages, lots of spicy details. But what is the actual ideological import of this opus that would justify all these bestseller-type features and elevate this novel to the level of a politically responsible, left-liberal work? After all, the socio-political message of Feuchtwanger's *Goya* cannot consist solely in the protagonist's overcoming his humble origins, in this peasant's breaking into the world of courtly society, and in his success as an unscrupulous parvenu by dragging to bed the duchess of Alba,

Spain's leading lady next to the queen. Surely other themes must be at work in the novel in order to justify such a claim. And there are such themes. Examined more closely, they become apparent especially at the points where Feuchtwanger (1) deals somewhat more closely with the isolated position of Goya within Spanish society and (2) interprets Goya's life toward the end of the novel as an "agonizing path to knowledge" in the course of which the painter finally comes to realize the political obligations that his artistic and social privileges entail.

Let us begin with the motif of social isolation. In the first scenes of the novel, it is already apparent how far removed Goya is from his rustic origins, and how deeply he has moved into the world of the nobility, which courts him because of his talent but by no means recognizes him as an equal. Thus, his social standing is rather precarious from the outset. By virtue of his social background, he still feels a deep affinity with the common people but is insightful enough to realize that the commoners, especially the petit-bourgeois *majos* and *majas,* are totally in favor of the ancien régime, and vehemently reject any so-called progress. "In his opposition to enlightenment and reason, to anything French, to revolution and everything connected with it, the *majo,*" Feuchtwanger informs us, "was the best ally of the monarchy and the church. The *majo* loved the splendid royal castles, the colorful cavalcades of the grandees, the resplendent processions of the church; he loved bulls, flags, horses, and daggers, and his savage national pride led him to mistrust and hate the intellectuals, the liberals, the *afrancesados,* who sought to eliminate these traditions. In vain, progressive writers and statesmen promised the *majo* better living quarters and more bread and meat. He was more than willing to dispense with all that, as long as his festivities and spectacles were left untouched" (242).

Feuchtwanger's Goya can understand this outlook, but he no longer shares it because of his greater sophistication, which makes him—despite his humble origins—more and more of an outsider among the *majos* and *majas.* But he feels equally uneasy in the realm of the court and the nobility. Here, only the aging, unattractive, but still deeply lustful queen Maria Luisa has a certain sympathy for him. She is even sufficiently self-assured and enlightened to tolerate his "realism" and his critical remarks about the church. Otherwise, however, Goya is confronted at the court with smooth, empty masks. While the *majos* and *majas* give crude but heartfelt expression to their feelings, the courtiers display a cold, unfeeling pride in their own status that immediately kills any stirring of trust, let alone love. Here, people only smile in order to bare their fangs, and Goya eventually comes to realize that this is true even of the smiles he receives from Cayetana.

Thus, after every contact with commoners or courtiers, he perforce retreats to his private world, that is to say, he draws, etches, paints, and enjoys the advantages life offers him because of his talent. Because of his artistic extravagances, he is under constant surveillance by the Inquisition but manages to elude the consequences thanks to clever tactical maneuvering. Especially important in this respect is—apart from the favor of the queen—the particular protection he owes to Prime

Goya, *Devota profesión* (1799). Reprinted from *Sämtliche Radierungen* (Vienna, 1961), pl. 70.

Minister Don Manuel de Godoy. On the other hand, Goya initially maintains a pronounced distance from the few free spirits in his vicinity. Although these Frenchified intellectuals, enthused about Rousseau and Voltaire, enjoy a certain support from the queen and her prime minister, they are nonetheless cited before the Holy Office of the Inquisition because of their radical views. Goya even has to witness how some of the leading *afrancesados,* among them Pablo Olavide, Gaspar Jovellanos, and other representatives of "philosophism" (170), are accused by the Inquisition of heresy, thrown into prison, or driven into exile. And he must recognize that these intellectuals are completely isolated, since the common people believe just as "strongly and strictly" in the Inquisition as they do in the king and his grandees (163). Fearful that the Inquisition might also count him among the "enlighteners," Goya initially keeps his distance from this group in order to avoid jeopardizing his own position.

So much for Goya's social isolation, which Feuchtwanger—especially, in the first part of the novel—constantly alludes to in order to explain the cautious yet hedonistic life-style of his hero. But in the course of the novel, as its author increasingly emphasizes the contrast between Goya's urge to live his own life and the restrictions demanded by the Inquisition and the court, it becomes ever more apparent that Goya's desire for individual freedom is quite as strong as his desire for Cayetana. Feuchtwanger carries out this transformation quite skillfully by portraying Goya at the beginning as an unscrupulous egotist and pure artist, who is totally uninterested in politics, and avoids any commitment that might become dangerous for him. In the old Spanish tradition, he wants to remain a *majo* and rejects anything revolutionary. "I am a painter, nothing but a painter," he declares when the liberals challenge him to take an ideological stand. When they point out that "silence is tacit consent," he either falls back on his conservative principle—"keep your mouth shut" (190f.)—or claims that he still believes in "the divine right of kings, the subject's duty to obey, and the cult of the virgin" (103).

There are several reasons why Feuchtwanger's Goya finally goes beyond his thick-skinned egotism to a greater commitment to social issues. One reason is that his bourgeois confidants, especially Miguel Bermudez and Goya's studio assistant Agustin Esteve, push him more and more urgently to side with them against the prevailing misrule of the nobility and the church. But he is somewhat imperceptive by nature, and their admonitions initially stir him very little. Their reproaches only begin to influence him after he has experienced several blows of destiny—the loss of his favorite daughter, the passing of his wife, the death of Cayetana, and advancing deafness—all of which gradually transform him from an "unknowing" to a "knowing" person. It is not so much the tyranny of the powerful or the suffering of the powerless that opens his eyes but, rather, the course of his own life, the experience of pain, and the awareness of aging that lead to an ebbing of his immature egotism. His own suffering alone is finally able to teach him that his talent is not simply a privilege but also something that obligates him to give his art a social character going beyond the advancement of personal prestige. Thus, he aban-

Goya, *María Luisa of Spain* (1800). Reprinted from Dino Formaggio, *Goya* (New York, 1960), pl. 37.

dons his former outlook and, embracing the motto "Yo lo vi" ("I have seen it"), takes an ever stronger stance in his works against all those whose entire existence is based on the labor and ignorance of the lower orders.

This process of growing awareness, which gives Feuchtwanger's *Goya* something of the character of a classic Bildungsroman, occurs across several stages. The first step takes place when Goya is forced to sit in on the interrogations of the Inquisition. Reflections of this experience are to be found especially in his paintings *The Dying Bull, The Madhouse, The Crazed Carnival,* and *The Burial of the Sardine,* works he painted without a commission, simply to give vent to his anger. "You can just smell the rebelliousness in these pictures," declares Miguel Bermudez, who is the first to see them (209). But even in the paintings commissioned from Goya during this period, his critical intention becomes ever clearer. Thus, he paints his "powerful patron" Godoy "with the full splendor of a generalissimo," but accentuates at the same time "his laziness and corpulence, his petulantly bored arrogance" (550). Goya takes even greater liberties in the grand portrait of the royal family, in which he was to immortalize all thirteen Spanish Bourbons. While the court expects a conventional genre painting in the style of Miguel van Loo, Goya simply places the members of the royal family side by side. But this is not all. In the midst of the "magical, intoxicating abundance of color of their inherited kingship," he emphasizes "the hard, cruel truth of their pathetic faces" (320). Queen Maria Luisa, magnanimous as ever, tolerates such an optic as always. Others declare, however, that "a subject should not stare at the king and his family" in such an "impudent, almost rebellious manner" (304). Only Don Miguel, Goya's "liberal" friend, is absolutely enthralled by the "barbarism" of this vision (320).

Toward the end of the novel, Goya's *Caprichos* have an equally shocking effect on all who see them, for it is unclear whether they are representations of general human follies or pointed satires of court and church. These etchings in a grotesque style that seems to unite "Bosch and Breughel and Callot all in one" depict a figurative world situated halfway between Christian allegory and sociocritical realism, equally interpretable as "pure fantasies" (532) or as "Spain's demons" (545). Goya's point of departure in this collection of etchings is the literal depiction of popular proverbs, a way of addressing not just the educated elite but also the simple folk in a feudalistically split society. In the closing chapters of the novel, therefore, Goya frequently speaks of his "idioma universal" (522, 541), the mixture of realistic, unmasking, satirical, grotesque, symbolic, and emblematic features that allows him to be specific and universal at the same time. The "noblemen and the clerics" who are "riding on the backs of the ever-patient Spaniards" (525) are distinctly recognizable as such, but are presented in the shape of grotesquely transformed trolls, witches, and vampires, who can also be seen as carnivalistic eccentricities. In the "tradition of the moralists" of the Renaissance, Goya here attacks the corrupt dignitaries of his own society, but at the same time asserts a "universalistic claim" that transcends any historical concretization.[20]

Goya, *Tú que no puedes,* from the *Caprichos.* Reprinted from *Sämtliche Radierungen* (Vienna, 1961), pl. 42.

In contrast to many pictures of the French Revolution that place their trust in the enthusiastic elan of the broad masses, Goya does not "idealize" the common people in the *Caprichos.*[21] Even in regard to them, the socially isolated and long-suffering Goya remains an uncompromising "realist." In this context, Feuchtwanger even takes the liberty of inserting a few theoretical excurses, mostly in conversations Goya has with the *afrancesados.* The point of reference is always Jacques-Louis David, the classicist who is held up by Goya's liberal friends as the model of a truly committed painter. Goya admits that David's way of depicting the world is "masterly," but it is too "clear" and, therefore, "cold" (44). "The world and the human race simply aren't that clear," he explains to his purely rationalistic acquaintances; "the wicked, the dangerous, the demonic, what's lurking beyond—that can't be painted with David's palette" (46). Hence, Goya is anything but surprised when told that David, this paragon of reason, after having been imprisoned twice following the downfall of Robespierre, proved capable of "accommodating" himself by offering his services first to the Gironde and later to Napoleon (262). David's development leads Goya to declare that it was only one step from a "market hawker of the revolution," i.e., a superficial poster painter whose works, despite their "formal perfection," have "an empty, facade-like quality" (269), to becoming a painter of "haut-bourgeois businessmen" (273) as well as a "market hawker of the young general" (483). He can see no real difference between these two phases. With such comments, Feuchtwanger's Goya makes it clear how unrealistic, i.e., how lacking in authentic subjectivity, the classicistic idealism of a David appears to him, and that every truly great work of art can only be based on the deeply felt experience of social reality. Toward the end of the novel, he finally attains the realization that artists should neither keep themselves out of the conflicts of their own times nor directly intervene in them, in order to maintain the relative autonomy necessary for the creation of all important works of art.

IV

When this novel appeared in 1951, it indeed enjoyed the commercial success that Feuchtwanger had foreseen. Published by Viking Press in Boston under the title *This is the Hour: A Novel about Goya,* it broke within a few months all records Feuchtwanger had achieved up to that time. It went through numerous printings, was made a "Book of the Month Club" selection, offered in several deluxe editions, translated into twenty-four languages, filmed several times, received enthusiastically in East Germany, and even in the Federal Republic sold over 600,000 copies.[22] The reviews were largely favorable or so superficial that they did not cause any reduction in sales.[23] The only polemics, about which Feuchtwanger reported in a 1951 letter to Arnold Zweig, were issued by outraged Catholics.[24] All in all, this novel achieved the greatest commercial success of any book by Feuchtwanger.[25]

The author was, of course, pleased with the sales, which seemed to confirm his literary hypothesis that it was only possible to achieve both mass success and

a political impact with novels that steered a "middle course" between trivialism and elitism. But in more thoughtful moments in the succeeding years, Feuchtwanger was occasionally troubled by doubts as to whether his *Goya* had really served the cause of reason in the sense of enlightenment. Wasn't this novel's success based largely on the appealing elements of its love story, which constituted the real suspense in this book? Or did it rest also on those political allusions with which he tried to maintain his credentials as a left-liberal author? Of the millions of his readers, how many had really noticed that this novel not only played in the closing years of the 18th century but sought, at least in part, to make the events of that era relevant to the present, in keeping with the principles Feuchtwanger had set forth in his speech on "Sinn und Unsinn des historischen Romans" at the Paris Popular Front Congress in 1935? Who among his readers had noticed that, with his attacks on the Spanish Inquisition, Feuchtwanger was also voicing anger at his constant surveillance by the FBI, at McCarthyism, and at the danger of being called before the House Un-American Activities Committee? Who among them had noticed that, when depicting the world of the Spanish court and the aristocrats who in the act of smiling bare their fangs, he was also exposing the superficially friendly but calculating world of Hollywood with its watchword of "Keep smiling"? Who had noticed that in the novel's excurses on art theory, which were drastically reduced in the American first edition by Benjamin Huebsch, the owner of Viking Press, Feuchtwanger was not only criticizing the heroic classicism of David but also the heroic personality cult of Stalinist neoclassicism? Who had noticed that in many passages he had been attacking not only the feudalism of 18th-century Spain but also the rule of Generalissimo Francisco Franco? Who had noticed that in this novel Feuchtwanger had portrayed his own development from a best-seller novelist to a socially committed writer? And who among them had noticed that in many passages he had written himself into the figure of Goya in a highly autobiographical way, in order to give this work that truly "experienced" quality that he saw as the basis of great historical novels?

Only a small proportion of readers really noticed these critical analogies, but this oversight cannot be blamed solely on the obtuseness of the general public. Examined more closely, this failure of communication is closely tied to the inherent patterning of all historical novels written in a bestseller fashion. On the one hand, their authors often use sex and intrigue to appeal to the broadest possible audience, while, on the other hand, some of them are disappointed when their readers are satisfied with the superficial moments of suspense and pay no attention to the "deeper" problems. Especially for a politically committed author such as Feuchtwanger, this must have been a constant source of disillusionment. Ultimately, he had tried his utmost in his *Goya* novel to bridge and mediate the high and the low, the elitist and the trivial, the sensationalistic and the political. Instead of writing just a bestseller or a highbrow novel that spoke only to those "snobs" interested in "Proust and Kafka," as he put it in a 1950 letter to Arnold Zweig,[26] he had hoped to produce a work in the true interests of the people.[27] Feuchtwanger repeatedly

emphasized that his book's central theme was "Goya's evolution from an artist of commissioned works to an artist who seeks to depict his own experiences."[28] Although he does not advance from a "conforming careerist" to a "revolutionary tribune of the people," as claimed by some later scholars,[29] he nevertheless is an artist who increasingly professes a sociopolitical commitment, thereby becoming a model for all artists conscious of their critical responsibilities.

But Feuchtwanger's hope of creating in Goya a role model worthy of imitation turned out to be illusory, despite the novel's tremendous commercial success. The following reasons can be adduced for this failure: (1) The early 1950s was the most unfavorable time for any leftist or left-liberal to call for a closer connection of art and politics. Not the liberals but McCarthy and his cohorts determined the intellectual climate in the US at that time. And things did not look much different in the other "Western" countries of this era, including West Germany. (2) Novels such as Feuchtwanger's *Goya* could appear in the 1950s only when they so disguised their political message that it remained almost unnoticeable to the ordinary reader. Thus, *Goya* did succeed in reaching many readers, but in a form that undermined its specifically critical intention because of the constraints of commercial mediation. Because of this marketing strategy, the novel undid its own chances for any deeper impact. It seemed too accessible to those intellectuals, snobbish aesthetes, and professional critics accustomed to dividing book production into high and low, or elitist and trivial, whereas the broad masses of the readers who relished a good love story enjoyed precisely this accessibility. (3) Such a novel illustrates perfectly what might be termed the "liberal dilemma." Written by a progressively oriented but, at the same time, well-to-do and internationally respected author, Feuchtwanger's *Goya* treats, with a clearly biographical-autobiographical perspective, the life of an artist held up as exemplary. Upon closer examination, however, what distinguishes Goya turns out to be the experience of a fifty-year-old who, battered by a few hard blows of fate, begins to temper his heedless egotism by seeing in the sufferings of others a reflection of his own hardships.

