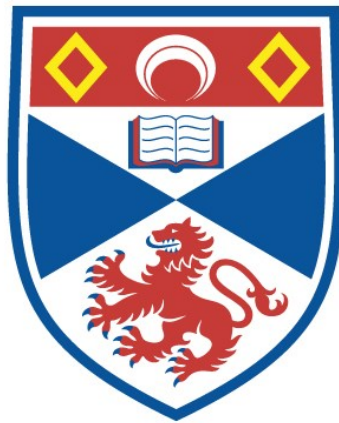


**THE SELF AND THE MODERN WORLD IN SELECTED
GERMAN-LANGUAGE PROSE WORKS : WITH
PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE WRITINGS OF
MAX FRISCH, THOMAS BERNHARD AND PETER
HANDKE**

Collin Ellis

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**THE SELF AND THE MODERN WORLD IN SELECTED
GERMAN-LANGUAGE PROSE WORKS WRITTEN
SINCE 1945**

**With particular reference to the writings of Max Frisch, Thomas
Bernhard and Peter Handke.**

Colin Ellis

Degree of M.Phil.

April 1994



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ABSTRACT

The self and its confrontation with a specifically "modern" world is viewed as a dominant theme of much German-language prose writing in the period 1945-1989. Chapter One considers factors giving rise to this preoccupation, their reflection in key literary works of the 1940s and 1950s, and literary and cultural changes in the 1960s. Frisch, Bernhard and Handke are introduced in the context of the period leading up to 1968, a year which is both the historical mid-point of this era and a symbol of the personal revolt crucial to each writer's development..

The three subsequent chapters examine (respectively) the writings of Frisch, Bernhard and Handke, in each case concentrating on a series of works in which the vulnerable self struggles to survive in the face of a modern world frequently portrayed as alien, uncontrollable and destructive ; Frisch's three major novels Stiller, Homo faber, and Mein Name sei Gantenbein, Bernhard's five volumes of autobiography, and Handke's tetralogy Langsame Heimkehr all illustrate the theme of re-evaluation of the self by being turning-points in each writer's career.

Chapter Five considers related tendencies in German literature after 1968 ; the "new subjectivity" of the 1970s, the debates generated by the rise of post-modernism and the dominance of mass media and popular culture in the 1980s. The sometimes puzzling forms assumed by German writing in this period are seen as reflecting a cultural and psychological unease, the portrayal of often harrowing inner experiences in the work of Frisch, Bernhard and Handke in particular demonstrating the awareness of an "other side". In their writings, the combination of historical and intensely personal elements creates a response in the reader which can stimulate his/her own self-scrutiny and personal re-evaluation, and lead to a kind of self-knowledge similar to that gained by the autobiographically-tinged central figures.

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PREFACE

The theme of this study, the self and the modern world as portrayed in German-language prose works after 1945, may at first glance appear vague and ill-defined. Yet it has been chosen in order to bring out aspects of this relationship which may well have been neglected in much previous work on similar topics in the English-speaking world. Particularly in Great Britain, a cornerstone of German literary studies has been the analysis of the relationship between individual and society, as portrayed in literary works. Numerous school and university syllabuses still take this as their starting-point, for obvious reasons. At the most basic level, the need for learners of German to acquire knowledge of the German-speaking countries through literature influences the choice of texts to be studied at school. In literary terms, the most accessible texts for young English speakers schooled in the traditions of the nineteenth-century realist novel are those post-war works which draw on Anglo-American models in their depiction of German-language societies. Furthermore, the experience of two world wars in which Germany was Britain's enemy, together with a certain resentment of her post-war *Wirtschaftswunder*, still affect public attitudes to the contemporary Federal Republic. The most comprehensible and well-known literary figures, therefore, are those writers who display a kind of social commitment and an unwillingness to conform which correspond to models familiar from other countries and reflect an Anglo-Saxon mistrust of German conformism and militarism. Thus, the study of writers such as Brecht, Böll, Grass, Frisch, Dürrenmatt, and Andersch has played a significant part in most students' experience of twentieth-century German literature.

Indeed, non-specialist British readers - A-Level students, journalists, the "intelligent general reader" - are likely to associate modern European literature in general with the image of the dissident or politically-aware citizen-writer. Quite apart from the German-speaking authors mentioned above, the "image" of French post-war writing is still dominated by Existentialism, and the perceived moral

authority, of Camus, Sartre and de Beauvoir ; while eastern European literature often seems to be valued for its status as resistance to centralised, totalitarian state power. Therefore , the tendency is to value literary works for non-literary reasons, and to ignore or play down their modernist, experimental or exploratory aspects. Again, there are identifiable reasons for this ; among them, the minor role played by avant-garde writing in Britain, especially after 1945, and the reluctance of English literary studies in Britain (as opposed to the United States) to develop a comparative dimension, or to pay much attention to contemporary European writing. The predominance of French and American critical theory in the 1970s and 1980s, too, represented a challenge to the British (Victorian or “Leavisite”) and German traditions of regarding literature as a moral endeavour with the aim of self-improvement - and to the tenets of twentieth-century European modernism. Its effect, paradoxically enough, was to reinforce the ambivalent, often hostile reception of both modernism and post-modernism in Great Britain. These factors therefore contributed to the predominance of the topic “the individual and society”, and to the conclusions which tended to be drawn from it ; namely, that the individual must struggle to preserve his freedom and his identity in the face of a society - usually portrayed as a specific nation-state - which is viewed as mindlessly conformist, if not totalitarian. However, to interpret this conflict exclusively in socio-political terms deriving from the devastating experience of Nazism and World War Two, while convenient for the British reader, runs the risk of falling into a partial and over-simplified view which makes the understanding of recent trends in German writing increasingly difficult. The post-war “Existentialist” model has long since given way to other literary standpoints, particularly since 1968 - as Chapter 5 of this study will demonstrate. In order to put this change into perspective, an awareness of recent history in the German-speaking countries, and of more long-term historical processes and far-reaching aspects of cultural history in Western Europe and the United States is necessary.

According to George Steiner, for example, the “*principal division in the history*

of Western literature occurs between the early 1870s and the turn of the century. It divides a literature essentially housed in language from one for which language has become a prison. Compared to this division all preceding historical and stylistic rubrics or movements - Hellenism, the medieval, the Baroque, Neo-classicism, Romanticism - are only subgroups or variants..."¹ Steiner goes on to analyse the "multiple and complex" causes of this language crisis², - a phenomenon whose significance is seldom called into question by literary critics in continental Europe, and which German-speaking readers in particular regard as very important. Its ramifications in the German-speaking world are outlined in Chapter 1 of this study. Yet a prominent British critic has recently stated that the early twentieth-century modernism which was the immediate product of this crisis is the expression of an "anti-democratic animus"³, "a determined effort, on the part of the European intelligentsia, to exclude the masses from culture"⁴. For him, the language crisis is not the central issue; rather, the self-proclaimed élitism of the early twentieth-century avant-garde is closely related to the rise of fascism and National Socialism. During this period, he claims, the cult of supermen and geniuses on a higher plane from the ordinary individual, the demand for strong leadership, and a distaste for the common herd who are merely required to obey, can be identified in both the cultural and political spheres. This argument is in accord with his portrayal of twentieth-century British intellectual life as being marked by a struggle between two different conceptions of culture - roughly speaking, between the high modernism of an upper-middle class intelligentsia ("Bloomsbury") and the down-to-earth, popular and commercialised culture of the lower middle class (as seen in the new London suburbs). He comes down firmly on the side of the "masses", but in doing so points to a key reason for the unease of the "intellectuals": "Behind all these recipes for supremacy we can observe the

¹George Steiner : *After Babel* (Oxford 1992), p.184

²ibid., pp.186-207

³John Carey : *The Intellectuals and the Masses* (London 1992), p.5

⁴ ibid., p.16

*presence of mass culture, driving intellectuals to invent new proof of their distinction in a world which increasingly found them redundant”*⁵ This argument may, however, meet with some opposition in mainland Europe, where many expressions of modernism still tend to be regarded as “progressive” and are less easily interpreted in terms of class politics.

In the twentieth century, the experience of mass technological civilisation is indeed the characteristic which influences most deeply the relationship between the self and the modern world. Even if Carey’s anti-modernist thesis sometimes seems excessively reductive and simplistic, and perhaps influenced by populist political currents in its hostility to life beyond the suburbs, his identification of the uneasy intellectual confronted with a new and alien mass culture is applicable not merely in the British context. Indeed, this conflict is identifiable throughout Western Europe, as he admits - and nowhere does it assume a more dramatic form than in the German-speaking countries. The German critic Huyssen analyses the relationship of modernism and mass culture in this period with much greater subtlety and breadth of vision than Carey ; he too is critical of the “high modernist dogma”, but is more aware of the interaction between high art and mass culture, and of their common historical origins “*in the decades around 1848*”.⁶ Consequently, he is able to take a broader historical and cultural view, and, in seeking to understand cultural developments in their totality is able to avoid the dismissive, simple-minded anti-modernist stance which is frequently encountered in contemporary Britain. Certainly, as is pointed out in Chapter 1 of this study, “Modernism” in its many forms accompanies the rapid transformation of Germany in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. It also finds fertile ground in the final years of Habsburg Vienna, where an atmosphere of intellectual ferment in the midst of a multi-national “mass” population accompanies political stagnation and economic decline. After 1933, these developments are driven underground, or - in the

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 72

⁶ Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide* (London 1988), p.18

political sphere - assume the forms which Carey, rightly or wrongly, condemns as a complement to the self-deluding “intellectual aristocracy” of modernism.

The reflection of this process in German literature after 1945 is twofold. The content of much post-World War Two writing - including the works which are briefly discussed in Chapter 1- is concerned with the problem of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* ; writers attempt to analyse and come to terms with the traumatic experiences, whether individual or collective, of the pre-war and wartime period. Stylistically, there is a need to “catch up” with the key works of modernism which had been suppressed during the Nazi era, and a search for a way of writing which will not be susceptible to corruption and distortion for unworthy political ends. Hence, in the immediate post-war era, pre-war avant-gardism and linguistic experiment is either unknown or generally mistrusted, and new models are found - the American short story, the French *roman catholique* and *roman engagé*.

It is significant that these models come from outside the German-speaking world ; in both cases they also reflect an awareness of popular culture which does not necessarily entail hostility. While the Nazis’ appropriation of German popular culture compelled their intellectual opponents to take a stand against *Blut-und-Boden* literature, pro-Nazi or escapist wartime films, the use of radio as a propaganda-medium, etc., the earlier decades of the twentieth century had provided many examples of a more curious and “innocent” interest in mass culture - e.g., the fascination with sport shown by figures such as Brecht, and the depiction of the intensity and speed of urban life in the modernist “city novel”, epitomised in German by Döblin’s Berlin Alexanderplatz. This tendency was to re-appear in the post-war era as writers, impatient with the pessimistic, anti-modern stance of the older generation of cultural critics, became increasingly sympathetic to the commercialised popular culture of the United States. Particularly during the 1960s, this appeared to cross what Huyssen calls the “Great Divide”⁷, America’s openness

⁷ *ibid*, p.viii

and “sense of the future”⁸ offering the possibility of developing an alternative to traditional European concepts of “high” and “low” culture.

The willingness of German intellectuals to follow such “foreign” models is also an indication of how, in the second half of the twentieth century, interaction between the individual and society becomes part of a more complex network of relationships. The freedom to travel, and the increasing tendency of business, politics, entertainment and sport to be administered at a supra-national level reduce the power of the nation state and threaten the survival of purely local traditions. The effect of this process on the individual is, on the one hand, liberating, insofar as an increasing range of cultural possibilities and what German-speakers call “life-chances” open up - and on the other hand, disorienting, as the decline of traditions often gives rise to a feeling of rootlessness and helplessness in the face of an increasingly centralised and standardised process of decision-making and an unprecedented flood of information.. As the support provided by the traditional institutions of family, church and state diminishes, the individual becomes increasingly reliant on his own mental and spiritual resources. All this calls received notions of identity - social, cultural, political - into question, and demands a constant re-evaluation of the self. The three writers with whom this study is mainly concerned are German speakers but not Germans, a fact which in each case intensifies the problems of artistic self-definition characteristic of the post-1945 era. Over a period of almost thirty years, their works provide ample illustration of this process of gradual change.

The first major novel of this period, Frisch’s *Stiller*(1954), provides an appropriate starting-point precisely because it demonstrates the broad series of problems with which the writer, and his literary “Ich”, are confronted at the beginning of the post-war era. The prison motif corresponds to Steiner’s division between “*a literature essentially housed in language from one for which language*

⁸ *ibid*, p.166

has become a prison” - made explicit in the lack of communication between Stiller and those who surround him. The protagonist’s desire to break out of the confines of a narrow national identity, his search for alternative identities through travel and residence in other countries, his re-evaluation of his past life and re-casting of his experience in “Geschichten” and his preoccupation with the second-hand nature of experiences and perceptions gained through the mass media are also key indicators of future literary themes. The novel’s reception is significant too ; those reviewers who are aware of the writer’s public persona tend to find autobiographical aspects in the work, setting up a tension between the writer’s life, his literary creation and his public image which is to characterise much of the literature and criticism which will follow. Together with Stiller, Frisch’s subsequent novels, Homo faber (1957) and Mein Name sei Gantenbein (1964), constitute what has been identified as a “Zürcher Trilogie”. In these works, Frisch dispenses with overtly autobiographical passages but constructs a network of themes, stylistic devices and symbols which establish the identity of his work. The conflict between modernism and mass culture is explicit in the case of Stiller, a character desperately attempting to live up to the ideals of authenticity and personal autonomy inherent in the claims of the modern artist, yet finding that this stance cannot resolve his deeply troubled personal relationships and need for recognition by the society he claims to despise. In Homo faber, this conflict is expressed not only in the portrayal of the engineer Walter Faber - a complementary figure to Stiller, who discovers that the prestigious, “modern” profession to which he devotes himself cannot grant him personal autonomy - but also in the novel’s structure and themes. An intricately constructed, non-linear narrative deals with the relationship between fate and technology in a manner which draws from both Greek myth and the clichés of popular literature. Mein Name sei Gantenbein may superficially appear to be a rather forbidding, radically modernist work ; yet the concentration on personal relationships, the creation of a mysterious yet identifiable central character in the “Buch-Ich” and the incorporation of stylistic features

familiar from Frisch's earlier novels help to make it more accessible than most other avant-garde works of its era.

Bernhard's Frost (1963) appeared at roughly the same time as Gantenbein and gained its author a reputation as one of the first "modernists" to emerge from post-war Austria. Like Stiller, the central character - the painter Strauch - is a failed artist-figure who demonstrates the unease of the high modernist intellectual in the face of mass society. He is also the first in a long line of protagonists in Bernhard's work who devote themselves wholeheartedly, even obsessively, to cultural projects but meet with apathy from the society which surrounds them and with which they gradually lose contact. Yet the reader's response to these representatives of art for art's sake is ambivalent. They are often presented in the third person, and in a way which makes simple identification difficult, repeatedly expressing themselves (to an anonymous or colourless narrator) in long tirades filled with exaggerations, misogyny, snobbery and anti-modernism. However, their dedication, and the intensity with which they pursue their creative endeavours, elicit admiration and create a context in which their criticism of the modern world (and especially of modern Austria) finds an echo in the reader.

Like Frisch, Bernhard became a writer whose work was marked by its stylistic and thematic consistency. Again, the author's success meant that his public persona began to influence the reception of his work ; Bernhard became an increasingly outspoken critic of his country's politics and culture while jealously guarding his private life. The five short volumes of autobiography, written between 1975 and 1982, made the relationship between the author's life and work a little more comprehensible. The concentration - typical in this period - on a series of key experiences in childhood and adolescence very clearly demonstrated the source of Bernhard's lifelong preoccupations, from his interest in the obsessive, "heroic failures" who are his central characters of his fiction, to his love of music, knowledge of Austrian rural landscapes, detestation of the Austrian state and constant awareness of illness and death. The autobiographical series was, however,

just as much of a literary creation as any of his fictional works or plays, and, in spite of its portrayal of the author's teenage years and of his relationship to his family, offered little else to satisfy serious biographical researchers - or, for that matter, Viennese gossip columnists. Appearing during the late 1970s and early 1980s, a period of intense concern with the relationship between autobiography and fiction in the German-speaking countries⁹, the series also corresponded to the introspective and searching mood of the time - doubtless a factor in its success.

This period saw the completion of the gradual change which characterised the development of German literature in the decades since the end of World War Two. The preoccupation with the self intensified, as the failure of ideologies to deliver the promised social and political transformations became apparent ; while the modern world - itself transformed from the situation pertaining at the end of World War Two - was described in literary works in ways which at times differed radically from the "realistic", politically-oriented writing of the preceding generation. A key figure in this development was Peter Handke, who published his Langsame Heimkehr tetralogy between 1979 and 1981. Like Bernhard's five short volumes, this has been interpreted as an autobiographical statement, even though it consists of a novel, a book of essayistic reflections written in the first person, a first-person narrative dealing with a father-daughter relationship which seems to resemble Handke's own situation as a single parent - well-known to readers of the *Feuilletons* - at the time, and a "dramatisches Gedicht" set in rural Austria, drawing on precedents from Greek drama and expressing the desire for a new beginning, indeed a "New Age". Handke, the youngest of the three writers with whom this study is concerned, had made his name in the late 1960s, due not only to the quality of his early, radically experimental texts but also to his flair for publicity. While older writers tended to keep their distance from the mass media, Handke initially seemed to go out of his way to cultivate public attention. In the

⁹ See Barbara Saunders : Contemporary German Autobiography : literary approaches to the problem of identity (London 1985), especially Chapters 2 and 3.

1960s, the decade in which Andy Warhol declared that “In the future, everyone will be famous for fifteen minutes”, such an attitude was not unfamiliar - but it was associated more with entertainers (pop stars, film actors, sportsmen) than with “serious” artists. Nonetheless, the blurring of boundaries between high and low culture meant that the “culture industry”, propagated by the media, could generate a wide variety of “cultural icons”, cult figures of various kinds who often seemed to live their lives on public display¹⁰. Handke, with his youthful, fashionable appearance and his interest in both literary tradition and cultural products of the modern world such as pop music and film, was well equipped to take advantage of this development. In both interviews and literary works he seemed to draw heavily from his own life, sometimes overtly, as in Wunschloses Unglück (1972), a work inspired by the suicide of his mother, and sometimes in fictionalised form, as in Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied (1972), an account of a journey across the United States which doubtless owed something to the author’s own well-publicised travels yet was a typical, highly self-conscious work containing numerous references to literary and other cultural figures who had influenced him. This combination of personal reality and fiction, marked by “name-dropping” - numerous overt references to other writers - and passages which appear to adapt, imitate or parody the styles of his literary forebears, became characteristic of Handke’s work. More than Frisch or Bernhard, he was aware, even at the beginning of his career, of the fact that he himself had contributed to the construction of his own public image; and was able to employ it as a tool in the exploration of the mysteries of identity. As his career developed, he abandoned the more provocative aspects of his persona, choosing to re-affirm a sense of privacy and renew his interest in tradition, distancing himself from contemporary urban culture and exploring identity in relation to nature. The Langsame Heimkehr tetralogy was a turning point in this respect ; as the chapter on Handke shows, his

¹⁰ See James Park (ed.) : Cultural Icons : Cult Figures Who Made The Twentieth Century What It Is (London 1991). The entry on Handke is on pp.176-7

subsequent writing has been concerned with the same themes - nature, family life, the past and its cultural and political influence, the need for the individual to resist the pressures and the pace of modern social life and to re-establish a connection with natural life through close observation and reflection. It can therefore be seen as a kind of "spiritual autobiography". Like Frisch, Handke has made use of the fragmentary form in diaries and notebooks, and published Die Geschichte des Bleistifts (1982) and Phantasien der Wiederholung (1983), both of which can be regarded as complementary to the tetralogy.

In this study, much attention is given to the reception of the works listed above in secondary literature, ranging from literary journalism to detailed studies within the framework of *Germanistik*. This is inevitable, given the fact that the three writers concerned are among the most famous literary figures in the German-language area, and have thus given rise to large and ever-increasing volumes of criticism - as can be seen from the Bibliography. Clearly, a study of this nature cannot hope to be exhaustive. Nonetheless, by concentrating on three famous writers, while retaining a broad perspective and attempting to cover a wide range of material, it is hoped that, in each case, a picture of the relationship between the writer, his work, his public, his presence in the media and his attitude to the extra-literary world will emerge. The period 1945-1968, covered in Chapter 1, also provides a context within which Frisch's work can be analysed (in Chapter 2) and its relevance to future developments understood. Bernhard's autobiographical volumes and Handke's tetralogy are at the centre of Chapters 3 and 4 respectively. Both writers continued to publish prolifically during the 1980s, as is shown in the discussions of their later works - and can, in their different ways, be taken as representative of the "generation change" following 1968 and the decline of the *Gruppe 47* aesthetic. For this reason, Chapter 5 concentrates rather more on critical responses to the literature of the post-1968 period than on analyses of individual works. The Conclusion points to the continuing desire of German-speaking writers, readers and critics to preserve, and express, a sense of self of some kind - even if the

nineteenth-century concept of the autonomous individual, or the stubborn individualism of the typical post-war existentialist hero, are no longer applicable models. If the concept of a collapsing, fluid or unstable self is initially seen as a threat, then recent literary developments demonstrate much evidence to the contrary. The contemporary writer's freedom to employ a wide range of stylistic devices and to ignore genre boundaries can create new ways of exploring questions of identity - and thereby provide new possibilities for self-analysis and self-development.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE SELF AND THE MODERN WORLD

The background : modernism and the modern world - a "collapse of the self" ?

Attempts to define the "modern" world and its relationship to concepts of identity are inevitably determined by the particular area of culture to which they relate. Thus, as this study deals for the most part with German-language literature, concentrating on prose works of what was until recently referred to as the "post-war", i.e., 1945 - 1990 period, its definition of the modern world has to encompass the specifically historical developments which transformed Germany into Western Europe's leading economic power (and, similarly, Austria and Switzerland into affluent societies) - reflected in the "realistic", socially concerned character of much of the literature of the period - and the less tangible, but equally significant, intellectual climate, within which the writer's identity is acquired (or challenged) and literature is created. Equally, an awareness of the external factors which influence the intellectual and social scene in Germany, Austria and Switzerland is necessary. The "modern world" in this sense is dominated by the United States (and, to a lesser degree, by the Soviet Union), often making the German-language intellectual uncomfortably conscious of his own provincialism, or that of the society in which he lives. Therefore, insights into the course of social and cultural developments in the German-speaking countries during these decades must be combined with considerations of its effect on the individual, as the relationship of self and world expressed by writers inevitably alters in the light of changing personal and political circumstances.

Literary historians have located the origins of "Modernism", or of "die Moderne", in various periods : for example, in the late eighteenth century, with the Enlightenment and the French Revolution heralding a succession of literary developments, in France, Germany and beyond, which reflected the new status of the

individual in relation to society and political authority. The writer began to be seen as moral exemplar and upholder of personal liberty in the face of threats from established, or ossified, structures of power ; this leading to what would later - especially in the German-speaking literary world dominated by the achievements of Goethe and his contemporaries - be seen as a canon of "classics" which both determined the function of literature, reinforcing a cultural and linguistic identity often closely related to the assertion of nationalism in the political sphere, and defined the writer's social and intellectual role. Later, in mid-nineteenth century France, a contrasting, more "modern" and sometimes ironic awareness of the writer's "spiritual" role can be detected in the work of such figures as Baudelaire and Flaubert. Yet "Modernism" as an international cultural movement is usually traced back to the early years of the twentieth century ; it is seen as a consequence of the transformations brought about by technological changes unleashed by the Industrial Revolution, which, during the nineteenth century, had led to the development of a self-confident world-view and a belief in material and scientific progress. The subsequent social changes created a dramatic and rapid series of upheavals in Western society ; one of these being a certain marginalisation of the artist in an increasingly commercial world. Rapidly growing prosperity and new scientific knowledge seemed to challenge the artist's previously privileged status and high social and intellectual prestige. The result of this process, as far as the writer sensitive to such changes was concerned, was a calling into question of received notions of identity, so that "*naives Schreiben, das über die Fragwürdigkeiten von Identität und Individualität sich hinwegsetzt*" was, according to Ruth Fühner (Fühner 1982,p.22), the kind of response no longer to be expected in this new situation.

Histories of German literature provide plenty of evidence to support this point of view, in the form of the succession of new movements and radical attempts to break with the past which marks the first two or three decades of the twentieth century. Yet this period of transition, like the experience of social transformation and world war against which it took shape, was not confined to the German-speaking world. Riding and Graves, for example, writing in the 1920s, attempt to define this identity-crisis

with regard to their contemporaries ; some of their comments can be applied not merely to English-speaking early modernist poets, but to a much wider range of twentieth-century artists, including those writers with whom this study is concerned. In spite of a seemingly very different cultural background, many can indeed be said to possess " *an over-developed historical sense and professional self-consciousness....* " ; to question their own motives and to be sometimes " *mentally uncomfortable....uncertain whether there is any excuse for the existence of [poets] at all...* " ; and to show inclinations " *toward the two extremes of radicalism and conservatism, or aristocraticness and rough-neckedness ; not so much out of militant opposition to bourgeois liberalism as out of peripatetic avoidance of a crowded thoroughfare.....* " ¹. All of these tendencies were still evident later in the century, as the three chapters devoted to individual authors will demonstrate.

Moreover, this crisis of identity was intensified, during the course of the century, by the rapid growth of a new, popular culture, the " *Expansion einer kommerziellen Kulturindustrie* " leading eventually to a perceived " *globale(n) Hegemonie Hollywoods* " (Berman 46) - a development with which artists working within traditional cultural frameworks would have to come to terms. Walter Benjamin was among the first to show a particular awareness of this problem, having already written extensively on the commercialisation of literature in the nineteenth century and its effect on the writer - as, for example, in his study of Baudelaire². His concept of the " *Zeitalter der technischen Reproduzierbarkeit* " was a formulation which has proved to be influential in the decades since its appearance in a celebrated essay of 1936 ³ ; writers and cultural historians became increasingly aware of new perceptions of the function of culture - as ritual, social product and object in the market-place - and of the social and intellectual changes deriving from the " *Entstehen einer hedonistischen*

¹ Laura Riding and Robert Graves, *A Survey of Modernist Poetry* (1927) ; quoted in Michael Hamburger, *The Truth of Poetry* (1969), p.82

² See his Charles Baudelaire. Ein Lyriker im Zeitalter des Hochkapitalismus, in : *Gesammelte Schriften*, 1.2. Frankfurt/M. 1974

³ Benjamin, *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit* (Zweite Fassung). In : *ibid.*

Massen- und Freizeitkultur (Sport, Kino usw)" , which, combined with a gradual "*Steigerung der materiellen Lebensqualität*" as the twentieth century progressed, meant that previous social hierarchies broke down as "*der Zugriff der industriellen Disziplinierung*" began to loosen ⁴. The rapid transition from feudalism to industrialism in the German-speaking area meant, furthermore, that these changes, and the interplay between tradition and innovation that they created, were intensified to a extent unparalleled elsewhere - as the course of German history in the twentieth century shows.

In order to view the development of the writer's sense of identity in the period in question, it is necessary to take into account the wider issues raised above - not least because the three writers to whom most attention is given - Max Frisch (1911-1991), Thomas Bernhard (1931-1989), and Peter Handke (b.1942), are all concerned with the consequences of these changes and their effects on the individual. Each in his own way registers the relationship between the writer and society at specific historical moments - whether it be the consciously "committed" and socially concerned approach of Frisch, the apparent and actual "rebelliousness" of Handke during the various phases of his career, or Bernhard's apparent rejection of modernity and mass culture, which is nonetheless combined with his own kind of involvement with his society and his country, and with the determination to communicate with his public through his work. At the same time, each is preoccupied with his inner world, devoting much effort to intense re-examinations of personal experience, and the balance between external and internal concerns is reflected in various ways throughout the prolific output common to all three authors. In addition, the fact that Frisch was Swiss, and Bernhard and Handke Austrian, is significant in any attempt to locate them within the context of German-language writing as a whole. Even if the concept of the ambitious provincial setting out to make his name in the metropolis is, perhaps, an essentially nineteenth-century one, and is in any event difficult to apply to a post-war German

⁴ H.Sanders, in C. & P.Bürger, *Postmoderne...*, 1987, p.74

literary scene where there is no single dominant "Weltstadt", the tension in their works between local, often intensely narrow traditions and the awareness of wider intellectual and geographical frames of reference becomes increasingly plain as their careers develop. Equally characteristic of all three is a kind of "internationalism", reflected both in a wide range of literary and extra-literary sources of inspiration and in a willingness to travel and live abroad which distinguishes them from many of their Swiss and Austrian contemporaries ; each has an ambiguous and often troubled relationship to his country and his home region. In addition to a prolific output of prose works, all have produced work for the theatre and for other, more "modern" media, notably film and journalism, and show a fascination with other means of expression (as can be seen in Handke and Bernhard's contrasting musical interests, and perhaps too in Frisch's essays and speeches on political and social issues, which are more "public" in overall tone than his increasingly introspective and personal fiction). They count among the most widely-read German-language writers, both within the German-speaking world and beyond it ; it is perhaps no coincidence that they are all beneficiaries of the prestige, and the promotional expertise, of the leading West German literary publishing house, the Suhrkamp Verlag. Yet their differences are as significant as their shared characteristics ; they represent three "generations" in post-1945 literary history, and in doing so reflect a wide range of (not merely twentieth-century) influences.