This may sound somewhat judgmental, but can scarcely be put any other way in light of the moral perspective that informs this novel. Beyond that, a novel about an artist is undoubtedly one of the least-suited genres for championing the political interests of the broad masses. Even with the best of intentions, such a novel will always be dominated by a subjective perspective that cannot be overcome solely by a conscious decision for political commitment, especially in a society such as the one depicted in this novel. Feuchtwanger, of course, saw this developmental process in a much more positive light. He felt himself to be completely "committed" while writing this novel, and identified his strategy of mediation largely with that of Goya. To be sure, as a socially critical but highly subjective liberal, he embraced a type of commitment that valorizes the "few talented ones," as he put it in the *Goya* novel, who are trying "with much cunning and sacrifice" to give the "masses of the others" a small push into the future (406). Indeed, as he put it in the contemporaneous essay "Das Haus der Desdemona oder Größe und

Grenzen historischer Dichtung," he further restricted his concept of commitment to the strength of the individual artist's ability to experience and portray reality.[30] Whereas his friend Brecht had long favored a dialectical appropriation of history, and even Arnold Zweig, his other friend, had always included in his novels a consideration of the material basis, Feuchtwanger, as a good liberal, remained largely on the level of an emotional and psychological appropriation of historical events and figures. As an author interested primarily in ideas, instinctual drives, and feelings, but not in the socioeconomic basis, he saw the historical subject not in the masses, but in the few enlightened intellectuals who believed that, in advancing their individual self-fulfillment, they would be advancing the general fulfillment of mankind. To be sure, Feuchtwanger was farsighted enough to realize at certain moments just how illusory such subjective-liberal hopes are, how they fail to correspond to any social praxis. He therefore wrote to Arnold Zweig on 4 December 1950, after completing the *Goya* novel: "Those who like to reflect on things are alone everywhere, on this side of the ocean or the other. I have the feeling that you as well as I, although we reach an extraordinary number of readers, are writing for only a few."[31]

Translated by James Steakley and the author

Notes

1 Cf. Lion Feuchtwanger—Arnold Zweig, *Briefwechsel: 1933–1958,* ed. Harald von Hofe (Berlin-Weimar, 1984) 1:265. Here and following, all translations of cited material are by Jost Hermand and James Steakley.
2 This according to Alexander Stephan in his address "Lion Feuchtwanger und das FBI," at the Exile Conference at Nashville in April 1991.
3 Cf. Wilhelm von Sternburg, *Lion Feuchtwanger: Ein deutsches Schriftstellerleben* (Königstein, 1984), 305.
4 Cf. Lothar Kahn, "Der arge Weg der Erkenntnis," in *Lion Feuchtwanger: The Man, His Ideas, His Work. A Collection of Critical Essays,* ed. John M. Spalek (Los Angeles, 1972), 203f.
5 Quoted by Sternburg, 307.
6 Cf. letter to Arnold Zweig from late 1948 or early 1949, in *Briefwechsel* 1:516.
7 Printed in *Internationale Literatur* (Moscow), September 1935; reprinted in *Lion Feuchtwanger, ". . . für die Vernunft, gegen die Dummheit und Gewalt,"* ed. Walther Huder et al. (Berlin, 1985), 154–59.
8 Kurt Hiller, *Profile: Prosa aus einem Jahrzehnt* (Paris, 1938), 236f.
9 Cf. Alexander Stephan, *Die deutsche Exilliteratur: 1933–1945* (Munich, 1979), 196ff.
10 Cf. the article "Der Kampf zwischen Liberalismus und Demokratie im Spiegel des Romans der deutschen Antifaschisten" (1938) by Georg Lukács, who here calls for a greater "attention to the needs of ordinary people" in the new historical novel (quoted by Stephan, *Exilliteratur,* 200). Cf. also Ludwig Marcuse, "Die Anklage auf Flucht," *Das neue Tage-Buch* 6 (1936): 131.
11 Cf., among others, Uwe Karl Faulhaber, "Lion Feuchtwanger's Theory of the Historical Novel," in

Lion Feuchtwanger, ed. Spalek, 69–81 and Gudrun Müller, "Der Geschichtsroman deutscher Autoren im Exil," in *Lion Feuchtwanger: Werk und Wirkung,* ed. Rudolf Wolff (Bonn, 1984), 121–44.

12 Cf. Kahn, "Der arge Weg der Erkenntnis," 202f.

13 Cf. especially Klaus Washausen, *Die künstlerische und politische Entwicklung Goyas in Lion Feuchtwangers Roman* (Rudolstadt, 1957); Wilfried Bütow, *Probleme der Gestaltung des historischen Stoffes in der Romantrilogie Lion Feuchtwangers ("Die Füchse im Weinberg," "Goya," "Narrenweisheit") untersucht am Beispiel der Ereignisse und Figuren* (Ph.D. diss., Greifswald, 1966); and Ludwig Maximilian Fischer, *Vernunft und Fortschritt: Geschichtliche Dokumentation und literarische Fiktionalität in Lion Feuchtwangers Werk, dargestellt am Beispiel "Goya"* (Königstein, 1979).

14 This and all following page citations to *Goya* refer to the edition published by Frankfurter Verlagsanstalt (Frankfurt, 1951).

15 Jutta Held, *Francisco de Goya* (Reinbek, 1980), 19.

16 Ibid., 7.

17 Bütow, 131.

18 Cf. Held, 43.

19 Cf. Bütow, 107, and Joseph Pischel, *Lion Feuchtwanger: Versuch über Leben und Werk* (Frankfurt am Main, 1984), 215.

20 Cf. Held, 59.

21 Cf. Ernst Fischer, "Die Wandlungen des Francisco Goya," in his *Auf den Spuren der Wirklichkeit: Essays* (Reinbek, 1968), 165.

22 Cf. Lothar Kahn, *Insight and Action: The Life and Works of Lion Feuchtwanger* (Canbury, 1975), 314.

23 Cf. Frank Dietschreit, *Lion Feuchtwanger* (Stuttgart, 1988), 134.

24 Letter to Arnold Zweig dated 13 July 1951, *Briefwechsel* 2:133.

25 Kahn, "Der arge Weg der Erkenntnis," 215.

26 *Briefwechsel* 2:139.

27 Cf. the considerations in the volume *Popularität und Trivialität,* ed. Reinhold Grimm and Jost Hermand (Frankfurt, 1974).

28 Letter to Arnold Zweig dated 11 June 1951, *Briefwechsel* 2:130.

29 Cf. Wulf Koepke, *Lion Feuchtwanger* (Munich, 1983), 141.

30 Cf. Manfred Keune, "Das Haus der Desdemona: Lion Feuchtwanger's Apologia for a Mimesis of History," in *Lion Feuchtwanger,* ed. Spalek, 83–98.

31 *Briefwechsel* 2:91.

Mediating the Mediation: Rolf Dieter Brinkmann's Concept of the Aesthetic Subject

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A *captatio benevolentiae* for my choice of Rolf Dieter Brinkmann is impossible for two reasons. For one thing, an author who propagated the radical popularization of literature to the point of its de-montage should not be "legitimized" at the outset as an object of literary and literary-historical investigation to be taken seriously. The legitimization of seriousness would indeed have to operate with the standard of "high" culture, and this would mercilessly crumble my object between that very dichotomy of "high" and "low" which, after all, is what is first and foremost under discussion. To apply a standard which is itself the theme would be a *petitio principii* and a surreptitious valuation or—to put it differently—would mean to judge the facts of a case before analyzing it, which is the circumlocution for a prejudgment or prejudice.

For another thing, I am uncertain whether Brinkmann's texts are known beyond a circle of specialists or fans, and if they are, which ones. What should my solicitation of the reader's benevolence be, other than an abstract, rhetorical gesture, if the object of my investigation is unknown or only vaguely known by name? Test drillings in this direction have not been particularly successful. I will attempt to remedy the latter—the supposed lack of familiarity with Brinkmann's work—with an (admittedly poor) enumeration of his biographical dates and his titles.

Rolf Dieter Brinkmann was born in 1940 in the south-Oldenburg Catholic diaspora of Vechta, and lived there for nineteen years, most of them as an outsider. In 1962, after a short time in Essen, he moved to Cologne, married there and became the father of a handicapped son, studied, and wrote. At first, he wrote primarily lyric poetry, later he tried his hand also at other media. In 1972–73, he held a stipend of the Villa Massimo; in 1974, he was Writer-in-Residence at the German Department of the University of Texas in Austin. In 1975, at the age of 35, Brinkmann died in a traffic accident in London.

Brinkmann's work[1] comprises a number of volumes of poems (published between 1962 and 1980),[2] a novel (1968),[3] several stories,[4] three radio plays,[5] a number of essays,[6] four editions of what was then new American poetry in German translation (these, above all, made him familiar to a wider public),[7] and three large posthumous volumes which were edited by his wife Maleen, and which defy clas-

sification by genre. The latter include the following titles: *Rom, Blicke,*[8] *Erkundungen für die Präzisierung des Gefühls für einen Aufstand: Reise-Zeit-Magazin. (Tagebuch),*[9] and *Schnitte.*[10]

Rolf Dieter Brinkmann is one of those poets and writers about whom Emil Staiger warned us in 1966. In a speech at that time which received a good deal of attention, Staiger conjured up with loathing the

> legion of poets who are today spread over the entire western world, whose life's calling is to rummage in the abominable and ordinary. . . . They say that they are true, that they prefer unmerciful evil truth to beautiful comforting illusion. . . . When such poets claim that the cesspool is a picture of the real world, that pimps, prostitutes, and alcoholics are representatives of real, unretouched humanity, then I ask: In what circles do they move?[11]

The answer is easy: Brinkmann moved in precisely those "circles" where poetic transfiguration along the lines of a consolation function of art for the needs of the bourgeois middle class was impossible. Brinkmann went even further: he brusquely rejected even versions of proletarian or socialist-realistic art and, along with them, both their frames of reference, that is to say, the bourgeois and the socialist societies as forms of life.[12] Seen politically and sociologically, Brinkmann was an outsider. Little, very little offered itself to him as a positive point of reference, much less a point of identification—unless it were an outsider such as he was.

Brinkmann's path is, therefore, the perilous path of one who is driven into deeper and deeper isolation, who risks along with the loss of social and ideological coordinates the loss of the subjective *origo* of this system.[13] This is what concerns Brinkmann: namely, the securing of this starting point; or, more exactly, what is important for him is the proof that this starting point is possible at all, accessible, expressible, and operable as a basis for activity and life. That is the meaning of his statement: "Ich will Ich werden, was immer das ist" ("I want to become I, what ever that is").[14]

A daring undertaking indeed, not at all merely a provocative game without commitment—risky for Brinkmann the poet, risky for Brinkmann the person as a whole. Aesthetic experimentation and the securing of one's own existence by opening up authenticity, however utopian, are closely bound together to the extent that an analytical separation is difficult. This, to be sure, lies in the nature of the thing and may become clearer when one dismisses the conventional concept of the aesthetic—even if only within the confines of my considerations.

When I speak here of "aesthetics," I do not mean that which Hegel called "philosophy of the fine arts," nor that which Kant developed in his "critique of [the aesthetic faculty of] judgement." I am referring, rather, to a conception of the aesthetic to which both—Kant and Hegel—objected. There is a glimmer of it in Baumgarten; it becomes basic with Herder; likewise, but applied differently, with Hamann; and the postmodern debate has reactivated it. "Aesthetics" in this—its etymological—meaning signifies the realm of sensate cognition and includes the realm of the primary contact through the senses between subject and world, which is the basis of all fur-

ther processing of perception and cognition. The pivotal point of this process is the act of *aisthesis,* of *sensate cognition.* I do not know whether Brinkmann was familiar with this tradition. It seems to me, however, that this conception of *aisthesis* is a key to the work of this writer. To lift up an object, it is often advisable to apply a lever.

"I want to become I, whatever that is"—who is looking for whom here? Unsure of himself, claiming that there be this I which, because not yet there, can scarcely go in search of itself—that indeed is risky logic. The capitalization (in the German text) of the second "I" ("Ich") is indicative of differences: the *searching* I is an individual, a limited body which is multifariously conditioned and determined. The *sought* I is a subject which—to express it carefully—knows how to deal with conditioning, and then, in its dealings, is able to articulate itself with its determination and outside of it. Without a doubt—what is at stake for Brinkmann is the freedom of the individual, and he sees himself wedged into a purely inescapable bundle of constraints. I will name a few: *semiotic constraints,* which bar the possibility of appropriate expression; *ideological constraints,* which block the path to the imagination of a society of free agents; *historical constraints,* which by tradition cause the present and the future to appear as the mere result of the past, rather than as intentionally determinable history; *economic constraints,* whose rationality of purpose devours every kind of creativity. In short, what is given in the presence of perception is just as mediated as the constitution of the one who perceives. It is Brinkmann's intention to mediate this mediation. The goal of this mediated mediation is a break with multiple determination through its presentation. My own field and interests urge me to limit myself to aspects of language and literature as well as their implications. More precisely, I have concentrated on Rolf Dieter Brinkmann's explicitly theoretical or theoretically applicable statements about literature, language, and their presuppositions.[15]

Brinkmann's engagement, toward the end of the 1960s, with the new American poetry such as Frank O'Hara's, Ron Padgett's, and Charles Bukowski's derives from his fascination with it because of the directness with which the texts allow access to that which is presented. In his introduction to the German edition of O'Hara's *Lunch Poems,* he states:

> The most striking characteristic of O'Hara's poems is their immediate presence. Each poem is immediately there.[16]

Shortly thereafter, in the same text, he continues:

> A sensibility is shown which perceives the present things and scenes as if it were for the first time, without being bothered by prejudices consisting of acquired scruples. In this connection, one should point out that such a look is by no means focused on the familiar functional nexus, but rather refers to the author's proper perspective—it is the last look, which, again, is like the first one, because it does not deny that whatever is gathered is surface, now and now and now and now . . . we live in the surface of images, we constitute this surface, on the reverse side there is nothing—it is blank. Therefore, one must finally accept this surface and take seriously the pictorial char-

> acter of everyday life by accepting the environment immediately, and decomposing the convention [known as] 'literature'. . .[17]

Here is a plea for two kinds of things. On the one hand, for the disautomatization of perception and, on the other, for the unconventionalization of literature. The latter, as we shall see, goes so far as to demand that literature should be abolished. For both of these points, as is known, there were forerunners—Russian formalism and surrealism, for example—and, furthermore, at the end of the 1960s, the discussion about the "death of literature" had broken out anew.[18] And yet, it seems to me that Brinkmann cannot, because of these remarks, be simply dismissed as an epigone.

The need for intimacy with that which is perceptible implies the need for its presence. All of that which, as individual habit or as social convention, reduces the act of perception to an act of re-cognition appears as a hindrance to this presence. The criticism occasionally leveled against Brinkmann, which attempts to take to task the required attention to the "surface" of the perceived as a sign of superficiality on the part of the perceiver, misses the mark from the beginning. Poetry as a convention conditions the recipient, just as advertising and the media condition the consumer, and it exonerates him/her unasked from obligations to have independent commerce with his/her capabilities. "Poetry," as Brinkmann states in one passage, "poetry has nothing to do with poems. Poetry sometimes is a chaotic and ordinary nightmare."[19] It is understood that in front of this backdrop the question of "high" or "low" literature cannot be posed at all, because "high" and "low" are differentiations which can have meaning only within the existing system—the convention of "poetry." Brinkmann's interest is directed towards matters which are prepoetic in the sense that they are determined to lay bare their basis, the *aisthesis*.

Brinkmann tried to approach the required undistorted view, the "Neues Sehen," even before his sojourn in Rome. I choose as an example the short poem with the title "Photographie" from 1963–64, which has repeatedly been discussed in secondary literature:

Mitten	[In the middle
auf der Straße	of the street
die Frau	the woman
in dem	in the
blauen	blue
Mantel.[20]	coat.]

Whether this image as a result is worthy of being communicated can be disputed with justification, the worthiness of the process of representation cannot.[21] Thus, the observation of one critic concerning the simplicity of this poem,[22] which can scarcely be undercut, applies only to the *product* and the content, whose plainness as data, as something given, draws attention to the simplicity as fact, as something made. Brinkmann is attempting to bring the suspended moment into view by means of the linguistic fixation of a closely focused optical impression. What is relevant here is not what is seen, but rather the seeing. This selection of one sense

and—within that sense—of one impression points to an excluding, a negative aesthetics as basis of the text. It is not an aesthetics of the negative that is meant, but rather an aesthetics which calls to mind its own foundation: *aisthesis* as a specially performed act of sensate cognition on the part of the subject within the respective presence. The title "Photographie" may in this connection indicate, not so much the description of a photograph or a detail thereof, as, rather, the intention of arresting a moment via selection, as photography does. Brinkmann often emphasized specifically that what is meant is the uniqueness of the moment of the exposure, not the uniqueness of that which is represented; more specifically, he intended in this way to allow mimesis to turn into poiesis. One example may suffice here:

> Everybody is familiar with the situation in which, on the point of leaving . . ., you accidentally look at something which becomes a very precise, solid, but also a very transparent picture behind which there is nothing. . . . Here, the meticulous look at, the correct attitude toward, the coffee dregs in the cup is at stake. A picture is formed, or an operation which never existed like this before—most immediate voices.[23]

The sloppy aperçu of the "correct attitude toward the coffee dregs in the cup" formulates a poetics of simplicity which, however, in no way constitutes a simple poetics. The banality of the everyday object is counterbalanced by the specification of the "correct attitude": namely, of an attitude through which the banal as an object of perception, which has been brought into view, becomes transparent. Attention is thus focused on the process of perceiving the object itself, the "surface": that is, a (potential) *signifiant* without a *signifié*. Brinkmann's insistence upon the momentary nature of the sensation formulates exactly what is of consequence to him: the subjectively experienced lucidity of the here and now, which tolerates no discursive reduction in retrospect or any "signification" in advance.

One cannot argue with this position either from a purely substantial or from a purely formal point of view. The notion of the banal is understood incorrectly if it is viewed as a reproduction of the everyday or of that which is presumed to be the "simple." Brinkmann is rather concerned with this "simple" as convention and constraint, whereby a considerable complication comes into play whose representational principle is alienation—but an alienation which not only allows the represented familiar to appear unfamiliar, but rather has as its object the process of production of self-evident simplicity. That which is represented is no longer bound up in a system of assigned meanings, because precisely these assignments themselves are the theme and the problem—the "rubbish." Expressed differently, Brinkmann is working on the semiotic question of how a liberated semiosis is possible.

The perception of the "surface" and its representation serve the uncoupling of that which is perceivable by the senses and that which is meant thereby, of the *signifiant* and the *signifié*. The "woman in the blue coat" is an optical étude which only exhibits the phenomenon but does not charge the phenomenon semantically. With respect to this text, "to mean" signifies as much as "to indicate" something, without semanticizing it further. The constitution of the sign (the text) is the consti-

tution of the imaginative object, which in turn refuses any further semantic charge, i.e., semiosis. In other words, the hetero-referential sign *is* the non-referential object. In this case, the conventional "poetic" appearance of the image in the arrangement of the print is supposed to disappoint the expectations of the reader, to assign to that which is represented a surplus of non-explicit meaning or sense. The goal of this disappointment might be to divert reflection away from that which is represented, and to guide it to the process of representing as well as to the process of impeded reception. Once the reader has taken this path, poems of the type of "Photographie" are used up, or have fulfilled their purpose: the reader has been put on a par with the author, or is himself potentially the author.[24]

The simple, the everyday, is for this purpose exactly the best—for two reasons. First of all, the everyday is easily at the disposal of many people. This is the aspect which underscores the early Brinkmann's affinity for pop art. What later separates Brinkmann from pop art—and he specifically distanced himself from it—is the fact that he does not attempt to reclaim from the everyday the culinary-"poetic," but rather, on the contrary, wants to expose the "poetic" styling of the culinary. For Brinkmann, the impetus to write is not the attitude of amazement degenerated to gaping, but rather disgust.

The other reason why common material is the best for Brinkmann's purpose is the fact that the thematization of everyday, imposed experience is a field where the threshold between the relevant and the irrelevant is dislocated. From the perspective of conventional poetry, the everyday rather tends toward the irrelevant, unless insight into something "higher" can be gained in it. The distance between the ordinariness of the represented and the unexpected insight would here be the measure for "high" and "low." Brinkmann for his part reaches back predominantly to easily available semiotic material, as can be seen particularly in his large posthumous prose texts and collages. What is, by general agreement, pre-reflectively accepted is for Brinkmann the decisive problem. "High" and "low" are for him irrelevant attributes of identically-valid, indifferent material. Documents of history—such as the Roman Forum—are for him "dead meanings,"[25] "rubbish"[26]—that is, prestructured material of perception that simultaneously imposes on the perceiving subject, along with recognition of the parts, also the system within which they carry meaning. In order to be able to break through this connection—a kind of semio-cultural mechanics—Brinkmann chooses the method of collage:

> gathering, cutting up, rearranging by means of new insights gained during the process of gathering and cutting up, which is equivalent to molding, that is, expressing.[27]

Brinkmann develops with this a high sensibility for the repulsive and ugly and for the particular, which is experienced as senseless:

> The sensate perception is congested by what is perceived . . .[28]
>
> I am only able to speak if I do not like something.[29]

He asks:

> Did you ever realize how awfully dismembered the present is if you cut up one moment into its separate elements and if you then reassemble them?[30]

And he states:

> Thus it is that for me the whole and the panorama disintegrate into nothing but isolated facts.[31]

These are a few explicit statements concerning the problem of how one should work according to Brinkmann's premises.

The three named characteristics of Brinkmann's motivation for writing and experiential perspective, however, are elements of a theory of sensate cognition. The only reason one does not connect them with an aesthetic theory is that they seem to bear witness to exactly the opposite. The *repulsive* is the counterpart to that which is attractive to the senses, to which attention is actually devoted.[32] The *ugly* is the counterpart to the beautiful as a successful sensate cognition; that means, the ugly is of necessity an aesthetic mode, too. The *experience of the particular,* after all, is the realm of primary *aisthesis,* which is realized in the concentration of the senses on a present and individual item.

Precisely the latter, the particularization, is for Brinkmann the starting point, which he attempts to elicit as the *origo* and as the pivotal point for his own way of writing and of perceiving. His restless collecting of impressions, of that which he read and of reflections and their processing, documents that the securing of his own perception and subject-constitution, aesthetics, and subjective existence-ascertaining are intimately tied together, so much so that Brinkmann's writing does not reproduce that which he experienced; rather, both living and writing tend to identify.[33] The populist reproach that the members of the avant-garde are not masters of their craft—that is to say, in our case, that Brinkmann could not write—is measured according to the understanding of that which is the "craft." Brinkmann, to stay with this image, is not working in his three large prose collages on a piece of work, but rather on the tool. His notations are prolegomena to the constitution of an aesthetic subject. He envisions as a project a second novel, which does not begin with the introduction of characters who carry the action, but rather is to be a novel that carries out the constitution of the subject at the end of a scattered and multifaceted text: "For me it is awful to see someone begin a novel with characters!!"[34]

But Brinkmann is far from producing a second novel, not only because he rejects literature as it presents itself to him as an institution, but also because he cannot impartially use the language available. The fact that words are "like moldy fungi, parasites of consciousness,"[35] and the fact that precisely he, who is tirelessly writing, is lacking in words—these are not the only thing which he has in common with Hofmannsthal's fictitious Lord Chandos.[36] Chandos, too, does not lament loss of language, but rather, in his letter to Francis Bacon, justifies his renunciation of the language at his disposal with the remark that it forces the sub-

ject to leave himself out of account.[37] Moments of lucid spontaneity allow him to suspect that there must be another language, that "a kind of feverish thinking" must be possible, "but thinking in a material which is more immediate, more liquid, and more fervid than words can be," by means of which the I is led, not, as previously, into an abyss, "but rather somehow into myself and into the deepest lap of peace."[38] This is "a language of which I do not know even a single word, a language in which the mute things talk to me, and in which I someday may possibly justify myself in the grave before an unknown judge."[39]

The common ground between Chandos and Brinkmann lies in their desire for an experience of reality which allows the subject an intimate participation and does not dictate for him the role of an extraneous observer—extraneous for the reason that the means of access are not his.[40] The desire itself arises out of the disconcertedness about what reality is, a shock which includes, along with doubt about the adequacy of the cognitive instrument, also the one who is perceiving, if not doubt concerning the legitimacy of his desire, then, nevertheless, doubt concerning his epistemological coordinates. However, whereas for Lord Chandos it could not be determined clearly whether he should attribute lucid experiences of the moment to the spirit or to the body,[41] for Brinkmann it was plain that it is physical experience which is distorted, determined, and crippled. For this reason, his attention is also, unlike that of Lord Chandos, not focused on the whole, but rather on the individual, as far as it presents itself to him. Brinkmann wants "to see what one sees, and not see what one wants to see,"[42] for the will to see is perverted by convention and semiotic constraint. He promises: "I am going to lead you to a place where there is nothing more to say!"[43] and he states:

> what is at stake is the consciousness of the body / who occupies the inner space? who is controlling the ideas and emotions? . . . Gradually, I learn to understand the decisive questions from a corporeal point of view.[44]

He feels himself "pursued physically from the brain!!"[45]

Again the hindrance to authentic *aisthesis* is bemoaned, and Brinkmann extends the circle of those who are responsible for it even further. His statement "Now is yesterday is now is tomorrow is yesterday? 'Let me out of there!'"[46] undoubtedly points to the historical and biographical preformation of the respective present, whereby an *aisthesis* specific to the particular subject is prevented. Here, too, Brinkmann goes further by incorporating, with increasing horror, results of paleoanthropology and ethology into his considerations:[47]

> since the time when I found out to what extent compulsion is immanent in each single body, how much biology determines the cells, each one for itself, cell by cell, and how much the body's conduct and expression is determined, since then I first shook with horror, then with wrath, and then this radical anger against everybody who blathers about revolution and social change![48]

In view of this perspective—it is that of sociobiology—every searching for a new language, for a new art, quickly becomes obsolete. Radically, Brinkmann forges

ahead in pursuit of the authenticity of the aesthetic subject through the mediation of its conditionality to the point where his own activity seems a determinate illusion.

Peter Handke had found his way *within the literary discourse* from the experience of the "chaotic world of isolated facts"[49] via the "desire for coherence"[50] to a poetological concept. The wave of autobiographies of the 1970s occurred mainly under the sign of conventional narrative method and even reached the point of plain literary naiveté. Brinkmann can be classified as belonging neither here nor simply in the New Subjectivity ("Neue Subjektivität") of the end of the 1970s.

Instead of all this, the writer Brinkmann promises: "I am going to lead you to that place where there is nothing more to say!"[51]: namely, to that point where semiotic convention is not valid, into the unused, into the "calming without words."[52] Non-occupied areas are sometimes extravagantly celebrated by Brinkmann in his description of snowcovered plains, fallow lands, cloudy skies, light, stillness. This evasive movement into the unoccupied, the uncultivated, is a propaedeutic program. The imputation of escapism is here inappropriate. The house in Tuscany or intellectuals' bucolics on the edge of the Lüneburg Heath is no solution for Brinkmann. Nature is for our author rather "the trace of the nonidentical of things, being spellbound by universal identity,"[53] as Adorno formulated it—which is not to say that Brinkmann should be interpreted by way of Adorno's "aesthetic theory."

This utopian view of Brinkmann, to be sure, is difficult to think of in connection with evolutionary determination. Nevertheless, developments of evolutionary epistemology seem to me to suggest a possible way out of the aporia, developments which Brinkmann did not live long enough to take notice of.

We cannot say that Brinkmann's project failed for that reason. His attempt to mediate the mediation of common experiences through evidence of their conditioning, belongs in the long tradition of attempts to deal with differing, that is, historical, types of rationality. In his poem "Saturday Evening Song in Cologne," Brinkmann quotes with affirmation Johann Gottfried Herder, who in his time had seriously taken to task various forms of rationality. Brinkmann's statement is:

> . . . I am reading: "Shadowy concepts,
> Half-ideas, we hardly see and feel anymore," that was
> 1773 in Germany. The sense is nonsense, 1973. . . .[54]

Here Brinkmann understood Herder's criticism very precisely. The passage which he quotes, "shadowy concepts, half-ideas," is to be found in Herder's work in the following context:

> You know from travel descriptions how strongly and firmly the savages are accustomed to express themselves. Always conceiving sensuously, clearly, and vividly the object they want to express: feeling immediately and exactly the issue they are addressing: not by shadowy concepts, half-ideas, merely symbolic understanding of letters . . ., not at all distracted by all this, nor—and even less—corrupted by mannerism, servile expectations, timidly sneaking politics, and confusing premeditations—blissfully ignorant of all these weakenings of the mind, they grasp the complete idea with

> the complete word, and vice versa. Either they keep silence, or, when affected, they talk with an unpremeditated firmness, certainty, and beauty, which all well-educated Europeans always had to admire and—which they could not touch.[55]

By quoting Herder, Brinkmann celebrates the bicentennial of the freezing point of the *aisthesis*.

Translated by Cora Lee Nollendorfs

Notes

1 For more comprehensive bibliographical references, see Sibylle Späth, *Rolf Dieter Brinkmann* (Stuttgart, 1989).
2 Cf. the volume of the collected poems, Rolf Dieter Brinkmann, *Standphotos: Gedichte 1962–1970* (Reinbek, 1980). Also see Rolf Dieter Brinkmann, *Westwärts 1 & 2: Gedichte* (Reinbek, 1975).
3 Brinkmann, *Keiner weiß mehr: Roman* (1968; repr., Reinbek, 1970).
4 Cf. Brinkmann, *Erzählungen* (Reinbek, 1985).
5 *Auf der Schwelle* (1971), *Der Tierplanet* (1972), and *Besuch in einer sterbenden Stadt* (1973). Revised versions are in Brinkmann, *Der Film in Worten: Prosa, Erzählungen, Essays, Hörspiele, Fotos, Collagen 1965–1974* (Reinbek, 1982).
6 E.g., in *Der Film in Worten*, ibid.
7 *Acid: Neue amerikanische Szene*, ed. Rolf Dieter Brinkmann and Ralf Reiner Rygulla (1969; repr., Reinbek, 1983); *Silverscreen: Neue amerikanische Lyrik* (Cologne, 1969); Frank O'Hara, *Lunch Poems und andere Gedichte* (Cologne, 1969). For the German reception of American poetry at that time, see Hans Dieter Schäfer, "Zusammenhänge der deutschen Gegenwartslyrik," in *Deutsche Gegenwartsliteratur: Ausgangspositionen und aktuelle Entwicklungen*, ed. Manfred Durzak (Stuttgart, 1981), 166–203; esp. 185.
8 "Rome, Views" (Reinbek, 1979).
9 "Reconnaissance for the Precision of Sense for an Uprising: Travel-Time-Magazine (Diary)" (Reinbek, 1987).
10 "Cuts" (Reinbek, 1988).
11 Emil Staiger, "Literatur und Öffentlichkeit," *Sprache im technischen Zeitalter* 22 (1967): 90–97; here, 94f. Here and following, all translations of cited material are by Cora Lee Nollendorfs.
12 "I hate the socialists as well as their counterpart, I loathe their clinch, mutual determination! How I loathe their unsensuousness which is in no way inferior to the unsensuousness of the overall technical utilitarianism!" *Rom, Blicke*, 82.
13 Cf., with reference to Brinkmann's poetry, Gerhard W. Lampe, *Ohne Subjektivität: Interpretationen zur Lyrik Rolf Dieter Brinkmanns vor dem Hintergrund der Studentenbewegung* (Tübingen, 1983).
14 *Rom, Blicke*, 184.
15 Cf. also Holger Schenk, *Das Kunstverständnis in den späteren Texten Rolf Dieter Brinkmanns* (Frankfurt am Main/Bern/New York, 1986).
16 Brinkmann, *Der Film in Worten*, 215.
17 Ibid.
18 Cf. Jost Hermand, *Die Kultur der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: 1965–1985*, revised and corrected edition (Frankfurt am Main/Berlin, 1990), 83ff., esp. 87.
19 "Sonntagsgedicht," in *Westwärts 1 & 2*, 62.
20 *Standphotos*, 52.
21 This has already been pointed out by Erwin Koppen, *Literatur und Photographie: Über Geschichte und Thematik einer Medienentwicklung* (Stuttgart, 1987), 231.

22 Cf. Martin Grzimek, "'Bild' und 'Gegenwart' im Werk Rolf Dieter Brinkmanns: Ansätze einer Differenzierung," *Text + Kritik* 71 (1981): 24–36; here, 26.
23 Brinkmann, "Notiz" (to *Die Piloten*, 1968), in *Standphotos*, 185.
24 Cf. Späth, 46.
25 *Rom, Blicke*, 56.
26 Ibid., 58.
27 Ibid., 171.
28 Brinkmann, "Notizen und Beobachtungen vor dem Schreiben eines zweiten Romans 1970/74," *Der Film in Worten*, 275–95, here, 278.
29 *Erkundungen*, 193.
30 *Rom, Blicke*, 14.
31 Ibid., 184.
32 Goethe's *Italian Voyage* is frequently the target of Brinkmann's harsh critique. "Bearing in mind what has been written about Italy, particularly in German and by Germans, and considering what they really have seen, take Goethe, silly fool [*blöder Kerl*], found everything good, won something noncommittal from each and everything—an artist, after all?" *Rom, Blicke*, 373. For Brinkmann's *Rom, Blicke* as a critical counterpart to the literature about travels in Italy, see Wolfgang Adam, "Arkadien als Vorhölle: Die Destruktion des traditionellen Italien-Bildes in Rolf Dieter Brinkmanns *Rom, Blicke*," *Euphorion* 83 (1989): 226–45. Manfred Beller's essay in *arcadia* 17 (1982): 154–70 seems to me not worthy of discussion.
33 Cf. Späth, 92f.
34 *Erkundungen*, 197
35 Ibid., 182, column b.
36 Among others, Adam refers to this context. See also Michael Braun, "Poesie ohne Wörter: Die Sprachkrise des Rolf Dieter Brinkmann," *Sprache im technischen Zeitalter* 90 (1984): 145–52. For the abundance of words expressing the speechlessness of Lord Chandos, see Christian Hart Nibbrig, *Rhetorik des Schweigens: Versuch über den Schatten literarischer Rede* (Frankfurtam Main, 1981), 157.
37 Cf. Hugo von Hofmannsthal, "Ein Brief (1902)," in his *Erzählungen. Erfundene Gespräche und Briefe. Reisen = Gesammelte Werke in zehn Einzelbänden*, ed. Bernd Schoeller in consultation with Rudolf Hirsch (Frankfurt am Main, 1979) 7: 461–72.
38 Hofmannsthal, "Ein Brief," 471.
39 Ibid., 472.
40 "[D]efense by wording is the only thing that makes him [Brinkmann] appear as a subject," said Peter Handke in his laudatio on the occasion of the (posthumous) awarding of the Petrarca Prize to Brinkmann; quoted in Braun, "Poesie ohne Wörter," 150.
41 Cf. ibid., 470.
42 *Rom, Blicke*, 374.
43 *Erkundungen*, 83.
44 Ibid., 140, columns b and c.
45 Ibid., 190 ("vom Kopf aus körperlich gejagt!!").
46 Ibid., 228.
47 There seems to exist a connection between Brinkmann's reception of Frank O'Hara's "Personism: A Manifesto" and the writings of Rudolf Bilz about paleoanthropology.
48 *Rom, Blicke*, 192.
49 Heinz Ludwig Arnold, "Gespräch mit Peter Handke," *Text + Kritik* 24/24a (1978): 32.
50 Peter Handke, *Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire* (Frankfurtam Main, 1980), 100.
51 *Rom, Blicke*, 374.
52 Ibid., 350.
53 Theodor W. Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie* (Frankfurt am Main, 1970) = *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann 7:114.
54 *Westwärts 1 & 2*, 120. Brinkmann quotes from Johann Gottfried Herder, "Auszug aus einem Briefwechsel über Ossian und die Lieder alter Völker [1773]." The citation in Herder, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 5, 2d ed., ed. Bernhard Suphan (repr. Hildesheim/New York, 1978/79), 181, 183.
55 Ibid., 181f.