Frisch, like, for example, Alfred Andersch, Wolfgang Koeppen and Günter Eich, is of the generation which had come to maturity before the start of World War Two, but had made its greatest literary impact in the ten to fifteen years immediately following its end. At least one critic (Stephan 1983) has seen the "Existenzphilosophie" and the "Kulturpessimismus" of the inter-war years as a decisive influence on his work - this in spite of the fact that Frisch is usually bracketed together with Böll, Grass and other figures associated with the politically "progressive", humanist beliefs influenced by Brecht and by the philosophers of the Frankfurt school - Adorno and Horkheimer's Dialektik der Aufklärung(1947) setting the scene for future critical controversies involving the "Aufklärer" and "Romantiker" of the late twentieth

century. In these debates - most notably the "Zürcher Literaturstreit" of 1966 - Frisch tended to take the side of the "modernists", but the tensions underlying his fictional work give a more rounded picture of the writer and his world with all its complexities and contradictions. Thus, while his novels are set in an unmistakably "modern" world, based around his home city of Zürich but opening out into a wide panorama of settings (the recurrence of the United States seemingly making explicit the problems of identity of a self caught between the "old" and the "new"), the main characters' struggle to assert a firm identity goes beyond a documentary or allegorical presentation of contemporary events, to evoke more deeply-rooted and personal dilemmas. This "inner" dimension of Frisch's work has recently attracted much critical attention: he attended a series of lectures given by C.G. Jung, while a student in Zürich, and this fact has provoked critics (e.g. Naumann, Lubich) to investigate the influence of Jungian psychology in his work. The motives, and the results, of these investigations vary, but Frisch would not be alone if he had indeed found psychoanalysis a spur to literary creativity.

For at least as important as the social, economic and historical factors which helped shape the literature of the second half of the twentieth century was the revolution in the analysis of the individual personality associated with Sigmund Freud and his followers. In the first decades of the century, Freud's work gradually became known to educated readers all over the world, in the process influencing profoundly the course of "modernist" literature⁵ - although parallel developments could be found in much of the literary work originating in the intellectual "Treibhaus" atmosphere of Freud's Vienna, not merely in the works of his associate Arthur Schnitzler, but in the early writings of such major figures as Robert Musil and Hugo von Hofmannsthal - whose famous "Chandos - Brief"⁶ is invariably cited as the key text portraying the

⁵ See, e.g. Nathalie Sarraute's essay *L'ère du soupçon* (1950), for a discussion of how literary creation was affected by this. In: Sarraute, *L'ère du soupçon*, Paris 1956

⁶ Hofmannsthal, Ein Brief. In: *Die deutsche Literatur in Text und Darstellung. Bd. 13: Impressionismus, Symbolismus und Jugendstil* (Hg. von Ulrich Karthaus), Stuttgart 1981, 137-154

breakdown of the individual's ability to describe, and thus to interact with, his world. Fühner, for example, talks of the "*Kommunikations-, Bewußtseins- und Erkenntnisproblematik*" (Fühner 23) expressed in the work, and attempts in her dissertation to trace how such feelings recur throughout twentieth-century German literature. An indication of how widespread such an awareness has become, since its origins in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna, is given by Michael Butler :

*An important preoccupation of twentieth-century German literature has been the sense that man has lost his vital centre. Writer after writer has struggled with the problems produced by the collapse not just of traditional values but of the self, the human personality, which this loss of centrality has induced.*⁷

Butler is by no means the only critic to have come to such a conclusion; when he lists Hofmannsthal, Kafka, Musil, Böll, Grass and Frisch (the subject of the book in which these remarks appear) as being among the writers "*who have sought in their different ways to throw light on an apparently increasing disintegration of human individuality and who have wrestled with the difficulties of portraying man in fiction that this involves*", he is reflecting a general tendency in literary criticism which is not confined to Germany - as shown by, for example, Fauconneau Dufresne (1975) who examines a cross-section of major novels from several European literatures to investigate the "*Phänomen der Gefährdung der Ich-Figur im Roman des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts.*" (Fauconneau Dufresne 22) Yet it is still true to say that this tendency is most marked in German-language writing ; Fauconneau Dufresne's book illustrates this, possibly inadvertently, when, out of more than twenty novels analysed, Frisch's *Stiller* is dealt with at most length. This novel was published in 1954 - in the immediate "post-war" era, therefore - and can thus be seen as encompassing a range of themes which both sum up early twentieth-century attitudes to the self - the crisis of self-expression, the problem of political commitment, the intellectual's feeling of irrelevance in the face of social conformity and accelerating technological change, the attempt to resolve these

⁷ Butler 1976, p. 9

dilemmas by heroic personal effort à la Malraux or Saint-Exupéry - and point to future trends : the search for authenticity in which the previously privileged status of the artist is called into question, the use of stories and fragments derived from the traditions of parable and folk-tale, the fascination with America and its culture which was to increase during the 1960s and '70s (and can be seen in the work of Handke and Rolf Dieter Brinkmann, and in the "New German Cinema" ⁸), the concern with - here, still from a masculine viewpoint - marriage and relations between the sexes, which was to lead to both the "sexual revolution" of the '60s and the feminism of the 1970s and '80s.

Literary developments in the post-war era

The fate of Frisch's Stiller seems to reflect a certain post-war, or mid-twentieth century, mood; the hope for a completely new beginning, in the life of the individual as in the sphere of politics, eventually giving way to a conservative "Restauration" (visible throughout Europe in the 1950s) and a period of social conformity - with Stiller's (and Frisch's own) complaints about the public's reluctance to accept modern architecture typifying the impatience of the "modernist" confronted with a society unresponsive to culturally-based proposals for change. And, indeed, literary historians have in recent years been at pains to point out that, despite the myth of "Stunde Null" and the concept of the "Kahlschlag", German-language writing immediately after the war was not "taken over" by a new generation - represented by the writers associated with the *Gruppe 47* - intent on atoning for the sins of their elders. Rather, the intellectual climate of the period up to around 1960 has been revealed as being strongly influenced by pre-war tendencies - not in the sense of a resurgent National Socialism, but in a more "respectable" conservatism which sought to overcome the confusions of the present by returning to the traditions

⁸As Thomas Elsaesser comments - in Huyssen/Scherpe, *Postmoderne...*, 1986, p.326 - "*Amerika als das 'Andere' wird Europa in einer zeitlichen wie auch geographischen Verschiebung zum Spiegel...*"

prevailing before 1933. However, this, according to critics such as Bullivant⁹ only demonstrated once more *"the German propensity for interpreting political developments in essentially aesthetic categories"*, and *"an inability to understand political developments other than in terms of the ebb and flow of the spirit"* ; i.e. the tendencies which had stressed the importance of the writer's inner world, thereby inhibiting the development of a critical and concerned attitude to the external world - particularly to mass industrial society of the early twentieth century - and hence contributing to the powerlessness of German intellectuals in the face of a populist mass movement such as Nazism.

In fact, a glance at the overall development of post-war literature in Germany - and Austria - reveals much to support this point of view. The conservative "Inner Emigrants" discussed by Peitsch (in Hewitt, 1989, pp.176-7) represented this link with pre-war beliefs : the dominance of critics such as Holthusen and Sieburg and the strain of cultural pessimism which was also carried over from the inter-war period (influencing a work as "modern" as Frisch's Homo faber, in which the traditional opposition of nature and modern technological civilisation is subjected to close scrutiny in the light of the intellectual debates of the 1950s) - help to demonstrate that Hans Werner Richter, Alfred Andersch and the "committed", modernist writers later attracted to Gruppe 47 were not working in a literary vacuum and in no sense had a monopoly of public attention. Indeed, to gain some impression of the way in which old and new influences co-existed and combined, certain key works of the era can be examined.

The first major "post-war" German novel was probably Thomas Mann's Doktor Faustus(1947) - the irony being, of course, that the exile Mann had no direct experience of the total destruction of his country, despite his decision to have his narrator "write" the story amidst the ruins of a defeated Germany. The consequences of

⁹ In Hewitt, The Culture of Reconstruction, 1989,p. 193

this included a reluctance by writers who had remained in the country to sympathise with Mann. Boehlich¹⁰ called him, famously, '*der praeceptor Germaniae*' - and, in the still uneasy atmosphere of the late 1940s, Mann found himself the object of bitter opposition - as a passage from Frisch's Tagebuch 1946-1949 (402-403) points out. Nonetheless, the novel's fascination lies in its combination of a close relationship to German tradition and a multi-levelled critical examination of German history and culture. The narrator, Serenus Zeitblom, represents the educated, liberal German of the provinces, the heir to those cultural tendencies which were still to prevail, for at least a decade or so, after the book's publication. Mann portrays him as sympathetic but sometimes obtuse - thereby illustrating the limitations of his cast of mind. (He is also one of the first of the many central characters, or narrators, in post-1945 literature to be thrown off balance by external events, a convention which, as will be seen, demonstrates the persistence of the idea of the self's integrity being at risk in a progressively more threatening external world.) Of course, Mann cannot be considered a "post-war" writer ; even at the time of the publication of Doktor Faustus, he was seen far more as a "Klassiker der Moderne", in the sense of that literary modernism which had developed, like Mann's own career, from the *Jahrhundertwende* until the outbreak of World War II. The novel's publication, therefore, at a time of important historical and artistic turning-points, only intensifies the conflicts which are reflected in its form and subject-matter. Josipovici (1977, 115-116) points out that Mann was "*brought up...to revere the art of the nineteenth century, with its sense of development, of growth in time, with its optimism and its belief in the links between art and culture*" and claimed that Schoenberg's music, with its "*sense of dislocation, of fragmentation, its disregard of the linear must have come as a severe shock to him. And yet the artist in him recognised that the art of the nineteenth century had rested on an unquestioning belief in authority which could no longer be accepted...*" Josipovici goes on to identify the historical figures who stand in the same relation to one another as do "*the*

¹⁰ Quoted in Trommler, *Auf dem Wege zu einer kleineren Literatur...In : Koebner, Tendenzen...*1984, pp.29-30

cultured academic" Zeitblom and the "cold obsessed artist" Leverkühn ; Schoenberg and the Nazis, Nietzsche and Burckhardt, Erasmus and Luther all illustrate, or foreshadow , "the modern crisis of authority" which the book portrays. The initially hostile reception of Doktor Faustus might well have been provoked by this very richness ; attention was focused, understandably enough, on immediate needs, so that a long and complex work very much in the style of Mann's earlier novels was unlikely, at first, to achieve widespread commercial success or to inspire the rising generation. Its epic form also ran against the trend towards the reflection of personal experience in shorter forms (be it in the realism of a Böll or in the more abstract manner of, say, Celan or Benn) ; Josipovici sees the author reflected in *both* Zeitblom and Leverkühn. Mann would, of course, continue to enjoy a wide readership and to influence writers in the post-war period ; one has only to think of Frisch's choice of the sanatorium at Davos as a setting for the scenes dealing with Julika's illness in Stiller - recalling Der Zauberberg, which takes place in the same environment, and was to be perhaps Mann's most important statement on the dilemmas of the modern world. Yet Doktor Faustus, although a serious attempt to take stock of the history of Germany and a work which echoed the apocalyptic mood found in other novels of the 1940s¹¹ , speaks to its readers in a way which is not paralleled in West German writing until Die Blechtrommel, eleven years later, takes up the same epic structure and concern with history in the long term.

Works which did attain popularity and influence in this period tended, instead, to concentrate on individual dilemmas ; the inspiration for such an outlook came from the dominant philosophical current of the late 1940s and early 1950s, French Existentialism, which owed a debt to pre-war German thought (the influence of Heidegger and Husserl on Sartre has been well documented) but appealed to the post-war generation by virtue of its emphasis on the individual's integrity and the ability to make choices and thereby determine one's own future. The then fashionable "image" of

¹¹ See Scherpe, in Huyssen/Scherpe 1986, p.288

the Existentialists - the rebellious youth congregating in Left Bank cafés and cellars to cock a snook at bourgeois convention and indulge in anarchic hedonism - set a pattern for successive generations of media portrayals, or trivialisations, of youthful rebellion ; but, as ever, there was more to this movement than the simplistic interpretations and often hostile press reports would suggest. In the shape of the literature produced by the two writers who were most frequently taken to typify Existentialism - Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus - it remained influential until well into the 1960s while establishing these two writers as moral authorities, figures seemingly standing apart from the compromises and cynicism of contemporary political life. Ralf Schnell, in his history of West German literature¹², distinguishes this "French" Existentialism from the German Existenzphilosophie from which it had drawn inspiration (at least in Sartre's case), on account of its vision of an individual "*ohne Transzendenz, ohne eine höhere Bestimmung*" who "*gegen die Absurdität des Daseins revoltiert, findet er zu seiner Verwirklichung, freilich einer ohne 'höheren Sinn'*". However, Schnell sees a "*verhängnisvolle(n) Entwicklung*" in Existenzphilosophie, culminating in Heidegger's "*Freiburger Rektoratsrede...im Sommersemester 1933 - der Übergabe der gesamten philosophischen Tradition an die nationalsozialistischen Machthaber ! ...*"¹³ Yet (as Sartre's later defence of Heidegger was to show), existentialism did initially draw on the German philosophical heritage ; Sartre's notion of "Wahlmöglichkeit" develops, as Schnell says, a theme already explored by Kierkegaard (supplying the motto for Frisch's Stiller, a century after "Selbstwahl" was treated in Entweder/Oder), Heidegger and Jaspers.

For those who had lived through the war years and were seeking a means of making sense of their experience, existentialism offered a world-view untainted by recent political developments ; the Resistance records of such as Camus served as an inspiration to that segment of the post-war generation which could not accept the

¹² Schnell, Die Literatur der Bundesrepublik, 1986, pp. 139-40

¹³ A contentious (translated) extract from Heidegger's speech is given in Michael Hamburger, A Proliferation of Prophets (1983), p. 18

"Restauration" or the conservative trends in literature and culture which accompanied it. And whereas Mann's Doktor Faustus seemed to view evil as a demonic force, completely outwith human control, the stoic and resolute outlook of Camus, in Le Mythe de Sisyphe(1942) and L'Homme révolté(1951), at least hinted at the possibility of survival, even of a kind of self-realisation, and sought to justify a defiant attitude in the face of apparent meaninglessness.

Camus portrayed this attitude in fictional form in his celebrated La Peste(1947). In this novel, a barely comprehensible catastrophe is visited upon an ordinary town, and individual characters struggle to come to terms with the subsequent suffering and deprivation. Its mixture of pared-down, almost de-individualised characters (a "modern" feature, perhaps owing something to Kafka) and a sober, spare narrative style reminiscent of the French classical tradition is indicative of the wish to confront contemporary dilemmas while maintaining a firm connection with an uncorrupted tradition. As already stated, this was a characteristic of much writing and criticism in the post-war years, in Germany as in France, but French writers were, perhaps, in a less problematic situation, the country's intellectual life being more open and less compromised than the cultural situation in a defeated Germany. This could help to explain the difference in the conception of evil in La Peste and Doktor Faustus - it is tempting to interpret it merely as a consequence of the difference of temperament in the two authors, but the fact remains that the German novel ends "realistically" with the country defeated and in ruins, while the French novel presents evil in the allegorical and abstract form of the plague - a phenomenon which, for all its catastrophic consequences, is temporary and can be fought against, indeed is viewed as, in Camus's phrase, a challenge as much as a punishment for man. Both standpoints have drawn criticism - Mann's for its insistence on the overwhelming power of the demonic and irrational, Camus's for not making evil concrete and vivid enough. Yet it was the younger man, Camus, who proved the more influential ; precisely because his public statements, like his fiction, concentrated on the responsibilities of the individual and the necessity of positive

action in both personal and political affairs. His influence can be seen not merely in German near-contemporaries such as Andersch, but even in the work of Handke, who has admitted to being particularly impressed by the first section of L'Étranger ¹⁴. The connection is not so indirect as it may superficially appear - Handke's alienated characters question not merely political conformism but every kind of conformism, and while this attitude has few, if any, precedents in post-war German literature, the behaviour of Meursault (in L'Étranger) and Clamence (in La Chute), veering between rigid social conventions and unpredictable, self-willed hedonism, offers some possibilities for comparison. The austere and carefully crafted style which runs through Camus's work can be compared to Handke's own, with its painstaking and conscious incorporation of elements from both Modernism and nineteenth-century writing - an approach which is exceptional in the context of post-war German writing but (because of a greater awareness of an uninterrupted literary tradition) less of a shock in France, where even a figure as fashionably "modern" as Roland Barthes was preoccupied not just with the phenomena of the new mass media, as treated in his celebrated Mythologies, but also with Chateaubriand, Racine and Proust.

With an "honourable" wartime record (apart from a few exceptions), and a centuries-old tradition which served to reinforce national identity, the French literary world felt no need for a "Kahlschlag" - or, indeed, for a "Restauration". This meant that, in contrast to the German situation, literary life went on much as before, and therefore French writing was able to retain its traditionally high reputation among readers elsewhere. Interestingly, though, despite all the political instability of the Fourth Republic, it did not develop a literature which dealt directly with social problems. Rather, Existentialism and the *roman engagé* were to be succeeded in the late 1950s by the *nouveau roman*, in which questions of language and perception took prominence (again, the obvious parallels in German writing are not to be found among contemporaries - with a few exceptions such as Arno Schmidt and the *Wiener*

¹⁴ See Gamper, Aber ich lebe nur von den Zwischenräumen, 1987 ,p.94

Gruppe - but in "Klassiker der Moderne" - e.g., Kafka, Musil, Hofmannsthal) ; by the *nouvelle vague* in cinema, and by innovative work in history and the social sciences.

While this process was taking place, French society itself was undergoing a transformation as remarkable in its way as the West German "Wirtschaftswunder". A relatively backward industrial nation modernised rapidly under the direction of Jean Monnet, also renowned for his pioneering work in establishing the foundations of the European Community. The key to Monnet's personality and outlook is often taken to be his sojourn in the United States - instead of following the traditional path of the French ruling élite, i.e. a classical lycée education followed by university study at a grande école in order to learn the administrative skills which would lead to a career in government or the civil service, he went to North America to represent the family business, in the process learning American business methods and being impressed by the openness of American society. For those who worked closely with him, Monnet was a cult figure of sorts, a magnetic personality who brought imagination and determination to bear on the solution of difficult problems and had the gift of inspiring his collaborators¹⁵. Yet - as his Mémoires reveal - he was in no sense a literary intellectual. This was doubtless a result of his abandonment of the conventional French career and *formation*, but it was also something new in a country where the arts were regarded as a significant part of the national identity, and where politicians, from Léon Blum to de Gaulle, liked to emphasise their literary interests and credentials¹⁶. Of course, German tradition was very different ; the time-honoured conflict between "Bürger" and "Künstler" had concerned German writers at least since the early works of Thomas Mann, or even from the age of Goethe and Schiller ; and a tradition of suspicion of

¹⁵ The committed British "European" Mayne gives examples of this in his Postwar. (1983)

¹⁶ It is interesting too to observe that the "European movement" of the post-World War Two years found no expression in literature, even though Andersch and Camus had called for a "new Europe" in their early post-war journalism ; in contrast to the 1920s, when French and German writers had been keen to promote the ideal of a united Europe when confronted with the aftermath of World War 1 and the rise of fascism and nationalistic hatreds.

intellectuals went back to Metternich's persecution of writers during the Biedermeier period (if not to the revolt against absolutism in the eighteenth century, and the early stages of the *Aufklärung* and of Romanticism). The consequences of this tendency can be seen in the careers of individual writers as historically important as Büchner and Heine, who did attempt to comment on political matters : and were to influence, over a long historical period, German ideas of the function of literature (it was often seen as a "moral" activity, its goal a kind of self-improvement quite detached from the sphere of politics). Hence, a German-language writer who felt ill at ease with the society in which he lived was certainly nothing new.

However, the particular historical situation of the post-war period complicated the relationship. The West German "*Wirtschaftswunder*" of the 'fifties created new tensions ; an economically and industrially-based "modernisation" of society, in the terms understood by Monnet, was relatively easy to bring about in a country which already boasted strong craft traditions, technological skills and a powerful infra-structure, and had developed a tradition of obeying authority-figures which made for efficiency in industry. In other areas of life, however - particularly politics - this could lead to a conformism and passivity which troubled some observers. Furthermore, as Hermand (1986, 296) observes, the new class of "*Entscheidungsträger*" which grew out of this process had little in common with literary intellectuals, be they traditionalists or modernists. The new affluence led to a fascination with consumption and with fashion, challenging traditional values and introducing an element of novelty and "disposability" into a country where culture had previously been regarded as an expression of high ideals or eternal verities. Thus, the "*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*" which is identified in literary histories as the most important theme of German writing in the twenty, or even thirty, years following the end of the war was a complex process, also necessitating a response to the present - once the notion of breaking completely with the past to establish a "clean slate" had been revealed as impossible. Demetz (1988) perhaps relativises the plight of the post-war writer when he states that the Allies and the "*Wirtschaftswunder*" created

conditions in which critical writers could thrive, thanks to the opportunities provided by the new, well-financed radio networks : Hermand (1986, 329), too, identifies "*das Radio*" as the most important medium of the 1950s, but points out that the increasing popularity of light entertainment programmes gradually led to a split between "*E-Kultur*" ("high" culture, or *ernste Kultur*) and "*U-Kultur*" (*Unterhaltungskultur*) in which the former was forced into a "ghetto". Nonetheless, Andersch, with his position as producer of programmes devoted to the spectrum of modernist culture, and Böll (among numerous other contemporary novelists) are obvious beneficiaries of this : thanks particularly to the demand for *Hörspiele* , and to the prestige initially attached to "cultural" broadcasting, with each regional *Sender* having a late-night programme devoted entirely to *Kultur* , modelled on the BBC Third Programme¹⁷ (although, as Hermand wryly observes, the fact that these programmes were broadcast late at night meant that the majority of their potential audience would already be asleep, due to the need to rise early and go to work).

Certainly, this situation was an improvement on the oppressive system of censorship pertaining under the Nazis. But, as stated above, the general intellectual climate remained heavily affected by the authoritarian, conservative strain in German thought dominant in the 1930s. Seen in this light, Schnell's contention that the alienation portrayed by Sartre ("*L'enfer, c'est les autres*") and Camus was also applicable to the West German writer's relationship to the society around him has at least some validity¹⁸ . Trommler has tried to show how the main concern of writers after 1945 was "*die existentiell erfahrene Ästhetik in literarische Praxis umzusetzen*" - a process which had less to do with innovations in technique than with a "*Neuanfang*" which began, paradoxically enough, at an "*Endpunkt von Emotionen und Erfahrungen*" :

Immer wieder ist der Wunsch erkennbar, die Tatsache, daß man mitten im

¹⁷ For an account of how this network influenced - and employed - British literary intellectuals, see Robert Hewison, *In Anger : Culture in the Cold War 1945-60* (1988), pp.38-43

¹⁸ Schnell 1986, p.140

Taifun gelebt hat, als Literatur zu dokumentieren, auch wenn das gerade die Schwierigkeit, gültiges Zeugnis daran abzulegen, sichtbar macht. Damit kommt es zu der für die Nachkriegsliteratur konstitutiven Erzählkonstellation des einsamen Beobachters, der sich am Schreibtisch über die Ereignisse beugt und sie als Gegenwart zurückholt, um sich als Mitlebender erfahrbar zu machen. Diese Zeugerschaft, die bei Wolfgang Koeppen und Erich Nossack wie bei Max Frisch, Siegfried Lenz und Alfred Andersch zentral steht, läßt nicht mehr den Aktionsappell der Romane über den spanischen Bürgerkrieg oder die Hoffnung auf Aktion anklingen...¹⁹

Like Schnell, Trommler discusses the influence of existentialism, particularly of Sartre, on the group of writers mentioned above. He notes that the "*Schlüsselerlebnis*" of Frisch's *Stiller* occurs during the Spanish Civil War, setting off the "*Handlungsimpotenz*" which not only determines his behaviour in the novel, but stands for "*die Handlungsimpotenz einer Generation von Gebildeten*" in the 'fifties. It portrays this basic existential situation in such a way as to carry a significant resonance for West German readers, and, says Trommler, exemplifies the importance of Max Frisch in the period by dealing with the problems of self-definition without disturbing "historische Wundzonen" - unlike, say, the works of Wolfgang Koeppen in the same period²⁰.

Alfred Andersch's *Sansibar oder der letzte Grund* (1957) also stands as a representative work of the 'fifties. It portrays a small group of characters, struggling to overcome the conformity and bad conscience prevalent in a world in which "die Anderen" dominate. The external, political events of the novel - involving the rescue of a Jewish girl threatened with deportation to a concentration camp, and of a religious statue which "die Anderen" wish to confiscate - serve as a background for the self-examination of each of the main characters. Each of them makes a conscious decision to take the action most appropriate to the situation, whatever the sacrifice required. The influence of French existentialism on Andersch can clearly be seen in this, as well as his experience of life under Nazi rule ; but Trommler regards *Sansibar*

¹⁹ Frank Trommler, *Die zeitgenössische Prosa I : Aspekte des Realismus*. In : Koebner, *Tendenzen...*(1984), 194-5

²⁰ For a discussion of Koeppen's post-war trilogy, see Stephan Reinhardt : *Politik und Resignation. Anmerkungen zu Koeppens Romanen*. In : *In Sachen Literatur : 25 Jahre Text und Kritik. Eine Auswahl*. Zusammengestellt von Christa Jordan (1988)

as showing "*exemplarisch die starken und schwachen Seiten der literarischen Selbstfindung deutscher Autoren der fünfziger Jahre*". He praises the book for its "*dichte, schicksalsverhangene Atmosphäre*", notes the device, common in post-war literature (as will be shown by its recurrence in other works considered in this study), of the "*Herausstellen des geschlossenen Handlungsraums: als Ort existentieller und moralischer Bewahrung*", and sees a theatrical quality in the way characters enter, experience, make their decisions and then their exit from the story - alone²¹. The book also displays another feature of 1950s writing, claims Trommler, and one which can be seen as a shortcoming - the tendency for events in fiction (or, for that matter, in drama - e.g. in Frisch's plays of the period) to be shaped into a "Modell" or a "Parabel", which, as he points out, is a consequence of an understandable wish to distance oneself from the events of the war, and from a still troubling post-war reality, in order to, as he puts it, justify one's existence ("Dasein" ; see Koebner 1984, p.65). The career of Andersch, too, was typical of many post-war writers in West Germany and Austria, insofar as he did combine his creative work with editing a periodical devoted to modernist culture - *Texte und Zeichen* - as well as radio work and contributions to *Gruppe 47* - reflecting both the awareness of a wider framework of possible creative activities and the increasing tendency of writers to involve themselves in public affairs.

The writer who is probably the most renowned of this generation outside Germany is, of course, Heinrich Böll. Many of the tendencies noted above are also present in Böll's work ; the unconventional and personal Catholicism which informs it naturally lends itself to the adaptation of the parable form, to be seen in, for example, *Billard um halbzehn*, his most ambitious novel of the decade, which portrays a conflict between two apparently irreconcilable ways of thinking - represented by the "Lämmer" and the "Büffel" - rather than between two politically opposed groups ; and uses the motif of architecture and building not to portray the conflict between

²¹ Perhaps this characteristic also reflects the influence and the techniques of the "Hörspiel", bearing in mind that the book has a motto from Dylan Thomas, and that Andersch's job as a radio producer might well have made him aware of Thomas's *Under Milk Wood*.

conservative and modern world-views (as in Stiller) but to illustrate an essentially religious view of history as a repeating cycle of creation and destruction (seen in the fate of the buildings constructed by succeeding generations of the Fählmel family), which might equally be held by a writer of more conservative disposition. Hans Mayer has spoken of Böll "*als erfolgreicher Gegenspieler Adenauers*" and of "*ein Familienkonflikt, was sich zwischen Adenauer und Böll abgespielt hat*" (Mayer 1988), stressing the two men's common heritage of Rhineland - specifically, Cologne - Catholicism. Indeed Böll made his name in the "Adenauer-Ära" of the 1950s , beginning a period which culminated with the award of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1972 - although subsequent years have seen a re-evaluation of Böll, in which his moral stature as a campaigner against the nuclear industry and the more strident voices of the West German Right (always associated for him with Nazism) is largely unquestioned, but his literary output is subjected to the kind of serious, sometimes harsh criticism which, in "progressive" circles, was formerly eschewed. Even if Böll himself was quite happy to be more popular with the reading public than with literary critics, there are some good reasons for this change of perspective ; Seymour-Smith, writing in 1985, calls him "*overrated*" , an "*excellent writer of short stories*" but as a novelist derivative, claiming that "*the figures of very familiar writers of the past stand squarely behind all these novels ; they were not original, though they were well done and they contributed to the image Böll built up of 'everyone's good German'*" (Seymour-Smith 651-2). J.P. Stern agrees, claiming that the simplicity of Böll's style facilitated its translation and thus the attainment of a "representative" position in relation to German literature of the '50s and '60s. What is more, he criticises Billard um halbzehn as being written for a generation which did not know Thomas Mann's Buddenbrooks. Böll's limitations are summarized as follows :

...In den meisten seiner Romane werden die vierziger Jahre beschrieben, der Krieg also und die Nachkriegszeit. Sein unfehlbares Mitleid für die Opfer dieser Zeit und die Fixierung auf deren passives Leiden liefern eine Art erzählerisches Raster, von dem nur gelegentlich abgewichen wird...darüber

hinaus gibt es bemerkenswert wenig Widerstand gegen die Übel dieser Zeit. Es bleibt nur eine traurige oder verzweifelte Resignation...²²

Other critics have come to different conclusions ; Demetz is particularly critical of Böll's early short-stories, finding in them a sentimentality which approaches "unabashed B-movie kitsch"²³, yet sees a development away from pre-set patterns in Böll's novels of the 1970s and '80s which confirms his status as a major novelist. Bance, taking Und sagte kein einziges Wort and Billard um halbzehn as representative of the early '50s and the later Wirtschaftswunder years respectively, presents a convincing case for the importance of Böll both in the period in question and in the general evolution of the post-war novel. In the light of more recent tendencies in German writing, it is interesting to compare aspects of Böll's work with similar tendencies in the works of figures such as Handke and Botho Strauß - some of whose admirers, one suspects, would scarcely welcome the comparison. For example :

Heinrich Böll's early post-war novels are built around characters preoccupied by death and the past. They bide their time ; their thoughts are slow, and they possess the patience of despair (e.g. Bogner and his wife in Und sagte kein einziges Wort , 1953)...But these characters are eventually brought back to the present : the real world conquers introspection...²⁴

The final sentence of this quotation points to the crucial difference between Böll's earlier writing and that post-1968 literature in which the conflict between "the real world" and "introspection" becomes a more problematic one, ending often (as seems to be the case with the later Handke) in a re-assertion of the (presumed) power of the imagination against the closed systems and mind-numbing and overbearing pressures of the social world. In Böll's 1953 novel set in the ruins of Cologne, on the other hand : *"There is a suggestion that, at this period in time and in this place, the subtleties of character analysis would be superfluous"* (50).

²² In dell'Agli, Zu Heinrich Böll, 1984, p. 101

²³ P.Demetz, Heinrich Böll, Citizen and Novelist. In : After the Fires (1986), p.90

²⁴ Bance, The German Novel, 1980, p.28

Furthermore : "*The tension in the book between the opposing tendencies of dignified resignation and indignant protest, is a strikingly honest reflection of the position of a man of goodwill at that point of German history*" (53). Here, Bance is employing the vocabulary - "dignified", "honest", "goodwill" - which would later be used in a pejorative sense by Böll's critics (Rolf Dieter Brinkmann, perhaps a quintessentially late-Sixties libertarian figure, preferred the American Beats and compared the Böll of the 1950s to a boy scout). But Billard um halbzehn(1958) is a more ambitious work. Bance points out how, as society "*becomes more stabilised in the 1950s, it presents a more unified, unmistakable target for criticism*" - it is "*settling into a rigid pattern*" which Böll satirises in his short stories ²⁵. Bance shows how Billard um halbzehn relates to these :

For Böll particularly it was impossible to see the continuing situation without reference to the past. In Billard um halbzehn his major theme, strongly and coherently expressed, is the attempt to break with the trauma of the past and "catch up" with the present. Here too, on a literal level, the melodramatic and futile act of violence which ends the novel is not a resolution of the problem. It is a token act, almost an acte gratuit ... (33)

The act of violence referred to here - the shooting of the former Nazi Nettlinger by Johanna Fähmel - plainly reflects the historical time-frame of the novel, "*the broad panorama of German life in this century*" by means of which Böll "*seeks to put present reality into perspective*" (Bance 92), but also seems to foreshadow the more violent political climate of the Federal Republic during the 1960s and '70s. It can also offer a point of comparison with the introverted, self-enclosed characters in Handke's work, who tend to be prone to sudden outbursts of violence - most notably the murders committed by Bloch in Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter and by Loser in Der Chinese des Schmerzes - even though the historical dimension is absent in these works, leading to the claim that these sometimes apparently random acts are "poetological murders". Yet the desire to overcome the sufferings of the past is

²⁵ These are seen by Reich-Ranicki as his most lasting achievement, and such stories as *Es wird etwas geschehen*, *Der Wegwerfer*, and *Doktor Murkes gesammeltes Schweigen* do indeed - in the manner of their telling as much as the subject-matter - provide a revealing commentary on the West Germany of the *Wirtschaftswunder*.

common to both authors. Similarities can be identified, too, in the recourse to symbols and motifs with a religious background - doubtless a result of the Catholic education which both writers received, but also reflecting a dissatisfaction with the world as it is and the subsequent search for transcendence. Bance, while acknowledging the carefully-structured "modernism" of Billard um halbzehn, can describe characters and "thought-content" of the book as follows :

Each individual (character) is a 'fragment of a confession'... use is made of ciphers, leitmotifs and symbols...to ward off psychological interpretation...to create and maintain in the reader a constant sense of wonder at the fact of history... We are asked to accept certain qualities in man as constant and eternal ; we are asked to view the world not merely with the eye of the scientist who traces an effect to its cause but with the eye of the prophet who beholds in every generation the transcendental qualities of good and evil...(95-6)

In the 1980s this viewpoint has again become acceptable, if still controversial, thanks to the works of Handke and Strauß ; but Bance goes on to summarize Böll's novel and in doing so identifies the tendency which has given rise to heated debate in recent years :

...Böll succeeded in basing a plea for certain values, which for him ultimately rested on an authority not of this world, in the firm setting of a real environment and in symbols which had a solid reality...He avoided that traditional pitfall of the German novel, the disrespect for the rights of the external world...His questioning of society did not become lost in vague intimations of the state of the soul... (109)

Much of the criticism directed at the literature of the 1980s has been aimed at the kind of "disrespect for the rights of the external world" which some have detected in writing since the rise of Neue Subjektivität or Neue Innerlichkeit ; "vague intimations of the state of the soul" have, according to this point of view, replaced the sober and responsible confrontation with German reality which was the major achievement of the first fifteen years of post-war writing. The debate which in the mid-1980s became known as the "neudeutsche Literaturstreit" (and which is discussed in Chapter 5) seemed to reflect the prevailing attitudes. Interestingly, the standpoints taken did resemble those held in the debates of the 1950s, inasmuch as

the main division was between, roughly, "committed" writers and critics insisting on the socio-critical role of literature, and those professing a belief in the power of literature to have a morally uplifting or enlightening effect on its readership by purely aesthetic means.²⁶ The tendency has been to see this conflict not merely in aesthetic but in political terms ; which accounts for the anxious tone to be found in much criticism from the left-wing "Aufklärer", who have seen their influence greatly diminish in the past ten or fifteen years, and see in the rise of post-modernism an expression in cultural terms of the prevalent right-wing consensus in politics. (However, a conservative critic such as Reich-Ranicki was equally perplexed by the "post-modernists" ; leading Lüdke [1985, 30], a leading supporter of Strauß and Handke, to condemn German literary criticism in general for its "*Inkompetenz, Griesgram und Unmut*"). Whether long-term cultural developments can be made to fit a dualistic political model must be open to doubt, however - particularly as that very model , like the fixed, traditional opposition of "self" and "world", is now being called into question (for example, in Paare Passanten Strauß - provocatively, in the light of that German literary tradition exemplified by the Bildungsroman , yet in accord with aspects of contemporary thought in France and elsewhere - goes so far as to deny the existence of a self which can be "sought" ²⁷) . The debate connects up with the literary situation of the late 1950s, however, in that the cautious reformism of writers such as Böll and Andersch began to be overtaken by the more radical and directly challenging styles which would prevail in the 1960s. The key work serving as the catalyst for this change was the most famous, and perhaps the most enduring, of all German novels dealing with the Nazi era and its aftermath ; Günter Grass's Die Blechtrommel.

Grass's novel was distinguished from its predecessors in the 1950s by its epic scale, its vitality and its complete lack of inhibition. Rather than basing his novel around a more or less representative individual hero, or a typical group of "survivors"

²⁶ See Literaturmagazin 17, 1985

²⁷ Paare Passanten, 1981, pp.175-6

whose moral qualities set them apart from their contemporaries and elicit the reader's sympathy, Grass creates a memorable and highly unconventional central figure in the amoral dwarf Oskar Matzerath. Oskar is born - fully developed - into a family of typical Kleinbürger, and, through his eccentric behaviour and "Froschperspektive" can shed light on the first half of the twentieth century in a way which was impossible for the more "normal" heroes created by other novelists. As Vormweg²⁸ points out, the novel is in some ways a throw-back to earlier forms - the "Bildungsroman", the "Schelmenroman" - in a manner which is appropriate to the still important theme of "Vergangenheitsbewältigung". It also represented a challenge to the existing system of values by means of its sheer power to shock - as the religious groups who publicly burned copies of the book demonstrated only too well. Indeed the use, sometimes blasphemous, of religious motifs could not but offend the conventionally pious groups who at the time were widely influential in the Federal Republic. Yet this does not prevent the novel from being, for Trommler (in Koebner 1984, 186), "*eine erfrischende Gegenwendung*" :

In der Tat forderte Grass die moralisch-existentielle Vergangenheitsbewältigung mit der moralisch-grotesken Ausrichtung der Blechtrommel heraus und wurde für kurze Zeit zum Hecht im literarischen Karpfenteich. Mit der Zwergkreatur Oskar als erinnernde Erzählfigur im Vordergrund schloß Grass an die geläufige Erzählkonstellation an, verfremdete sie aber so nachdrücklich, daß man das als eine Wiederbelebung der Romanform insgesamt feierte und die Möglichkeiten des Pikaroromans und des parodistischen Bildungsromans neu erörterte.

The incorporation of grotesque elements into a narrative whose realism is grounded in a distinctive local setting, more identifiable than in the many earlier post-war novels where the social background serves simply as a stage-set for the inner struggles of the protagonists, intensifies rather than diminishes from the total effect - on both the psychological and socio-historical levels. Thus, if Grass succeeded in producing a work which presented the reality of recent German history in a new,

²⁸ In Durzak, Deutsche Gegenwartsliteratur, 1981

sharper focus, he also revealed in the figure of Oskar, to a greater degree than before, the psychological wounds which could be produced by traumas experienced amidst the chaos and convulsions of the period. The tension between the self and the "modern", if hardly psychologically advanced world of German Kleinbürgertum is stressed by Oskar's decision to remain a three-year old, "*die Annahme, einer Rolle, um die wahre Identität zu wahren und zu bergen*", as van der Will and Thomas comment (87). They go on to identify an aspect of the conflict which was to be characteristic of German language writing in the decade following Die Blechtrommel's publication; "*Identität in einer gesellschaftlichen Umgebung, die eher Möglichkeiten des Unmenschlichen als des Menschlichen entfaltet, ist auch für den Außenseiter nur im Protest gegen diese Umgebung verwirklichbar*" (89). Seen in this light, Die Blechtrommel can be considered an example of the cultural change which seemed to occur around 1960 throughout Europe and even beyond, as the conservative currents which had been dominant in social and cultural life since the Great Depression were replaced by the unprecedented affluence and openness to innovation of new democratic societies strongly influenced by the United States.

E-Kultur, U-Kultur and popular culture

It is significant that Oskar finds employment as a jazz drummer after the war (as did Grass himself, for a short time), and is pleased when, in the asylum, his former colleague Klepp visits him and gives him some King Oliver records ; the New Orleans jazz of Oliver's group, featuring the young Louis Armstrong, who remained a cultural "icon" even for Ulrich Plenzdorf's Edgar Wibeau in the early 1970s²⁹, had fascinated European intellectuals ever since their discovery of its first recordings in the 1920s. The banning of jazz by the Nazis, as "*entartete Musik* ", only added to its attraction for the likes of Grass ; while the commitment of his French contemporaries,

²⁹ See Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.(1973), p.30

such as Boris Vian, who, in addition to his literary work, was both jazz performer and critic, served as an example. (Even in the calmer cultural climate of post-war England, jazz exercised an influence on a rising generation of writers unhappy with the "Mandarin culture" [Hewison] of their immediate predecessors³⁰.) The cinema too had alternately been considered a meeting-place for delinquents and plebeians (as in an early essay by the young Thomas Bernhard, upholding what he then saw as traditional Austrian cultural values, and defending Austrian youth by claiming that they were *not* going to the cinema as often as before, and were instead reading, going to the theatre and listening to serious music³¹) and an exciting new art form full of unexplored possibilities, as Benjamin seems to imply in his essay on the age of "Reproduzierbarkeit", and as the achievements of German film-makers in the 1920s had demonstrated. This era came to an abrupt end with the rise of Nazism ; the consequences were disastrous for the German film industry, with most of the important directors, critics and technicians compelled to leave the country (many of them emigrating to Hollywood), and a new generation, influenced by American and French models as much as - or more than - German film culture, only coming into its own long after the immediate post-war era had ended.

Film and jazz gradually came to constitute strands of an "underground" culture unacknowledged by the cultural "establishment" of the German-speaking lands but increasingly difficult to ignore. The 1947 essay by Horkheimer and Adorno, dealing with the Kulturindustrie,³² is an early indication of the intellectual's concern (in more than one sense of the word) with the phenomenon of popular culture. In an analysis whose pessimistic tone is marked by the authors' experience of the Nazis' media manipulation, a fascination with the techniques and structures of America's

³⁰ See Hewison 1988, pp.184-5 , for an discussion of the interest in jazz shown by British writers of the post-war era.

³¹ Thomas Bernhard, Die Kultur ist nicht stehengeblieben ! , *Demokratisches Volksblatt* (Salzburg), 4.April 1953. See Klug in MAL 3/4, 1988, pp.148-150, for a discussion of this "seltsamer Essay".

³² Kulturindustrie. Aufklärung als Massenbetrug. In : Adorno/Horkheimer, Dialektik der Aufklärung., Amsterdam 1947, S.144-198

commercial entertainment industry is combined with a deep dislike of most of its products. Jazz is dismissed as “Barbarei” (153) and Hollywood is examined, with the comment that : “*Jahrhundertlang hat sich die Gesellschaft auf Victor Mature und Mickey Rooney vorbereitet...*” (185). Their verdict is negative : “*Immerwährend betrügt die Kulturindustrie ihre Konsumenten um das, was sie immerwährend verspricht....*” (166ff). However, even they distinguish between jazz soloists and commercial dance orchestras ; and the two actors they mention, unlike some of their Hollywood contemporaries, are not celebrated today by retrospectives in *cinémathèques* and *Programmkinos* - emphasising that the interest in popular culture shown by intellectuals, far from indicating a complete abandonment of critical standards, is usually highly selective³³. Hermand’s study of West German culture in this period picks up on this point, but by taking a slightly more detached - and retrospective - viewpoint is able to give a broader picture of the cultural divides of the time. He identifies a large gap separating the “*E-Kultur*” of the educated middle class, marked by a “*kulturkonservative Gesinnung*” (487) yet sometimes overlapping with a smaller group preoccupied with what he sees as a frequently arid, self-consciously élitist or “institutionalised” avant-garde , and the “*U-Kultur*” consumed by the remaining 85-90% of the population.

The seemingly irresistible growth of the US-based commercial entertainment industry and the presence of American military communities meant that West Germany appeared to be particularly likely to come under the influence of this culture. But the “*restaurative*” mood so characteristic of the Adenauer era meant that the key developments took place elsewhere. The popular culture which dominated German taste, whether expressed in film, music or low-brow literature, was frequently nostalgic , sentimental and regressive to such a degree that, to young “outsiders”, even the least inspired American products appeared to have greater vitality. Jazz remained, in Germany as elsewhere, a minority taste, as did Anglo-American folksong - although

³³For a discussion of this point, see Helmut Schmiadt : Peter Handke, Franz Beckenbauer, John Lennon und andere Künstler. Zum Verhältnis von Populärkultur und Gegenwartsliteratur. In : *TuK*, 24/24a/Peter Handke, Vierte Auflage, September 1978.

this too would come to take on a political aspect, more or less equivalent to the European cabaret song, as the blacklisting of some of its leading practitioners - Paul Robeson, Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger - during the McCarthy era fuelled the "folk revival" and created a point of cultural contact between the European and the American Left. American popular music was, of course, most influential in Britain. Yet it was Hamburg, ironically enough, which provided the tough environment in which some young "*Gastarbeiter*" perfected their craft by working long hours "*in völliger Übereinstimmung mit der Atemlosigkeit des westdeutschen Aufschwungs*" - here Waive and Döring are referring to the Beatles, and their early years, from 1960-1962, spent performing in the clubs of St.Pauli, although many other British performers and groups were to find work there during the 'sixties. Yet, once again, a German equivalent to Anglo-American "beat music" was slow to develop. The strength of parental resistance to this very un-German phenomenon is shown in the film director Wim Wenders' reminiscence of, for years, keeping his rock and roll records at a friend's flat - "*I couldn't have brought them home*"³⁴. As Waive and Döring show, American and British pop music has, since the 1960s, become an accepted part of the German cultural scene, perhaps more so than in its countries of origin, its directness, realism and openness to change and novelty contrasting with the still dominant form of German-language popular music - "*die prüde, verlogene, traumhaft-illusionäre Schnulzenmusik des offiziellen Schlagerbetriebs*" (Hermand 1986, 358). Yet in the early sixties it was hardly considered worthy of serious consideration, either by traditionalists or proponents of what Hermand calls "*modernistisch-elitäre Kunstformen*".

The 1950s saw the emergence of lively national cinemas in several European countries, from Sweden to Poland ; yet it is noteworthy that, in spite of the "Oberhausen Manifest" of 1962 - a declaration by a group of young film-makers, announcing their intention of finding alternatives to the moribund commercial cinema of

³⁴ Wenders, *Emotion Pictures* (1989), p.25

the time - West Germany was not among them³⁵. The cultural and commercial climate was not conducive to the promotion of a "national" cinema in the Federal Republic - especially as the last expressions of German national cinema, under Nazism, had been followed by a period in which the American film companies gained control of distribution and exhibition with the help of the older generation of German producers and directors (i.e. those who had not emigrated to Hollywood after 1933) ; the result was a populist, rigidly commercial and conservative film industry with a "*deutliche Tendenz ins Restaurative*"³⁶ for whom experiment was anathema. This contrasted with the situation in France and Italy, where financially buoyant commercial industries were self-confident enough to allow young film makers the chance to introduce new ideas. Even when the "New German Cinema" finally broke through to international acclaim in the 1970s, hostility from the more conservative elements in the industry was still strong - to such a degree that it was often easier to see German "art movies" in New York, Paris or London than in main population centres in the Federal Republic. Hence, the blurring of boundaries between highbrow and popular culture which could be observed in the Anglo-Saxon world during this period, whether through the BBC's mission to "educate, inform and entertain" in Britain, or the dominance of film and commercial television in the USA, found little reflection in German-speaking countries ; television did not become a forum for popular debate or new cultural trends, and such oppositional- or "counter-culture" as did develop continued to be dominated by intellectuals schooled in the traditions of literature and the fine arts, distancing themselves from the commercialised culture of the majority. This fact was to influence the nature of the "generational revolt" which shook the Federal Republic of the 1960s.

³⁵ For a contemporary response to the various "new waves" of European cinema in this period, see Alfred Andersch's essay *Das Kino der Autoren*, reprinted in his Die Blindheit des Kunstwerks. Literarische Essays und Aufsätze (Zürich 1979)

³⁶ See Hermand, Kultur im Wiederaufbau, 1986, pp.339-345

The 1960s in West Germany are often considered a decade of protest : the political developments of the period seem to provide clear evidence for this view, with the formerly all-powerful figure of Konrad Adenauer retiring early in the decade to be replaced by Ludwig Erhard, the proponent of *Sozialmarktwirtschaft* and architect of the *Wirtschaftswunder* - who was, however, less effective as Chancellor than as *Finanzminister*. There followed the *Große Koalition* , the Christian Democrats having to share power with the Social Democrats, the party which had been favoured - in both the 1961 and 1965 election campaigns - by writers of the generation of Böll, Grass and Siegfried Lenz, but which had been condemned to opposition from 1949 to 1966.

The result of the 1966 election indicated a widespread desire for change, mirrored in other West European countries in this period ; yet growing dissatisfaction with the rigid structures of West German society led to the growth of the *Außerparlamentarische Opposition* (APO), and of the Student Movement with its frequent recourse to violent tactics and street demonstrations, culminating (in Germany) in the mid-sixties, and then internationally in the turbulent year of 1968. David Caute's book ³⁷ provides a good overview of the worldwide revolt and rebellion associated with the popular myth of "1968" ; the year can be regarded either as the mid-point of the Cold War period (1947- 1989), or as symbolic of the end of the post-World War Two era, with a subsequent intensification of cultural and social tensions - all of this being reflected in the products of both "high" and "low" culture during the late 1960s..

However, to gain an insight into how these changes affected German literature, and its portrayal of the self and the modern world, it is best to return to the situation obtaining at the beginning of the 1960s. As mentioned above, the political culture and the "media landscape" of West Germany (and, for that matter, of

³⁷David Caute : 68 : The Year of the Barricades (London 1988)

Austria and Switzerland) was still dominated by conservative forces, although new voices were gaining in self-confidence and starting to offer a genuine challenge to the prevailing orthodoxies. Grass's Blechtrommel attained great commercial success, some of it no doubt a *succès de scandale*, but there was more than merely sexual freedom at stake in Grass's universe; the irregular and rather witless family relationships portrayed in the book are just one aspect of Grass's attack on the petty bourgeois spirit which animates nearly all of the characters other than Oskar. This was to become a mainstay of much 'sixties writing, as criticism of society in general and of the moral taboos of the middle class in particular was more openly expressed - as in Böll's Ansichten eines Clowns in which the central outsider-figure, Hans Schnier, the self-proclaimed clown, explicitly attacks the hypocrisy of the Catholic bourgeoisie of the Rhineland and the Church hierarchy in a simple and direct manner which Böll had previously eschewed. A Böll character is scarcely likely to kick over the traces and become a revolutionary activist; yet the portrait of the unhappy Schnier playing his guitar outside Bonn Central Station at the end of the novel is a neat parallel to the alienated and angry youth whose feelings were to find an outlet first in the Student Movement, and then in the neo-hippy "Alternativler" who were to follow.

The fact that even such a conventionally "realist" writer as Böll could be influenced by the rebellious mood of the 'sixties - Ende einer Dienstfahrt (1966) describes that phenomenon of the decade, the "Happening" - shows how widespread the desire for change, of various kinds, had become. The use of modernist literary techniques to challenge, or to shock, the reader began to play a significant role - be it Uwe Johnson's often convoluted prose and deliberately confusing changes of narrative voice in Mutmassungen über Jakob and its successors, Max Frisch's "weißer Fleck" in Mein Name sei Gantenbein, or the mixture of closely observed social reality and extravagant and grotesque fantasy in Grass's Danziger Trilogie. Ziolkowski, writing in the mid-'60s, expresses scepticism about this abandonment of

the earlier perspective of the "nüchterne(r) Heimkehrer"³⁸ in favour of "Der Blick aus der Irrenanstalt", as he calls his chapter dealing with madness in literature, and sees the stress on the outsider's inability, or unwillingness, to engage with a world regarded as itself insane, as a negative tendency, not just in German literature, but in modern writing generally. The fact that most of the German novels of the early 'sixties he discusses are now forgotten - Die Blechtrommel's success inspiring numerous imitations - would seem to support his view. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, a "new sobriety" would gradually come to predominate ; if this development did not completely dispense with the convention of the outsider, alienated from the mainstream of society, it did indicate an abandonment of the exuberant fascination with revolt for its own sake characteristic of the first half of the 1960s. New perspectives were necessary, in order to reflect and re-define the self in a changed cultural and social climate ; these were increasingly provided by writers from countries other than West Germany, with Austrian literature once again exercising a significant influence. However, in order to understand why Austrian writers began to make an international impact at this particular historical moment, the country's post-war history must be considered.

The Austrian contribution

While German literature in the Federal Republic was establishing itself as a cultural and political movement, and as an "industry", Austrian writers were confronted with a different historical situation and a different set of problems - instead of total defeat followed by a *Wirtschaftswunder*, post-war Austria endured ten years of Allied occupation before the establishment of the Second Republic in 1955. Like the Germans, the Austrians too sought to re-assert their national pride by reviving cultural traditions which pre-dated the Nazi era and which could be

³⁸ Ziolkowski, Dimensions of the Modern Novel, 1969, p.293

viewed as transcending it ; with the difference that the issue of war guilt, which has so preoccupied German writers since World War Two, did not play a significant role. The Moscow Declaration of 1943 defined Austria as the first free country to fall victim to German aggression³⁹ ; although this statement ignored, or played down, the awkward realities of Austrian collaboration during the *Anschluß* period (these were only to receive significant attention in the 1980s), it contributed to the construction of an independent Austrian identity which would find expression in the Second Republic. Thus, the "Austrian idea" in the sense that such as Hofmannsthal had used the term after World War 1, to distinguish "Austrian" from "German" values, was taken to legitimise Austrian identity through cultural activity. It has been observed that, in the immediate post-war era, the results of this attempt at self-definition were, ironically enough, similar to the kind of conservative, anti-modern, anti-mass-culture, pessimistic world-view held by the older generation of West German intellectuals. Walter Weiss⁴⁰ discusses an anthology of essays (Das große Erbe, 1962) which seemed, even in its title, to epitomise this tendency in Austria :

Die Wörter "Wesen, Erbe, Mensch, Idee, zeitlos, Dichtungs- und Geistesform", die da den Konstanten "Österreich, österreichisch, Österreicher" zugeordnet werden, treten feldartig zusammen, in der gemeinsamen Sinnrichtung auf Stetigkeit und Dauer. Damit verbundene gedanklich-sprachliche Leit motive sind : das Evidenthalten des katholisch-barocken, imperial-übernationalen Erbes ; der Sinn für das Metageschichtliche, ein enges Verhältnis zum Tod ebenso wie ein letztes Vertrauen in Gnade und Natur ; Stabilität, thomistisches Maß, Gleichgewicht der Gegensätze, Ablehnung der Dialektik, der extremen und einseitigen Umschläge (des Faustischen) : Aversion gegen das Gewaltsame, Veränderungssüchtige ; Sinn für das Alte in der Bedeutung des Bleibenden, des immer gegenwärtigen Ursprungs ; Heimat und Volksverbundenheit.

This set of values, although less doom-laden than German Kulturphilosophie, can be regarded as leading to a kind of intellectual immobilism ; but, as Weiss points out, there was a need in Austria to find a means of consolidating the new republic and its democracy, after the long decline of the

³⁹ See e.g. Hellmut Andics, Die Insel der Seligen. Österreich von der Moskauer Deklaration bis zur Gegenwart (Wien 1980), pp. 9-21

⁴⁰ In Durzak 1981, p.604

Habsburg Empire and the chronic instability of the First Republic which had culminated in the *Anschluß*. Yet the rich cultural heritage remained ; apart from the distinctive traditions listed by Weiss, there were also the important literary, philosophical and psychological developments of the final years of the Habsburg Empire, which had made such a significant contribution to the course of twentieth-century modernist culture in general. It might well have been assumed that these "multi-disciplinary", wide-ranging and innovative works - whether identified with the names of Musil or Freud, Kafka or Kraus, Wittgenstein or Hofmannsthal - could provide a useful starting-point for the exploration of the relationship between the self and the modern world⁴¹, but other factors worked against this ; most notably the loss, after 1938, of the Jewish population who had contributed so much to early twentieth-century Viennese cultural life. Moreover, the Cold War and the emergence of the Eastern bloc confirmed, and reinforced, the loss of the connection with those neighbouring countries which had, before the collapse of the Habsburg Empire, provided Vienna not merely with an industrial hinterland (and a source of cheap labour) but with the multi-national atmosphere which had given Viennese culture much of its vitality ; outside the now somnolent capital, what remained was the conservatism of a small country which was still predominantly rural, even "feudal"⁴², retaining its traditional social structure and lacking the large-scale industrialisation which had transformed West German society into a "*Wohlstandsgesellschaft*".

All this meant that Austria, rather like Switzerland, was now in the shadow of its larger and much more powerful neighbour. Seen in this light, it is no surprise that Austrian writing in the first ten or fifteen years after the war bore a

⁴¹ For a discussion of the continuing relevance of Viennese modernism, see Jacques Le Rider : *Between Modernism and Postmodernism. The Viennese Identity Crisis.* (Translated by Ralph Manheim) In : E.Timms/R.Robertson (eds.) : *Vienna 1900 : From Altenberg to Wittgenstein. Austrian Studies 1.* Edinburgh 1990, pp.1-12

⁴² See Handke's *Wunschloses Unglück*, and the numerous other works of the 1970s and 1980s in which young Austrian writers of rural or lower-class background examine critically their social and cultural inheritance.

strongly conservative flavour, being dominated by a rural *Heimatliteratur* rather than by a revived and cosmopolitan Viennese modernism. In political terms, the neutrality of the Second Republic reflected both its geographical position at the centre of a divided Europe and a conscious distancing from the Western alliance on the part of the country's political leaders. In cultural terms, the era was marked by a return to the tradition of emphasis on music rather than the written word (Thomas Bernhard and Ingeborg Bachmann both had a strong musical, as well as literary, background, as shown in Bernhard's idea of "musikalische Prosa" and in both Bachmann's writing and her work with Henze), and by a certain distancing, on the part of leading Austrian literary figures, from the avant-garde movements of Western Europe and the USA. Nonetheless some works did connect up with the more innovative aspects of the national- or multi-national - tradition. Indeed, the first Austrian author of the new generation to achieve widespread acclaim was Ingeborg Bachmann, whose poetry, although traditional in formal terms, was regarded at the time as exemplifying a modernist sensibility. Heimito von Doderer's epic novels Die Strudlhofstiege and Die Dämonen celebrated the society of pre-war, "traditional" Vienna from an upper middle - class, nostalgic point of view, thereby reflecting the author's own age, background and beliefs - yet also incorporated the techniques of literary modernism - the role of the city, and its impact on the consciousness of the individual (as in Joyce and Döblin), the essayistic digressions recalling Musil, the theory of "*Apperzeptionsverweigerung*" pointing to the possible function of literature as a means of restoring the harmonious and untroubled world-view which, it was claimed, modern life and industrial civilisation threatened to destroy. Sometimes, in his non-fictional writing, Doderer, with his sympathy for the likes of Ortega y Gasset and his dislike of democracy and the "Masse", can seem as narrowly tradition-bound as any of his German contemporaries but for all his aristocratic values he was still willing to speak

out in support of the avant-garde *Wiener Gruppe*, as Weiss⁴³ observes - and this at the age of nearly seventy.