Mediating Sexuality: Elfriede Jelinek and Manfred Bieler

Various questions posed around the dichotomy of high and low culture are certainly played out in contemporary literary texts. Manfred Bieler's Still wie die Nacht *and Elfriede Jelinek's* Lust, *both published in the fall of 1989, work through a conception of sexuality that draws familiar definitions into question. Their controversial approaches propelled both texts* and *authors into the public forum, where their various qualities were debated. We present here two separate discussions focusing on such issues as subject-positioning within the text, the possibility of negotiating a "medium" sphere, the structure of violence in society as visualized through the discourse of sexuality, and possible moments of resistance within the text. By examining these issues, the two discussions treat the difficulties inherent in negotiating mediation or categorization.*

Lust and Jelinek: Violating the Commonsensical

ELLEN RISHOLM AND ERIN CRAWLEY

The notion of "mediation" is somewhat perturbing; it implies negotiation, the settling of differences, the rewriting of that which disrupts into that which can be restrained and, thereby, circumscribed. This act of dickering maintains the integrity of the participating parties (high and low culture, eroticism and pornography, sexuality and the female body). But Elfriede Jelinek refuses to dicker in this manner. In her desire to write a female pornography, she found it impossible to negotiate a language which was already occupied by the male construction of sexuality. As Jelinek—drawing upon a common phrase—points out: "Man kann nicht neuen Wein in alte Schläuche füllen" ("One cannot pour new wine into old skins"). Pornography is not at issue here; instead, *Lese-Lust* and *Schreib-Lust* ("the pleasure of reading and the pleasure of writing") inscribe the text through the play of language as the commonsensical is subverted.

The arrival of *Lust* on the market was carefully orchestrated down to the last detail. Interviews and published excerpts preceded its appearance, piquing public interest. Cloth-bound, printed on expensive paper, *Lust* was ripe with the promise of consumption while adorned with the accoutrements of high culture. In a round-table discussion of *Lust,* Marcel Reich-Ranicki put it most succinctly: "Aber das Entscheidende, worauf es ankommt bei Büchern über Sexualthemen—ich meine natürlich die Belletristik—bietet sie [Jelinek] natürlich gar nicht. Das Entscheidende, worauf es ankommt [ist] zu zeigen, was die Frau oder der Mann oder gar beide während dieser Sachen empfinden."[1] This statement reveals a great deal about Reich-Ranicki's expectations. What Reich-Ranicki anticipates is a pornography that, because it is written by a woman, finally exhibits not only the sexual act, but also reveals what is inside a woman's head. The fulfillment—we might say—of his desire to enter her completely is tantalizingly close yet utterly frustrated.

Jelinek strikes back. She allows for no simple consumption of the text, refusing to negotiate an accessible pornography. Heavily influenced by Roland Barthes, she concurs with his "rejection of story, anecdote, psychology of motivation, and signification of objects." But, rather than playing with language in a subtle way, as the modernists in Barthes's analyses did, she enjoys the hyperbolic and employs excess as a decisive force in the text. The pleasure generated in the process of reading results from this play of language, not from the expected voyeuristic penetration and devouring of a pornographic text.

In light of this coitus interruptus, the frustration voiced by most reviewers becomes apparent. They adamantly insist that a different work should have been written, and they even go so far as to say how: "Besser wäre ein Roman über die Liebe gewesen. Oder über den Haß."[2] "Die Autorin . . . hat sich den Roman, den grausamen, den sie hätte schreiben können, versagt um des Traktes willen, sich ehrlich umsonst gequält."[3] "[D]as sind doch keine normalen Vorgänge!"[4] "Es muß doch ein bißchen Spaß dabei sein."[5] "Das hätte Lust sein können . . ." (followed by what the book should have been).[6] One of the most disturbing aspects for the critics is that the work does not allow for any identification. Volker Hage, for instance, searches for a subject position in the text with which the reader can identify: "Jelinek läßt die Puppen tanzen—aber es bleiben eben Puppen." He goes on to say that, as pornography, it may not be so easily forgotten, but "als Stück Literatur ist es so trostlos und marionettenhaft wie seine Figuren." "Da dem Buch alles Spielerische fehlt, aber auch die psychologische Raffinesse . . . ist *Lust* nichts als eine einzige große Enttäuschung, ein Absturz, ein Fiasko."[7] A great deal of energy is expended on explaining where the author went wrong and what should have been written—for easier consumption.

Unable to access the text, the critics turn their attention to Elfriede Jelinek in the hopes of probing and uncovering the author. But the authentic Jelinek is a myth. The author plays with familiar constructs: on the one hand, the suffering, enigmatic artist and, on the other, the media personality—there is a star quality about the way she positions herself. In this manner, she collapses high culture's notion of the creative, private individual with mass culture's reproduction of the star as public property.[8]

This Jelinek persona is meticulously assembled. She claims a place of her own within the modernist Jewish-Austrian tradition that was annihilated by the Nazis. Paradoxically, this place no longer exists. She tells stories of a child genius: the suffering Jewish father who goes insane; the repressive, authoritarian Catholic mother who reads Goethe to her; dance, piano, and organ lessons; a breakdown at the age of 18—all of which sets the creative process in motion. She reiterates again and again that this process nearly destroys her ("Ich bin fast krepiert daran"). Precisely the repetition of the stories, always the same, belies any sense of an authentic autobiography. Most reviewers, feminists included, attack Jelinek for failing to provide any clearly circumscribed subject position that allows for identification. Moreover, Jelinek herself cannot be easily contained as she exploits her positionality. She refuses to assume the didactic role inevitably assigned to women artists. The canonized Ingeborg Bachmann also does not fulfill a didactic role, but she has nevertheless been elevated to the realm of high art. Perhaps this is precisely because she can be defined as an ill woman, thus reducible to a socially acceptable subject position.

The image that Elfriede Jelinek puts forth in the media undercuts the illusion of a private, intimate glimpse into her soul. This has done nothing to stem the tide of interviews, however, each hoping for a new angle of penetration. Every inter-

view, every review is accompanied by one or more photographs of Jelinek. Posed, the scene carefully orchestrated, she objectifies herself through the lenses of the camera. She is never caught unawares; every picture is artificial with only a suggestion of intimacy that proves deceptive and leaves one dissatisfied. The string of questions posed by the interviewer delves into the most personal aspects of her life, and no question is left unanswered. A respected male author of the high culture variety would never be grilled in this manner: "Why didn't you have any children?" "What turns you on?" "Do you watch porn videos?" "Do you take notes while you have sex?" She becomes the text *Lust* and must answer for, and dispel, the frustrations it has produced. The first interview might offer the illusion of truth, but further interviews make it apparent that Jelinek has a different agenda in mind. She frustrates anew by disrupting any sense of the enigmatic artist, answering everything and anything. Stars are, after all, public property and must satisfy consumer needs. By playing these two constructs off of each other—the artist and the star—Jelinek, in a postmodern gesture, deconstructs the validity of both categories.

Nor does *Lust* allow for neat categorization. These same interviewers and reviewers disfigure and reduce the text to a simple story. (Hermann is the director of a paper factory in the Alps. Gerti, his wife, watches over home and son in between sadistic, abusive sexual encounters with Hermann. After a rather pathetic attempt to free herself through a fling with a sportsman, Gerti is retrieved by her husband and brought home, where she kills her son.) *Lust,* however, exceeds the restraints imposed upon it by such reductive narratives. Even though many innovative aesthetic strategies employed in the text are recognized, they are discounted as insignificant. Jelinek's sophisticated use of language is acknowledged at the same time that she is accused of having written a simple tract with a banal message: sex is no longer possible between men and women. In fact, the text precludes any moral imperative. Non-reducible and fragmented, *Lust* obstructs this drive to uncover a message-oriented linear narrative. Therefore, many reviewers are simply left with the conviction that *Lust* is unsuccessful or fails—as what, is never made clear.

But the text leaves its mark; even as the reviewers write about *Lust,* the process of repression and reduction leaves gaping contradictions. The complexity of the text cannot be smoothed over in an attempt to deny the multiple systems of brutality interpolated in *Lust.* Violence and the threat of violence are intertwined with the mechanisms of repressive social structures that traverse the body. As the place where violence is exercised, the body becomes the site where such discourses as work, religion, ecology, sexuality, the media, sports, and the home are produced. Discourses can be understood as language systems that both delimit and open up possibilities for transgressions. In *Lust,* it is language which cuts through and realigns patterns of thought, modes of thinking. The myths of everyday life are evident—to quote Barthes—"in the decorative display of *what-goes-without-saying.*"[9] And in the text, the sex act is the vehicle that brings all these discourses into play as they converge on the body where they collide, throwing the obvious into question.

This is not accomplished by uncovering, revealing, unveiling, or exposing any "hidden" social truths. The discourses are on the surface, colliding with, and transgressing, their limits. In *Lust,* the reshuffling of metaphors, the subversion of common idioms and clichés, punning, the invoking of old masters, all converge in constellations that reassemble social realities. Violence is not a "hidden" truth, but rather permeates all of these discourses, violating its own containment in socially acceptable categories. For example, the notion that marriage is prostitution is hardly earth-shattering. It is the language in *Lust* which violently transgresses conventions: "Wie gern wohnt das Eigentum bei uns. Es kann sich auf keinen besseren Platz setzen als unter unsere Geschlechtsteile, die darüber klaffen wie die Klippen über dem Strom. Dafür bekommt diese Frau jeden Monat bar das Leben auf den Tisch geknallt für ihren Alltagsherd."[10] Images of cliffs above the stream with sexual parts clapped open above them, property living with "us," the monthly cash payment—or life—slammed down on the table (in return for her mundane little oven), all, in juxtaposition, force the ruptures where discourses cross. There is a confrontation of images as sex organs are superimposed on the pristine Austrian landscape. The odd metaphor of a woman as an "oven for the everyday" brings together her functions as sexual body and as keeper of the home.

Obviously it is difficult, if not impossible, to re-state the text. It cannot be dissected and then analyzed under a microscope, because there is nothing to discover. The text can neither be consumed (as low culture) nor picked over and interpreted (as high culture). The passages do not aim at a subtlety that would undermine their radical moment. The following longer passage speaks for itself:

> Der Direktor ist unermüdlich aufgestachelt von seinem Fleisch und den Frechheiten der Presse. Er nimmt sich Freiheiten heraus, gern z.B. uriniert er, wie es Hunde tun, gegen seine Frau, nachdem er aus ihr und ihren Kleidern einen kleinen Berg gebaut hat, damit es steiler mit ihm bergab geht. Die Skala der Lust ist nach oben hin offen, dafür werden wir keinen Richter brauchen. Der Mann benutzt die Frau wie das Papier, das er herstellt. Er sorgt für das Wohl und das Wehe in seinem Haus, reißt seinen Schwanz gierig aus der Tüte, noch ehe er die Tür zugeworfen hat. Stopft ihn der Frau noch warm vom Fleischer in den Mund, daß ihr Gebiß knirscht. Selbst wenn Gäste zum Abendessen ihr Licht in sein Gemüt tragen, wispert er seiner Frau Nichtigkeiten über ihre Geschlechtsteile ins Ohr.[11]

The repeated penetration of Gerti's body is a device drawn from pornographic texts, the sex act described ad nauseum. In an article entitled "'Frenchwomen,' Stop Trying," Luce Irigaray asks of the generic pornographer: "*What fantasy of a closed, solid, virginal body to be forced open* underlies such a representation, and practice, of sexuality? In this view, the body's pleasure always results from a forced entry—preferably bloody—into an *enclosure.* A *property?*"[12] "Property" *(Eigentum)* is constituted through the act of violation, and this is a fantasy set in motion in *Lust.* But is gratification achieved with the establishment of ownership? The female body becomes a sacred vessel—or as Jelinek puts it: "Sie ist Fleisch geworden und hat unter uns gewohnet."[13] And throughout the text, this hol(e)y

body is to be dissected in the search for truth. The violence inherent in the belief that truth is a secret to be uncovered is apparent in the rending of flesh. The director begins his search for buried pleasure: "Der Vater wirft sich auf die Sparbüchse der Mutter, wo ihre Heimlichkeiten sich aufhalten, um vor ihm verborgen gehalten zu werden."[14] Once Gerti has been established as the keeper of secrets, the dissection begins. "Er zieht das Geschlecht seiner Frau auseinander, ob er sich auch leserlich dort eingeschrieben hat."[15] Or: "Wie ein Frosch muß die Frau ihre Beine weitlich anwinkeln, damit ihr Mann in sie möglichst weit, bis ins Landesgericht für Strafsachen, hineinschauen und untersuchen kann."[16] But he only meets with frustration: "Er öffnet Gerti und wirft sie hinter sich gleich wieder zu. Nichts gefunden!"[17]

The above scenario is endlessly repeated; Gerti is a consumable, but always regenerative, item: "Diese Frau ist zum Anbeißen und Abbeißen da. Er möchte ihre untere Hälfte aus ihren Häuten reißen und sie, noch dampfend, mit seiner guten Soße gewürzt, verschlingen."[18] The director is a gastronomic connoisseur; Gerti is the raw material, and he provides the refinement (the spicy sauce). Hermann is a man of "good taste" who wallows in vulgarity. Such images mock a more traditional conception of "Geschmack" (or good taste) that would shy away from the satisfaction of immediate needs by denying the body. There is no feigned disinterest in the object of desire. The integrity of the aesthetic is ruptured: standard definitions of eroticism are positioned as a fiction as sexuality is reduced to the consumption of the female body. Once again, categories are exploded, collapsing upon themselves.

If eroticism is not the product of this sexual/textual intercourse, what is? The only products to speak of in the text are semen and bodily fluids, on the one hand, and paper, on the other. Another invasive process—consumer sports—leaves only the violated environment. Fabricated on the bodies of the woman, the worker (for example, the workers in Hermann's factory), and the environment, these products have in common a violent process of generation. In the production of both semen and paper, bodies are ravaged: "Zuckend und schreiend werden die Produkte hervorgebracht, die winzigen Körperfabriken mahlen und knirschen . . ."[19] Most importantly, however, these are waste products. And by juxtaposing these products with the wasting of the environment and the human body wrought by consumer sports such as skiing, seemingly disparate discourses are implicated in common systems of brutality. For instance, one metaphor—or pun—in the following quote evokes a complex of images. The word "Überschüssige" calls forth many associations—skiing, surplus, ejaculation: "Und keiner streckt die Hand aus und holt sich eine von diesen Schi Kreaturen, die Krater in den Boden bohren, und hindert ihn daran. . . . Und ein paar hundert Überschüssige produzieren Papier, eine Ware, die noch schneller entwertet, als der Mensch durch den Sport abgenützt wird."[20] By invoking the discourse, or language, of sports (what could be more banal?), the destructive violence practiced on these bodies underscores the nonsensically invasive process of extraction or production.

Despite the ruthless assault on Gerti's body—she is ripped asunder, torn apart, cracked open, turned inside out—there is always something left over. Excess spurts from the violated body, which becomes a site of production without a tangible "product." What transpires is the violation of the commonsensical itself. The discourses collide, rupturing the *what-goes-without-saying,* thereby making apparent the violence of banality. These ruptures are mirrored in the play of sentence structure where the juxtaposition of seemingly incongruous ideas subverts the expectation of a linear narrative. Even a single sentence often brings together discordant images, words, ideas: "Er sieht Gottes tektonische Verwerfungen an ihren Oberschenkeln, sie machen ihm nichts aus, er klettert in seinen Hausbergen herum auf sicherem gewohnten Steig, er kennt jeden Tritt, den er austeilt. "[21] Her body is an architectural structure, God's flawed creation, and a domesticated natural formation where the director can surefootedly climb. In one constellation, the body is violently traversed by father property, mother nature, and holy construct.

What is the radical moment in Jelinek's text? As the reviewers were quick to point out, there are no points of entry, no identifiable positions from within the text to experience it. Furthermore, any hope for a feminist utopia is, to say the least, crushed; no subject position is presented which negotiates the violence. The figures remain mere figures—marionette-like, puppets. We might add that this refusal of character development is certainly within the tradition of modernist high culture. What then is so "different," so "difficult" about this text? Perhaps readers find Jelinek's work so offensive and distasteful because she chooses to work through the metaphor of sexuality—not as a place of pleasure but as a scene of violence that is very much a part of the mundane, the everyday, the banal. The female body becomes an allegory for the destructive processes of production wrought on many bodies in society. By dismantling commonly accepted boundaries—whether of high and low culture or of sexuality and sports—the radical moment is evinced in the transgression from within these categories. We leave the last word to the text:

> Das mit der Dreieinigkeit muß ich noch erklären: die Frau ist dreigeteilt. Greifen Sie oben, unten oder in der Mitte zu![22]

Notes

1 "And the most crucial aspect upon which books on sexual themes depend—I mean of course belles lettres—is not offered at all by Jelinek. The most crucial aspect is to show what the woman or the man or even both feel during these things." Marcel Reich-Ranicki, Sigrid Löffler, Helmut Karasek, and Jürgen Busche, "Keine Lust für niemand?" *PflasterStrand* 311 (6 April–19 April 1989): 41. Here and following, all translations of cited material are the authors'.