This act both shows the abiding Austrian preoccupation with formal experimentation and illustrates the manner in which Austrian literature was to develop - with no immediate attempt to break with the past, as represented in West Germany by the founding of *Gruppe 47* and the ideas of "*Kahlschlag*" and "*Stunde Null*". Rather, a continuity could be observed, as the pre-war Austrian "*Klassiker des modernen Romans*" exerted their influence ; this being based on "*die 'moderne' Erfahrung des Verlusts der Einheit und Übersichtlichkeit der Welt, durch die ihre erzählerische Gestaltung zunehmend schwieriger würde*"⁴⁴. It is a starting-point which seems typical of 'modern' literature in general - and, as Austrian writers were increasingly to exercise an influence on German writing once the initial period of "*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*" had ended (i.e, after 1965) - their inheritance could be interpreted as a positive advantage. While West German literature faced new problems deriving from the socio-political orientation which had been predominant since the late 'forties - Enzensberger's complaint that intellectuals in West Germany were allowing themselves to become a privileged but ineffectual opposition, using literature as a substitute for real political action, and his 1968 proclamation of the "*Tod der Literatur*" are key statements in this context⁴⁵ - the Austrians, while themselves being aware of a less dramatic process of modernisation and social change in their own society, did not (at least, until the 1970s) feel under pressure to participate in political activity in quite the same way. Indeed, the Austrian state was increasingly willing to subsidise culture, including literature. This was not without its controversial aspects - there developed a "generation gap", expressed in enmity between the conservative writers associated with the Vienna branch of the PEN club and the young avant-gardists of the *Forum Stadtpark* group in Graz - but these

⁴³ in : Durzak 1981 , p.602

⁴⁴ Weiss, *ibid.*,p. 605

⁴⁵ See : *Gemeinplätze, die Neueste Literatur betreffend*. In :H.M. Enzensberger, *Palaver. Politische Überlegungen 1967-1973* (1974)

were of little import compared to the upheavals which literature and society were experiencing in the Federal Republic.

Handke, Frisch and Bernhard in the late 1960s

Ziolkowski's identification of the "*view from the madhouse*", discussed above, is one indication of the increasingly strained relationship between writers and politicians in this period. From a purely political angle, Erhard's description of certain (unidentified) intellectuals as "*Pinscher*", and the rejection of parliamentary politics in favour of revolutionary activity by the likes of Enzensberger and Martin Walser (albeit temporary, in both cases) also provide clear illustrations of this tendency in the Federal Republic.

Yet the recent re-evaluations of German literary history since 1945 - particularly Schäfer's "*Periodisierung*"(1977)⁴⁶ - supply a context in which the phenomena of the 'sixties can be analysed. As he says, the mentality which held sway in the immediate post-war period was a product of the social and political trends of the 1930s : of "Depression" in both senses of the word :

Erst als sich während der sechziger Jahre in der westlichen Welt angesichts einer geradezu gigantischen Prosperität ein neuer Optimismus entwickelte und das Krisenbewußtsein der letzten drei Jahrzehnte verdrängte, vollzog sich auch in der Bundesrepublik der Bruch mit der Restaurationsepoche...Die Pop-Art mit ihrer Subkultur und Warenwelt war eine Rebellion gegen den Formalismus und den organisierten Literaturbetrieb der Nachkriegszeit ; der Durchbruch dieser neuen Kunstströmung setzte in der Bundesrepublik 1965 ein und wurde von der studentischen Protestbewegung der folgenden Jahre zeitweise mitgetragen. .

Schäfer identifies - as have many other observers - Peter Handke's "*provokatorische(s) und selbstbewußte(s) Auftreten*" at the 1966 meeting of *Gruppe 47* at Princeton as possibly the most striking 'document' of the radical break with the "*Krisengeneration*". There are many reasons to consider Handke a representative figure of the new generation - his flair for publicity and controversy;

⁴⁶ Hans Dieter Schäfer : Zur Periodisierung der deutschen Literatur seit 1930. In : *Literaturmagazin* 7, 1977, S. 95-115

his fashionable appearance; his interest in Structuralism and Russian Formalism; his equally strong passion for rock music and for the kind of Hollywood genre film celebrated by the French critics associated with the magazine Cahiers du Cinéma (who, as theorists and then as directors, had challenged the older generation of French film-makers in much the same way as Handke now appeared to be rejecting the conventions of Gruppe 47). Yet it cannot be overlooked that he was an Austrian, who had made his initial literary breakthrough as a member of the Forum Stadtpark group in Graz. For the most part, the experimental groups of Graz and Vienna had presented an "alternative" to the predominant socio-critical strain of German writing, and had attained a certain amount of recognition but little commercial success ; at first, they did not exercise any significant influence on their contemporaries, although as the Sixties progressed, an increasing fascination with the avant-garde in general - first, in music and painting⁴⁷, then in literature - did become evident. What is more, these writers, often supported by state subsidy or able to find employment in Austrian cultural or academic life, for the most part professed an indifference to any kind of literary careerism ; which meant, of course, that they remained at a distance from the *Literaturbetrieb* of West Germany.

Handke, on the other hand, told Heinz Ludwig Arnold⁴⁸ that he wrote with the intention of reaching as wide an audience as possible :

Ich möchte als Schriftsteller, zumindest ist das mein Wunschtraum, wie ein amerikanischer Schriftsteller sein: daß ich nicht einfach meine Phantasie und meine Ängste ausbreite, sondern daß ich da eine Geschichte finde, die die Kommunikation bewirkt. Das ist natürlich ein Kalkül, und ich finde auch überhaupt nichts Schlimmes daran. Es ist eine Art Kundendienst.

Although this statement might be interpreted as curiously at odds with the somewhat elusive and esoteric qualities which some of Handke's work contains (not to mention his problematic definition of the "*amerikanischer Schriftsteller*"), the awareness of his public which Arnold finds in Handke's literary method did bring it

⁴⁷ See Hermand, 1986, pp.387ff.

⁴⁸ In : Arnold (Hg.), TuK 24/24a (Peter Handke) 1978, p.40

into the centre of literary debate, in a way unequalled by any of the other Graz and Vienna writers of the 'fifties and 'sixties. Yet the "view from the madhouse", to use the term which Ziolkowski (1969) had employed to characterise the predominant perspective of early 'sixties German writing, re-emerged in Handke's work - in the *Sprechstücke*, most notably Publikumsbeschimpfung, in which the conventions of theatre-going were attacked (although somehow in a more "orderly" way than in much of the radical and avant-garde drama of the late 'sixties - the audience may have been "insulted" by the language of the play, but at least they were not humiliated or physically assaulted by the actors⁴⁹), and Kaspar, in which social conditioning by means of linguistic norms is questioned. Then, when Handke turned to prose writing, the typical central character of his 1970s writings tended to show "abnormal" tendencies - Bloch, in Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter, commits a seemingly motiveless murder and shows traces of schizophrenia, Keuschnig in Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung transforms his life in a way which seems to take little account of the feelings of those around him, to take but two examples. What these characters imply is not necessarily - as implied by some of the Surrealists, or by the "anti-psychiatry" fashionable in the 'sixties - that the world, or society, is insane, and that therefore the insane are the only people who have real insight into the true state of things; but that pre-ordained, "conventional" ways of seeing can dull our perceptions, and that "moments of true feeling", be they epiphanies or shocks, can enable one to overcome this - it will be remembered that Handke's attack on the literature read at the Princeton Gruppe 47 meeting took issue with its "Beschreibungsimpotenz". This statement could be said to have created the required shock effect, as the silence of many of the older generation during the intensely politicised late 'sixties was followed by the so-called *Tendenzwende*, in which a move towards more introspective writing and an abandonment of the Utopian revolutionism of the Student Movement were apparent.

⁴⁹ See the chapter "Radical Theatre" in Cauter, 1968 (1988) for examples of this.

Indeed, Frisch's Tagebuch 1966-1971 reflects the disorientation felt by some older writers during the period in question. The author seems to feel challenged in his familiar role as political liberal and cultural critic, not merely by the process of ageing and the awareness of mortality which haunts the book (and which is familiar from, e.g. , the Faber-Sabeth relationship in Homo faber) but by the fact that so many of the world events to which he gives his attention seem to be completely outwith his control. In contrast to the Tagebuch 1946-1949, which is much more the journal of an author who knows that his audience will be drawn from his contemporaries and who is the direct witness of current events, Frisch here, despite the fact that his travels take him to the USA, Japan and the USSR, obtains much of his information second-hand, mediated through the means of reproduction - newspapers, radio and television - which had been cited as a source of inauthenticity in Stiller. Furthermore, there is the presence of a younger generation with whom Frisch sympathises, to a certain extent, but whom he cannot completely understand or identify with - as the somewhat awkward conversations with students make plain (e.g. 341-344). The author retains his curiosity about contemporary events : during his stay in the United States, this ranges from a lunch at the White House with Henry Kissinger (290-307), to further encounters with students and black Americans (including a visit to Harlem's Apollo Theater) and, perhaps surprisingly, attendance at a concert in the most celebrated rock music venue of the time, the Fillmore Auditorium, where the performance is interrupted by a bomb alert (374). Even so, it is easier to imagine a Handke or a Brinkmann in such surroundings ; Frisch's Tagebuch 1966-1971 , therefore, illustrates both the "generation gap" of the time and, in its more reflective passages, the introspective tendencies which were to play a major role in the 1970s.

One of Handke's early essays was entitled "*Als ich Verstörung von Thomas Bernhard las*"⁵⁰. It indicated a strong affinity between Handke and his fellow Austrian, even though Bernhard was a dozen years older than Handke and came from

⁵⁰ In : Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms, Frankfurt/M., 1972, pp.211-216

a very different social background; he was a product of the traditional, cultured and Catholic bourgeoisie of Salzburg, while Handke spent most of his childhood in poverty in rural Kärnten. Bernhard's first novels Frost (1963) and Verstörung (1967) again take up the "view from the madhouse" - this time, by focusing on central characters of exceptional ability who have nonetheless been unable to reconcile themselves to the modern world and as a consequence live alone and in despair in remote Austrian landscapes whose atmosphere seems to reflect their doom-laden thoughts. This was to become a kind of "trademark" of Bernhard's writing - the theme of the failed genius battling intensely and heroically against a society characterised by mediocrity and attempting to resist the all-pervasive influence of an indifferent, decaying natural world. Bernhard's movement from music to literature, from association with the avant-garde composer Gerhard Lampersberg at the beginning of his literary career in the 1950s, to a position in the 1980s as a kind of "court jester" of the Austrian Second Republic, was facilitated by a series of interventions in public affairs which often led to scandal and controversy. For him, the problems of self-definition appeared to be inextricably bound up with the country in which he lived ; his "Haßliebe" for his homeland was expressed both in his public statements, often bitterly critical of Austrian institutions and politicians, and in his fictional writing, in which he portrays the influence - usually malevolent - of the rural landscapes of the country on the psychological condition of his characters. His standing in German cultural life fluctuated too, views on his significance varying from adulation to dismissal. Some regarded him as a genuinely "great" writer, others as little more than a kind of Austrian Spike Milligan, a psychologically vulnerable proponent of a tragi-comic, Goon Show-like humour which spilled over into the grotesque, a tendency most obvious in his plays but regarded by some critics as marring his work in general. However, the most challenging aspect of his work, the extremely repetitive and unconventional prose style, characterised by Bernhard himself as "musikalische Prosa" , registers an individual identity in quite a different manner from the simple re-telling of earlier experiences or straightforward expression of social

criticism. In the 1960s, Bernhard was, as an Austrian and a writer marked by influences from beyond the Federal Republic and the milieu of *Gruppe 47*, to some degree a "fringe" figure, identified with the Austrian avant-garde, if indeed with any particular grouping⁵¹. Yet in the 1970s and '80s he was gradually to achieve recognition as a major writer of his era. His career and the reception of his work provide an intriguing reflection of the changes in the literary and cultural climate of Germany and Austria, revealing unexpected correspondences between the political and the personal - and, as the chapter on Bernhard will show, in a way strikingly different from that favoured by those of his contemporaries associated with the generation of 1968. In fact his work seems to provoke a response which cannot be easily pigeon-holed by means of politically-inspired criteria of judgement, and thus to foreshadow that change in the critical climate which was to occur in the 1970s and 1980s; the stylistic mixture of tradition and modernism, the alternation of realistic description and rhetorical exaggeration, the ambiguous relationship to literary and philosophical forebears, the deeply-troubled relationship of the central characters to their world all serve to illustrate the increasing difficulty of categorising literature as merely "conservative" or "progressive"; a problem which will recur in the chapters devoted to Frisch, Handke and Bernhard, and will be considered in more detail in Chapter 5 of this study.

⁵¹ He was, for a short time, associated with the *Wiener Gruppe*; see H.C. Artmann's "Ein schreckliches Theaterstück", in his *Im Schatten der Burenwurst. Skizzen aus Wien* (Munich 1986), 41-43, with its comic account of the première of a play, "Rosen und Einwände" (a title recalling Bernhard's 1959 *die rosen der einöde. fünf sätze für ballett, stimmen und orchester*) by "Thomas Herrenbart" in a small Vienna theatre which also presented works by the likes of "Oswald Prager" and "Conny F. Bayer".

CHAPTER TWO

MAX FRISCH

Like Böll and Grass, Max Frisch too has been accused of continually returning to the same themes, following his initial successes with the Tagebuch 1946-1949 and his novel Stiller(1954). Indeed Frisch himself was well aware of this criticism, and can even be said to have anticipated it in his well-known remark from the first Tagebuch :

"Die Zeit verwandelt uns nicht.

"Sie entfaltet uns nur." (TB 1,22)

Like Grass, he was always ready to comment on current affairs, but his situation as a Swiss allowed him a certain detachment from the hurly-burly of the West German scene, with its *Literaturbetrieb* and *Kulturindustrie*. His career developed gradually ; born in 1911, his first published writings date from the early 1930s, but he did not achieve any significant success until his play Nun singen sie wieder (1945). Therefore, although Frisch can be classed with the post-war generation of German-language writers, he was older than most of them, and because of his Swiss background, conscious of a separate literary tradition - as is shown most clearly by his tributes to his fellow-countryman and formative influence, the novelist Albin Zollinger ¹. At the same time, his periods of residence outside Switzerland and his wide-ranging travels give him the air of a *Weltbürger* - to a far greater extent than his equally renowned Swiss contemporary Friedrich Dürrenmatt ². This is reflected in the constantly changing geographical location of his novels, adding a colour and variety to the narratives, which no doubt contributes to the widespread popularity of Frisch's work ; furthermore, the three works on which his reputation as a novelist is based -

¹ See GW 1, 197, 206 ; and GW IV, 265

² With whom he is often compared - albeit largely because of similarities in their successful plays of the 1950s and 60s. However, Dürrenmatt's early prose writings seem to have a much more localised Swiss setting, and for the most part are considered less important than his theatrical work.

Stiller, Homo faber, and Mein Name sei Gantenbein - all unfold in a cosmopolitan, bourgeois atmosphere, centred on the society of middle-class Zürich, which Frisch knew so well. Indeed, attempts have recently been made (by Lubich, 1990) to classify these novels as a "Zürcher Trilogie", after the fashion of Grass's "Danziger Trilogie", even though it is acknowledged that Frisch's intentions differ from those of his German contemporary. Nevertheless, in spite of touches of local colour, the social milieu of these works is sufficiently generalised to stand for the kind of affluent, mobile, professional, "modern" - or perhaps "modernising"- Europe of the two decades following World War Two, with its fascinated yet ambivalent attitude towards the model of progress represented by "THE AMERICAN WAY OF LIFE" (Hf 175-6). The existential dilemmas of Frisch's central characters can thus be regarded as products of the conflicts which arise from the collision of the self and a specifically modern world ; indeed Stephan (1983) has argued that the predominant intellectual mood of his *oeuvre* is that of the 1930-1960 period, with the writer's pre-war preoccupations being carried over into his later work. What gives them an added urgency is the fact that Frisch, unlike many of his contemporaries, is not writing from the standpoint of an "Akademiker" or a "Künstler", whose social position, in the somewhat compartmentalised societies of the German-speaking countries, would tempt him to project his fears onto a technological world of which he knows little. After his initial studies, early journalism and two novels of the 1930s, Frisch earned his living as an architect until literary success enabled him to become a full-time writer, and this experience of the world of work - described in the Tagebuch 1946-1949 in the sections dealing with the construction of the swimming-pool in Zürich-Letzigraben - prevents him from succumbing to the habits of thought which are produced by an oversimplified glorification of the creative artist at the expense of the "Bürger". It also helped him to formulate his social and political views, later to be expressed in essays and articles on architecture and town planning, in which he comes down firmly on the side of modernism and rejects the dominant tradition-based architecture of post-war Switzerland ; just as he will reject conservative political views in his publications of the

1950s, most notably in the collaborative polemics of achtung : Die Schweiz.³ In this work, the desire for architectural innovation in Swiss cities reflects hopes that the country will develop a more open and modern outlook, as a result of such departures from traditional practice.

STILLER

These tendencies are evident in Frisch's "Künstlerroman", Stiller, which occupies a similar place in his *oeuvre* to that of Die Blechtrommel in Grass's work. Although Stiller did not achieve a comparably immediate and spectacular commercial success on its publication in 1954, it was soon hailed by both West German and Swiss critics as a major achievement, and over a period of several years, recognition by the reading public steadily followed. The reception of Stiller is itself revealing. At a time when West German literature was still attempting to come to terms with the horrors of the recent past, critics in that country were gratified to discover a German language novel with characteristics of the "modern"; displaying, both technically and thematically, a sophistication and complexity which, it was claimed, made West German works of the time seem naive and provincial. Karl Korn, for example, singled out Frisch's "*Auffassung des Eros*", his "*Porträts der beiden Damen*" and the "*Amerikaschilderungen*" for particular praise (thus hinting at the preoccupations of Frisch criticism a generation later). However, Swiss critics, while admiring the book's ambition, tended to be annoyed by what was called the "*Salonschwipsattitüde*" (Hans Trümper) of Stiller's attacks on the conservatism, complacency and conformism of Swiss society - an indication that Frisch had struck a sensitive nerve⁴.

The "Aufzeichnungen im Gefängnis" which make up the first seven books of Stiller are the painful and complex means by which the novel's central character, the

³ With Lucius Burckhardt and Markus Kutter : achtung : Die Schweiz. Ein Gespräch über unsere Lage und ein Vorschlag zur Tat (1954). Reprinted in GW, 1976, Bd. III, S. 291-339

⁴ See Schmitz, Materialien zu Max Frisch Stiller, Bd.2 (1978) for a selection of reviews, including those by Korn and Trümper.

sculptor Anatol Ludwig Stiller, alias James Larkin White, attempts to come to terms with the intense feelings of anxiety, confusion and self-disgust which are the consequence of what he feels have been the failures of his life. The notebooks portray a series of traumatic events, from Stiller's unheroic participation in the Spanish Civil War - his "*Niederlage in Spanien*" - to his disillusionment with his career as an artist, the disaster of his marriage and his subsequent flight to the United States, culminating in an attempt at suicide. This leads him to return to Switzerland, where, under investigation in the "Untersuchungshaft" for relatively insignificant past offences, he finally confronts the broader problems of his own personality. His early perception, that "*das Gefängnis ist nur in mir*" (20) is borne out as the novel progresses, and the reader gradually becomes aware of the behaviour-patterns which have been characteristic of Stiller and have occasioned his repeated failures - both in his relationships with women and with society at large.

It would, however, be simplistic to argue that Stiller alone is responsible for his plight. He shares with Emma Bovary the problem of being surrounded by a society which is small-minded and uncomprehending, and thus being unable to change it or escape its influence ; but whereas Emma's tragedy is played out in the narrow, limited world of nineteenth-century provincial France, Stiller can take advantage of new, twentieth-century freedoms - he is able to leave Switzerland, firstly seeking to prove himself ("*à la Hemingway*", according to Elm 1984, 237) by fighting in the Spanish Civil War, and then, much later, in an attempt to resolve his personal crisis by fleeing to the United States. The fact that he cannot do so - rather, he eventually returns "voluntarily" to Switzerland, is arrested and finds himself in a prison cell agonizing over his past - points to the deeply-rooted nature of this crisis. He has lived what might superficially appear to be an attractive, even enviable life, working as a sculptor, married to a ballet-dancer, moving among a circle of intellectuals in a prosperous, sophisticated city, and achieving a certain amount of recognition for his creative work. Yet the picture of Swiss society given in the book is highly critical, and the individuals with whom Stiller is brought into contact tend to be either pillars of Swiss conformity,

such as Sturzenegger and Bohnenblust, whose lack of imagination prevents them from understanding why he has rejected his nationality and has adopted the persona of the American, James Larkin White - or characters such as Rolf and Julika, whose problems of adjustment to preconceived social roles are in many respects similar to his own.

Given such a combination of circumstances, it is hardly likely that Stiller's journey to self-realisation will be easy. Indeed Bohnenblust's request that he write down "*nichts als die schlichte und pure Wahrheit*" (9) sets up a tension between the notion of reality and truth held by the literal-minded, conventional characters of the novel and that of its "hero" ("*Jedes Wort ist falsch und wahr, das ist das Wesen des Worts...*" [175]). His unwillingness to accept their system of values is shown in his preference for tall tales which give an allegorical portrayal of his feelings while entertaining his gullible warder Knobel ("*eine Seele von Mensch, der einzige, der mir glaubt, wenn ich etwas erzähle*" [24]) and irritating his defence counsel, his wife Julika and all those who lack the perception to see beyond their seemingly banal adventure-story or fairy-tale surfaces. The most plainly allegorical of these stories is that of Jim White and his descent into the labyrinth of the Carlsbad Caves, New Mexico ; it works as a yarn to amuse Knobel, while allowing for a presentation of Stiller's struggle with himself, in its account of the underground life-or-death battle between two friends and the eventual emergence into the daylight of "*der Stärkere*" - reflecting his attempt to assume a completely new identity in the New World. Hence Stiller's reply to the puzzled Knobel :

"-sind Sie denn Jim White ?" fragt er.

"Nein", lache ich, "das gerade nicht ! Aber was ich selber erlebt habe, sehen Sie, das war genau das gleiche - genau." (172)

Similarly, the curious tale of Isidor and his flight from a life in which cosy domesticity and characteristically Swiss "*bester Ordnung*" are the rule, to a life of

adventure and freedom in the tough, exclusively masculine world of the Foreign Legion, bears obvious similarities to Stiller's attempt to assert himself by leaving behind his homeland and the failures of his life. Indeed, like Isidor, Stiller has absented himself from his homeland for a long period, because of a breakdown in his relationship with his wife : like Isidor, he has changed as a result of his experiences, but on his return has only found an unchanged domestic situation and a continuation of the state of non-communication with his wife which provoked his desertion in the first place. Julika's reaction to the Isidor story is revealingly similar to that of Isidor's wife on his return, in her refusal to acknowledge the possibility that anything might lie behind his stories :

"Du bist ja komisch !" sagt sie. "Du bist wirklich komisch, ich muß schon sagen, in dieser Stunde, nachdem man sich ein halbes Leben lang nicht gesehen hat, kommst du wieder mit deinen Hirngespinnsten, deinen kindischen Hirngespinnsten !" (57)

Her "*fixe Idee*" of him is, he finds, no less imprisoning than Isidor's wife's "*stete Fragerei*" and he responds to questions which are near-identical to those which so enrage Isidor ("*Wo bist du nur all die Jahre gewesen ?*") with a silence which indicates that their own breakdown of communication is just as complete as that of the "fictional" couple. Certainly, if Stiller is to attain a measure of self-acceptance, he will somehow have to come to terms with the inner turmoil which the presence of Julika (and of other figures from his past) provokes in him. By tracing the course of their relationship he is able to do so, but this process leads to the realisation that their life together was founded on a lie, and that he has to bear much of the responsibility for her plight. The resulting guilt-feelings cannot be sloughed off easily, and, more than any other aspect of his past, the memory of his behaviour towards Julika continues to torment him until the end of the book (and perhaps beyond it, if the erratic thoughts and actions recorded in the final section are indicative of his subsequent state of mind).

The key event of Stiller's life is, as previously mentioned, his "*Niederlage in Spanien*" : the Tajo River incident, and the humiliation of being rejected and

considered a coward by Anja (again, the presence of a woman is significant for him) leave Stiller with a feeling of failure which cannot be overcome by his friends' "*schmeichelhafte Interpretation*" (141) of his actions (they see his refusal to fire on the enemy as a great humanitarian gesture, thereby using it to bolster their own beliefs) . When, later, he reveals this to Sibylle, she cannot understand "*warum diese Geschichte für Stiller eine solche Last war...*" He tells her, "*Weil ich ein Versager bin. Ganz einfach ! Ich bin kein Mann.*" (268) - a statement exemplifying the self-doubt which continually undermines his hopes of fulfilment. What is more, his marriage to Julika fails on account of his naivety, which, we are told, had prevented him from perceiving her frigidity and narcissism, and only reinforced his feelings of insecurity. The narrative points out the negative characteristics which they share and which can hardly lead to a mutually satisfactory relationship :

Als Fremder hat man den Eindruck, daß diese zwei Menschen, Julika und der verschollene Stiller, auf eine unselige Weise zueinander paßten. Sie brauchten einander von ihrer Angst her. Ob zu Recht oder Unrecht, jedenfalls hatte die schöne Julika eine heimliche Angst, keine Frau zu sein. Und auch Stiller, scheint es, stand damals unter einer steten Angst, in irgendeinem Sinn nicht zu genügen...(89)

Following on from this is the "Ich-Bezogenheit" so characteristic of their behaviour in the marriage ; as the relationship deteriorates, both seek refuge in their work. Inevitably they drift apart, but at their final meeting before the break-up, in the sanatorium at Davos where Julika is a patient, Stiller at least shows signs of acknowledging his insensitive treatment of her :

"Wäre nicht diese Niederlage in Spanien gewesen", sagte er, "wäre ich dir mit dem Gefühl begegnet, ein voller und richtiger Mann zu sein - ich hätte dich schon längst verlassen, Julika, vermutlich schon nach unserem ersten Kuß, und diese ganz jämmerliche Ehe wäre uns beiden erspart geblieben...Ich machte dich zu meiner Bewährungsprobe. Und darum konnte ich dich auch nicht verlassen. Dich zum Blühen zu bringen, eine Aufgabe, die niemand sonst übernommen hatte, das war mein schlichter Wahnsinn..." (146-7)

Yet Julika seems unable to respond in a way which would reflect, or reinforce, her husband's developing, but still vulnerable, self-awareness : her narcissism has

already been mentioned in the narrative (128)⁵. Later, in the "Nachwort des Staatsanwaltes" Rolf describes their life together, but it is obvious that there is little change. Julika is incapable of the kind of "Verwandlung" (420) which Stiller repeatedly (and unfairly) demands of her, as she confesses to Rolf :

"Wie soll ich mich denn ändern ? Ich bin doch so, wo ich bin. Warum will Stiller mich immer ändern ?"..."Ich begreife ihn immer weniger", antwortete sie nach einem mühsamen Besinnen. "Wissen Sie, Rolf, was er immer von mir erwartet ?..." (405)

She dies, having concealed the seriousness of her condition from her husband, who is left to cope with his solitude, the novel's final words giving no explicit statement as to whether or not he succeeds ; they could be taken as evidence that Stiller has indeed achieved "*der Verzicht auf die Anerkennung durch die Umwelt*" (408), which Rolf takes to be a sign of the change that has taken place in him⁶. On the other hand, it could be argued that Stiller, mentally exhausted by his struggle, has finally abandoned his attempt to assume a new identity and avoid the "*Flucht in eine Rolle*" which he has feared.

Yet Stiller is not the only character in the novel whose self-image is challenged by the problems ensuing from the application of theories to human relationships. Rolf comes from the same background as Stiller - the circle of Zürich intellectuals shown in the scenes in which Stiller and Julika meet - without having the petit-bourgeois upbringing (described in the scenes with Stiller's brother Wilfried) which make the latter an outsider even among this group of self-conscious non-conformists⁷. Hence, Rolf can recover from the shock of finding that his theories on "*Freiheit in der Ehe*," which his wife Sibylle regards as "*Vorträge*" and "*eine Männer-Theorie*", are impossible to put into practice, after admitting to Sturzenegger that he finds his wife's

⁵ For a discussion of this relationship, and of the "deliberately vague portrayal" of Julika in the novel, see Sterba/ Müller-Salget, *What about Julika ?* (1987)

⁶ See also Brombert, 1987, who comes to similar conclusions.

⁷ Julika herself is, like other female characters in Frisch's work, "*aus kultiviertem Haus*" - Lubich, 1990, picks up on this point when he describes Stiller as a "*gesellschaftliche(r) Aufsteiger mit sexuellen, künstlerischen und sozialen Minderwertigkeitskomplexen*", thereby - and perhaps surprisingly - hinting at a recurrent theme of post-war literature throughout Western Europe, that of the social climber who is unsure of himself in the face of existing cultural convention,

infidelity intellectually acceptable but emotionally unbearable (227). This tendency to separate intellect from human feeling is reflected in the "*kleine Geschichte mit dem fleischfarbenen Kleiderstoff in Genua*" at the beginning of the *Viertes Heft* (202ff.), a story which resembles Stiller's allegorical tales in its colourful surface narrative and symbolic function. Here the parcel of material, which Rolf cannot even give away, stands for his feelings :

"Die meisten von uns haben so ein Paket mit fleischfarbenem Stoff, nämlich Gefühle, die sie von ihrem intellektuellen Niveau aus nicht wahrhaben wollen. Es gibt zwei Auswege, die zu nichts führen ; wir töten unsere primitiven und also unwürdigen Gefühle ab, soweit als möglich, auf die Gefahr hin, daß dadurch das Gefühlleben überhaupt abgetötet wird, oder wir geben unseren unwürdigen Gefühlen einfach einen anderen Namen. Wir lügen sie um." (321)

In this passage he shows powers of analysis which are lacking in most of the characters with whom Stiller has to deal ; it is therefore not surprising that Stiller regards him as a friend. Their shared experiences of separation from their wives mean that they have a mutual sympathy, and indeed the *Viertes Heft* is devoted entirely to Rolf's account of his break-up with Sibylle, as told to Stiller - the roles of storyteller and listener here being reversed. But the very fact that Rolf can analyse his own predicament so clearly shows that his experiences have been less damaging to his self-confidence than the traumas which have so troubled Stiller. In addition, the two men have both had relationships with Sibylle, whose story is recounted in the *Sechstes Heft*. She too is not nearly so alienated from herself as is Julika, finding freedom in having to earn her own living after leaving her husband, yet being able to return to Rolf after her affair with Stiller and her spell in New York ; her sexuality is of a less problematic nature (we are told that in the United States she, as a sophisticated European, misses "*die Vielfalt des erotischen Spieles*", 312), and her appraisals of Rolf and Stiller show a keen awareness of their character-failings. Rolf's complacent intellectualism makes her seek relief from the aridity of their marriage, but her attraction to Stiller makes her question his habitual insecurity and self-disgust :

"Du schämst dich, daß du so bist, wie du bist. Wer verlangt von dir, daß du ein

Kämpfer bist, ein Krieger, einer, der schießen kann ?" (269)

"Stiller gefiel sich (so sagt sie) in seiner Verwundung ; er wollte nicht damit fertig werden. Er verschanzte sich. Er wollte nicht geliebt werden. Er hatte Angst davor."

She can see that he has *"unsichtbare Banderillas im Nacken...und blutete"* (262), in the scene when they playfully act out a bullfight, but in the course of their relationship her exasperation at his obstinacy causes her image of him to alter, so that she too begins to deny him the possibility of change : *"Du wirst dich nie verändern, glaube ich, nicht einmal in deinem äußeren Leben"* (300).

This remark hints at the reasons for the apparent success of Rolf and Sibylle's reconciliation. Both partners are capable of assuming the conventional social roles which Julika, and, especially, Stiller, because of their particular problems, are unable to play. Stiller obtains sympathy and friendship from both, but neither can probe deeply enough into his character to help him break free from his obsessions. Nevertheless, Rolf's insights into his motives are of much greater benefit to Stiller than the easy options offered by the defence counsel, Bohnenblust, which he resists until the closing pages of the Siebtes Heft, despite the mass of evidence connecting him with his previous identity. Bohnenblust's outlook, typified by the tirade in praise of common-sense, reasonableness, *"Heimat"*, *"Wurzeln"*, *"das Ewig-Weibliche"*, *"Familie"*, *"Hoffnung"* and the whole apparatus of Swiss patriotism (*"alles mit gesundem Schweizersinn"* [373]) and "positive thinking" (*"also Kopf hoch, Hand aufs Herz und Schwamm darüber..."*) is well-intentioned but marked by the kind of conventionality and smug superficiality which Stiller finds intolerable in his fellow-countrymen. Indeed, his attempts to achieve independence of thought are greatly hindered by the fact that he lives in a country in which social conformity is at a premium and any challenge to the prevailing system of values is interpreted as a threat. His later move to the United States⁸ only reveals its similarities with Switzerland ; the two nations both pride themselves on their freedom and lack of indebtedness to earlier models of society, and have a correspondingly strong potential for inducing

⁸ A decision which is, according to Elm (1984, 236) *"wiederum ein Bildnis, ...klischeehaft vorgeprägt und nicht seine eigene Wahl..."*

disappointment, when reality fails to live up to the high ideals and hopes for a new beginning implicit in the national identity. Furthermore, at this historical moment - the early 1950s, with the atmosphere of the Cold War producing a suspicious and defensive mentality - Stiller can only be confirmed in his identity by his society's mistrust of outsiders, feeling compelled to play the role of the truth-seeking artist and social critic ; hence his bitter criticism of Swiss literature and architecture, and his dislike of those, such as Sturzenegger (241-249) and the group of friends who visit him in the Siebtes Heft (331-333), who compromise their ideals for the sake of their career ambitions. This group regard him as someone whose opinions cannot be taken seriously, as is seen in Sturzenegger's response to his impassioned comments on architecture :

"Mein Lieber", sagt er zum Schluß, seine Hand auf meine Schulter, lachend, "du bist noch immer der alte !"

Darauf schweige ich.

"Immer etwas niederreißen !" fügt er hinzu. "Immer destruktiv ! Wir kennen dich ja - du alter Nihilist !" (249)

As the above remarks indicate, Sturzenegger and his circle bear very little resemblance to the characteristic rebels of the post-war era, be they French existentialists, American beatniks or British "Angry Young Men". It could be argued that this is precisely because they are Swiss, living in a country in which the tradition of dissent expressed in, and contained by, "sub-cultures" in larger European countries, is largely absent ; therefore, it is hardly surprising that they, like Stiller, follow imported intellectual fashions, although at a distance and somewhat half-heartedly. Yet their willingness to compromise only denies what lies behind Stiller's living out, at second-hand, of the *"Bild des romantischen Künstlers, frei von Norm und Gesetz, genial und in sich zerrissen"* (Elm 236) - the need for a kind of authenticity, in a country where (as Pender's work on the Swiss "Künstlerroman" demonstrates⁹) the

⁹ Malcolm J.Pender (1985) : Creative Imagination and Society. Aspects of the German-Swiss "Künstlerroman" in the Twentieth Century (Glasgow)

artist's relationship to his society is especially problematic.

His flight to the New World is, therefore, an attempt to break out of this role, which is no more satisfying to him than his relationship with Julika. But again he encounters disappointment ; among the community of black Americans which has aroused his curiosity, initially through his attraction to his neighbour Florence, he finds their social behaviour, in the scenes describing the wedding and reception, a "*vollkommene Karikatur einer weißen Kleinbürgerlichkeit*" (190) at the same time acknowledging the difficulty of establishing a completely new identity :

(Ach, diese Sehnsucht, weiß zu sein, und diese Sehnsucht, glattes Haar zu haben, und diese lebenslängliche Bemühung, anders zu sein, als man erschaffen ist, diese große Schwierigkeit, sich selbst einmal anzunehmen, ich kannte sie und sah nur eine eigene Not einmal von außen, sah die Absurdität unserer Sehnsucht, anders sein zu wollen, als man ist !) (193)

Yet Stiller's attitude is also a consequence of his awareness of the "second-hand" nature, not merely of his own past, but of many aspects of modern life, emphasised when he (mis)quotes Walter Benjamin's formulation of the "Zeitalter der Reproduktion". Evidence for this tendency can be found in the "Illustrierten" read by the prison warder Knobel (who, as the credulous recipient of Stiller's tall tales, is described by Krätzer [37] as "*Ein typisches Kind des Zeitalters der technischen Reproduktion*" , his imagination dominated by images derived from the world of "Kino" and "Illustrierte") and in which both Stiller and Julika appear (one imagines that, a few years on in the British context, this "creative" couple's imagined lifestyle would have been ideal material for the Sunday colour supplements) - but in both cases the "Bildnis" , a key concept in the novel as in much of Frisch's work, is misleading. In the magazine reports, Stiller is suspected of espionage for the Russians (a typical Cold War theme, or cliché), while Julika is shown in the role in which she is most comfortable, that of the "Balletteuse".

In both cases the question of identity which is the main preoccupation of the novel is made manifest through the second-hand medium of the "Illustrierte". The age

of "Reproduktion" has led to a multiplication of the means by which experience can be rendered indirectly ; while Benjamin, in his 1936 essay, had concentrated on the role of the printing press, photography and the cinema in changing individual and collective consciousness, Frisch's *Stiller* extends the concept, to cover not merely art, but all aspects of life. Above all, its negative effects are stressed ; knowledge and experience can be gained, he says, by being "*Fernseher, Fernhörer, Fernwisseur*" - furthermore, he claims, "*Und mit dem menschlichen Leben ist es genau so*" (186). This ultimately leads to that "*Mechanik in den menschlichen Beziehungen*" (242), which he senses in his former friend Sturzenegger ; to bad faith, "selling out", "*fidele Resignation*". Stiller's fear of "Wiederholung" is connected with this idea ; the term is adapted from Kierkegaard's *Enten-Eller* (*Entweder-Oder*), which provides the motto of the novel¹⁰, and in this context loses its original celebratory overtones¹¹ to signify a powerful "Lebensangst" (Honsza, in Jurgensen 1977, 73), determining the repeating patterns of behaviour which have characterised Stiller's life and led to what he now perceives, all too agonisingly, as its failures.

The succession of traumatic events, from his "*Niederlage in Spanien*" to his ill-judged, disastrous marriage, subsequent flight to the United States and a further series of (real, mythical or fictional) frustrating experiences there, culminate, as previously mentioned, in an attempt at suicide. Yet at this point, through the intervention of what he mysteriously calls his "*Engel*", a "*Wesen der Gnade*" which he finds impossible to express in words (reflecting the recurring problems of language, reality and "Bildnis"¹², which separate Stiller from those around him and make him unable to give them the "proof" and affirmation they expect), he experiences a kind of "rebirth" and returns to Switzerland, to try to rebuild his life with a totally new identity - an attempt which seemingly fails, as he discovers that he can never completely escape his past. Still, the passages in which he analyses and comments upon his earlier self display a

¹⁰ See Naumann, 1978, pp.26-39

¹¹ Present too in Handke's use of it in his 1980s work - see e.g. *Der Chinese des Schmerzes*, 70

¹² Or, as Elm (1984, 228-229) puts it, "*Vorurteile*"

fair degree of self-awareness - for example, the picture of Stiller given by "Mr. White" (251-53), claiming that he suffers from a "*klassischen Minderwertigkeitsangst aus übertriebener Anforderung an sich selbst*", and showing how his doubting of his own masculinity derives not just from the Spanish Civil War incident and his relationship with Julika, but from his own sensibility, which he perceives as "*sehr feminin*" :

"...er ist nicht bereit, nicht imstande, geliebt zu werden als der Mensch, der er ist, und daher vernachlässigt er unwillkürlich jede Frau, die ihn wahrhaft liebt, denn nähme er ihre Liebe wirklich ernst, so wäre er ja genötigt, infolgedessen sich selbst anzunehmen - davon ist er weit entfernt !" (252)

Indeed, for the course of the book self-acceptance remains an intractable problem for him. Stiller is the first of a series of central characters of German-language novels of the post-war period who find themselves in a prison cell ¹³, trying to make sense of their past lives. In Die Blechtrommel, published three years later, Grass's Oskar Matzerath would find himself in an asylum, recounting the events of his life and his family history ; then, in 1968, Siegfried Lenz, in Deutschstunde, presents a central character, Siggi Jepsen, who, like Stiller, writes the story of his life in an effort to draw lessons from it. Siggi is quite explicit about his reasons for choosing to prolong his imprisonment : "*Ich bin stellvertretend für meinen Alten, den Polizeiposten Rugbüll*". In both of these novels, therefore, the central character's confinement derives from his experiences during the Nazi era, whether it be Oskar's picaresque journey from his Danzig childhood to the Rhineland of the years following the war, or the conflict between the ideals instilled in Siggi by his two contrasting father-figures in the remote north of Schleswig-Holstein. This "*Arbeit an der Vergangenheit*" in enclosed spaces is, as mentioned earlier, a familiar feature of post-war German literature ; yet Stiller is not German, but Swiss, and his wartime involvement is restricted to limited action in the Spanish Civil War. How, then, is his reassessment of his past to be understood?

¹³ See Brombert, 1987, for a discussion of the "*redemptive carceral motif*" in a wider literary context.

A consideration of the societies portrayed in Stiller, and of the period in which the book appeared, helps to establish a suitable perspective (although, given the fact that so many of the novel's themes and motifs either derive from Frisch's journalism¹⁴ or reappear in his later work, speculations on the relationship between the author's life and his fictional creations are unavoidable, although not always rewarding). Given the tangled circumstances of his life, however, Stiller's journey to self-realisation would never be easy, no matter what society he lived in. In refusing to conform to the "Bildnis" others make of him, Stiller, as previously mentioned, adopts the role of the truth-seeking bohemian artist, it being the persona which seems to correspond to his needs ; gradually, however, he becomes aware that even this (supposedly) privileged state can involve suppressing a part of himself and living a lie. In the United States, a country which in German literature is, as Krätzer points out, traditionally associated with new beginnings, he only finds new forms of conformity, expressed not only in the section set among the community of black Americans, but also in the description of the mass exodus of motorists from New York at the weekend (179-182), the accoutrements of modern living actually preventing them from gaining direct experience of nature. It could be argued that some of this disappointment is due to Stiller's own tendency to see bad faith and false consciousness everywhere ; yet social historians have indeed viewed the 1950s as an era of conformity, particularly in countries such as Switzerland and the United States, where both Cold War politics and the prevailing business ethic tended to produce the suspicious and defensive mentality mentioned earlier - and which Frisch attacked in his political writings of the period. In Stiller, the most notable representative of this mentality is Bohnenblust, the conventionally-minded and obtuse defence counsel, whose staunch patriotism is accompanied by a suspicion of, and a lack of curiosity about, the world outside Switzerland¹⁵.

¹⁴ See especially the Kleine Prosaschriften (1951-1954), in GW, III, for examples of the short essays - dealing with visits to Spain, Mexico and the USA., criticism of Swiss architecture and encounters with black Americans - which Frisch re-worked into the text of Stiller.

¹⁵ E.g. the fact that he can only associate Mexico with communism, contrasting with Stiller's vivid memories of the country's landscapes, climate and people - again, a theme first tackled in Frisch's journalism (the essay Orchideen und Aasgeier, *ibid.*) and recurring in Homo faber.

In this context, Stiller can be seen as a representative of what has recently been called the "*Culture of Reconstruction*" (Hewitt 1989) - a tendency common to all of Western Europe in the immediate post-war years, in which the hope of a new beginning and a new identity, free from the traumas and the burdens of the past, gradually gave way to a new order in which elements of the pre-war world re-asserted themselves. The late 1940s and early 1950s - the period of time in which the events of Stiller take place - saw a change from a fluid situation, in which revolutionary and Utopian ideals were expressed, to the polarisation which produced the Cold War, the Iron Curtain and the incorporation of Western Europe into the American sphere of influence. Switzerland can therefore be seen as a typical example of "Reconstruction" in this sense (quite apart from Frisch's, and Stiller's, criticisms of reproduction architecture), in spite of its neutral status ; although it did not experience the social tensions common to most European countries during the late 1940s, its political climate from the pre-war period to the 1950s was, as Frisch repeatedly asserts, not so very different from that of West Germany during the "Restauration" years. (Frisch's essays of the period show that he is very conscious of - and intrigued by - America's political, economic and cultural dominance ¹⁶ ; and, of course, as a recipient of the Rockefeller Grant for Drama he had lived in the United States for a year). If the analogy holds true on the political level - and it recalls the persistence of, say, a Utopian idea such as the "American Dream", in spite of recurring disappointments - then might it also be applicable to Stiller's personal dilemma? After all, his malaise goes deeper than a mere revolt against the ruling class of his country or a distaste for conservative politics ; he seeks to eradicate all traces of his previous identity. He rejects all of the overtures made to him, whether from Bohnenblust or from Rolf, to admit that he is Anatol Ludwig Stiller. Only Julika's (female) presence can convince him that he cannot escape his past - finally, in the key scene set in his former studio, he smashes his sculptures, an act which reveals his feelings towards his earlier persona, but nonetheless his "resistance"

¹⁶ E.g. Unsere Arroganz gegenüber Amerika, 1953, in : *ibid.*, 222-229

crumbles. For Brombert, this obstinacy signals the essentially private nature of Stiller's aim :

The main thrust of the novel clearly leads beyond a socio-historical reading of the prison motif...The central prison image is indeed the cause of a confrontation between social and private values...in prison...(Stiller) gradually learns to value the prison of the inner life, to want to reach the still centre of the self...(64)

As is pointed out in his discussion with Rolf concerning the problems of "Selbsterkenntnis" and "Selbstannahme", Stiller is one of those who "*sind aus einer falschen Rolle ausgetreten, und das ist schon etwas, gewiß, aber es führt sie noch nicht ins Leben zurück*" (323). It is questionable whether Stiller ever advances beyond this stage - Rolf's attempts to reassure the reader in the "*Nachwort des Staatsanwaltes*" contrast starkly with the bleakness of Stiller's renewed life with Julika, and her death, narrated in the final pages. Yet Brombert interprets Stiller's final silence as a realisation of a "*latent monastic wish*", an acceptance of the "*prison of the inner life*" which, paradoxically, through a "*withdrawal from the world and the word*", grants him the freedom he has sought. Michael Butler, on the other hand, sees the outcome of Stiller in these terms : "*...society wins...a highly dubious (victory) in which a man is grimly and unceremoniously driven back into himself*" (Butler 1976, 77) - and indeed the manner in which his resistance is worn down seems to have more to do with a breakdown, resulting from the unresolved tensions within him, rather than a breakthrough into a newly-integrated and liberated psychological state. Nonetheless, the ending ("*Stiller blieb in Glion und lebte allein*") is sufficiently "open" to permit a variety of interpretations. While a reading of the novel as a pure socio-political allegory would ignore its more personal, indeed "spiritual" elements - the problematisation of marriage, the portrayal and function of the female characters, Julika and Sibylle¹⁷, and the religious motifs and search for redemption to which Brombert draws attention - the close relationship between public and personal matters in Frisch's writing enables parallels to be drawn between the unsatisfactory "reconstruction" of Stiller's

¹⁷ This aspect of his work has recently received increased attention in Frisch criticism - see Mona Knapp, in G.Knapp, 1979, and Sterba/ Müller-Salget 1987

personality and the portrayal of the social climate of the post-war period in which it takes place - with Frisch's own profession, architecture, providing an appropriate link. At the same time, the intellectual dilemmas of that period are explored by means of the novel's ironic portrayal of the sculptor Stiller, who, although a creative artist, can nonetheless seem to be "*ein(en) Mensch(en), der kritiklos aus zweiter Hand lebt*" (Elm 238); and through its thematic, structural and geographical diversity - making Stiller a key work of the mid-twentieth-century, and perhaps Frisch's most substantial achievement.

HOMO FABER

Homo faber, appearing three years after Stiller, took up many of the themes of the previous novel and employed some of the same techniques ; again, the central character looks back over a series of catastrophic events and attempts to reconstruct them from fragments of memory in a way which will lend them some meaning ; again, he has assumed a specific social role, that of the "*Techniker*" , and has adopted a set of beliefs - in his case the belief in scientific progress at all costs - to which he clings desperately and doggedly ; again, the only factor which causes him to question this role is the guilt resulting from the memory of a previous relationship with a woman. Frisch told Hans Mayer that the two novels were intended to be "*komplementär*" ¹⁸, and indeed Stiller the artist and Faber the engineer have much in common despite the superficial contrast between their lifestyles and world-views. Whereas Stiller's revolt against the tyranny of pre-ordained social roles is so radical that his relentless demand for authenticity becomes in itself an obstacle to the achievement of self-realization, Faber goes to the opposite extreme and creates an image of himself as the rational, scientific, "progressive" modern man. It is tempting to see in him the typical conformist "organisation man" of the 1950s (see Whyte 1956) ; an "amerikanisierter

¹⁸ Quoted by Schmitz, in Über Max Frisch II, 1976, 563

Europäer"(Krätzer) and technocrat, working for UNESCO as an engineer, he can live (like Stiller) a seemingly enviable lifestyle, owning an apartment in New York, and having an affair with a glamorous model. He seems to typify the kind of "success story" familiar from films, television, popular literature and advertising, yet his identification with his role goes far beyond the mere enjoyment of power and the fruits of worldly success ; he prefers the products of the man-made world not only to wild nature but even to humanity itself. He describes how he cherishes the moments he spends alone in his car, happy to be isolated from the rest of humanity ; for, he feels "*Menschen sind anstrengend*". This means that although he can describe his work as a "Techniker" as "*ein männlicher Beruf...wenn nicht der einzigmännliche überhaupt*" (77), he can derive little comradeship from it. He prefers to be a "*Mann unter Männern*" (64) in his leisure time, and expresses the self-confident belief that he is "*gewohnt, die Dinge zu sehen, wie sie sind*" , claiming that he needs "*keinerlei Mystik ; Mathematik genügt mir*". For him, an emotional or imaginative response to an experience such as being stranded in the desert is valueless ; "*Ich finde es nicht fantastisch, sondern erklärlich...Warum soll ich erleben, was nicht da ist?*" The consequences of such habits of thought derive from this denial of a sense of mystery; a reduction of his world to a series of "*dualistischen Erklärungsmustern*" which amount to a "*modern geschlossenes Weltbild*" (Lubich 45), and the subsequent inability to recognise a pattern in the "*ganze Kette von Zufällen*" which lead him away from predictable routine into a course of events which he cannot control, culminating in the death of his own daughter.

Faber's preference for what are often regarded as "masculine", rational modes of thought impoverishes his emotional life and ensures that his relationships with women fail. His affair with Hanna broke down because of his lack of involvement; he had suggested abortion as a "solution" to her pregnancy, while referring to their child as "*Dein Kind*". Some of his remarks reveal a deep-rooted misogyny ; he cannot understand why Ivy, the New York model, wishes that their affair would go beyond the mere physical gratification which is its basis as far as he is concerned. He is happy

as long as she conforms to the stereotype of the model as sex-object, "*gesellschaftliches Schmuckwerk des Mannes*" or "*Laufsteg-Roboter*" (Lubich 53), but, after leaving her, condescendingly refers to her as "*Ein lieber Kerl...obschon ich Ivy nie verstanden habe*". Elsewhere, though, the reasons for this unwillingness to contemplate deeper involvement become clear. Women are associated in his world with the natural processes of growth and decay which so horrify him during his time in the "Sumpfland" of the Central American jungle; "*Ivy heißt Efeu, und so heißen für mich eigentlich alle Frauen*" (91). Faber the rationalist claims that "*Alle Frauen haben einen Hang zum Aberglauben*" (142) and implies that "*weibisch*" is synonymous with "*mystisch*" and "*hysterisch*" (24,47). Yet despite this attempted assertion of superiority he confesses that sometimes he was frightened of Ivy (65).

It is not hard to see in Faber's behaviour evidence of a "*Verdrängungskomplex von Sexualität und Tod*" (Lubich 54); fears of aging and of death have haunted him since his own collapse in the airport at Houston and the discovery of his friend's corpse in the jungle, while his obsessive shaving and showering and his view of the human body as "*ein Fluch*" illustrate his distaste for the natural, as if he is trying to stave off the process of aging and of decay (witness his remarks on teeth). In the light of all this, it is not surprising that Sabeth's youth and spontaneity attract him, given the arid and predictable life he has been forcing himself to lead, and from which he begins, albeit subconsciously, to seek an escape. As Lubich puts it: "*Daß diese Flucht ausgerechnet in die Arme Sabeths und Hannas führt, hat freilich seine innere, psychomythische Notwendigkeit*". (Lubich 53). The combination of "Mythos und Psychologie" which is at the heart of Lubich's analysis of Homo faber, is seen by him as counterbalancing, and finally overcoming, the self-confident, masculine rationalism and "Fortschrittsoptimismus", viewed as characteristic not merely of Walter Faber but of "der Frühmoderne" in general. Hence, the work's enduring attraction can be interpreted as owing much to this thematic richness and complexity; finding expression in recent work which has investigated those mythical and psychological aspects of the novel which were largely overlooked in the early

"Rezensionen", with their tendency to focus much more on the problem of technology.

Volker Hage has stated that Frisch's approach to this theme, sketched out in the Tagebuch 1946-1949, involves "*nicht nur Abscheu von der Technik, sondern auch ein Stück Faszination*". Walter Schmitz has brought together much material (1982) to demonstrate the position of Homo faber in the German intellectual tradition of "*Technikkritik*" and "*Technikoptimismus*". Schmitz shows how the rejection of technology among writers and critics was often linked to the rejection of modernism by the conservative practitioners of "*Kulturphilosophie*", in his definition a self-chosen "*Geistesaristokratie*" who saw their values threatened by the growth of modern mass society and whose evaluation of technology was based on "*mythische Denkmodellen*". (This is not to be confused with the renewed, less dogmatic and more inquisitive interest in myth among critics in the 1970s and '80s, but is rather more akin to Faber's dualistic and stereotyping habits of thought). Thus, technology, like the "*Masse*" itself, was feared, and regarded as an uncontrollable force. Frisch, writing in the 1950s, must surely have been aware of this attitude, which held sway in large areas of post-war German cultural life, yet his journeys to the United States had also given him first-hand experience of a contrasting tendency - the American "*Technikoptimismus*", influencing other societies during that period. He therefore manages to subject these contemporary themes to a more careful examination than was usually the case. The element of myth and of "*Schicksal*" in the book is also scrutinised more closely than a superficial reading might indicate. After all, Faber, although in some senses a representative figure, is hardly a typical technologist; rather, he is an "eccentric" character in the sense in which Michael Butler (1976) uses the word, lacking any real "*fester Punkt*", for all his efforts to impose a pattern of logic and rationality on his life. Rather than embodying the demonic and destructive power of an unrestrained technology, he is an all too fallible human being, as his worries about his physical health, and his attraction to Sabeth, amply illustrate.

With this in mind, a reading of the novel as a tragedy brought about by the *hubris* of the technologist is possible - particularly when he explicitly rejects "*Natur als*

Götze" , because "*Wir leben technisch, der Mensch als Beherrscher der Natur, der Mensch als Ingenieur*" . However, it is characteristic of the novel that nature is portrayed not in the traditional European manner, i.e. as a pastoral idyll, but as a dynamic, elemental process of growth and decay, seen most clearly in the extreme environment of the Guatemalan jungle. If the alternative, proposed by Faber, of totally rejecting technology and the modern world means to be, like the "*Indios*" , "*los in den Dschungel*", with all its dangers and uncertainties, rather than living in a controlled and harmonious relationship to a benevolent Nature, then sympathy for his point of view is provoked - perhaps unexpectedly. But other "kulturkritische Aspekte" of the book were particularly appreciated in the 'fifties ; such as Faber's contention that man can and should now assume God-like powers over matters of life and death - Lubich (48) calls this "*Technodizee*" - which only stresses the extent of his arrogance. Faber's journey takes him from the New World to, as Butler puts it, "*the cradle of Western humanism, Greece*" , where Hanna diagnoses his malaise in a way which strikes to the heart of his dilemma - "*Technik (laut Hanna) als Kniff, die Welt so einzurichten, daß wir sie nicht erleben müssen*". She explains his attraction to Sabeth as "Repetition", an attempt to re-live his past ; or, in other words, the "Wiederholung" that Stiller was so anxious to avoid. The temptation would thus be great, particularly for readers educated in the tradition of "*Kulturphilosophie*", to take the seemingly simple dichotomies of the work at face value ; the new world versus the world of antiquity, technology versus myth, modern society versus nature, masculine rationality versus feminine intuition, etc., etc.. Alan Latta has pointed out the tendency of critics to adopt Faber's "Dualismus", and the danger that in doing so they can also unwittingly take on aspects of his reductive view of the world ; for example, the collapse of Faber's technological self-image can lead to the conclusion, doubtless a reassuring one in the 1950s, that the morally superior "old values", represented by Hanna, are victorious in the end. This ignores Hanna's own unhappiness, though (she tells Faber her life is "*verpfuscht*") and her own uncompromising feminist arguments which seem to challenge traditional notions of "das Ewig-Weibliche":

Sie findet es dumm von einer Frau, daß sie vom Mann verstanden werden will ; der Mann (sagt Hanna) will die Frau als Geheimnis, um von seinem eignen Unverständnis begeistert und erregt zu sein. Der Mann hört nur sich selbst, laut Hanna, drum kann das Leben einer Frau, die vom Mann verstanden will, nicht anders als verpfuscht sein (140)

Predictably, Faber is unimpressed and reacts in sexist terms, finding it curious that *"eine Dame von ihrem Ansehen"...* *"wie ein Backfisch philosophiert"* - but it is interesting to observe that, as Mona Knapp has pointed out, Hanna provoked hostility from male critics, as if her independent existence as a single mother and career woman was a challenge to the fixed social roles allotted to men and women in the conformist 1950s - and Faber, whom Knapp calls the *"Prototyp des modernen Anpassers"* ¹⁹, is particularly aware of this "threat". Hanna's own fate does not seem that much more positive than Faber's ; her belief in "Schicksal" and myth cannot give her the knowledge, or the power, to avert the death of her daughter. This is perhaps her equivalent of that *"Weltlosigkeit des Technikers"* which she identifies in Faber, and points to the conclusion that she is not necessarily to be taken as the book's moral exemplar ; however, she does at least survive, in spite of the obstacles placed in her path. Yet, together with the de-mythologising of the technologist, it shows that the interplay between the self and the modern world is presented in Homo faber in such a way that the opposites set up by Faber's dualistic habits of thought intermingle, and the absolutes traditionally associated with abstract terms such as "Technik", "Natur" and "Mythos" are relativised. As Latta points out, Frisch is too shrewd to merely fall into the trap of coming down in favour of one "side" in the argument between "Wahrscheinlichkeit" and "Mystik", recognising that a balanced outlook on life can incorporate both.

Frisch admittedly does use myth as a framework for the novel - and in recent years this has provoked some interesting studies of its role and significance (e.g. Blair, Lubich) - but, as Latta says, the references to mythology do not add up to a coherent

¹⁹ In Schmitz 1983,205

"system" countering Faber's beliefs. Indeed, his downfall can be seen less as the outcome of a remote and unquestionable "Schicksal" than as the consequences of a particular kind of mid-twentieth-century, masculine, West European (or American) world-view taken to extremes. Krätzer (60) maintains that the criticism of the "American Way of Life" contained in the book's later pages is convincing because it also represents *self*-criticism on Faber's part ; it is not mere rhetorical anti-Americanism of the type which was to become so commonplace in the 1960s. In addition, Schmitz's formula of "Mythos plus Psychologie" (1977/82, 54) is of particular use here ; as Lubich (62) says, it is an interpretative method which has come back into fashion in recent times, connecting the literary debates of the 1950s with those of the 1980s - and it is also relevant to the analysis of Homo faber, the "Psychologie" in particular. Blair's tracing of Jungian archetypes, and Lubich's ambitious attempt to place the novel - and the "Trilogie", as he sees it - within the tradition of matriarchal myth, heralding deeper changes in society whose consequences we are still (according to his argument) undergoing, are examples of how the balance has swung back in favour of myth - but still signal a change of emphasis from its use to bolster conservative beliefs at the time of the book's publication. Although the male point of view is dominant in both Homo faber and Stiller (and, for that matter, in Gantenbein), in their different ways Stiller and Julika, Faber and Hanna illustrate the dangers of egocentricity while also affirming that the roles which society enforces on its individual members often have a debilitating effect on their personalities.