2 "A novel about love would have been better. Or about hate." Annette Meyhöfer, "Nein, sie kennt auch diesmal keine Gnade," *Spiegel* 14 (1989): 243.
3 Meyhöfer, 246. "The author gave up on the novel, the dreadful one that she could have written, for the sake of a tract—truly, she tortured herself in vain."
4 Reich-Ranicki et al., 40. "Those are certainly not normal processes."
5 Ibid., 41. "There has to be a little bit of fun involved."
6 "It could have been pleasurable. . . ." Volker Hage, "Unlust," *Die Zeit*, 7 April 1989, 69.
7 "Jelinek has the puppets dance—but they remain simply puppets." "[A]s a piece of literature, it is as wretched and marionette-like as its figures." "Because the book is missing all elements of playfulness as well as psychological finesse . . . *Lust* is nothing but a big disappointment, a failure, a fiasco." Ibid., 69–70.
8 See Juliane Vogel, "Oh Wildnis, Oh Schutz vor ihm," in *Gegen den schönen Schein: Texte zu Elfriede Jelinek*, ed. Christa Gurtler (Frankfurt, 1990). In this article, Vogel points out how cleverly the Jelinek persona is constructed and reproduced ad nauseam in the media.
9 Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York, 1972), 11.
10 "How the property likes to live with us. It cannot sit down on any better place than under our sexual parts, which are clapped open above them like the cliffs over the current. In return this woman receives—in cash—life slammed down on the table for her everyday oven." Elfriede Jelinek, *Lust* (Hamburg, 1989), 32.
11 "The director is tirelessly goaded on by his meat and the impudence of the press. He takes liberties out of this; for instance, he likes to urinate, as dogs do, on his wife, after he has built a little mountain out of her and her clothes, so that it goes more steeply downhill for him. The scale of pleasure is open at the top, we need no judges for this. The man uses the woman like the paper that he produces. He provides for the weal and woe in his house, pulls his cock greedily out of the bag before he has slammed the door shut. Stuffs it—still warm from the butcher—in the woman's mouth, so that her jaw grinds. Even when dinner guests shine light into his disposition, he whispers nothings about her sexual parts in her ear." Ibid., 68.
12 Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter with Carolyn Burke (Ithaca, 1985), 201.
13 "And she became flesh, and lived among us." Jelinek, 59.
14 "The father throws himself upon the savings box of the mother, where her secrets reside, in order to be kept hidden from him." Ibid., 31.
15 "He pulls his wife's sex apart, [to see] if he has really inscribed himself legibly there." Ibid., 32.
16 "Like a frog, the woman must splay her legs, so that her husband can, as far as possible, right into the district court for criminal matters, look inside and examine." Ibid., 76.
17 "He opens Gerti and at once slams her closed behind him. Nothing found!" Ibid., 76.
18 "This woman is there to bite on and bite off. He would like to rip her lower half out of its skin and devour it, still steaming, spiced with his good sauce." Ibid., 103.
19 "Twitching and screaming, the products are brought forth, the tiny body factories grind and crunch. . . ." Ibid., 76.
20 "And no one stretches out a hand and fetches one of these ski creatures, who drill holes in the earth, to prevent him from doing so. . . . And a few hundred surplus ones produce paper, a consumer product which depreciates more quickly than the body is worn out by sports." Ibid., 169f.
21 "He sees God's tectonic faults on her upper thighs, they don't bother him, he climbs around in his housemountains on secure familiar trails, he knows every kicking step he delivers." Ibid., 24.
22 "That stuff about the trinity I must still explain: the woman is divided into three parts: dig into the top, bottom or the middle!" Ibid., 105.

Mediating Sexuality in Manfred Bieler's *Still wie die Nacht*

ANTJE HARNISCH AND PETER HÖYNG

When checking bibliographical resources for the name Manfred Bieler, we found only one minor entry regarding his first book, a picaresque novel published in 1963. This paucity of secondary sources stands in contrast to Bieler's "enormous productivity."[1] He began his career as an author in the GDR before he moved to Prague in 1965. The political situation in Czechoslovakia in 1968 forced him to move once again, and he settled in Munich. In West Germany, he was particularly successful with his novels *Der Bär* ("The Bear"; 1983) and *Der Mädchenkrieg* ("The Girls' War"; 1975), the latter of which was eventually made into a movie. Nevertheless, he has been largely neglected by *Germanistik* until now.

One reason for this might be his populist approach to writing, i.e., his desire to reach as large a number of readers as possible, since, in his view, "if you want to live off your writing, your books must sell well."[2] And in order to sell well they have to be entertaining. Bieler's most recent book *'Still wie die Nacht': Memoiren eines Kindes* ("'Silent as the Night': Memoirs of a Child") contains all the ingredients that should make it consumable and, therefore, easily marketable:[3] he uses colloquial language and a very simple sentence structure throughout the book and knows how to keep his reader's attention. The text's four parts are divided into very small chapters, some of them no longer than half a page, so that the reader can digest the book easily. Above all, however, it was the content of the book, with its focus on sexuality, that pushed it into the forefront of public attention.

This content can be briefly summarized as follows. The text is written from the viewpoint of a fifty-year-old narrator who confronts us with his childhood in Thüringen between 1934 and 1941, covering the period from his birth to the age of seven. He depicts his past from a child's perspective; thus, the Nazi period appears in the text filtered through the child's eye. If at all, fascism is present in the mentality of, and the power relations within, the family that the narrative focuses on. This family consists of the narrator, his mother, father, and grandmother. His mother, Edith, a 32-year-old secretary, is the dominant figure in the household, whereas her husband Robert, a 29-year-old clerk, is portrayed as weak and powerless. He is an alcoholic who later contracts tuberculosis and has to remain in a sanatorium for an extended period. His position becomes ever weaker as the text progresses. The bond between Edith and Robert is tenuous at best (12). Edith looks down on her husband, and while he escapes his unhappy life through alco-

hol, she escapes her dissatisfying life by getting involved in relationships with men whenever possible. Her self-esteem seems to be based on being sexually attractive to men.

The narrator as a child suffers most from this relationship. The reader is forced to become involved in the constant shifts between promises to, and humiliations of, the child.

> A word about my parents: they take everything out on me, their bitterness, their anger, their lechery, their unfulfilled longings, their failures at work, their unlimited greed, . . . their jealousy of men and women, their dirty jokes, . . . their hunger for love, and their self-perceived failure. But the worst is: I, the 50-year-old, I am the heir to their feelings.[4]

On the first few pages, the child's drama is already outlined. Since Edith is disappointed at having a boy and not a girl, she is unable to breast-feed the baby. She neglects and even hates the child (9). Later in the text, Edith's behavior does not become more affectionate. She progresses from swearing at, and hitting, her son to abusing him sexually. The father, Robert, is portrayed as being unsympathetic to his son, too. When the child is born, Robert is drunk. Later, when on rare occasions he feels like taking care of his son, he treats him rather sadistically. Consequently, the little boy is constantly looking for a father figure. At times, his mother's lovers fulfill this role, since they pay attention to him, play with him, and, in general, are more sympathetic than Robert. However, they also become his enemies, because he has to compete with them for his mother's affection. And since he witnesses their love affairs—which must be kept secret—he becomes a potential threat to them because he could give away their secret.

The only person the boy can rely on and trust—at least, in his youngest years—is his grandmother Louise, who runs the household. She provides him with the much-needed physical and emotional love when he is a baby and in his early boyhood. She is the one who sings lullabies and at times protects him from his hostile parents. Later, however, the boy finds out that even his grandmother has been lying to him, and this causes their relationship to become problematic as well. The childhood portrayed by the narrator is by no means a "normal" childhood, yet the parents make every effort to give the outside world the impression that they are a "normal, happy" bourgeois family.

Reviews in German newspapers and magazines have been divided in the evaluation of Bieler's novel. This division itself reflects how literary culture is negotiated within the German literary institutions. The reviewers either take the content seriously and believe in the intention of a therapeutic self-analysis *(Die Zeit)* and, therefore, praise it as a ruthless attempt at catharsis *(Der Spiegel),* or they renounce it, alleging that it cannot live up to "good" literary autobiographies *(Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* [*FAZ*]*). Die Zeit* and *Der Spiegel* argue that sexual experiences need to be included in the narrator's account of his childhood in order to reflect an authentic self-therapy. Thus, they treat the text as a non-fictional doc-

ument of self-psychoanalysis, not as literature. If one were to take this claim seriously, however, one would have to accuse the narrator of lying, since he starts his account with his birth and relates experiences that are impossible to remember. (Bieler himself claims that the text is not an autobiography.)

Die Zeit is not alone, however, in reviewing the book extensively; *Der Stern,* a magazine that tends to be more sensationalist, has also done so. The fact that *Der Stern* as well as *Die Zeit* believe that Bieler's book is interesting enough for their readership shows that the book resists the easy traditional categories of high and low culture. If *Der Stern* is interested in literature at all, then it is so for reasons that are usually associated with the concept of low culture: entertainment value, accessibility to a mass audience, use of colloquial language, and strong identificatory appeal. The alleged authenticity of Bieler's description of his childhood sexual experiences enhances its sensationalist quality for *Stern* and also situates it in the realm of low literature. Sex always sells well and speaks to nothing but instinct. These are exactly the reasons why the *FAZ* renounces the book. The papers evaluate it according to standards of what is traditionally considered high art: namely, literary language, distance to experiences portrayed, and autonomy, all of which also implies that the author's primary interest is not in selling the book. Bieler's book, according to the *FAZ,* does not demonstrate the requisite literary qualities characteristic of high art and is therefore rejected. But condemning the text on grounds that it is not a good piece of literature does an injustice to this account of a miserable childhood. Reducing it to a self-therapeutic act, on the other hand, would mean to ignore its literary merits. Thus, we argue that Bieler's text undermines the distinction between high and low and can be situated in a realm that Christa Bürger refers to as the "medium sphere": literature that is "not a novel, not autobiography, not [just] fiction, not high literature, not trivial literature, not an autonomous 'Werk' and not a direct expression of life."[5] That this is true for Bieler's text is demonstrated in the following analysis of the mediation of sexuality. We argue that the text is neither a "direct expression of life" as authentic self-analysis, nor only fiction. Fictional or literary elements are used to distance and analyze experiences. Thus, we want to show that the explicit sexual passages, on the one hand, render painful, real experiences. On the other hand, these passages cannot be read voyeuristically—as a pornographic text—because of the analytic distance from which they are presented.

Foucault's *History of Sexuality* (1976) seems challenging and productive for an analysis of how sexuality is mediated and constructed in Bieler's novel. Foucault regards the family as the nucleus of sexualization and as a relay station for power constellations.[6] This theory of sexuality can help us analyze the intimate connection between sexuality and power, a connection which becomes especially obvious in the representation of the boy, the mother, and their mutual relationship. According to Foucault, relations of power can be found everywhere. Since "power comes from below," we have to look for relations of force, not on the level of the state apparatus but, instead, "in families, limited groups, and institutions."[7] Within

these power relations, sexuality "is one of those endowed with the greatest instrumentality: useful for the greatest number of maneuvers."[8]

This holds especially true for the deployment of the child's sexuality, which takes place under the most rigid power maneuvers imaginable. In Bieler's text, the boy's body becomes the site of an intricate power game. Mother, father, and grandmother endlessly use him for their unresolved problems and as an outlet for their own desires. The ongoing threats and promises to which the boy is subjected are linked to the adults' sexuality to such an extent that one can claim that sexuality represents *the* underlying structure of the book. Most obviously, power is involved when the boy is made a "prisoner" (227) by his mother and grandmother. This occurs after he witnesses his mother having sex with two men while she is at work, causing the mother to be afraid that he might talk about what he has seen. The situation can be interpreted in terms of Foucault's thesis that the will to knowledge is connected to power and sexuality. Since the boy is not allowed to know—and tell—what he has witnessed, he is imprisoned in the apartment, allegedly due to illness. For a long time, he is forced to stay in bed, and not allowed to play with other children. Since his father has tuberculosis, he is forbidden to see him as well. This imprisonment demonstrates the victimization of the boy not only by his mother but also by his grandmother, since she is involved in this power-knowledge intrigue. Sexuality for the boy has become a treacherous domain, a place of punishment. His victimization peaks when his mother abuses his body for her own sexual pleasure. This incestuous violence represents a destructive way for a mother to wield power over her son.

According to Foucault, "where there is power there is resistance."[9] But how does a five-year-old boy resist? Three ways are indicated by the narrator. Not only does the boy's body become the object of control, it also becomes the object of pleasure. The boy discovers his penis, his "one and only friend" (231), and its potential as a source of gratification. But, at the same time, the source of pleasure becomes another source of control—in the sense of Foucault's argument:

> the body of the child, [is] under surveillance, surrounded in his cradle, his bed, or his room by an entire watch-crew of parents, nurses . . . and doctors all attentive to the least manifestations of his sex . . .[10]

When his mother discovers him masturbating, she calls him a "dirty pig" and threatens that if he does it again he will end up in a lunatic asylum (232). However, only a couple of hours later he breaks the promise that he was forced to give to his mother, and masturbates again. In this way, his sexual pleasure falls under the influence of his mother, even when she is not present. He is guilt-ridden and full of anxiety while masturbating, but his engagement in forbidden self-gratification is a manifestation of resistance against his mother's attempts to control his sexual behavior.

The little boy demonstrates another type of resistance through the thoughts and words the narrator puts into his mind. After a visit to relatives, he is angry

about his parents and uses the power of words to oppose and defy his sense of humiliation. The father "is an idiot. He is a donkey. He is an asshole. . . . Edith is a filthy swine. The whole family a pig pen. I am carried away with murderous anger. I would like to take an axe and slaughter all of them. Except for Louise [the grandmother]" (217–18). This is not the only time the boy uses violent fantasies as a way to rebel against his abuse. One can actually read the entire process of narration as an act of resistance against all the humiliation which he had to bear as a child.

Of course, as a young child confronted with the adults' controlling power, the boy does not have the words at hand that the narrator puts into his mind. Rather, his body is the means by which he reacts to the abuse of the adults. He often feels dizzy. He also has to throw up, and he dirties himself, and this results in further humiliation by his mother, who pointedly labels him with the words "you little shit" (240). But in the end, when his mother abuses him sexually, he can only react with tears (347).

Foucault sees the family not just "as a powerful agency of prohibition but as a major factor of sexualization."[11] This becomes apparent already in the way masturbation is represented, although the aspect of prohibition is dominant. However, throughout the text one can see that

> the family has become an obligatory locus of affects, feelings, love; that sexuality has its privileged point of development in the family; that for this reason sexuality is 'incestuous' from the start.[12]

In Bieler's text, the relations between all members of the family are sexualized. This is especially true of the relationship among mother, grandmother, and the little boy. He watches them getting undressed (20), he witnesses them urinating (22, 70), and he is proud of his penis and proudly displays it to them already at the age of two (20). The list could go on and on. All of this suggests that the family's repressive sexual morals are represented as being "a hotbed of constant sexual incitement."[13]

The character mainly associated with this aspect of the family, i.e., the sexualization of all relationships, is Edith, the mother. In the construction of her persona, the intimate connection of sexuality and power becomes most evident. In contrast to traditional discourses that construct female subjectivity as an object, Bieler's text positions Edith as subject: she is presented as an agent who is in a position of power and uses this power to control members of her family, especially her husband and her child. Traditional gender positions are thus inverted. Edith is the dominant figure; she does not abuse her husband only verbally, but also hits him occasionally (163), and she determines when they sleep together (63). The same is true of her relationship to her son, where hitting and kissing go hand in hand. After hitting him first, she kisses him on the mouth (228). Violence and sexuality are intimately intertwined in her relationship to both her husband and her son; she even plays them off against each other, sending Robert off to sleep in a different room so that her son can sleep in her bed (158)—which in a later chapter culminates in incest.

Edith uses men for her own pleasure and is often the one who initiates the re-

lationships. Although she is positioned as an agent, the representation of the relationships themselves calls this into question. Most of the men she gets involved with are in a position of power over her: the first one is her husband's employer, and it can be assumed that Robert even knows about their affair and tolerates it, because it helps his professional career. The connection between power and the subordination of female sexuality is even more evident in the portrayal of Edith's relationship with her own employer, especially in the depiction of the scene her son witnesses:

> The mother is bending over a small table. . . . Behind the mother, Mr. Sengebusch is standing. He is wrapping his arms around her and kneading her breasts. Edith is sighing. Her brown polka dot dress is pulled up behind, and Mr. Sengebusch is thrusting at her as if he wanted to pierce through her. Across from the mother, Oswin Kutarsky is standing pushing his penis in her mouth. (224)

Here Edith is not represented as an agent at all, but rather as the sexual *object* of two men. In general, in the portrayal of her sexual acts, she is positioned as the object; even in the intercourse scene with her weak husband, Edith appears as a victim. In addition, the narrative objectifies her body through metonymic descriptions of ugly body parts, such as dirty toes (239), rotten teeth (110), and hard fingers (118). This happens through a doubling of the male perspective, that of the narrator and that of the little boy. Thus, the representation of female sexuality is ambivalent: on the one hand, the woman is positioned as agent who uses her sexuality as a means of control; on the other hand, she is objectified by men, the male power structure, and the narrator's male gaze.

In the representation of both the boy's and the mother's sexuality, the interconnection with power relations is crucial. Power and sexuality go hand in hand in Bieler's text. Analyzing the mediation of sexuality in Foucauldian terms makes possible a demonstration of how a particular representation distances the authentic experience. The analytic distance is not just in our reading of it, but is also written into the text, undermines a voyeuristic reading while simultaneously portraying authentic painful experiences. This interplay of fictional elements and authentic experience allows us to see Bieler's book as a paradigm that reveals the categories of high and low culture as outmoded.

Notes

1 Bruno H. Weder, "Manfred Bieler," *Kritisches Lexikon zur deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur* (Munich, 1986) 1:2. Here and following, all English translations are the authors'.

2 Weder, 2.

3 The publishing company Hoffmann and Campe sees the book as a success, given its first edition of fifty thousand.

4 Manfred Bieler, *"Still wie die Nacht" : Memoiren eines Kindes* (Hamburg, 1989), 109. All further quotes from this book are identified by page numbers in the text.
5 Christa Bürger, "Bemerkungen zu einer Literatur der mittleren Sphäre," *Deutschunterricht* 42.6 (1990): 13.
6 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Volume I: An Introduction* (New York, 1980), 1:98f.
7 Ibid., 94.
8 Ibid., 103.
9 Ibid., 95.
10 Ibid., 98.
11 Ibid., 114.
12 Ibid., 108f.
13 Ibid., 109.

Risk Society and Individuality: High, Low, and Middle Writing Styles in the Prose of German-Language Women Writers (1971–1991)

URSULA LIEBERTZ-GRÜN

I

"Risikogesellschaft" is the term Ulrich Beck has given the new form that the modern age, itself a consequence of the industrial society begun in the 19th century, has assumed in the last few decades: "risk society" is that new form of society which produces its own risks.[1] The destruction of nature, arsenals of atomic and biochemical weapons, nuclear power plants, genetic technology—all global risks which today threaten humanity's existence—are the results of the most recent and most advanced technology and science. There is a need, therefore, for strengthening the self-reflective teachability of scientific rationality, if we are to be able to entrust the latter to pull itself out of the quagmire of blindness (to the risks of its own creation) and reshape the cognitive model of the natural sciences from within.

Can science supplement its isolating, analytical processes by developing a new specialization to focus on interconnectedness? Can it contribute to a consideration of the potential side-effects of its operations and begin to recognize its selection criteria, explications, hypotheses, theories, and methods as being decisions by which society's future is significantly determined? Earlier men of science, socialized by cultural models of aggressive manliness and constrained to view women as creatures of nature who protect nature, and to understand themselves as cultural beings called upon to subdue and exploit nature, would certainly not have been able to do the job of combining analytical and self-reflective, socially integrating approaches. However, in the last twenty or thirty years, the gender-determined roles created in the 19th century as the basis of industrial society have been dissolved (i.e., man–public sphere–culture–income-producing employment/woman–house–nature–work for the family). Why then should the generations of both male and female scientists of today and of the future not have the capacity to develop an ecological natural science?

The humanities are able to help scientists practice socially integrating approaches if they accomplish the task of bringing into view the real history that men and women have experienced together, i.e., the complicated interaction between biological sex, discourses concerning relationships between the sexes (gender-cultural or symbolic sex), and experienced relationships between the sexes (social

sex). Since, potentially, all cultural models of a society can be formulated in language and presented as literary texts, the systematic study of literature as cultural anthropology can make an important contribution. It can, for example, analyze certain types of texts as cultural systems which, in competition with other complementary or contradictory cultural systems, guide the socialization or the individualization of men and women and make possible social interactions.[2]

My interest here, however, is not to inquire into the consequences of differing systems of symbols, but into the capabilities of certain writing styles. To what extent are narrative and fictional writing styles suitable for representing processes of individuation or socialization in the risk society and in differing models of individuality? For heuristic reasons, I divide narrative and fictional writing styles into three groups. These groupings are in the tradition of the old European rhetorical differentiation of the *genera dicendi* into *genus humile, genus medium, genus sublime,* but they deviate from these traditional definitions for well-considered reasons.[3] In a prototypical "low" writing style, a simple, conventional technique is employed without reflection. The author does not know that she is constructing her (life) history herself through her narration, through choice, perspective, visual screen, representation model, narrative techniques. She believes that she is narrating her life just as it really was. In a prototypical "middle" writing style, fictions and complex representation and narrative techniques are employed, but they are already so familiar to experienced readers that they can recognize them without great effort and can concentrate on the content of the text. A prototypical "high" writing style forces even the experienced reader to concentrate first of all on the form, since the author has processed traditional literary techniques into an innovative and, therefore, less accessible writing style.

When I speak in the following only of women writers, it is not because I am claiming that women who write have intrinsically accelerated the dissolution of gender-determined roles, but rather because women, as a part of their own biography and their own identity, have experienced the new push toward individualization earlier than men, as a coercion either to establish a difficult balance between the traditional role in the family and new professional possibilities, or, on the other hand, to choose one of the two roles. Men, by contrast, are primarily strengthened in their traditional role identity by the new push toward individualization, as the traditional masculine role in the family already presupposes success in one's occupation.

II

The capability of a low writing style can in my opinion not be demonstrated more convincingly on any other text of this period than the "Lebenserinnerungen einer Bäuerin," which Anna Wimschneider published in 1984 under the title of *Herbstmilch.*[4] Anna Wimschneider describes the pre-industrial world of the small farmer in Lower Bavaria into which she was born in 1919 and in which she worked until

1971 as a farm woman. In this pre-modern, traditionalistic world of long duration—which extends into the risk society practically untouched by the radical changes of the modern world—those growing up were not yet faced with the chance or the necessity to choose from among a wealth of competing social and cultural roles and life models and to fashion together for themselves their own biography. Here, they grew into traditional social roles and cultural models that left little latitude for self-determination, even for such a strong and energetic person as Anna Wimschneider.

Anna Wimschneider observed her surroundings very carefully and described them precisely. She gives detailed information concerning many facets of her life: dependency on the seasons; work in the fields; the keeping of large and small animals; the architecture and furnishings of farm houses; the brewing of beer, cooking, baking, roasting, and the preparation of milk dishes such as "Herbstmilch," from which she takes her title; washing, sewing, and mending the clothing of small children, boys, girls, men, and women; details of the care of children, children's games, children's pranks; the care of the sick, the elderly, and the dying, funerals, the honoring of the dead; the roles of the sexes, family bonds, the helping of neighbors, friendships, love relationships; children's work, men's work, women's work, working conditions of maids and farm laborers; threshing festivals, weddings, Christmas parties, and other festivities; village tales and family anecdotes; farmers' rules, folk piety, religious instruction, and the control of sexuality by clergymen; the effects of the war and of National Socialism on rural life; and relations with spiritual and lay authorities.

When reading *Herbstmilch,* one has the impression of hearing the voice of a narrator, for Anna Wimschneider, who was able to attend a school for only five and a half years, put her memories on paper in the style of an oral narrative. She organized her memories chronologically and separated them into small segments, which she then binds together into very small or somewhat longer chapters. In some chapters, the narrative plot is tightly woven because it describes a chronology of events. In other chapters, the associative chains connecting the sections are rather loose. Not infrequently, recollections of earlier or later events are superimposed on the chronological order. For the most part, she reports briefly on recurring events, but at times, she expands her narration to scenic representations. Almost always, she views herself and others from outside; only seldom does she mention her thoughts or feelings. Her sentences are simple. Her language is vigorous, unworn, visual, concrete, characterized by easily remembered and sharply contoured images.

Toward the end, in the middle, and in the second chapter of her memoirs, Anna Wimschneider speaks of the early death of her mother, which left an indelible mark on her life. For, after the death of her mother, the father was dependent on the assistance of his children. In this, he holds rigidly to the traditional preindustrial farm family's division of labor between the sexes. In plain words, the eight-year-old Anna has to care for the five younger children, and to cook, bake

bread, clean, do laundry, sew, and mend for the family of eleven. In addition, she takes over easier chores in the field and in the care of the farm animals. Furthermore, she has to attend school until the afternoon during the first few years. Her work begins every day at five o'clock in the morning and ends at ten o'clock in the evening, while her father and her older brothers for the most part go to bed earlier and often have their Sundays free. If things do not run perfectly—if, for example, the food is not correctly seasoned—the little girl receives slaps from her father and from the older brothers, acts that in this cultural system do not count as acts of violence or abuse, but rather as aids to education. Even the older brothers are punished this way at school for each wrong answer.

In this society of small farmers, the rigid, sex-specific distribution of roles in everyday work, and also at festivals and social games, has the function, above all, of making men and women conform to the standards in such a way that they are mutually dependent upon each other. The distribution of roles in individual cases may be more advantageous for women; in other cases, more for men. But it is apparent that structurally it is women who are put at a disadvantage by social standardization: for example, the boys get much warmer clothing in the winter than the girls who, though they knit the gloves for the boys, are themselves not allowed to wear any. The extra work of poorer women, of maids who wash the laundry while the farm laborers enjoy free time, or of the wives of small farmers who take care of their housework at night so that during the day they can help with the heavy work in the fields, is structurally significant.

Work brings to Anna Wimschneider not only the praise of her father and the recognition of her husband, but also the possibility of having influence and her own money. Whether her husband has control over more money of his own because he is a man or because he is the heir to the farm, does not become very clear. In any case, both seem to use their own funds above all for giving each other presents, so that by virtue of mutual gift-giving an equalization is reached. Anna Wimschneider earns her money above all through keeping small animals. In addition, she worked before her marriage as a day laborer, and in this way put together a trousseau, for which, according to tradition, her mother would have been responsible. Whether she also contributed in this way to her dowry, or in what way her father saved the considerable sum of almost ten years' wages for a farm worker (1,400 marks at that time), remains unclear.

Anna Wimschneider found her parents, her siblings, her husband, and her children to be reasonable people. Several other women of her circle of acquaintances, however, suffer from the brutality of their husbands. In Anna Wimschneider's view, though, aggression and sadism are not typically masculine modes of behavior. She remembers two spectacular murder cases in which women were involved. And her own mother-in-law attempted to make her life a living hell. Since Anna's husband was inducted into the military eleven days after their marriage, she had, for months, to take care of the farm alone, with the help of only one maid. She also had to care for four elderly in-laws, and, beyond that, to bear the psycho-

logical terrorism of her mother-in-law. The latter threatened the young woman during her pregnancy, for example, that she would make her eat so much "Herbstmilch" (a kind of clabber) that she would have a miscarriage; and she openly wished death in childbirth for her.

In the traditional farm society, women can form friendships with other women, men with other men (friendships between the sexes are apparently not provided for). It is crucial, however, that one should belong to a family with farm relatives interconnected over many generations. Whoever enters new from the outside, or in any way deviates from the usual norms, is branded as an outsider. Anna's husband was considered a dubious element, an "ausgesprungener Pfarrer" ("renegade preacher"; 70), because he had studied for three years at the gymnasium of a cloister school. Anna was an outsider because she was poor, because she always had to work, because she (therefore) always came late to school, and because she was not allowed to attend festivities.

Men and women are sermonized by the clergy on the norms as these apply to them; above all, sexual behavior is strictly regulated by the clergy through confession. Anna's mother died at the birth of her ninth child because she took the doctor's warning against further pregnancies less seriously than the father confessor's warning that any attempt at birth control would be punished with eternal damnation. The pregnancy itself, to be sure, was viewed as a consequence of her sins, and for this reason Anna's mother wears shoes in her deathbed, "for a woman in childbed must walk over thorns to get to heaven" (7). Anna Wimschneider does not engage in a theoretical discussion concerning the norms of the clergymen, but after she met the man she later married, she did remove herself from their control by going to confession only in the city, where no one knew her.

Not all the farmers in the village subjected themselves to the authority of the clergy. When the preacher beats Anna as a young girl because she does not use the required prayer book in the church service—since the family has, to be sure, nine children but not nine prayer books—the father lodges a complaint with the police, and the police look into the matter. As several other farmers permit their children to testify against the preacher, he is fined. Anna Wimschneider speaks out against other authorities with no less self-confidence. She has no great respect for uniforms. She refuses to give the Hitler salute with the excuse that her arm hurts too much. By dint of her sheer obstinacy, she gets from the authorities someone to help her with the heavy work in the fields, although, to be sure, this was only after the oxen had dragged her through the field, eight months pregnant, when she was trying to plow.

She also did not let herself be intimidated by written culture. She turned her desire to write her story into reality—with great success. She looks back on a hard but fulfilled life without self-pity and without transfiguration (she emphasizes that she would not wish to become a farm woman again). Her simple narrative style corresponds to the firmly established order of the pre-industrial society, where her wish to leave the role of a farm woman, into which she had been born, to become

a nurse was punished by her father with a slap. She observed her surroundings intelligently and attentively and masterfully employed the possibilities offered by a simple narrative style. The title "Herbstmilch" is a key to her hard life, providing a general sense against which to read her descriptions of agricultural realia. Her entire life history is simultaneously a compendium of the life-style of the small farmer, which later generations, too, will be able to profit from. *Herbstmilch,* which first appeared in 1984, was made into a movie by Joseph Vilsmaier in 1988. The success of the movie, which meanwhile has also been shown on television, has increased the success of the book. In 1990, between 1.8 and 1.9 million copies of *Herbstmilch* had already been sold.

III

I have gone into Anna Wimschneider's memoirs extensively in order to demonstrate that a simple narrative writing style is an appropriate medium for a rational appropriation of the world, if the represented world has not yet reached the complexity of an industrial society, let alone the complexity of a risk society. Conversely, the attempt to present individuation and individuality in a risk society through the medium of low or modified low writing styles inevitably brings forth trivial myths.[5]

Here I would like to pause to insert a definition. Following Max Weber, I begin with the premise that the process of modernization is a process of *rationalization* which is accompanied by a process of sentimentalization.[6] By "rationalization" I mean the attempt to come to terms with constructions of reality which count as reality within a certain society, either through practical action or theoretical contemplation. By "sentimentalization" I mean the attempt to contemplate these constructions of reality in the medium of wishful thinking. The sentimental-aesthetical are—according to a classification system I will question later—those appropriations of reality that are more interested in the formal presentation of wishful thinking than in its content. Sentimental-mythic appropriations of reality belong to this sort of thinking. I designate as utopian myths such regulative ideas as truth, beauty, and justice, which in my opinion are adequate to the complexity of the reality they structure. I designate as trivial myths those examples of wishful thinking which in my opinion simplify the reality to which they react so far as to render it unrecognizable.

Two things happened in 1975 that caused capable women and men on editorial staffs throughout Germany to recognize that a new type of trivial literature was enjoying prospects of large sales. Ursula Krechel's knowledgeable and perceptive essay *Selbsterfahrung und Fremdbestimmung—Bericht aus der Neuen Frauenbewegung,*[7] published by the respectable company Luchterhand, became a noteworthy success, and Verena Stefan's *Häutungen,*[8] published by the then virtually unknown company Frauenoffensive, became a best-seller in a very short time after being popularized only by word of mouth (to this date more than 300,000 copies

have been sold). At that time, almost all large publishers included books in their offerings which were constructed according to the scheme which had already proven itself to be very marketable. Angela Praesent succeeded in getting the series *neue frau* accepted at the Rowohlt publishing company, and this has become one of the most successful book series of the Federal Republic. A new book has been published in this series every month since November of 1977, and by March 1991, a total of 165 titles had appeared. Of these, 25 have sold more than 100,000 copies, and, on the average, the 165 titles were published in editions of 50,000 copies. Their monthly appearance, their low price (mostly in the range of six to ten DM), and their pastel-colored design have rendered the series similar to regularly consumed magazines. According to the publisher, forty percent of the books are bought by men, probably for the most part as little gifts for a "women's-moved" girlfriend or wife.

The concept of the series has not changed in the fourteen years of its existence. In each volume, it is endorsed anew with the following editorial statement:

> The rororo-series "neue frau" presents narrative works from the literature of all countries whose theme is the concrete sensuous and emotional experience of women and their search for a self-determined life. The volumes, which appear monthly, address all those who eagerly follow changes in the relationship between the sexes and the self-concept of woman.