It is this which makes Frisch's two novels of the 1950s key works of the period ; like the works of his German contemporaries, they show how the individual is conditioned by his past, but, by not being tied to the specific historical experience of Nazism, are able to speak of social and personal identity in a much more general way, sometimes recalling French writing of the period - witness the attempts to draw parallels between Frisch and Camus, for example, such as Schmitz's reading of the Cuba episode in Homo faber as Faber's living out, at second hand, of a kind of " *heroische(r) Existenzialismus*" deriving from the French author's writing (comparable

perhaps to Camus's vision of Mediterranean civilisation), and, more extensively, Michot-Dietrich's work comparing L'Étranger with Frisch's novel. Both Stiller and Faber come to an awareness of the forces which have formed their personalities, and, although neither character seems to emerge as a happily-integrated individual, at peace with himself and his society, the reader is invited both to look more closely at the faults of that society and, through the "*Identifikationsmöglichkeit*" which Peter Klotz (1982) stresses as a particular quality of Frisch's writing, bring his own experience to bear on the material presented in the texts and examine his own motives. For Stiller and Faber it is perhaps too late to change, but the novels, unlike other contemporary works which portray man as either totally conditioned by society, or a helpless pawn in the grip of fate or of some higher authority, hint that the individual, if given the chance to evolve a set of values which do not have a corrosive effect on the personality, can develop in a way which overcomes - or at least minimises - self-alienation and the "*Flucht in eine Rolle*" it produces. The influence of Brecht is important here ; Frisch has described his friendship with Brecht in both of the Tagebücher, and the concept of "*das Offen-Artistische*", which Frisch applies to his work, has been seen as a product of his study of Brecht's theories. The fact that both Stiller and Homo faber conclude by leaving certain questions unanswered - we do not know for certain whether Stiller finds contentment by living alone in Glion, or whether Faber survives his operation - is an indication of this. In line with his dislike of fixed images and "Bildnisse" Frisch allows his characters what Naumann (1978, 186) identifies as a final, small hope of change - although, more importantly, the reader's role is, as Egger (1986) demonstrates, to reflect upon and resolve the "*Dilemma*" into which Frisch's artistry has drawn him.

MEIN NAME SEI GANTENBEIN

With Frisch's third novel, Mein Name sei Gantenbein, the reader has, perhaps, to work somewhat harder. Again, there is the preoccupation with identity and

"Rolle", but the novel appeared in 1964, some seven years after Homo faber, and the innovations of technique - the abandonment of a conventional central character and plot-structure - might appear on first sight to owe something to the French nouveaux romanciers whose works had made such a remarkable impact in the intervening period. Frisch himself denied any deliberate intention to write a nouveau roman, but admitted, "*darum kommt man nicht herum*"²⁰. Here, it is interesting to note that Frisch did not share the hostility to the nouveau roman expressed by some of his West German colleagues, notably Andersch, Böll, (Siegfried) Lenz and Schnurre; as stated in Chapter 1, their aesthetic, deriving from the early years of Gruppe 47, emphasised realism, social responsibility and Vergangenheitsbewältigung and was accompanied by a deep mistrust of experimentalism. Watt (NGS 1981/2) has demonstrated how this mistrust was based on historical rather than strictly aesthetic factors, the legacy of Nazism and the war again leading to a suspicion of any work not displaying social commitment; and on an ignorance of the texts themselves. Frisch, on the other hand, was quite happy to accept Robbe-Grillet's remark that one should no longer try to write novels in the manner of Balzac. As a Swiss, he had not only been spared the horrors of first-hand experience of the war, but had also had access to the modernist literature which the Nazis had banned as "entartete Kunst", to say nothing of the productions of Brecht, Wilder and others at the Zürcher Schauspielhaus. Consequently, the techniques and preoccupations of his French contemporaries were not nearly so shocking to him as to his German colleagues (although it has to be said that, as time passed and German writers became aware of the real intentions of the nouveaux romanciers, their hostility faded). Yet it is true that his fear of alienating his public led him to devote an entire essay/questionnaire - Ich schreibe für Leser (GW V, 323-334) - to explaining his intentions in writing Gantenbein.

Frisch had, of course, been developing his own "experimental", "modern" prose style since, at least, the Tagebuch 1946-1949, where his reflections on the

²⁰ But he continues, "*Aber sicher kommt man darüber hinweg*", claiming to find more substance in the work of Grass, Johnson and Martin Walser - see GW, V, 329

application of Brecht's idea of "Verfremdung", the development of "das Offen-Artistische" and the notion of "Spielbewußtsein" in narrative prose obviously hint at his later practice. His concern with the relationship between form, content, narrative view and identity meant that he could be aware of the questions of technique raised at the end of the 1950s - as well as of the extra-literary, political matters which began to loom large during the subsequent decade, and were to take up a large part of his attention in the Tagebuch 1966-1971. At the time of Gantenbein, however, the politicisation of literature had not yet become a burning issue, and the novel takes up Frisch's previous (and abiding) themes ; the exploration of identity through storytelling, the problems of man-woman relationships, and the difficulties of role-playing and of coming to terms with past experience. The major innovation is the "Buch-Ich", as Frisch calls the anonymous central character, who experiences the fluid nature of identity and the fear of becoming trapped in a "Bildnis" constructed by others' expectations and one's own behavioural and mental habits. Certain key statements point to the novel's main themes, while providing links with Frisch's earlier work and the ideas it expresses. The role of the imagination in the interpretation of experience is stressed by the repetition of the phrase "*Ich stelle mir vor*" throughout the book ; there are clear parallels with Stiller's attempt to find a "Sprache" to adequately express his "Wirklichkeit" by resorting to the telling of tall tales. There are eight of these stories, based around the three "Varianten" on the central character - Enderlin, Svoboda and Gantenbein ("*Jedes Ich, das sich ausspricht, ist eine Rolle*") and they do bear a certain resemblance to the stories Stiller tells to dramatise his experience and entertain Knobel. Their function in Mein Name sei Gantenbein is, however, very different ; here, they do not contrast so sharply with a banal and disappointing social reality, as the novel is concerned essentially with personal relationships and "*the imagination and its products...this sphere in which the major part of our experience of reality occurs*", as Botheroyd puts it. As critics have observed, other statements in the book show how Frisch is approaching his familiar themes from a new viewpoint, : "*Ein Mann hat eine Erfahrung gemacht, jetzt sucht er die Geschichte dazu*", "*Ich probiere Geschichten an*

wie Kleider", "Jedermann erfindet sich früher oder später eine Geschichte, die er für sein Leben hält". In Gantenbein, these "Geschichten" are presented in such a way that identification with - or sometimes, indeed, of - the central character is much more difficult than before, and for this reason the novel seemed disconcerting to many who came to it after enjoying Stiller and Homo faber. Nevertheless, the fragmentary, "mosaikartig" structure is a development of, rather than a radical break with, earlier works, and corresponds to Frisch's idea of the narrator as a "weißer Fleck" subject to a series of disorienting experiences leading to alienation from the self and the world²¹. The search to overcome it involves the Buch-Ich projecting himself into the three named figures. Thus, through a combination of identification with and distancing from them, the Buch-Ich has the freedom to explore various possibilities - again, with the awareness that this involves playing a role, as is clear from the opening pages of the book.

The narrator, like his predecessors, is troubled by experiences, or imaginings - the recurring dream of the horse's head vainly attempting to break free from its background, for example - and by the memory of a failed marriage, illustrated by the recurring image of the deserted flat, in which he and his wife had, apparently, once lived. The foregrounding of the male-female relationship through the creation of the female figure Lila ²² provides another link with Frisch's earlier work. Lila too is as mutable a character as each situation demands, becoming, in the words of Marchand, "zum Spiegel des sich in den Rollen suchenden und das Buch fabulierenden Ichs". Marchand also sees in her a "Verbindung", helping to hold together the fragmentary episodes of the novel, and cites Frisch on his intentions in "creating" her ; she is not a character, but a " *Chiffre für das Weibliche, das andere Geschlecht, wie es das Buch-Ich sieht...Lila ist ein Phantom, also nicht zu fassen, daher seine Eifersucht*" (see GW, V, 333-4) - and in this sense she does not change, unlike, perhaps, the Buch-Ich. How

²¹ E.g. the tale of the man who reads his own obituary and attends his own funeral - an idea possibly derived from Pirandello's Il fu Mattia Pascal (see Zeller-Cambon, in Jurgensen 1977), and recalling Stiller's attempt to assume a completely new identity.

²² Petersen(1990) reports that the Frisch's first title for the novel was Lila oder Ich bin blind .

far the narrator *does* change, however, is open to debate. The book's final words, "*Leben gefällt mir*", might suggest that he has worked through his troubling experiences to escape them, "*abzuschwimmen ohne Geschichte*" (288). On the other hand, Grimm and Wellauer's more sceptical assessment of the development of Frisch's narrator - a "*kaleidoskopische(n) Wechsel ohne Wandel*" - could be applicable here, when, for example, a remark such as "*immer entstehen die gleichen Falten am gleichen Ort...*" (22) is taken to illustrate the futility of the Buch-Ich's experiments with "Geschichten" as "Kleider". But, as Butler (1976) observes, the ending at least lacks the tragic overtones of his two preceding novels, the "Gedankenstrich" which concludes the final paragraph seemingly symbolising the openness and lack of finality of the Buch-Ich, and seemingly confirming Petersen's view that the book is concerned with pure possibility.

Because of this preoccupation with the "inner" world, the assumption could be made that Gantenbein is a somewhat formless and unsuccessful re-working of earlier Frisch themes, and indeed critics such as Mayer and Holthusen tended to judge it in this light on its publication - although Peter Schneider (1965), in a defence of the book, complained of the "*Mängel der gegenwärtigen Literaturkritik*", in terms which were to recur in defences of the works of Strauß and Handke, in the mid-1980s. Later investigations revealed a network of symbols and images as intricate as that of Homo faber. The "Spiegel", for example, constantly recurs in the novel - its English translation was entitled A Wilderness of Mirrors - implying the "*Kreise um ein Ich*" (Marchand) by means of which the novel unfolds, rather than a chronological plot-structure. Plot developments are just as likely to take place within the consciousness of the narrator as in the society portrayed, which is, once again, that cosmopolitan, upper bourgeois world of Frisch's Zürich, and could just as easily be Paris, New York, London, Rome or any other "Weltstadt". Lubich sees this aspect of the novel - its "*Palaver mit Niveau*" - as "*eine schillernde Gesellschaftssatire...ein Jahrmarkt der Eitelkeiten, genauer, ein Jahrmarkt aus Wirtschaftswunder und Wohlstandsrummel*" (88). Characters hold important academic (Enderlin) or professional posts (Svoboda is

an architect and interior designer), attend cocktail parties, the theatre and the opera, and discuss cultural matters such as Musil's fiction and Fellini's films.

This reference to the cinema is intriguing because it hints at similarities between Gantenbein and the European "art cinema", which by the early 1960s had reached what many critics now regard as a creative peak. The films of such then fashionable figures as Fellini, Antonioni, Bergman and the group of directors associated with the French *nouvelle vague* constituted a development in film history somewhat akin to the *nouveau roman* in literature - with the significant difference that all but the most resolutely experimental of films (the "underground" films which were briefly fashionable at the end of the 1960s) could find a comparatively large and appreciative public. Part of this was undoubtedly due to the fact that these films were rarely as complete a break with the past as their literary equivalents ; in spite of the European abandonment - or, more often, re-evaluation - of conventional Hollywood forms, the role of the cinema in originating, in the silent era, what in literary terms were still considered "modernist" techniques - flash-backs, discontinuous narrative, "montage", etc. - meant that films, such as those of Antonioni or Bergman, which tackled subjects such as alienation in a hostile modern world, had a strong appeal for a literate public. And, indeed, the presentation of a social world centred on the anxiety-ridden bourgeois intellectual, living amidst sophisticated metropolitan society and visions of the "good life" deriving from the affluent United States and propagated by Hollywood, yet inexplicably unable to make his peace with it, was a characteristic of the European cinema of this period. The (male) fascination with mysterious, enigmatic, "archetypal" female characters- like Frisch's Lila ²³ - and the questioning of social and sexual convention are also typical features of the "art movie", which, rather like Frisch's novels, had its origins in one specific country or culture but became "international", finding its public in "Weltstädte". Frisch himself had shown an interest in the cinema in his earlier work ; it is first visible in the short story Er liebt die Greta

²³ Or, for example, Catherine in Truffaut's Jules et Jim (1961), and, more generally the tendency of directors such as Bergman, Antonioni or the young Godard to build their films around women central characters.

Garbo (1932 : GW I, 19-21), the tale of a timid "Bureaulist" infatuated with the female "archetype" of 1930s cinema. In the Tagebuch 1946-49 the longest entry is Der Harlekin, Entwurf zu einem Film (1949 : 350-399). In the same book he mentions the powerful impact made by an Italian film (331) - presumably one of the neo-realist works which were acclaimed in the immediate post-war era, while in his account of his journey to Mexico (GW III, 196-221) he mentions Eisenstein's famous documentary film - Que Viva Mexico(1931-32) - made in that country. (He was to work on a film script, Zürich-Transit²⁴, two years after Gantenbein, but the film was not made ; likewise, Wim Wenders was to express an interest in adapting Stiller for the screen, and Krzysztof Zanussi filmed Blaubart - unsuccessfully - in 1982 ; only with Volker Schlöndorff's adaptation of Homo faber in 1990 was a commercially successful film derived from Frisch's work.)

The confusion between real and imaginary found in, to cite a famous example, Resnais and Robbe-Grillet's L'Année dernière à Marienbad(1961), or, perhaps more appropriately, Fellini's Otto e Mezzo (1963) is echoed in Gantenbein - and, interestingly, Fellini has said that his film contained elements of psychoanalysis, had a funereal yet comic quality and autobiographical traits but was a work of the imagination²⁵ ; all of which could equally be said of Frisch's novel. In addition, the "Sturz durch den Spiegel" (25) recalls the scene in Cocteau's film Orphée(1950) in which the hero descends from the real world of post-war Paris into the mythical underworld by passing through a mirror.

The formal and thematic similarities with Sixties art cinema²⁶ perhaps help to account for the widespread commercial success of Mein Name sei Gantenbein ; for once, the public in this case proved more responsive than the critics to a "difficult" work. It could even be claimed that Frisch's readers were displaying the kind of trust in him normally accorded to an "auteur" by cinéastes. Certainly, the figures quoted by

²⁴ In : GW V, 403-452 ; for a discussion of its shortcomings, see Stephan, 1983, 93-94

²⁵ In : Sadoul, 1967 , 14-15.

²⁶ The narrative says of Svoboda : "Im Bett benimmt er sich wie in einem französischen Film" (MNsG 212)

Viehoff²⁷ give an indication of Frisch's popularity ; by 1962, the combined hardback and paperback sales of Homo faber alone amounted to more than 100,000 copies ; the author therefore occupied a place in the world of the "best-seller", as well as enjoying purely literary renown. This meant that a new novel by Max Frisch would be assured of substantial sales, at least on its first print run. The fact that Gantenbein has remained one of the author's most influential works, exercising an influence on much subsequent writing in German, is an indication that the qualities which so irritated critics on its publication were no mere following of literary fashion but consistent with the author's overall development. Petersen isolates the factor which perhaps accounts for the work's popular appeal :

*Was in der Contessa-Variante letztlich nicht "geht", also nicht gelingt, das ist der Versuch, sich in einem konfliktfreien Verhältnis zur Umwelt, insonderheit zum anderen Geschlecht, zu "verwirklichen". Dieses Thema durchschlägt, wie eingangs kurz skizziert, das Gesamtwerk Frischs und bildet den Grund für die vielberufene Identitätsproblematik in seinen Dichtungen...*²⁸

Petersen also claims that, of all Frisch's novels, it is Gantenbein which has had the most wide-ranging influence on subsequent German-language writing : "...es bildet in mehrfacher Hinsicht einen Dreh- und Angelpunkt innerhalb der Entwicklung des deutschen Romans der letzten zwei Jahrzehnte" ²⁹, enabling the incorporation of previously avant-garde techniques into "mainstream" fiction to become acceptable. The key sentences "*Ich stelle mir vor*" and "*Ich probiere Geschichten an wie Kleider*" hint at the new possibilities of imaginative invention and variation which the novel demonstrates. Petersen cites numerous examples of this influence, from Christa Wolf's Nachdenken über Christa T. through Ingeborg Bachmann's Malina - a work which seems to reflect, in a more disturbing way, the mood as well as the techniques of Gantenbein (sse Toman, 1977) - to "*Bernhards späte(n) Denkassoziationen Holzfällen und Auslöschung*" (195). Much of this influence is, as Petersen points out, indirect -

²⁷ Reinhold Viehoff : Max Frisch's Homo faber in der zeitgenössischen Literaturkritik der ausgehenden fünfziger Jahre. Analyse und Dokumentation. In : Schmitz, 1983, p.245

²⁸ In Knapp, 1978, 153

²⁹ J.Petersen : Max Frisch, SM 173, 2.Aufl., 1990, p.192

one feels that in the case of Bernhard, Bachmann rather than Frisch is the key figure (as the Bachmann-like poetess Maria in Auslöschung would imply) - but nevertheless the "*Durchbrechung des fiktionalen Kunst-Rahmens*" (193) is indeed "*zur gängigen Mode geworden*" - as will be seen in, for example, Handke's Lehre der Sainte-Victoire and Bernhard's autobiographical series.

Walter Schmitz (1985), attempting to situate Gantenbein within Frisch's overall development, sees it as "*ein Kompendium typisierter Gehalte aller früheren Werke Frischs*". It is also clearly a turning-point for Frisch, the last of his published prose works to be designated a "Roman" and the first (claims Schmitz) to offer the central character a way out of the cycle of negativity and narcissism in which such figures had previously been trapped. While this point is debatable, it is possible to see the novel as representing the beginning of what Schmitz calls "*Frischs Altersstil*", characterized as "*esoterisch und exoterisch (unter den Neueren vielleicht dem späten Hofmannsthal vergleichbar) - sein spätes Werk bezieht sich mimetisch auf sein früheres Werk als Wirklichkeit*" - a tendency which was to manifest itself in the three *Erzählungen*, Montauk (1975), Der Mensch erscheint im Holozän (1979) and Blaubart (1982). These works are analysed in Schmitz's Max Frisch : Das Spätwerk (1962-1982), although the altogether positive verdicts of Schmitz and others have been contested elsewhere. Margret Eifler, for example, writing in the mid-1970s, aligned herself with the more critical view taken by Grimm and Wellauer, claiming that the self-development desired by Frisch's central characters did not really take place, while his political analysis derived from his position as a "Nachkriegsschriftsteller" and was thus beginning to lose some of its relevance. Armin Arnold, dealing with the "*Problematik des Alterns, des Sterbens und des Todes*" in Frisch's work draws interesting parallels between the writer's biography and his works, citing Dürrenmatt's remark that to him, Stiller was really about Frisch himself³⁰, and regards the Tagebuch 1946-49 as "*Frischs vitalstes Werk - das Werk eines Mannes, der sich selbst gefunden hat und*

³⁰ F. Dürrenmatt, "Stiller", Roman von Max Frisch. Fragment einer Kritik. In : Über Max Frisch, 1971, 7-15

selbstbewußt und selbstsicher notiert, was ihn beschäftigt und was ihn an Ideen einfällt" ³¹.

The fact that, as many critics have observed, the first Tagebuch contains the nuclei of much of Frisch's future output, would seem to bear out this view. This is not to dismiss the later works out of hand - Montauk in particular, with its numerous echoes of, and quotations from, Frisch's earlier works, throws valuable light on the author's relationship to his world at a time when "Selbstverwirklichung", "self-realisation", "self-aktualisation" (sic) and "do it yourself" were, as Bänziger (in Knapp 1978) somewhat loftily puts it, "*Schlagwörter der Supermarktgesellschaft*". (Frisch told Jon Barak that he wrote the book as "*a kind of therapy*" ³²) Yet whether it possesses the broader resonances of Frisch's novels is open to debate - even if it has been viewed as "*the most personal and private of Frisch's books*" ³³. Petersen's recent survey of secondary literature on Frisch shows just how much critical attention has been bestowed on Stiller, Homo faber and Mein Name sei Gantenbein - an indication, perhaps, of their continuing fascination rather than merely reflecting the fact that scholarly analyses of the later *Erzählungen* are as yet comparatively scarce. If Linda Stine's definition of Frisch's gifts can be taken as accurate :

Frischs schriftstellerische Begabung läßt sich eher als erklärend-deutende bezeichnen, denn als eine unabhängig schöpferische...Seine Rolle als Autor ist diejenige des Beobachters und Auslegers ; er braucht die Wirklichkeit, um seiner Fantasie Gehalt zu geben, und die Fantasie, um seiner Realität Tiefe zu verleihen... ³⁴

- then it follows that his most effective works will be those in which he is most fully engaged with the reality around him and therefore using his imaginative capabilities to the full. While a carefully-constructed and psychologically acute work such as Der Mensch erscheint im Holozän certainly fits this model³⁵ , it perhaps -

³¹ In Knapp, 1978, 253

³² Quoted in Stephan, 1983, 115

³³ Butler 1976, 154 : for discussions of the importance of Montauk in Frisch's career, see also Saunders (1982) and Vom Hofe, in Schmitz (1987)

³⁴ In Knapp, 1978, 51

³⁵ See Butler, 1986, for an analysis of this work.

because of the central character Herr Geiser's very isolation - lacks the social dimension of the three novels, which must therefore qualify - together with the Tagebuch 1946-49 - as both key documents of their period and the most important imaginative creations of Max Frisch .the writer of prose, revealing in their diversity of content, from architectural criticism to Greek myth and Jungian archetypes, a range of interests which constitute his imaginative world - and thus portraying the interaction of self and world in a manner which is both historically and psychologically fascinating.

Evidence for this can be found in the sheer variety of interpretations which the novels have provoked ; and this in spite of the fact that Frisch is the kind of writer whose widespread popularity sometimes provokes mistrust among academic critics. Elm (1984) discusses this problem, and concludes that Frisch's incorporation into his work of stereotypes and clichés deriving from popular literature, far from being a weakness, is part of a deliberate authorial strategy. The resulting "*Ambivalenz aus Trivialität und Tiefsinn*" (227) is, claims Elm, a product of Frisch's technique of "*Schreiben im Zitat*", exemplified in Stiller and intended to provoke thought in the reader, rather than to present him or her with ready-made, definitive judgements. Reich-Ranicki (1991), too, values Frisch's work precisely for the reason "*daß es diesem Schweizer gelungen ist, was in deutscher Sprache Seltenheitswert hat : nachdenklich und dennoch unterhaltsam zu schreiben*". - praising in particular his interest in psychology, his portrayal of women characters, and his awareness of death and "*die Vergänglichkeit des menschlichen Daseins*". Frisch died in the same week as Graham Greene, and De Jongh and Driver (1991), in their obituary article, used a comparison to try to explain why the Swiss author had not, unlike Greene, become a "household name" in the English-speaking world : "*Frisch's characters had that mysterious ambivalence, fatal to mass appeal. They were neither victims nor agents, yet never mere observers. Greene people could be classified...."*

This assessment, derived perhaps from a knowledge of Frisch's work in translation, nevertheless seems to relativise the tendency of those German-speaking critics hostile to Frisch's work to see him as a simple-minded "popular" writer

comparable with the likes of Kossak or Simmel. Other assessments of his work range from Pender's emphasis on its "moral" aspects, seeing Frisch as a contemporary representative of the Swiss-German literary tradition of "*Räter, Ermahner, Warner*", to Lubich's view of the central characters' "journeys" as "*die esoterischen Reisesstationen der Roman-Trilogie, chiffrierte Seelenwanderungen ins muttermythische Niemandsland*" (Lubich 114). This interpretation, at first sight somewhat fanciful, does however attempt to come to terms with what can be categorised as the "Other" in Frisch's work - the ambiguous female figures, the recourse to myth and storytelling, the recurring guilt and failure of the male characters (see Konstantinovic, in Jurgensen 1977) - all of which tends to be at odds with the politically "progressive", rational, "aufklärerisch" nature of Frisch's essays and speeches. Lubich is not alone in seeing a conflict between "modern" and "post-modern" elements in his work ; from a different perspective, Richard Sheppard (1990, p.288) sees the later novels as a product of a modern world-view in which the carnival principle is repressed :

The final artistic results of the above process are, notwithstanding the Romantic attempt to reverse it, such varied texts as Kafka's novels, Expressionist poems, dramas and paintings, most of Bergman's later films, Frisch's later novels and the plays of Herbert Achternbusch. All such texts involve a covert, "high" theology, a hidden patriarchal God (hypostatized in Lacan's concept of the castrating Law) from whom people are either completely cut off...or to whom people are allowed limited access ...Conversely, in such texts, matriarchal Nature is either absent..., or a silent landscape..., or a bleak landscape..., or a demonic principle, which brings about apocalypse.

The descriptions of landscape in Frisch's novels have frequently been remarked upon, from Stiller to Der Mensch erscheint im Holozän ; while the matriarchal, "demonic principle" in Sheppard's sense can perhaps be equated with the suppressed areas of the personality which wreak such havoc on both Stiller and Faber, and which seem to dominate the Buch-Ich throughout Mein Name sei Gantenbein. Be that as it may, Frisch had defined his approach to writing in the first Tagebuch - "*Schreiben heißt : sich selber lesen...*" : his achievement as what Botho Strauß³⁶

³⁶ In : Die Zeit, Nr.16, 12.April 1991, S.54

called "*der Epiker der persönlichen Lebenszeit*" points to much of what was to follow in the development of post-1945 German-language writing, and, as the above quotations illustrate, the emergence and application of new critical approaches seem to have confirmed that interest in Max Frisch's three novels of the mid-twentieth century is unlikely to diminish.

CHAPTER THREE

THOMAS BERNHARD

A surprising aspect of the tributes which followed the death of Thomas Bernhard (on February 12, 1989) was the affection, expressed by many critics, for a writer who had done very little, on the face of it, to ingratiate himself with his contemporaries. Like many of his central characters, Bernhard had spent much of his life in isolation from the modern world, obsessively devoted to his work and seemingly indifferent to everyday social or political concerns. Yet the fact that, in the months leading up to his death, he had managed to stir up great controversy in the Austrian media with his play Heldenplatz, in the process attaining considerable public notoriety, proves that he was well aware of and deeply troubled by certain national tendencies (in this case, anti-Semitism) which his fellow-countrymen often preferred to overlook. Indeed, if a development can be traced in Bernhard's prose work, it would seem to involve a gradual abandonment of the more Gothic, doom-laden atmosphere of his earlier writing - up to, say, Korrektur (1975) - and a lightening of tone, expressed by a more satirical, even sociable, approach ; with an increasing interest in the "world outside" being expressed both thematically and in character-portrayal, as well as in the incorporation of more overtly comic moments. His career of almost four decades can be divided up into a number of stages, Sorg¹ suggesting that his works (up until 1981) can be neatly categorised by decade ; the early works of the 1950s, the prose works of the 1960s which established Bernhard as a major figure in German writing of the period, and the plays and autobiographical works of the 1970s which signified a gradual moving away from the overwhelming negativity and hopelessness of the early novels. The 1980s saw a consolidation of his status with a further series of prose works, in which the

¹ Bernhard Sorg, Thomas Bernhard. In : Kritisches Lexikon der deutschsprachigen Literatur, Munich 1988, 13

boundaries between fiction and autobiography often seemed to blur, and further examples of his often scandalous interventions in Austrian and German cultural and political life. Nevertheless it is true to say that from the beginning of his career until his death Bernhard retained his reputation as a chronicler of unrelieved negativity, of death, disease, madness and decay. In his books this was often expressed with what Peter Demetz² called "*the most searing intensity of vision and language*". Given such depressing subject matter, how, then, could Benjamin Henrichs³ claim that Bernhard is probably "*der am meisten geliebte Autor unserer Jahre*" ? The autobiographical works can help to answer this question by providing perhaps the most accessible point of entry into Bernhard's world, and in doing so throw light on the author's entire output.

Bernhard established his reputation as what Bullivant and Thomas called him in 1974, "*a major figure on the West German literary scene*", through the success of his prose works, notably Frost(1963), Amras(1964), Verstörung(1967) and Das Kalkwerk(1972). In these books the characteristic Bernhard themes are explored in the setting of the Austrian landscapes which he knows so well, and portrays so differently from the familiar national convention of sentimental and nostalgic idealisation of rural life ; not surprisingly, he was dubbed a "negativer Heimatdichter", and the grotesque and Gothic elements in his work were appreciated by those in the German-speaking world who were sympathetic to such tendencies in modernist literature but had grown up with a "Heimatliteratur" which they now detested. Frost and Verstörung both follow a similar pattern ; a young student travels into a remote region and encounters an intellectually extraordinary yet totally isolated and seemingly eccentric, if not insane, older individual - Strauch in the first novel, Saurau in the second - who becomes the book's central character. The student is overwhelmed by the long, passionate, doom-laden monologues of

²Peter Demetz, After the Fires, San Diego/New York/London 1988, 200

³Benjamin Henrichs, "Der Triumph des Untergehens/Thomas Bernhard ist tot - es lebe Thomas Bernhard", Die Zeit, 44, Nr. 9, 24.2.1989, 57-8

the central character, in which not merely modern Austria but existence itself is called into question ; the consequence is that he is drawn into the central character's inner world to such a degree that he can do little more than record it. With the subsequent novels, Das Kalkwerk and Korrektur, Bernhard's early work seemed to reach its culmination. The former, with its tortuous syntax and concentration on the bizarre experiments carried out by the central character (again, a reclusive "Geistesmensch") Konrad on his crippled wife, is perhaps the most rebarbative of all his prose works - Demetz (1988) calls it "*a piece of repetitious prose that works on [the reader] with the relentless whine of a dentist's drill*". Yet this did not prevent it from winning the Büchner-Preis and the Prix Séguier⁴, a sign that Bernhard had, in the view of some critics, attained the status of a major writer. This pattern continued with Korrektur, which was described as a masterpiece by several critics (e.g. George Steiner 1976 ; Fetz 1987 ; Demetz 1988) ; as with Das Kalkwerk, its formal complexity was admired, although Demetz admitted that this factor created difficulties for the reader - the book is, according to him, "*a disturbing masterpiece that few people have tried to read and even fewer finished*" (Demetz 1988, 199-200).