The series is not homogeneous. Several books by famous women authors such as Simone de Beauvoir, Colette, Virginia Woolf, and Doris Lessing serve to catch attention, while the memoirs of the nomad woman Nisa introduce readers to a tradition-bound African culture. However, most of the texts, which during its first years were specially written for the series, are variations of the pattern which is characteristic of the new type of trivial literature and which I illustrate here with the example of Verena Stefan's *Häutungen.*

In *Häutungen,* a female narrator tells of her painful detachment from a conventional role (e.g., from the role of a woman subservient to a man) and of her finally successful self-realization—which consists of continuous circling around her own self. Stefan does announce—thus, seemingly deviating from the pattern—that she is going to tell of completely new love experiences among women, but even she describes a self which is solipsistically inhibited and turned inward, which unmistakably stresses its mistrusts of all people, men and women alike, and which isolates itself emotionally even from women. Nevertheless, she separates the world into a good feminine part and an evil masculine one and assigns to man civilization, war, and technology, to woman nature, humanity, and readiness to help. She does this because she has detached herself from the traditional rational concept of woman as subordinate to man, but not from the complementary sentimental concept of the "schöne Seele." How does the self which is locked into its interior realms change into a strong self? By writing. Just as the fairy-tale prince of 19th-century trivial literature elevates every Cinderella to a queen, the text

transforms the stunted self into a strong self. The metamorphosis presupposes the concept of artistic genius developed in the 18th century, which Sigmund Freud reduced to the handy formula that the artist is distinguished from the neurotic in that the former gives form to his daydreams in a "work" whose success helps overcome the discrepancy between the real self and the ideal self.

If the text is a "work," it must be able to stand up against critics. None of the texts here under consideration lays out a new vision of reality. Are they what they nevertheless pretend to be—namely, expedition reports from the still unchartered territories of feminine individuality? No—for they use non-complex and rigid narrative patterns, well-worn language, and a trivially mythical concept of the self, means by which not even old experiences can be repeated, much less new ones formulated. Stefan does emphasize the necessity of a new language and attempts to develop a new language. But since she does not take note of the tradition, her supposed innovations fall far behind what has long been customary within the tradition. Although the fabrication of the texts is obvious, and although, for example, Stefan already in the subtitle ("Autobiographical Sketches Poems Dreams Analyses") draws attention to the artificiality of her text, the limited complexity of the linguistic clichés she uses was counted—at least for a time—as proof that here a narrator was speaking authentically, and in a manner undisguised by an artificial literary technique, about nothing but her very own experiences; surprisingly, this was supposed to be of interest to others. In the final analysis, these texts should be seen as the waste products of the German developmental novel. Goethe in *Wilhelm Meister,* the prototype of the German developmental novel, represents individuation as socialization, and he aesthetically-ironically relegates the sentimental concept of the emphatic self (which develops entirely according to its own laws of being) to other sentimental concepts, such as the "schöne Seele," humane art, unadulterated nature, and anarchic eroticism. Stefan's texts, by contrast, regressively take the aesthetical-sentimental sketches literally.

To be sure, the linguistic and intellectual simplicity of the texts did not hinder, but rather promoted, their success. This fact has social-historical reasons. After the gender-determined roles that were created in the 19th century and solidified in the Federal Republic in the 1950s, the new push toward individualization became clearly perceptible in the 1960s. Since human beings are inadequately defined in genetic and biological terms, and shaped into individuals capable of life and social integration only through cultural models, all impulses towards individualization are inevitably disharmonious affairs. Not only are social and emotional security lost when human beings are freed from traditional commitments; in addition to this, new standardizations take the place of the old roles and forms. Those growing up in risk societies that are at the same time open, pluralistic democracies and welfare states are confronted with the chance and the necessity for reworking the socialization that was first imposed on them in early childhood, and for constructing, repeatedly and from a seemingly diffuse mass of cultural symbols and social roles, an individuality of their own that will in part determine the further

course of their lives. The freedom to outline new programs, or to program oneself, is never an option, however; what is won, rather, is only the freedom to choose between standardized programs, to combine anew, and—seen from a macroscopic point of view—to modify slightly. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, a number of women apparently experienced the new possibilities and pressures that were opening to them as the products of a basic insecurity with regard to their identity. While these women welcomed their release from the traditional role in the family, they were not so readily capable of coming to terms with the loss of accompanying sentimental concepts and the loss of a closed conception of the world. For this reason, they found pleasing those texts that erected, from the remnants of the literary tradition, a trivial-sentimental ghetto in which these female readers (and male readers?) were not confronted with difficult reality.

The shock that the push toward individualization had called forth did not last long. This fact is apparent in the texts of the *neue frau* series, where particles of reality beyond introspection, such as foreign lands or the professional world, began to claim more space as early as the 1980s; the old role of women in the family, thoroughly reformed since the 1960s and since 1977 no longer defined by family law, is once again presented as attractive. The simplicity of most of the texts has not changed. As before, conflicts in the private sphere are represented as purely personal conflicts. The structural causes of many conflicts, which arise from circumstances in which gender-determined roles are dissolved within a framework of institutional structures that are, themselves, based on the foundation of gender-determined roles, remain invisible.

IV

Prototypical middle writing styles are suitable for a differentiated representation of individuality in the risk society, as the novels and short stories of Barbara Frischmuth demonstrate.[9] In the final novel of the Sternwieser trilogy, *Kai und die Liebe zu den Modellen* (1979), the first-person narrator Amy writes precisely this kind of novel, in which she tells of the joys and difficulties of her double role as a writer and mother. While she, like Colombina and Pierrot in Frischmuth's *Die Frau im Mond* (1982), dreams of a post-patriarchal model of couples and families, her partner Klemens is ready to take over the role of a patriarchal father, if necessary. She attempts to force upon him her life rhythm, while he does not understand why he should be enthusiastic about a child just at the point when he would like to concentrate completely on his profession. Similarly, his mother, Sophie Silber, the protagonist of the first volume of the trilogy (1976), decided in favor of her profession as an actress, and so, after the birth of her son, entrusted him to the care of foster parents. Her decision is not criticized by anyone, not even by Klemens, who does not get to know her until he is eighteen years old. For a time, Amy and Klemens live with a compromise solution which frustrates them both. She takes on the role of a mother who raises her children alone and becomes infuriated over

her unequal share of the burden; he plays the role of the guest father and frequently feels himself superfluous and unwanted. The difficulty of joining together two self-centered professional biographies, of two figures who are both dependent on the employment market, is expressed also in the everyday quarrels: if Klemens does not come, she yearns for his presence; if he comes only at prearranged times, she is annoyed about the rationalization of their love; if he visits her spontaneously, she at times feels his presence as murder committed against the thoughts she would like to put on paper. When he makes clear his choice for a more patriarchal couples model by leaving the town where they both live without discussing the matter, and by noncommittally offering her the possibility of following later, their relationship ends.

Frischmuth's female protagonists are often single mothers who neither subordinate, nor want to adapt themselves, to a man; we remember the matrilinear, fatherless dynasty with the indicative name of "Weitersleben" ("living on") in *Die Mystifikationen der Sophie Silber,* the fun-loving innkeeper in *Über die Verhältnisse* (1987), and the divorcee Pröbstl and the young Marilies in *Einander Kind* (1990). In *Kai und die Liebe zu den Modellen,* Amy ponders what is lacking in a mother-child family, i.e., that the child can be misused as a partner, and that a son lacks a masculine role model. She mentions various alternative models: a young Turkish woman praises the patriarchal Turkish extended family in which the generations help each other; an older woman remembers the times in which well-to-do mothers were relieved by nannies and housekeepers; and a female friend advises her to couple the traditional female family role with free-lance writing. This last is the solution proposed in *Bindungen* (1980) by Malwine, who is wife, housewife, mother, and a successful painter. The notion of an erotic friendship with another woman flashes through her mind, but Amy, unlike Sidonie in the first volume of the trilogy, has no lesbian tendencies. She weighs advantages and disadvantages of a mixed communal living arrangement. Kai falls into raptures about an Indian tribe which does not separate the children from the adults, and Amy envisions in her novel that Kai, together with the children and the grown-ups, will establish a radical personal organization in the city park, in which children and adults associate with and approach one another.

Critics have reproached Frischmuth with a tendency towards a superficially positive attitude. But most of her texts are equally far removed from the opposite picture-book realms, the safe and sound world of the idyll and the totally distorted world of satire. The presumed positive tendencies, when viewed more closely, are found to be constructions integrating a considerable measure of destructiveness: while she enjoys playing with her son in the swimming pool, thoughts of suicide shoot through Amy's head—a tiny opposing detail. The embodiment of life, which nature spirits celebrate in a matriarchal ritual in the first volume of the trilogy, is a gruesome-benevolent goddess of death and fertility. Trude's rooftop garden in *Einander Kind* is, like the world, a paradise in which murder and manslaughter prevail everywhere. It is not the yearning for a world in which human beings can

live with one another that marks the limitation of Frischmuth's texts, but rather her way of writing. Middle writing styles are not suitable for making visible what has never yet been seen, or for letting the familiar appear from a new perspective and in a new light.

V

In her novel *Rita Münster,*[10] which appeared in 1983, Brigitte Kronauer laid out a new model of aesthetical subjectivity, employing a cumbersome manner of writing which forces her audience first of all to concentrate on the form. Critics have justifiably praised her energy, the incisiveness and clarity of her language, the transparent complexity of her images, the exactness of her metaphors, and her innovative narrative structure.

In the first part of the novel, the first-person narrator, Rita, lets her acquaintances and relatives ("Unversehens Veronika," "Jetzt Onkel Günter," "Nun Lambrini," "Dann Karin") pass repeatedly in review, as if on a turntable, in short associative or chronologically ordered segments. The short reports or portrait sketches are interrupted by momentary snapshots of the narrator, her moods, wishes, fears, dreams, visual and optical perceptions, and statements concerning her cat. The latter is an original re-creation of Kater Murr, who appears in the entire novel as a symbol for the unity of the speaking and the depicted self, since the cat is an aesthetical life artist who speaks only through body language. The first-person narrator behaves toward others like the writer of a novel toward her characters. She steps forth as an omniscient observer who is able to see through others with X-ray vision from outside and from within. While the others cannot take over the role of observer, and are not able to form a notion of her, she forces the figures to become frozen as fixed images which, when the figures change, are replaced by new fixed images. The object-self, on the other hand, is not fixed in an image, but rather is represented as an ever-changing unknown who appears in many forms; furthermore, and unlike the others, the object-self is not measured and restricted by any norm. Likewise, the speaking subject-self is not restricted by meta-reflection; neither her linguistic competency nor the surety of her observations are questioned.

In the second part, which begins temporally somewhat before the first part ends, and then runs backwards to the center and from there forwards again to its beginning in time, the first-person narrator describes a short love encounter and the forceful shock which it triggers within her. The narrator can make for herself only a shadow but no fixed image of the other person, and she finds her self-image mirrored in the imagination of the other. In the third part, which temporally follows immediately upon the second one or the first one, the narrator understands, by remembering scenes from her childhood and her youth, why in the process of her individuation she had first of all to lose her early integrated experience of love, cosmos, and individuality, which she has gained again through her experience of love.

In order to assert herself as an individual, the child had to disenchant its magic image of the world, in which even heads of wheat were powerful beings. In order to avoid a splitting of the self into "ego," "id," and "superego," the child had to disempower the punishing frown of the Catholic god. The maturing girl wanted to attract all glances to herself, but she experienced the glances of others as threats. She learned to view others as unseeing fixed images in order not to let herself be reduced by their glances to a standardized specimen of the species in accordance with handed-down cultural patterns. Early on, she had become acquainted with the power of aestheticizing, and with this self-technique she had increasingly disempowered the resistance of reality and expanded her own arbitrary power. Thus, she gradually enmeshed herself into a system of aesthetic solipsism, in which the all-powerful self experiences its life as a game where it can disempower every resistance by fictionalizing it—fellow human beings, weather, melancholic moods, love, death, and eternity—and can enjoy every fiction as a real resistance, just like the cat. At the pinnacle of her infatuation, Rita wants to know no more about her similarity to the cat because she has at last found the long-desired, completely real resistance. Later, however, she remembers that even being in love again and again takes its course according to the same rules of the game.

Rita Münster demonstrates the brilliance of aestheticizing, since Brigitte Kronauer conceived her as a first-person narrator and fictitious author of a novel whose overbearing phantasms are broken neither by any self-reflections nor by any perceptions of other observers nor, for that matter, by an autonomous narrative authority. Matthias Roth, the protagonist of the novel *Berittener Bogenschütze* (1986), demonstrates the wretchedness of aestheticizing, since Kronauer limits his overbearing phantasms in many ways through his self-reflections, the perceptions of different observers, and the autonomous narrative authority. While Rita Münster seems to experience her life in an original fashion, Matthias Roth, the university lecturer in literature, experiences only secondary literature, things he has acquired through reading, from Joseph Conrad and Ludwig Tieck through to Tania Blixen's "Alpenglühen" in *Ehrengard*. In his delusions of grandeur, encapsulated "in the intoxicating desert of his inner self" (416), Roth considers himself to be the creator and the center of a world whose events and figures all refer to him. To a certain extent, he is even right. All the structural elements of the novel refer to him, the main figure, and his analyses of the narrative structure and the narrative techniques of Joseph Conrad's novels determine not only his life and his perception, but also the narrative techniques and the narrative structure of the novel whose main character he is.

Undoubtedly, Brigitte Kronauer's novels are virtuoso texts. They are among the best things that German-language authors who employ a high writing style have had to offer in recent years. And what do they offer? Aestheticizing—opium for the intelligentsia among those who scorn trivial literature. This would not have to be true. The fact that it is true, however, has historical reasons, which I would like to elucidate in the following.[11]

VI

Perhaps this was the most successful of the basic concepts invented in the 1780s and 1790s in the German-speaking areas as a remedy against revolution: the concept of aesthetic autonomy. To a certain extent, fictional texts were always autonomous—even in the Middle Ages, for example, they were not bound to the rules of everyday speech, theology, the language of documents, jurisprudence, medicine, etc. What was new in the concept of aesthetic autonomy, which was not invented but emphasized in the Weimar classical period, was the exclusive joining of fictional texts to the regulative idea of beauty and their separation from the regulative ideas of truth and justice. Kant's radical separation of the beautiful from the true and of the true from the good left its decisive stamp on scientific discourse and the discourse concerning fictional literature, on the one hand directly and on the other indirectly, through the aesthetic writings which Schiller produced after his study of Kant, and then again through the theorems which Max Weber developed in his discussion of Kant and Schiller. The origin and the function of the Weimar classical period and its concepts have been subjected to perspicacious investigation.[12] I would like, at this point, only to draw attention to one function of the concept of aesthetic autonomy which has for the most part been long overlooked.

Well into the 18th century, rank and position in a hierarchically structured society were assigned by birth; the fact that gender roles, too, were hierarchically structured corresponded to the logic of the symbolic order. The subordination of the feminine to the masculine was further legitimized through the system of interpretation that medieval theologians projected onto the biblical story of the creation and the fall of man. Enlightenment thinking then undermined the belief in the legitimizing power of Christian mythology and its interpretations, and the utopia of freedom to rule, which was discussed in the era of the French Revolution, undermined the belief in the legitimacy of hierarchical social structures not based upon performance. How could those striving for enlightenment accept the utopia of freedom to rule as a regulative idea and still cling to the concept of hierarchically structured gender roles? By secularizing the ideology of theologians, as Rousseau did, with an appeal to nature. But how could it be avoided that society itself should become enlightened and see through Rousseau's notions and other, similar ones? By having literary discourse—and here, despite heated protests, I point to Herder—be separated into autonomous discourses of the good, the true, and the beautiful.

The discourse of the true became the discourse of rational knowledge, or of science, which was carried on in universities and academies: that is, in institutions from which women were excluded. Here, men were able to seek truth without bothersome voices questioning the concept of hierarchically structured gender roles.

Literary discourse in the public sphere—outside of institutionalized science—in which many women since the 18th century have taken part, including in Germany, now no longer counted in the strict sense as capable of truth, i.e., as sci-

entific. Contrary positions, which might have been expressed, no longer earned any substantial respect.

Schiller taught in his aesthetic writings that man is an unhappy being, divided into rationality and sensuousness. If he thinks rationally, then he must suppress his sensuous nature. If he acts rationally—even against the strongest resistance of his sensuous nature—then he is sublime. If he follows the impulses of his sensuous nature, then he suppresses his rationality. He is a total being solely and alone when he is successfully occupied with the artistically beautiful, when his sensuousness and his rationality play together harmoniously. Woman, according to Schiller, is a less unhappy being because she possesses very little rationality. Often, she would follow only the impulses of her sensuous nature, if rational man did not guide her. Many particularly successful women, however, are graceful beings, "schöne Seelen," whose weak sensuousness virtually by nature plays together harmoniously with their weak rationality.

The discourse of fictional literature turned into the sentimental-aesthetical discourse of the beautiful. Here, men were able to structure their masculine fantasies into images of womanliness which were suitable for manipulating the unconscious and for cementing hierarchic gender roles without having to fear criticism. For whoever would have dared criticize imaginings for their content would have had to accept the answer that he was a barbarian who had not understood that art was autonomous and had been released from any ties to the good and true, a barbarian whose slavish attention was directed at the content of wishful thinking, while it was, after all, the form of this wishful thinking alone that allowed human beings the infrequent happiness of harmony.

And why did women, for themselves, not conquer the sentimental-aesthetical discourse concerning beauty and structure their women's phantasies into images of men that could have been suitable for manipulating the unconscious and for undermining hierarchic gender roles? Because many were too uneducated? No, this would have been true of only a few. Because they had to care for their homes, their children, and their husbands? No, many men were also not professional writers able to concentrate only on their texts. Rather, it is because woman—so states Schiller—is a less unhappy being than man; because she is a being who is either too sensuous to be able to become artistically creative, or because she is by nature graceful, so harmonious that she is not dependent on producing artificial harmonies by creating the artistically beautiful.