However, critical reception of Bernhard's work was never unanimously positive, and his unrelenting productivity presented critics with a challenge ; was he, like other apparently "avant-garde" writers who had made their names in the late 1960s, repeating himself, endlessly recycling a limited range of themes which gradually lost their original strangeness and power to shock ? It is interesting to look at how Bullivant and Thomas defined the content of his work, firstly because it is a relatively rare example of Anglo-Saxon response to the earlier novels (Bernhard's reception being, until the 1980s, mainly confined to the German-speaking countries and, to a lesser degree, the rest of mainland Europe), and secondly because their conclusions also have some relevance to aspects of the

⁴Nicholas J.Meyerhofer : Thomas Bernhard. Berlin 1985 (Köpfe des 20. Jahrhunderts ; Bd. 104), p33

autobiographical volumes:

Bernhard's work is about the psychological consequences of life in isolated places in Austria, but it is also about much more than this, about existence gone rotten through being too long turned inwards upon itself, the victim of a self-sufficiency which can no more indefinitely be its own reward than "the clear concept" can for ever dictate its too exclusive claims (see their analysis of Das Kalkwerk, CDE). The individual comes to live amid obsession with his own dissolution, and spirituality moves into the orbit of madness...⁵

In spite of their comment that negative statements, such as those of the Fürst in Verstörung, with regard to the politics and society of Austria, "*are not to be taken as authorial opinions but as symptomatic of a fictional, and degenerate, character*"⁶, the fact remains that Bernhard's own public pronouncements were no less uncompromising - most notably, his speech on receiving the *Österreichischer Staatspreis für Literatur* in 1968, which, as he relates more than a decade later in Wittgensteins Neffe⁷, provoked outrage and scandal among his audience. Events such as this, combined with the singular nature of his work and a reputation as an unpredictable and reclusive personality, contributed to a growing curiosity about Bernhard; at a time when writers were involving themselves more and more with political issues, forming groups, publishing manifestoes, campaigning for established politicians or extra-parliamentary groupings, his refusal to do so, or even to acknowledge the possibility of progress attained by concerted action was puzzling - although perhaps no more "extreme" than other anarchist or Utopian standpoints of the 1960s and '70s. Thus, the negativity of his work could be seen as a kind of "radical" stance, while his aesthetic programme - critics were quick to compare him with Beckett (the obsession with death) and Kafka (the reduction of character-portrayal to a minimum and the creation of a sinister, threatening environment) - satisfied the criteria of modernism. Peter Handke wrote an essay in

⁵Keith Bullivant/R.Hinton Thomas, Literature in Upheaval, Manchester 1974, 22

⁶ibid., 20

⁷Wittgensteins Neffe, Frankfurt/M., 1982, 114-118

praise of Verstörung soon after its publication⁸, and has recently spoken of the impact Bernhard had on himself and his contemporaries in the 1960s:

Thomas Bernhard war anfangs eine riesige Geschichte für uns junge Schreiber in Österreich. Da hat einer was aufgemacht, aufgerissen kann man fast sagen. Der war das Vorbild, vor dem ich nie dachte, ich konnte es erreichen. Dann wurde er eine Art Herausforderung. Aber in den letzten Jahren war er leider nicht mehr die Herausforderung, die ich mir gewünscht habe .⁹

Handke proved himself to be an attentive reader of Bernhard's work, as is shown by the references to it in his own books¹⁰, and his assessment of Bernhard's development is perceptive - and will be considered later in this chapter. Yet he was not alone in claiming that the later works lost some of the provocative quality that had made Bernhard so distinctive. In 1974 Peter Laemmle expressed his wavering loyalty to the author as follows:

...Die Metapher Tirol=Irrsinn wird zusehens abstrakter, formelhafter, erfahrungsärmer. Ihre ständige, gleichbleibende Wiederholung scheint mir eher ein Anzeichen für Bernhards literarische Grenzen, für die Grenzen seiner Phantasie zu sein, als ein Symptom dessen, was die Literaturkritik ehrfürchtig seine Monomanie, seine Besessenheit nennt.

Die Metapher "Tirol" hat sich verbraucht. Sie hat sich, was noch schlimmer ist, inzwischen verselbständigt. Thomas Bernhard ist zum Markenzeichen geworden für Kostproben aus der österreichischen Vorhölle ¹¹.

Laemmle finds the source of Bernhard's dilemma in the beliefs which, he claims, underlie his writings. His "Katastrophengläubigkeit" is based, says Laemmle, on a disillusion with conventional religious belief, and, in support of this argument, cites extracts from the early (1958) collection of poems In hora mortis. Therefore, when viewed in this light, Bernhard's "Katastrophenstimmung....nichts anderes ist als ein Umschlag seiner früherer Erlösungssehnsucht ", he says¹².

⁸Peter Handke, Als ich Verstörung von Thomas Bernhard las. In : Über Thomas Bernhard, Hg. von Anneliese Botond, Frankfurt/M., 1970, 100-106

⁹"Der Alltag ist schändlich leblos", Der Spiegel, 16, 16.4.1990, 232

¹⁰ See e.g. Wunschloses Unglück, Frankfurt/M., 1974, 26

¹¹Peter Laemmle, Stimmt die partielle Wahrheit noch ? Notizen eines abtrünnigen Thomas Bernhard-Lesers. In : text+kritik 1974, H.43, S.46

¹² ibid., 47

Furthermore, the rejection of all "*Ordnungsmöglichkeiten des Lebens*" is related to this initial loss of faith, in that a religious impulse remains in his thought - but is transferred to the "Ersatzreligion" of death, encompassing tendencies towards passivity and regression as well as "*der zutiefst erotische Wunsch nach einer totalen, alles umfassenden Liebesbeziehung*"¹³. Interestingly Laemmle illustrates this final remark with an extract from Bernhard's monologue in the film Drei Tage¹⁴ in which the author speaks directly about his life, outlook and work, and comments ; "*Hier wird in kurzen, wie beiläufig geäußerten Erinnerungen und Zustandsbeschreibungen schlagartig klar, daß die zentralen Motive in Thomas Bernhards Büchern ihren konkreten Ursprung haben in seiner Biographie*". And, furthermore, autobiography could offer him a way out of the creative impasse into which he has written himself:

*Wäre er fähig, seinen eigenen Leidensprozeß direkt auszusprechen, müßte er ihn nicht (aus welchen Gründen auch immer) in einen exotischen, fiktiven Bereich projizieren, könnte er auf die Metapher "Tirol" verzichten und endlich "Ich" sagen, dann könnte in dem, was er künftig schreibt, mehr enthalten sein, als nur eine partielle Wahrheit...*¹⁵

Even if the concept of "Wahrheit" was not presented in the form which Laemmle implies here - it was, in spite of the use of the "Ich" form , to be repeatedly called into question - the appearance of the first volume of Bernhard's "Jugenderinnerungen" in the following year (1975, Die Ursache) indicates that he too was aware that the re-examination of his past could prove to be a productive endeavour. Whether this was a response to Laemmle's criticism is another matter, although in this regard it is interesting to note that the increasingly positive portrayal of women characters in his work of the 1980s followed Ria Endres's widely-publicised feminist attack on the patriarchal tendencies of his "Männerfiguren"¹⁶,

¹³ *ibid.*, 48

¹⁴In : Der Italiener, Salzburg 1971, 144-161

¹⁵ Laemmle, 48

¹⁶ Ria Endres, Am Ende angekommen. Dargestellt am wahnhaften Dunkel der Männerporträts des Thomas Bernhard, Frankfurt/M. 1980

published at the beginning of that decade. Bernhard always affected an indifference towards his critics and the reading public, but was sufficiently aware of Endres's book to parody "Germanistinnen" in the following year, in his play Über allen Gipfeln ist Ruh - and to roundly insult her in an interview in Der Spiegel¹⁷. Nonetheless, Bernhard himself claimed that he was compelled to write down his memories of childhood and adolescence by the knowledge that he did not have long to live¹⁸ - and without aiming for an impossible "objectivity". This may well have been true, given the fact that his experience of serious illness is a major theme of his autobiography; what is more, the first volume was published when the author was in his mid-forties, at a time when, as an established writer, he was assured of a readership with a keen interest in the facts of his life, as Sorg¹⁹ points out.

However, the first four short volumes comprise an account of Bernhard's adolescent years, between the ages of thirteen, when he is sent to Salzburg to receive a boarding-school education after years of living in the countryside in a family dominated by his grandfather, and nineteen, when he has to overcome not only his illness but also the loss of his closest relatives - his beloved grandfather, and his mother, to whom his feelings were more ambivalent. The latter relationship is explored in more detail in the fifth, and final, book of the series, Ein Kind, which relates childhood experiences which lead up to the decision to send him away to boarding-school. Therefore, Bernhard's autobiography is far from complete, even taking into consideration the selectivity which is an inevitable feature of the genre. Why, then, did he choose to concentrate on what critics call his "Jugenderinnerungen"? The reasons must surely correspond to Laemmlé's suggestion that an investigation of his own biography would benefit him - "*seinen*

¹⁷ "Ich könnte auf dem Papier jemand umbringen", 26.Jg., 34, 23 Juni 1980, 172-182

¹⁸In: FAZ 24.2.1983

¹⁹Bernhard Sorg, Thomas Bernhard, Munich 1977

eigenen Leidensprozeß auszusprechen "20. His experiences during this period are dealt with precisely because they do shape the patterns of thought which, he will eventually realise, determine his future life. An interesting comparison can be made with the straightforward Autobiographische Notiz, written in 1954 to accompany the publication of his early story Großer, unbegreiflicher Hunger. The essential facts of Bernhard's early life, going beyond the point at which Die Kälte ends, are summarised in a long paragraph :

Mein Leben nahm im Februar 1931 in einem holländischen Kloster seinen Anfang. Meine Mutter war Hausgehilfin und eine wunderbare Frau, mein Vater Tischler. Bis zum siebenten Lebensjahr war ich teils in Wien, teils in Seekirchen am Wallersee, wo mein Großvater, ein bedeutender österreichischer Dichter, lebte. Die schönsten Jahre verbrachte ich anschließend im bayrischen Traunstein, 1945 wurde unsere Familie dort ausgewiesen und wir übersiedelten nach Salzburg, die Heimat meiner Vorfahren, wo ich das Gymnasium besuchte. Kurz darauf starb meine Mutter. Wenige Tage später erfuhr ich, daß mein Vater in Frankfurt an der Oder in den Kriegswirren zugrundegegangen war. Ein paar Wochen später starb mein Großvater. In dieser Zeit ging ich zu einem Lebensmittelhändler in die Lehre. Das Lokal war in einem feuchten Keller, also verkühlte ich mich, bekam Rippenfellentzündung und wurde lungenkrank. Vier Jahre wurde ich von einem Krankenhaus zum andern geschleppt, abgehört und "gefüllt". In der Lungenheilstätte Grafenhof begann ich, immer den Tod vor Augen, zu schreiben. Daran wurde ich vielleicht wiederhergestellt....²¹

The experiences described here are the basis of the autobiographical volumes ; the style is that of the "Gerichtsberichterstatter", reflecting Bernhard's journalistic training and later to be adopted in his fiction as the mode of expression of his narrators, the "Spiegelfiguren" whose anonymity and detachment throw into relief the intellectual and linguistic extremism of the central figures. Yet there is also a note of deep personal involvement here, shown for example in the description of his mother as "*eine wunderbare Frau*". The autobiographical volumes will reveal the reasons for Bernhard's choice of adjective ; troubled and complex family relationships, not merely involving himself and his mother but

²⁰ Schmidt-Dengler (1977, 59) points out that Bernhard had published "*kein erzählendes Werk*" in the first half of the 1970s, concentrating instead on drama and film - which perhaps indicates that Bernhard himself was seeking new insights and approaches, in order to ward off the stagnation which Laemmle had seen as a danger to his literary development.

²¹ Reprinted in Jens Dittmar(Hg.), Thomas Bernhard Werkgeschichte. Zweite, aktualisierte Auflage, Frankfurt/M. 1990, S.13-14

also, and most importantly, the overpowering figure of his grandfather, the "*bedeutender österreichischer Dichter*", Johannes Freumbichler, have to be endured by the adolescent. Only towards the end of his mother's life does he learn that her own youth had been as difficult as his own (Kä 93-5), enabling him to overcome what Bugmann²² calls "*Mutterhaß*" and gain an understanding which at last makes possible a normal relationship with her. The truly dominant figure of the "*Jugenderinnerungen*", however, is his grandfather. The books portray their relationship as a strangely paradoxical one; if the account in the autobiographical series is to be believed, then clearly Bernhard loved his grandfather, investing him with qualities lacking in others in his immediate circle, and conversely Freumbichler encouraged his grandson's talents and had a great effect on the development of his personality. Nonetheless it is obvious from the texts that the old man's eccentricities were in many ways a serious hindrance to his family's hopes of happiness and fulfilment. In particular, the young Bernhard is so overawed by him that the autobiographical series can be interpreted as the adolescent's struggle to escape from his shadow and establish an independent life of his own - and this approach has given rise to some interesting analyses of the works by critics such as Bugmann, Tschapke²³ and Mittermayer²⁴ - drawing respectively on the works of Jung, Joseph Campbell and Jacques Lacan in order to establish a framework within which the struggles portrayed in the series can be understood. Later, in the film *Drei Tage*²⁵, Bernhard will talk of his "*Alleinsein*" - a characteristic resulting from the circumstances of his childhood - and claim that all of the "*Männerfiguren*" in his books (up to that point) are based on his grandfather; a fact which is now widely acknowledged. But it is worth returning to the *Autobiographische Notiz*, in order to gain an impression of Bernhard's life after

²²Urs Bugmann, *Bewältigungsversuch. Thomas Bernhards autobiographische Schriften*, Bern 1981

²³Reinhard Tschapke, *Hölle und zurück. Das Initiationsthema in den Jugenderinnerungen Thomas Bernhards*, Hildesheim 1984

²⁴Manfred Mittermayer, *Ich werden. Versuch einer Thomas Bernhard-Lektüre*, Stuttgart 1988

²⁵*Der Italiener*, 146-7

leaving Grafenhof, the point at which the autobiographical volumes break off:

1951 kam ich nach Wien, um dort an der Akademie, die mir einen Freiplatz gewährte, Musik zu studieren. Aber was tat ich? In quälendem Hunger räumte ich Misthaufen vornehmer Leute weg, zerkleinerte Beton auf dem Gelände des Arsenal, hauste in Waggons, trug Koffer auf dem Westbahnhof, schlief dort im Bunker, und pflegte schließlich eine häßliche siebzigjährige Irrsinnige in Währing bis zu ihrem Tode, wofür ich zu essen bekam. Bis zum heutigen Tage war ich vielseitig, zuletzt auch als Kunstkritiker einer Tageszeitung, tätig. Ich schreibe vor allem Gedichte, aber auch Prosa und Dramatisches. Meine Arbeiten wurden vor allem in deutschen Zeitungen und Zeitschriften veröffentlicht. Ich las ein paarmal vor. Deutsche Sender und "Rot-Weiß-Rot" brachten meine Arbeiten. Ein Roman liegt druckfertig im Schreibtisch, ein Band Sonette wird im Herbst in Deutschland erscheinen.

This passage resembles a *curriculum vitae*, showing that its author had certainly not been inactive after leaving the sanatorium ; indeed, in the chaotic and impoverished Vienna of the post-war years it may well have been necessary, for reasons of survival, for Bernhard to turn his hand to the succession of menial jobs listed. After the harrowing experiences of war, illness and family life, "*Überleben*" is, as he says repeatedly in the autobiographical volumes, an art he has mastered - even at the cost of his own isolation - but it is still surprising to see just how active this supposedly reclusive author had been, perhaps building up a store of further experiences which, although not mentioned in the "*Jugenderinnerungen*", provided inspiration for his fiction (the "*Misthaufen vornehmer Leute*" and the "*häßliche siebzigjährige Irrsinnige in Währing*" could just as easily be typically "Bernhardian" episodes in his novels). The essays by Mixner, Dittmar²⁶ and Klug²⁷ all deal with Bernhard's early career, and with the relationship between lived experience and its literary stylisation in the author's work - a topic which is, of course, equally relevant to the autobiographical series - and suggest that the few statements he made concerning his own life in this period are not necessarily truthful. Nevertheless, it is interesting in this context to look at a statement made in an interview given by Bernhard towards the end of his life, and concerning

²⁶Both in Jurgensen 1981

²⁷In :MAL 1989

Ingeborg Bachmann:

Die Bachmann habe ich sehr gern mögen, die war halt eine gescheite Frau ...Ja, die hat halt sehr viel erlebt und hat sehr viel Gesellschaften kennengelernt, von oben bis unten, von unten bis oben, wie ich, und da kriegt man ein gewisses Bild. Man ist immer nur das Endprodukt dessen, was man halt mitmacht, erfahren und gesehen hat. Und je intensiver man etwas angeschaut hat, desto weiter entfernt hat man sich, logischerweise. Mehr sehen heißt, weiter weg flüchten. Weil's immer gefährlicher wird...²⁸

It is true that both writers share common themes, in particular what has been called a "*sehr österreichisches Techtelmechtel mit dem Tod*"²⁹ and that both grew up during and after the Second World War, at a time when class divisions in Austria were, at least for a short period, secondary to the need to survive amidst political chaos and material want. What is more, Bernhard very rarely made any positive comments about his contemporaries ; so his respect for Bachmann is founded upon similar social experiences as much as intellectual and temperamental affinities. Unfortunately an investigation of these factors lies outside the scope of this chapter³⁰ but a distinction might be made (perhaps too easily, because based on each writer's public image) between Bachmann as a "victim" of the merciless forces of nature which, according to Bernhard, mean that death is inescapable, and Bernhard himself as a "survivor", fighting this process until the very end. Feminist critics such as Endres and Boa³¹ would doubtless find such an analysis far too kind to the male author, whose survival was only due to the system of patriarchy which he inherited - even unconsciously - from his grandfather, according to this line of thinking (and which is, as Endres points out, certainly reflected in his constant references to illustrious - and male - literary, musical and philosophical

²⁸Kurt Hofmann, "Alles ist grauslich", *ZEITmagazin*, 1989, 49-50. Reprinted in : Hofmann, *Aus Gesprächen mit Thomas Bernhard*, Munich 1991

²⁹Günther Nennung, Grillparzers Schnoferl oder Poesie als Weltanschauung. In : K.Bartsch/D.Goltschnigg/G.Melzer(Hg.), *Für und wider eine österreichische Literatur*, Königstein/Ts., 1982, 41

³⁰See Bachmann's tribute to Bernhard, *Ein Versuch*, 1969, in her *GW* iv, 361-4 ; and his response to her death, *In Rom*, in *Der Stimmenimitator*, 1978, 168-9

³¹Elizabeth Boa, Women Writing about Women Writing and Ingeborg Bachmann's Malina. In : Richard Sheppard(ed.), *New Ways in Germanistik*, New York/Oxford/Munich 1991

figures of the past) ; while Bachmann, in attempting to set up an alternative to patriarchy through her writing, was persecuted mercilessly by its representatives (or, as Bernhard claims in *In Rom*, by the Austrian state itself). Nevertheless the fact remains that both authors' initial intense involvement with their society was followed by a withdrawal and a rejection of the conventions upon which it was based. Elfriede Jelinek, herself, like Bernhard, a recipient of a musical education in Vienna and a severe critic of her country's culture, recently claimed³² that the work of Bachmann and Bernhard portrays both the Viennese bourgeoisie and the ruthless way in which both writers were rejected by that social group ; while Klug (*MAL* 1989, 167-8) gives examples of the conservative cultural climate of Salzburg in the early 1950s, which the young Bernhard was to celebrate, in his writings for the Demokratisches Volksblatt, and then violently reject.

DIE URSACHE

In the autobiography, this process of rejection and withdrawal begins with Bernhard's experience of the "Internat" in Salzburg. The depiction of traumatic boarding-school experiences is a common feature of European literature, in spite of the British tendency to assume that the genre begins and ends with the public-school story ; in an Austrian context, one need only think of Musil's *Törleß*. In Bernhard's case, this represents not merely the predictable, though genuine, suffering of a sensitive child attempting to adjust to the rough and tumble of a society of his peers without the aid of his parents or teachers, but a fundamental threat to his equilibrium. The decision to send him to Salzburg had been made by his beloved grandfather, as a stage in his plan "*aus mir einen Künstler zu machen*" (*Ur* 38). Yet if the school, according to Bernhard's account, was hardly a suitable environment for the nurturing of artistic ambitions, the preparation for this

³² Elfriede Jelinek, *Atemlos*. In : *Die Zeit*, 24.2. 1989, 56

experience was equally inappropriate, as Ein Kind illustrates. Much of the behaviour described in this book, chronologically the earliest (it deals with the years of childhood, rather than adolescence, unlike the other volumes of the series) but the final book to be published (in 1982), is that of a disturbed child, and the difficult relationship with his mother is vividly portrayed. He is in need of care and attention and receives it from his grandfather - but at a cost. The latter's contempt for "Normalität" causes him to place extraordinary demands on the boy, in fact (as Bugmann shows) to project his own wishes on to him. What is worse, his statement that "*Die Schule an sich sei der Mörder des Kindes*" (Ki 52) and his encouragement when his grandson plays truant from the "Volksschule" is very much at variance with his subsequent decision to deliver him into the care of a highly authoritarian educational establishment - in fact, the school is run by the National Socialists, whom the grandfather professes to despise. The consequences for Bernhard are the suicidal thoughts which trouble him during his stay at the "Internat" - and in the long term, his love of music (he calls his violin practice in the school's "Schuhkammer" a "*Zuflucht zu sich selbst*", Ur 12) and his abiding loathing of the institutions of church and state, which finds expression in the characteristically provocative and intense "Haßtirade", directed against the city of Salzburg, with which Die Ursache begins. This was, as previously mentioned, the first of the autobiographical series to be published (in 1975) and, due to the thematic and stylistic similarities to his earlier work, was immediately seen as a key to the world of Bernhard's fiction ; for example, Jean Améry's 1976 essay³³ identifies both typically Austrian and highly personal elements in the book, so that it is, for him, both a "Pathogramm" and an example of what he calls *morbus austriacus* - although Améry's criticisms annoyed the author³⁴. Bernhard, at the time of writing, still sees "*diese Zeit als meine finsterste und in jeder Hinsicht*

³³Jean Améry, *Morbus Austriacus*. In : Merkur, 1976, 91-94

³⁴See Jean-Louis de Rambures, Thomas Bernhard im Gespräch mit Le Monde. In : Spectaculum, 39, 1984, 242-245

qualvollste" (43). This is no surprise when the external events described in the book are considered ; as well as having to adjust to school life, Bernhard has to live through the bombing of Salzburg, and devotes much of the book (e.g., 21-33, 53-58) to vivid and seemingly eye-witness accounts of the subsequent suffering and horror, claiming that only after the bombing, in the chaos of Spring 1944, did Salzburg become, for him, a "lebendige" city filled with "Menschlichkeit" ; one which could be loved, rather than "*das tote und verlogene Schönheitsmuseum*" which it had previously been (50-51). He is thus at an early age confronted with the reality of death, and claims that at this time he becomes aware of the extremes of human suffering and of the meaninglessness of life (55-56). His experiences in the "Internat" seem to confirm his grandfather's low opinion of schools in general ; even after the defeat of the Nazis, when the school transforms itself from the "*sogenannte(s) Nationalsozialistische(s) Schülerheim in das streng katholische Johanneum*" (Ur 63), there is no real change. Much of the commentary in Die Ursache stresses the fact that, although the author is still haunted by his memories and feels that he has to write about them before it is too late (42-43), most of the inhabitants of Salzburg have preferred to forget about the harrowing events described in the book. Just as the school did not really change after the defeat of the Nazis, so the city remains marked by the ideology of the pre-1945 period, he claims. Hence Bernhard's equation of Catholicism and National Socialism ; the two are inextricably bound up in the dominant mentality in Salzburg and its environs, according to him. This is the kind of observation which tends to infuriate Bernhard's countrymen, but, as recent political scandals have shown, his apparently wild exaggerations can contain a grain of truth (according to Gabriel Josipovici³⁵, Bernhard "*senses the latent fascism beneath the comfortable and placid surface*" of his country - although in his early journalism he sometimes seemed content merely to celebrate that "surface", in a traditional and lyrical

³⁵Gabriel Josipovici, Genius on a settee. In : The Independent, 29 July 1989

fashion). They thereby demonstrate that his seeming generalisations from extremes of personal experience can have validity for, and cause identification in, the reader. Benjamin Henrichs, in his tribute to Bernhard, draws attention to this characteristic of his writing:

Wieviele Tage hat Bernhard gerettet! Wieviele Deprimierten hat er aufgeholfen, indem er ihre Depressionen aus dem Schweigen befreite, triumphal zur Sprache brachte, im Gelächter untergehen ließ! ³⁶

Although Henrichs is discussing Bernhard's work in general rather than the autobiographical writings, the fact that these are grounded in personal reality aids their effectiveness from this viewpoint. Die Ursache, for example, is, among other things, a kind of "school story". The adolescent "crisis of faith" and the feeling of abandonment of the young Thomas in his boarding-school must surely be fairly common experiences, even if individual circumstances might be less bizarre or extreme. In the English tradition, for example, it is not unknown for parents to profess an indifference to education yet send their children off to boarding-schools which are designed for "character-building", and whose regimes resemble those of traditional institutions such as those described in Die Ursache. This system produced apparent rebels, who, like Freumbichler, nevertheless sent their offspring to the same schools which they had attended. Bernhard manages to break out of this cycle, paradoxically enough, thanks to the war and its consequences, thereby gaining a wider range of acquaintances and abilities than might otherwise have been the case. In contemplating his grandfather's motivation in sending him away, though, he can only consider - in the section headed Onkel Franz (59ff) - the destructive effect of education in general, seeing no end to this process (Ur 62ff); even his grandfather was also "*zugrunde erzogen*", and later, in wishing his "Enkel" to complete his studies in the Gymnasium was guilty of "*Inkonsequenz*", a "*Bruch im Denken*" of which he later became painfully aware (Ur 90). Bugmann

³⁶ Henrichs, Die Zeit, 24.2.1989 (see note 3)

sees evidence of unresolved inner conflicts, and of a reluctance to concede that his idealised "Lehrer" could have provoked his adolescent misery, in the manner in which Bernhard deals with this episode : but perhaps it is equally true to say that the book represents a painful re-living and re-evaluation of the author's past, in which an awareness of his grandfather's error does not preclude a profound gratitude to him and a willingness to forgive, which is also apparent in the evolution in his attitude to his mother as the series progresses. The family background is important at this stage ; Bernhard devotes several pages to an outline of the lives of the most important (for him) members, i.e., his grandparents, uncle and mother, and tells us that they are proud of his attendance at the Gymnasium, seeing it as a road to success and respectability - yet he, of course, sees it very differently. For him, it is a microcosm of society, in which outsiders or non-conformists, such as the disabled pupil and the ugly geography-teacher, automatically become "Opfer" and are persecuted mercilessly by the majority. His decision to leave the school is provoked in part, he says, by his identification with these two outsiders ; he was the third victim, he tells us - with the difference that he had learned to disguise his sufferings (102).

At this point it is worth looking at Reinhard Tschapke's interpretation of the autobiographical works. His dissertation is concerned with the concept of "Initiation" as applied to this series, and both Bernhard's grandfather and Podlaha, in Der Keller (the latter perhaps to a lesser extent) are seen as "*Initiationshelfer*" (Tschapke 69ff). Immediately, the reader is reminded of obvious parallels - in Western societies, pupils of boarding schools and apprentices both commonly undergo painful initiation ceremonies (as do members of university fraternity societies, and, in the Austrian context, the traditional, and still influential *Burschenschaften*) ; the "reward" is exclusivity, membership of a kind of self-proclaimed "élite" with access denied to outsiders. The sado-masochistic rituals of Beineberg and Reiting in Törleß, for example, can be seen in this light. Yet there is none of this in the autobiographical works ; the kind of lurid detail which usually

characterises descriptions of such ceremonies is markedly absent, as are the overtones of homosexuality³⁷. The physical unpleasantness of boarding-school life is evoked merely by references to smells (in the dormitory and the "Schuhkammer") and to the early-morning scuffles, always won by "die Stärkeren", in the "Waschraum". Bernhard the outsider and "Störenfried" portrays himself as too alienated from his fellows to participate in their games; and he would doubtless resist the kind of enforced conformity that this would imply, just as he rejects the values of the teachers. So the conventional idea of initiation, i.e. that of instilling a sense of belonging to an exclusive group, whose norms will henceforth be accepted - to, say, an Austrian equivalent of the British "old school tie network" - is not the way in which Tschapke interprets the term. (Indeed, bearing in mind Bernhard's statement that, on entering the *Gymnasium* for the first time, he was awestruck by its architecture and by the thought that "*aus welchem, wie es immer wieder heißt, seit Jahrhunderten die Elite des Landes hervorgegangen ist...*" [76], and his subsequent disillusionment, it could be argued that this kind of "initiation" goes seriously awry in the course of Bernhard's adolescence - as his comments in the final pages of the book seem to confirm). Rather, drawing on anthropological sources such as Joseph Campbell's The Hero with a Thousand Faces, it is seen as a continuing process, liberating the self and contributing to its development, instead of curbing individuality in the name of conformity to a pre-ordained ideology, which, like many contemporary cults and secret societies which stage surrogate initiations, has no more than a "*soziologisch-psychologische Krückenfunktion*" (Tschapke 58).