If she attempted this nevertheless, this only proved that she was no real woman, but rather a total failure to be scorned. She was an anomaly of nature who needed gently—but, if necessary, even with drastic means—to be made aware of the impropriety of her action. As proof of this reaction, I recommend the hate-filled letter which Clemens Brentano wrote to Karoline von Günderode after he had read her first volume of poetry.[13]

Farsighted, clever men understood how to protect women from ending as victims of suicide, as did Günderode. It was, to be sure, not desirable, but it did not

do much damage, if women wrote. However, they had to write in a feminine manner, and that meant above all in a mediocre manner, simply gracefully and a bit insignificantly. As proof of this reaction, I recommend the letters which Schiller wrote in his capacity as manuscript reader to the writer Sophie Mereau.

In the 19th century, it was not possible entirely to prevent a few women authors from becoming great artists within the system of rules of autonomous art. In this case, the unfeminine unnaturalness of the female artist, her misfortune, her suffering, her state of being torn, her being divided were stressed. Here I recommend as proof a cross-sectional reading of the history of the reception of Annette von Droste-Hülshoff. If, on occasion, this particular strategy was not convincing, then the artist could be minimized to a charmingly feminine state of mediocrity—here I recommend as proof a cross-sectional reading of the reception history of Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach. If even this strategy proved to be erroneous, then one should celebrate the artist so emphatically as a brilliant child of nature that no one would think further about her artistic accomplishments; better still, one should think that her works did not count as works of art, but only as natural poetry. As proof of this last strategy I recommend a cross-sectional reading of the reception history of Bettine Brentano-von Arnim.

A considerable number of men in the 19th century protested against their enforced social neurotization into rationalistic beings of culture far from nature. But none of them—neither Goethe, nor Hölderlin, nor Kleist, nor the early Romantics, nor Büchner, nor Heine—questioned the foundations of masculine socialization, the concept of hierarchically structured gender roles. For this reason, their sentimental-aesthetical protests did not shake the structures of rationality of their society, but rather strengthened them. Only one woman author entered into the system of rules of autonomous art in order to diagnose the aesthetics of autonomy as both symptom and part of the cause of the disease which it was pretending to cure: within the framework of the horizons of thought of her time, Bettine Brentano-von Arnim developed a post-patriarchal aesthetics whose relevance has long gone unappreciated.[14]

In an insidious manner, the National Socialist attempt to establish a regressive myth as rational, and once again to cement gender-determined roles, has put an enduring stamp on mentality structures. In Ingeborg Bachmann's novel *Malina*,[15] the imaginary female author of the imaginary autobiography dissects her complicated personality into a feminine self and Malina, a masculine other, with the masculine and feminine here being metaphors for the metonymic, allegorical names of partial aspects of the imaginary main character. The masculine other embodies the aspect of the personality which Sigmund Freud calls the ego; he is rational, i.e., he adapts himself in a streamlined fashion to the constructions which count as rational in his society. The feminine self, victim, accomplice, and powerful antagonist of the symbolic father, is a strange mixture of various images of femininity, from Goethe's Mignon and Kleist's Käthchen right down to the Cinderella of trivial literature, who is dreaming of her fairy-tale prince. She has the

narcistic delusion of grandeur of the solipsistic female artist who, in a feeling of intoxication over her own creativity, occasionally looks down with considerable arrogance upon the magnificent intellectual achievements of men. This feminine self rebels against social conventions that determine what must count as real. By day, she insists upon the evidence of her emotions, spontaneous inspirations, wishes, and dreams. By night, she is shattered by nightmares: a despotic, fascist father forbids her to speak and forces her into incest. She resists by conquering language for herself, making literature and literary authors into her helpers, inventing both the brotherly alter ego Malina and a lover who takes over the role of a redeemer in her nightly dreams. During the day, the self recognizes that she cannot escape the tyranny of the symbolic father, that even the motions she makes toward fleeing are guided by the symbolic order from which she wants to escape. The dream-lover refuses to play the eternally kindhearted redeemer. Malina does not protect the unfolding of the feminine self, but rather, at the end, takes its place. Language and literature prove to be the murdering (suicidal) system, "the wall" (354–56) into which the feminine self gradually deadens itself.

The original power of Bachmann's language, her musicality, her wealth of variations, the transparency and intricacy of her images have often and justly been praised. With *Malina,* Ingeborg Bachmann proved that she was not only an outstanding lyricist, but also a narrator of high rank. Here she bound together differing narrative schemes into an innovative narrative structure: the sadomasochistic dream sequences follow a narrative logic that is completely different from the yearnings for redemption cloaked in a fairy-tale story, and from the satiric-theatrical representation of Austrian high society, etc. In this novel, there occur neither nebulous and dark nor one-dimensional, unequivocal passages in the text. Everything is clear and at the same time ambiguous, since it is bound up in diverse enmeshments. Is the demolished feminine self plagued by traumatic memories of an incestuous rape? Does she translate the fascistic terrorist activity into the imagery of sexual degradation? Does she fight against the superior symbolic father of patriarchal culture? Have traumatic experiences given structure, not only to her fears but also to her desires? Are her nightmares shrewdly staged instances of sadomasochistic wishful thinking? *Malina* is a text which entices us to constructive and deconstructive interpretative pleasures. It has already given rise to hundreds of interpretations; and further hundreds or thousands will follow. I would like here to stress just one aspect that has to this point not received the attention it deserves: *Malina* is an aesthetical sepulcher, or a mausoleum, for the idealistic aesthetics of autonomy.

After 1945, especially in the 1950s and early 1960s, the notion of aesthetic autonomy was reactivated, along with other notions, as a cure for the devastation that had been left behind in people's minds by fascism. Like Schiller's *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen in einer Reihe von Briefen* (1795), the reformulated conceptions swayed between a theory of the aesthetic as the revelation of real individual and social harmony, and a theory of the aesthetic as a substitute for

harmony. The Austrian lyric poet Ingeborg Bachmann, the much-admired and widely praised primadonna of German postwar literature, was the most important exponent of a highly artificial aestheticism which was seen as a guarantor of the humane. Against this backdrop, one must understand the irritations which the novel *Malina* unleashed when it was published in 1971, less with its readership (contrary to rumors, this novel appeared on the best-seller lists immediately) than with literary critics, who did not know what to do with this unwieldy text, especially since they had just become accustomed to the most recent short-term fashion wave of politically direct "engaged" literature.

A rereading of *Malina* is to be recommended to those who today are once again celebrating aestheticism as an antirationalistic religion of art. Remarkable is not the fact that at the end the woman is sacrificed, because no woman who is imagined to be real is sacrificed; at most, it is the male lover who is sacrificed, who is pushed aside after he has done his duty and transported the feminine self into an intoxication of love, fear, and panic, thus inspiring her to artistic productivity. The feminine self transforms itself in art and then withdraws into its rationalistic core called "Malina." Thus, at the end, the order of the symbolic father triumphs. In other words, autonomous art is no humane counter-world offering a harmonic holistic entity; rather, it is a rationalistic partial system. The vital and emotional impulses that are symbolized as feminine are sublimated and channeled in a sentimental-aesthetical manner, so as not to shatter the rationalistic order that is symbolized as masculine, but rather to cushion and to strengthen it.

Malina is a worthy burial place for the distinguished corpse of the aesthetics of autonomy, in case it is really dead. It still roams abroad in a ghostly form and probably must be buried a number of times. How simple it is to poke fun at Schiller, yet how difficult it is, on the other hand, to escape from his thought structures in the German language, is proven by Christa Wolf's *Kassandra* and her Frankfurt lectures on poetics concerning this novel, which appeared in 1983.[16] In the lectures on poetics, in which she arranges well-known set pieces of feminist criticism in the traditional form of loosely assembled essays, she takes the sentimental concept of the "schöne Seele" literally in a trivial manner as she promotes a feminine aesthetic and a feminine worldview as a cure for the ravages of the modern. In her narrative, which she constructed strictly in a high pathetical tone, the protagonist embodies Schiller's concept of the masculine sublime: with open eyes and reflecting calmly, she moves toward her heroic death.

Whether from political naiveté or from political opportunism, from intellectual laziness or from artistic negligence, for whatever reasons, Irmtraud Morgner, like Christa Wolf, took up the notion that has been rejected as dangerous illusion by serious feminist theory—namely, that, after the bourgeoisie and the proletariat have failed, women can take over the role of redeemer of the world—and made it the center point of her unfinished novel-trilogy. Even before systematic scientific research into women and gender had really gotten started, she published the first results of her private searchings for intractable women, both in her own mind and

in history, myth, fairy tales, sagas, literature, and art since antiquity.[17] Admittedly, in comparison with the standard of scientific findings concerning the history of gender roles—which today are still sketchy—her representations of men and women are not much differentiated. Furthermore, her self-willed women are by far not as complicated as the women writers, artists, rulers, physicians, farmers, market-women, serving girls, and so on, about whom research can report today. And still, to that point, there had not been such unrestrainable joy in storytelling, so much fantasy, wit, humor, and sense for burlesque comedy in the text of a German-language woman author. Moreover, the meaning of these novels is by no means unambiguous. Is the author holding fast to the political utopia of paradise on earth, or is she holding a subtle and delicate funeral oration for that utopia by recalling it from the practice of the totalitarian state into the fantasy of wishful thinking?

The era of totalitarian European revolutions has come to an end. It is time to free ourselves from the notions which were once devised as a remedy for the terror of revolution. In pluralistic democracies, men are no longer forced into the role of rationalistic beings who must suppress their emotionality, and women are no longer forced into the role of complementary-neurotic beings of feeling who must stunt their rationality. In their search for new forms of the art of living together, men and women have little time for the formal arts of aesthetical solipsism and its virtuosity in the description of non-viable relationships. Furthermore, they prefer developing an ecological natural science to comforting themselves about the destruction of nature by means of beautiful artistic landscapes or the newest refinement of highly artificial representations of the catastrophe.[18]

At the end of the 18th century, the mobile of the good, the true, and the beautiful became entangled. In the age of arts which are no longer beautiful, beauty has long since become detached from its classicist connection to fictional literature. Beauty, platonically defined as order within chaos, has no more and no less to do with a poem than with a scientific text, a mathematical equation, or an anthill. The true cannot be separated from the good for the sole reason that those imaginary constructions that (in different societies) determine what should count as reality in the various complementary and contrary partial systems of each society are connected with those imaginary constructions that, in different ways, determine what should count as good in the various complementary and contrary partial systems of each society. The scientific pluralism of an open, post-patriarchal, democratic society is apparently regulated by a completely different idea of justice than the scientific pluralism of a fundamentalist-Islamic society.

The understanding that the scientific, discursive-analytical discourse of the modern, too, is regulated by the utopian myths of truth, beauty, and justice, relativizes the difference between science and myth, yet without nullifying it. Myth was always also rational, and science cannot escape from its sentimental foundations. It does not make sense to replace science's old fear of myth with science's new fear of the presumed unavoidable rationalism of science, and to seek benefit

in avoiding discursive-analytical ways of writing or their mixture with fictional-narrative ways of writing. Discursive and narrative ways of writing can formulate regressive myths. They can come to the assistance of narrow-minded rationalisms. They can bring into view, as sophistry or as aestheticism, the possibilities of language when it is freed from specialized concerns. And they can bring rational insights up for discussion which are the result of the interplay of sharpened reason and heightened feeling.

It is crucial to free fictional-narrative writing styles from the ghetto of the sentimental-aesthetical. When the great and small literary critics, who give out the lucrative stipends and literary prizes, and who play a part in determining the sales potential of books, have understood that high writing styles do not have to revolve around writing and the literary enterprise; that a serious neurosis is not the unalterable precondition for literary productivity; that authors are able to give structure to something other than their neuroses—then it will be seen that high-grade complex writing styles are equal to the complexity of society; that fiction and narration are unrenounceable and irreplaceable ways to appropriate reality even in the modern risk society. And the crisis of the novel, so often mentioned since the 19th century?—it will then be over.

Translated by Cora Lee Nollendorfs

Notes

1 Ulrich Beck, *Risikogesellschaft: Auf dem Weg in eine andere Moderne* (Frankfurt am Main, 1986).
2 Compare this point to my forthcoming *Geschlechterrollen im Mittelalter: Die höfische Literatur als kulturelles System.*
3 Concerning problems of differentiation, see *Zur Dichotomisierung von hoher und niederer Literatur,* ed. Christa Bürger, Peter Bürger, Jochen Schulte-Sasse (Frankfurt am Main, 1982).
4 Anna Wimschneider, *Herbstmilch: Lebenserinnerungen einer Bäuerin* (Munich, 1984). Here and following, all translations are by the author.
5 Important works: Ricarda Schmidt, *Westdeutsche Frauenliteratur in den 70er Jahren* (Frankfurt, 1982); *Frauen Literatur Geschichte: Schreibende Frauen vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart,* ed. Hiltrud Gnüg, Renate Möhrmann (Stuttgart, 1985); Karin Richter-Schröder, *Frauenliteratur und weibliche Identität: Theoretische Ansätze zu einer weiblichen Ästhetik und zur Entwicklung der neuen deutschen Frauenliteratur* (Frankfurt, 1986); Evelyne Keitel, *Psychopathographien: Die Vermittlung psychotischer Elemente durch Literatur* (Heidelberg, 1986); Sigrid Weigel, *Die Stimme der Medusa: Schreibweisen in der Gegenwartsliteratur von Frauen (1987)* (Reinbek, 1989); *Deutsche Literatur von Frauen,* vol. 2, ed. Gisela Brinker-Gabler (Munich, 1988).
6 Max Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie,* vol. 1 (Tübingen, 1978). See also Jürgen Habermas, *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns,* 3d ed. (Frankfurt am Main, 1985), 1:225–366.
7 Ursula Krechel, *Selbsterfahrung und Fremdbestimmung: Bericht aus der Neuen Frauenbewegung* (Darmstadt/Neuwied, 1975).

8 Verena Stefan, *Häutungen: Autobiografische Aufzeichnungen Gedichte Träume Analysen* (Munich, 1975).

9 Barbara Frischmuth, *Die Mystifikationen der Sophie Silber* (1976; repr., Munich, 1979); *Kai und die Liebe zu den Modellen* (1979; 3d ed., Munich, 1985); *Bindungen* (1980; repr., Munich, 1983); *Die Frau im Mond* (1982; repr., Munich, 1985); *Über die Verhältnisse* (Salzburg/Wien, 1987); *Einander Kind* (Salzburg/Wien, 1990). See also Christa Gürtler, *Schreiben Frauen anders? Untersuchungen zu Ingeborg Bachmann und Barbara Frischmuth* (Stuttgart, 1983); Paul M. Haberland, "The Role of Art in the Writings of Barbara Frischmuth," *Modern Austrian Literature* 14 (1981): 85–96; Jorun B. Johns, "Barbara Frischmuth: Eine Bibliographie der Werke und der Sekundärliteratur bis Herbst 1980," ibid., 101–28.

10 Brigitte Kronauer, *Rita Münster* (1983; 2d ed., Stuttgart, 1984); *Berittener Bogenschütze* (1986; repr., Munich, 1990). On the "Alpenglühen," compare *Berittener Bogenschütze,* 272–74, and Tania Blixen, *Ehrengard* (Frankfurt am Main, 1987), 30–31.

11 More details on this point will be contained in my forthcoming essay "Ästhetik in der Risikogesellschaft."

12 *Die Klassik-Legende,* ed. Reinhold Grimm and Jost Hermand (Frankfurt am Main, 1971); Wilhelm Voßkamp, "Klassik als Epoche: Zur Typologie und Funktion der Weimarer Klassik," in *Literarische Klassik,* ed. Hans-Joachim Simm (Frankfurt am Main, 1988), 248–77; Klaus L. Berghahn, "Das Andere der Klassik: Von der 'Klassik-Legende' zur jüngsten Klassik-Diskussion," *Goethe-Yearbook* 6 (1992): 1–27; *Klassik im Vergleich: Normativität und Historizität europäischer Klassiken,* Symposion Villa Vigoni 1990, ed. Wilhelm Voßkamp (Stuttgart, 1992).

13 Bettine von Arnim, *Clemens Brentano's Frühlingskranz. Die Günderode,* ed. Walter Schmitz (Frankfurt am Main, 1986), 845–850; here, 848 (original letter quoted by Schmitz).

14 Ursula Liebertz-Grün, *Ordnung im Chaos: Studien zur Poetik der Bettine Brentano-von Arnim* (Heidelberg, 1989).

15 Ingeborg Bachmann, *Malina* (1971; repr., Frankfurt am Main, 1987).

16 Christa Wolf, *Voraussetzungen einer Erzählung: Kassandra, Frankfurter Poetik-Vorlesungen* (Darmstadt/Neuwied, 1983); *Kassandra, Erzählung* (Darmstadt, Neuwied, 1983).

17 Irmtraud Morgner, *Leben und Abenteuer der Trobadora Beatriz nach Zeugnissen ihrer Spielfrau Laura* (1974; 2d ed. Darmstadt/Neuwied, 1978); *Amanda: Ein Hexenroman* (Darmstadt/Neuwied, 1983).

18 See Jost Hermand, *Im Wettlauf mit der Zeit: Anstöße zu einer ökologiebewußten Ästhetik* (Berlin, 1991).

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