As Tschapke claims, not only can a variety of "Initiationsmotive" be found in the autobiographical volumes, but a "*psychischer Zwang nach periodischer Entdeckung und Vergewisserung*", as he puts it, makes such motifs common in modern literature generally, when the "Ich" of the narrator or central character is

³⁷Which do, however, appear in the author's later fiction, notably in Auslöschung.

thrown off balance or threatened by challenge, catastrophe, or unexpected and inexplicable experiences of happiness or transcendence (Tschapke 60). Furthermore, "*Mythe, Ritual, Einweihung, Helden, ritueller Tod, Regeneration, Wiedergeburt*" have become part of the "*Grundterminologie der literarischen Exegese*", he says, and have even been consciously incorporated into the fiction of modern writers who have studied the social sciences or psychology (one thinks, for example, of the symbol-laden work of Michel Tournier, which employs, often in a playful manner, much of this terminology). It is probably fair to say, however, that this was not a special area of interest for Bernhard; but the stress on death as an inescapable fact, which is found throughout his work, perhaps loses some of its negative overtones when the idea of "death" is interpreted symbolically, as in esoteric traditions such as alchemy; i.e. as the necessary stage to be lived through in order that a renewed and vital personality may emerge. This is also, no doubt, a common enough conclusion in psychoanalytically-oriented criticism³⁸, but here it is given a new twist by the parallels which are drawn by Tschapke between initiation and individuation as related and open-ended processes. Evidence is found for this standpoint in the gradual movement in Bernhard's work, from the seemingly completely negative, isolated and doom-laden atmosphere of the earlier prose works, through the "opening-up" which permits a less veiled expression of personal feelings in the plays and autobiographical works of the 1970s, to the lighter, uninhibited and generally more easily assimilable work of the 1980s - a view echoed in the critical judgments of Reich-Ranicki³⁹ and others. But, if Tschapke is careful to relativise the results of the initiatory process at the end of his thesis by reminding the reader that initiation in this sense has less to do with salvation than with survival, so the fact that Bernhard, in *Ein Kind*, "*berichtet ausgeglichen und Obsessionen frei*" (Tschapke 110) could mean that in conquering

³⁸ To say nothing of earlier *literary* usage of the metaphor of death and rebirth - for example, "*Stirb und werde!*" from Goethe's *Selige Sehnsucht*

³⁹ Marcel Reich-Ranicki, Thomas Bernhards entgegengesetzte Richtung. In: *Entgegnung. Zur deutschen Literatur der siebziger Jahre*, Stuttgart 1979

some of his personal demons he has robbed himself of the most powerful impetus for his writing. Certainly critics such as Sorg⁴⁰, in discussing his fiction of the 1980s, seem to support this viewpoint, accusing him of repeating his earlier themes and of trying too hard to please his audience.

These criticisms refer to the works which followed the autobiographical series, however. Yet it is possible to argue that, given the nature, and the consequences, of the key experiences portrayed in these books, any further development would be difficult. After all, as Bernhard admits (Ur 62), it had taken him the best part of three decades to come to terms with them, and he was never to entirely recover from the cycle of illnesses which began in the "Keller" - the setting for the second volume of the autobiographical series.

DER KELLER

Die Ursache ends with the fifteen-year-old's decision to put an end to his "Leidenszeit" by leaving the *Gymnasium* and instead visiting the *Arbeitsamt*, where he is offered an apprenticeship with the grocer Karl Podlaha, whose premises are in the "*feuchte(r) Keller*" mentioned in the Autobiographische Notiz. In the end he does contract the serious illness which begins the four years he will spend in hospitals and sanatoria - this, he claims, is his own fault (Ke 106-7). But, as Der Keller shows, Bernhard benefits from his change of direction. Indeed the change is emphasised in the text, with the repetition, with minor variations, of the phrase "*in die entgegengesetzte Richtung*" - according to Bugmann, it appears twenty-one times. Bernhard is insistent too that "*ich ging meinen Weg*", the route to his job being "*der Weg zu mir...*", in contrast to the journey to the *Gymnasium*, which leads, literally and figuratively, in the opposite direction, "*aus mir heraus und von mir weg,... ich war auf diesen Weg gezwungen worden von meinen*

⁴⁰Sorg, KLK (1988), 13-18

Erziehern, von meinen Verwaltern, von meinen Vermögensverwaltern..." (Ke 19-20). This emphasises, too, his act of will in opposing the path laid down for him by his grandfather ; indeed, he is insistent that this is no mere teenage whim but an "instinktiv" (Ke 88) move which proves, in retrospect, to be the right decision. His "Kehrtwendung " is, he says, a "lebensrettende(r) Augenblick ", and, having accustomed himself to the role of outsider at school he can sympathise with the inhabitants of the slum district in which Podlaha's shop is situated - the Scherzhäuserfeldsiedlung , a "Schmutzfleck, zusammengesetzt aus Hunger, Verbrechen und Dreck " (Ke 26), as he luridly describes it. After the rarefied and inhibited atmosphere of home and school, dominated respectively by his grandfather (whose obsessive writing leads him to behave like a tyrant when at work {Ke 72-73}) and by teachers whom he fears and despises, he comes to appreciate the openness of the inhabitants and is fascinated by the reality of what is to him a new world. The fact that "respectable" citizens of Salzburg despise the district and its people only adds to its attraction for him ; he tells us that he is happy in his job because he was able to be "wie ich war" (Ke 86), emphasising the contrast between this and the dissimulation and conformity required at home, which at this time is a "Hölle" for him (Ke 68-69), and at the Gymnasium - "*die Persönlichkeit war plötzlich nicht mehr von den Regeln des bürgerlichen Gesellschaftsapparates, der ein menschenverheerender Apparat ist, niedergemacht und zermalmt...*" (Ke 86-7)

Yet this rebellion may nevertheless seem unusual in many respects ; Bernhard's adolescence, if it corresponds to the account given in his autobiography, must have taken place during the chaos and turbulence of the mid- and late 1940s, as Wendt remarks, the "*Zeit der Lebensmittelkarten, der kleinen und großen Schiebereien, als eigentlich ein jeder ein bißchen kriminell ist*" - yet still a time when Austrian teenagers, particularly in traditional middle-class families, did not generally rebel against the wishes of their parents. Despite the portrayals of

adult inhabitants of the Scherzhauserfeldsiedlung (e.g Ke 78-86)⁴¹, there is no hint in the books of any kind of "youth culture", such as that of, for example, the teenage gangs which emerged in French and German cities (or, indeed, in Vienna) during the wartime period ; in any case, it would be doubtful whether the loner Bernhard, at this stage still the traditionalist in his desire to pursue a musical career, would appreciate the solidarity (and conformity) of such groups. He does not seem to have many friends of his own age, describing the difficulties he had in overcoming the mistrust of Podlaha, his assistant Herbert and the apprentice Karl. Nevertheless, he still looked back on that period, with his turning away from a pre-determined career path and first attempt to assert his independence, as the most significant of his life ; he finds a new "Mentor" in Podlaha, the "*Meister im Menschenkontakt*" (Ke 75) under whose guidance he feels "*nützlich*" for the first time in his life, and overcomes the "*Kontaktschwierigkeiten*" which, he now reveals, were a consequence of the inhibiting and sometimes tyrannical manner of his grandfather - his home life at this time was, he tells us, particularly fraught⁴². (The portrait of his grandfather given in Der Keller [Ke 71-72] bears a close resemblance not only to the obsessive figures at the centre of many of Bernhard's fictional works, but also to the author himself - the grandfather too is "*lungenkrank*", is haunted by suicidal thoughts and sees writing as "*den Kampf mit dem Tode aufnehmen*", yet refuses to give way to despair, struggling ceaselessly to complete his life's work). Tschapke also draws attention to the role of the observer adopted by Bernhard in the series, tracing its origins back to his childhood, when the boy's natural quality of direct observation is nurtured by his grandfather's teaching, and is then sharpened by his time in the

⁴¹See Anon. : Scherzhauserfeldsiedlung ist über Bernhard-Roman empört. "Keller"-Kaufmann bedroht. Salzburger Volkszeitung, 10.November 1976, for a description of how Bernhard's characterisations - or stylisations - angered some of the inhabitants of this district and led to the real Karl Podlaha receiving threats, because he was suspected - much to his own surprise- of having inspired his former apprentice's negative views.

⁴²Mauch (1980, 102) sees this remark as typical of Bernhard's reluctance to do more than hint at his personal and family circumstances during the period covered by the first two books of the series - although numerous hints in Der Keller do give the alert reader some indications of his unhappiness.

Scherzhauserfeldsiedlung, where he experiences the liberation of earning his own living, taking responsibility in the shop, and feeling a sense of unforced solidarity and sympathy with a community. Podlaha's instructions in the practical business of dealing with customers give him something which his grandfather's teachings cannot - an ability to cope with "*die Gegenwart als Realität*", in other words the everyday modern world from which his grandfather has distanced himself. Furthermore, the reflections which constitute the final pages of the book, representing an attempt by Bernhard to draw conclusions from the disappointment - decisive for the rest of his life - of having to spend the following four years undergoing treatment for his lung illness rather than progressing in his preferred career as a singer, culminate in an encounter with a former acquaintance from the Scherzhauserfeldsiedlung. This former customer, whose job (a labourer with the works department of the city), unkempt appearance and unhealthy, perhaps alcoholic demeanour mark him out as a typical inhabitant of the district, unwittingly provides Bernhard with his "Stichwort", he tells us (Ke 118) - "*Servus...es ist alles egal*". This cliché of everyday speech is seen as an illustration of the indifference (or detachment) which is, claims Bernhard, a quality he has developed in the course of his life, and which has enabled him to gain a kind of victory over his misfortunes - losing every battle except the final one, as he puts it. It is a paradox characteristic of Bernhard, or perhaps of Austria itself, that a writer generally regarded as a product of the country's traditions of "high" culture should find such stimulus for his self-development in an allegedly disreputable working-class environment ; but, in addition to discovering possibilities for independence and a community in which he feels "*nützlich*", Bernhard responds to the discipline demanded by his employer, just as later in the same book he will be warmly appreciative of the exacting standards set by his music teachers, who encourage him in what seems a promising career. However, this contrasts with his fierce resentment of discipline imposed by institutions, and of those who serve in them, a feeling which will be confirmed by the experiences recounted in the next volume of

the series.

DER ATEM

After having achieved a precarious independence, gaining self-confidence through his job in the grocer's shop and a reconciliation with his grandfather by taking music lessons, thereby hinting that he may, after all, become a "Künstler" (much better than being a "Kaufmann" in Freumbichler's traditionally Austrian scale of values), illness provides "*eine entscheidende Wende in unserer Existenz*" (At 9), his grandfather becoming ill at the same time as himself and the equilibrium of his life again being shattered. The tests to which Bernhard is subjected are described in grim detail in the early pages of the book, and are compared by Tschapke to the wounds given to candidates in traditional rites of initiation in tribal societies - a comparison which may seem far-fetched until it is seen that Bernhard himself regards his passage through these institutions as an "education". Later, in Die Kälte, he says:

Ich hatte das Salzburger Krankenhaus, ich hatte Großmama hinter mir. Ich hatte schon die Elementarschule der Krankheiten und des Sterbens hinter mir, ja schon die Mittelschule. Ich beherrschte das Einmaleins der Krankheit und des Sterbens. Nun besuchte ich auch schon den Unterricht in der Höheren Mathematik der Krankheit und des Todes. Diese Wissenschaft hatte mich, zugegeben, immer schon angezogen gehabt, jetzt entdeckte ich, daß ich sie mit Besessenheit studierte... (Kä 62)

His strategy for survival here is again, he tells us, based on his "*Beobachtungskunst*", just as in Der Atem he is able to use his "*Mechanismus der Wahrnehmung*" (At 56) to detach himself from the horrors around him in the "Sterbezimmer" and minimize the "*Selbstverletzung durch Beobachtung*". His will to survive, having manifested itself during the third, and most serious, bombing raid on Salzburg (Ke 52) and in the decision to leave the Gymnasium, asserts itself once more at the point where he is closest to death when he determines to survive,

claiming that it is up to him whether or not he continues to live (At 54). He needs his "*Willenskraft*" not only to survive his illnesses, he tells us, but also to resist the destructive effects of his surroundings and the indifference of the representatives of the hospital : the nurses are seen as "*exakt funktionierende Krankenversorgungsmaschinen im Vinzenterinnenkittel* ", the doctors are noteworthy for their "*übersteigerten Hochmut* " and their "*geradezu perversen Geltungsbedürfnis* " (At 54). The author's powers of observation are exercised further as he describes the sufferings of his fellow patients ; after the particularly harrowing episode of the death of the "*Geldbriefträger aus Oberösterreich* " Bernhard feels the need to intervene in order to reassure his readers that he is dealing with facts, and that what he has written does not mean that he is "*verrückt* ", even if what he, or anyone else for that matter, writes can be "*nur Annäherung und nur ein Versuch* " ; soon afterwards he calls his writing "*Bruchstücke ...aus welchen sich, wenn der Leser gewillt ist, ohne Weiteres ein Ganzes zusammensetzen läßt* " (At 69), judging complete accuracy, particularly in this desperate situation, to be unattainable - a statement which has been viewed as a key to Bernhard's work in general.

He learns of the death of his grandfather through the newspaper, his family having withheld the news for fear that he too would die - although Bernhard characteristically adds a touch of black comedy to his recounting of this, for him painful, occurrence, in the incident of the "*Krankenhauspfarrer*" and his grandfather's last word (At 81). Bernhard says that this event marks the end of the total domination of his personality by his grandfather's example, claiming ; "*In der Krankheit bin ich meinem Großvater nachgefolgt, nicht weiter* " (At 83) - he now sees the possibility of a new freedom, "*Eine zweite Existenz, ein neues Leben* " in which he will be truly independent. Nonetheless, as if to indicate that escape from early influences will be impossible, he inherits his grandfather's typewriter, on which, he tells us, he writes his own works - shades of Tschapke's idea of the initiate taking on the clothes of his mentor (and indeed clothing is included in

Freumbichler's "Nachlaß" [At 88]). This too is the point at which he enters into a normal relationship to his mother ; his illness and her distress following the death of her father bring them together and enable a previously impossible "*enge und liebevolle Beziehung* " to develop. During her visits her son learns that she too has had to submit to her father's "*Kunstwille* " and her "*Ballettmartyrium* " ; her subsequent feeling was of being enslaved - "*hörig*", as she puts it - to him. The author is still sensitive enough not to repeat what he recounted in Drei Tage - that he was born in Holland, in a home for "fallen women" because she had been sent away in order to avoid disgracing the family, by giving birth to an illegitimate child. When Bernhard learns this, the reasons for their difficult relationship become clear, and this knowledge inspires such emotionally-laden statements as the following:

...bei meiner Mutter, mit welcher ich tatsächlich zeitlebens immer nur in dem höchsten Schwierigkeitsgrad zusammengelebt habe und deren Wesen zu beschreiben ich heute noch nicht die Fähigkeit habe, immer nur die Unfähigkeit, auch nur ihr Wesen anzudeuten, ihr ereignisreiches, aber so kurzes, nur sechsundvierzigjähriges Leben auch nur annähernd zu begreifen, ist mir bis heute nicht möglich, dieser wunderbaren Frau gerecht zu werden,...(Ur 83)

Admittedly, this comes from Die Ursache, in which the author is only beginning the exploration of his childhood which is developed in the following four volumes of the series, and the tensions still to be worked through are reflected in the language of the passage ; these diminish markedly as the series progresses, until with Ein Kind the typically "Bernhardian" devices are abandoned for a direct and at times artless style. Already in Der Atem, and in spite of the tirades against the medical profession, this tendency is visible ; after having hinted at his unhappiness at home in Der Keller, he is now able to openly admit that "*Mein Großvater war kein guter Vater seiner Kinder gewesen* " (At 95), because he felt his real family were the "Denker" to whom he felt an affinity.

The next "stage" on Bernhard's journey involves yet another institutional experience, with his move to Großmain, the "*Erholungsheim für an den Atmungsorganen Erkrankte* "(At 105), which is "*eine abgelegene Sterbeklinik für*

tuberkolosekranke Patienten ", and in which, because he is not a "*Klassepatient* ", he receives second-class treatment. Indeed his condemnation of "Klassen" in Austrian hospitals as a "*gesellschaftspolitische Perversität* " and his call for their abolition is unexpected at this point - but based on the painful experiences described here (At 100). Again he finds himself among "*aufgegebene Fälle* ", and claims that he now believes he was sent to Großmain to catch tuberculosis rather than to be cured of it. Again he doubts the competence of the doctors, but, in a way reminiscent of Thomas Mann's *Der Zauberberg*, is able to pass his time in reading, contracting in the process an "*unheilbar(e) Zeitungskrankheit* " - once more able to ironise his condition, and commenting on a motif which recurs in both his fiction and interviews - as well as reflecting the time the author did spend as a journalist. (It may also point to the means by which this seemingly apolitical and isolated author was able to keep "in touch" with world events, even though this knowledge could not distract him from his abiding theme of the unavoidability of death and the futility of most, if not all, human endeavour in the face of such a threat. Certainly the picture which emerges from both Bernhard's fictional work and his interviews is that of a voracious reader of Western Europe's best-known "quality" newspapers, even if, late in his life, he would complain about the poor quality of their contents⁴³)

Again, positive developments are reported ; conversations and friendship with his fellow patients, visits from his mother and other family members, walks in the surrounding countryside and observation of "*völlig unberührte Natur* " - but also a "*Tuberkolosenangst* ", an oscillation between "*Idylle* " and "*Höllenschloß* " (At 118). But the most significant discovery is that of literature. He describes it in the following terms:

In Großmain war ich erst auf das Lesen gekommen, plötzlich und für mein weiteres Leben entscheidend. Diese Entdeckung, daß die Literatur die mathematische Lösung des Lebens und in jedem Augenblick auch der eigene

⁴³ See Hofmann 1991

Existenz bewirken kann, wenn sie als Mathematik in Gang gesetzt und betrieben wird, also mit der Zeit als eine höhere, schließlich die höchste mathematische Kunst, die wir erst dann, wenn wir sie ganz beherrschen, als Lesen bezeichnen können, hatte ich erst nach dem Tod des Großvaters machen können, diesen Gedanken und diese Erkenntnis verdankte ich seinem Tod. (At 119)

McLintock⁴⁴ for one finds this passage somewhat obscure, the reference to "Mathematik" being characteristically abstract and unspecific (compared to those writers - e.g. Queneau, Perec, Max Bense, Arno Schmidt - who have incorporated their knowledge of mathematics into their work) - but it is at least certain that Bernhard had to wait until he was free of the overpowering presence of his grandfather in order to develop his own conception of literature ; Freumbichler's obsessive devotion to his craft may well have provoked a negative reaction in his grandson. However, in spite of his growing optimism further "tests", in more than one sense, await the adolescent ; he learns that his mother is seriously ill, is then himself diagnosed as "lungenkrank", and is transferred to the sanatorium at Grafenhof, which is described in the fourth volume of the autobiography.

DIE KÄLTE

Given what has preceded it, it is no surprise that this book begins with a portrait of another institution ruled by tyrants who humiliate and destroy the vulnerable individuals in their charge ; this, as Tschapke observes, is a constant theme in the series. What is less predictable is the sudden transformation in the next few pages, where the episode of the "Sputum" introduces a comic-grotesque tone more commonly found in Bernhard's fiction, not to mention his plays in which this kind of humour plays a significant role. It may be a sign that Bernhard is conscious of stylising his experience when he says that, having attained some skill in this "art", he is no longer an outsider but a "*Vollmitglied der Gesellschaft*" (Kä 13). But this honour is of little value when the community in question inhabit a

⁴⁴D.R.McLintock, Tense and narrative perspective in two works by Thomas Bernhard, OGS 11, 1980, 1-26

"Strafanstalt", as he calls the sanatorium; again, it is a "Todesgemeinschaft" in which "Der Individualist wird ausgemacht und abgetötet" (Kä 19).

The reader may also sense a feeling of *déjà vu* on reading the description of the morning scenes in the "Waschraum", reminiscent as it is of a similar passage in Die Ursache. The "Primarius", like Grünkranz, is a "Nationalsozialist" from whom no reassurance can be expected. A key difference, however, is that in contrast to the "Masse" who, according to Bernhard, were the inhabitants of the institutions he had previously attended, Grafenhof is inhabited by "Ausgestoßene, Ausgeschiedene..., Entrechtete, Entmündigte" (Kä 32). Typically, he feels himself an outsider even among this community of outsiders; after a short spell of "Hoffnungslosigkeit" his will to live reasserts itself and sets him apart from those who cannot resist; "...so hatte ich mich selbst auf die natürlichste Weise vom wehrlosen Opfer zum Beobachter dieses Opfers und gleichzeitig zum Beobachter aller andern gemacht" (Kä 42), he says - and can thus, once again, avoid becoming a victim of the system, unlike "die sogenannten Alteingesessenen", "die eigentlichen Herrscher und die Peiniger ihrer Mitpatienten" (Kä 45). That he is not without guilt is shown by the passage punctuated by the repetition - again, with minor variations - of the phrase "Ich saß auf dem Baumstumpf .." (Kä 59-70). The vocabulary at first recalls Frisch's Anatol Ludwig Stiller: "...ich war ein Versager...Überall hatte ich versagt, zuhause, von Anfang an, als Kind, als junger Mensch, in der Schule als Kind, als junger Mensch, in der Lehre, immer und überall, diese Feststellung bedrückte mich,..." His past is a "festverschnürte(s) Paket", which, like Rolf's "fleischfarbener Kleiderstoff" in Stiller (also a "Paket") cannot be left behind. But Bernhard is not willing to leave it at that. As Barbara Saunders⁴⁵ comments, this passage "appears to act as a focal point for Bernhard's reflection"; sitting in the garden at Grafenhof he reviews his life, and unlike Frisch's inhibited characters, he is willing to "untie" this parcel, "vor

⁴⁵ Barbara Saunders, Contemporary German Autobiography: literary approaches to the problem of identity, London 1985, 72

Zeugen ":

...indem ich diese rohen und brutalen und sehr oft auch sentimental und brutalen Sätze, unbekümmert freilich wie bei keinen anderen Sätzen, auspacke, habe ich keine Scham, nicht die geringste....nur das Schamloseste ist authentisch. Aber auch das ist natürlich so wie alles ein Trugschluß. (Kä 63)

The final remark here relativises his claims to authenticity (just as later in this passage he will deny any difference between "Wahrheit" and "Irrtum") and thereby by-passes the agonizing dilemmas to which Stiller is subject ; the acceptance of absurdity which Saunders identifies, and the recognition that "Sprache" can never perfectly convey "Wahrheit", as he says later in this book, enable Bernhard to examine his motives much more thoroughly than Frisch's character could. As Saunders says, "*we have here a triple mirroring of Bernhard, the narrator, evaluating Bernhard the protagonist's assessment of a past which this protagonist has already examined. All perspectives are seen to be consistent with each other.*" (Saunders 72)

The episode of the "Pneu" bears out his mistrust of the doctors and, what is worse, coincides with his mother's fatal illness. Nonetheless, despite the prevailing atmosphere of death he is able to distance himself from it once more, with the aid of acquaintances such as the "Kapellmeister" (music continues to be a major preoccupation) and the socialist - and hence, he claims, victimised - "Doktor der Rechten" (Kä 119-125), who as a representative victim of the institution's ruthless suppression of the outsider (the "Kälte" of the title) is discussed at length, gaining Bernhard's sympathy as the author identifies with his refusal to conform. The revelation of a class system in operation in the sanatorium (the "Priviligierten"), "Dorfexpeditionen" which break the rules of the institution, further reading (he calls it "*Ablenkung von mir und meiner Umgebung*" - and "*ganz bewußt*") lead up to the next ordeal, as he learns of the death of his mother in the manner mentioned earlier. Again tragedy is interrupted by a bizarre touch, as he is seized by a "Lachkrampf" when the mourners pronounce the incorrect

surname which had been printed in the newspaper, and leaves before the end of the ceremony.

A period of hopelessness and passivity follows, but once again is short-lived : an "Aufwärtsentwicklung" begins, he rediscovers his will to live - this time, he claims, "*nach meinen eigenen Gesetzen*" - and draws strength from music and "Dichtung". At this moment he begins to write, a further indication of his growing self-confidence and independence. (He also begins to take the Times, in order, he says, to improve his English - explaining in part the references to England and the English which are so frequent in his work). Deciding he has to leave, "*um nicht in dieser perversen medizinischen Unheilsmühle endgültig und also für immer zermalmt zu werden*" (Kä 148), he does this as soon as he can, "*auf eigene Gefahr*" (Kä 149) - and survives.

With this decision Bernhard would seem to be free at last of the institutions in which he has spent his adolescence. Tschapke, in line with his theme of initiation, sees the succession of rooms occupied by Bernhard at key points in the series - "*Schuhkammerrefugium, Luftschutzstollen, Bombenkeller, Spitalbadezimmer und die Räume der Heilstätten Vötterl und Grafenhof*" - as:

Prüfungs- und Angststationen, die eine schlimmer als die andere, immer isolierter, abseitiger und unwirklicher werdend, auf der anderen Seite in der geographischen Hoch- und Engführung zunehmend allegorischer und zeitloser wirkend (Tschapke 110).

Indeed, although it is possible to extract a chronological, more or less conventional "story" from the first four books of the series, as the preceding pages demonstrate, the stylisation which is an integral part of Bernhard's literary method, and his corresponding emphasis on the incomplete and inevitably subjective nature of his writings, lead the reader to suspect that something other than literal truth is intended. The theme of the initiate's journey provides one interesting interpretative possibility, even if Bernhard does remark, in Der Keller, "*ich war niemals ein*

Mensch für einen Weg" (Ke 111). Nevertheless, the above quotation from Tschapke recalls Thomas Mann's description (quoting a critic in his speech introducing *Der Zauberberg* to an American audience, and somewhat surprised to find it considered an "initiation story") of the sanatorium as "*a version of the temple of initiation, a place of dangerous enquiry into the secret of life*"⁴⁶. In spite of the fact that the hints of esotericism and occultism present in Mann's work (notably, of course, in *Doktor Faustus*) do not appear in Bernhard's writing, Peter Friedl⁴⁷ can still say, in an article dealing with its "*autobiographische(r) Diskurs*", that "*Wenn ich Die Kälte lese, ist es fast so, als ob ich ein Märchen lese*", because of what he calls the "*Wirkungsmechanismen sprachlicher Vergegenständlichung*". If doubts have been expressed regarding the authenticity of episodes such as the eye-witness accounts of the bombing of Salzburg in *Die Ursache*⁴⁸, then the story of the author's father given here (Kä 114-115), in which he sets fire to his parents' house and flees, having decided "*alles aufzugeben*" and wishing to destroy his "*Heimatbegriff*", also seems to be designed to be understood symbolically. (It is reminiscent, too, consciously or otherwise, of the story of another mysterious character and "Brandstifter", Joseph Koljaiczek in Grass's *Die Blechtrommel*, who disappears leaving his grandson Oskar to speculate, like Bernhard here, on his forebear's life and whereabouts⁴⁹.) Indeed, all this would seem to justify Meyerhofer's view of *Die Kälte* as "*der (chronologisch letzte und) philosophischste Band der Autobiographie*"⁵⁰.

⁴⁶ Thomas Mann, Einführung in den Zauberberg. Für Studenten der Universität Princeton. In : *GW*, xi, S.616.

⁴⁷ Peter Friedl, *Die Kälte* von Thomas Bernhard. In : *LuK* 1981, H.26, S.531-544

⁴⁸ See Mauch 1980, 108

⁴⁹ Unterm Floß, *Die Blechtrommel*, Darmstadt 1988, S. 17-27

⁵⁰ Meyerhofer 1985, 13

EIN KIND

Ein Kind differs from the four previous volumes in the series not simply because it deals with childhood rather than adolescence. The sub-titles which point to the themes of the four volumes of "Jugenderinnerungen" - respectively "Eine Andeutung" (Die Ursache), "Eine Entziehung" (Der Keller), "Eine Entscheidung" (Der Atem), and "Eine Isolation" (Die Kälte) find no counterpart here ; perhaps because this time the "Erinnerungsfetzen" are more diffuse, as befits the author's earliest memories. Critical opinion has tended to see Ein Kind as somewhat separate from its predecessors, whether as a successful realisation of the self-development resulting from Bernhard's personal "Trauerarbeit" in the earlier volumes (Tschapke, Reich-Ranicki) or as a disappointment, failing to reach the standard set in the four preceding books of the series (Wallmann)⁵¹. If there is an "Übergang" from its predecessor it is perhaps Friedl's idea of "Märchen" - if only because here the narrative perspective tends to be, much more than before, that of the child. The story of the seven-year-old's attempted bicycle ride is , as Michael Hamburger puts it, "*an incident that becomes the theme for variations and modulations, rather than the point of departure for a linear plot*"⁵² - a characteristic shared, he claims, with "*most of his later novels*". It is effective on the surface level - it is the type of "catastrophe" which could befall any child - while at the same time being, for Christoph Geiser,

(eine) Erzählung vom Ur-Sturz, die immerhin das erste Drittel des Buches ausfüllt; eine Geschichte, in der sich aus dem scheinbar Anekdotischen, Banalen allmählich das Grundmuster einer Existenz zu entwickeln beginnt - gesehen aus der Kinderperspektive, die die Verzweiflung und die Euphorie verabsolutiert ; auf dem langen Umweg zurück an den Familientisch durchlebt das Kind eine Odyssee von gegensätzlichen Gefühlen - Rettung und Rettungslosigkeit in schnellem Wechsel .⁵³

⁵¹ Jürgen P. Wallmann, "Thomas Bernhard : Ein Kind". In : LuK 1983, H.173-174, S.208

⁵² Michael Hamburger, After the Second Flood : essays on post-war German literature, Manchester 1986, 254

⁵³ Der Ur-Sturz oder Das sogenannte schlimme Kind. In : Süddeutsche Zeitung, 1.4.82. Extract reprinted in Dittmar(Hg.), Werkgeschichte, 1990

Nevertheless, as Tschapke observes, this story is a surprise to those expecting simply a further succession of scenes of horror and humiliating defeats. In fact, it represents a kind of victory, a transformation of misfortune into triumph through the medium of storytelling ; from being a "Geschichte", the failed bicycle ride to Salzburg becomes a "Bericht", then a "dramatischer Bericht", and finally a "dramatisches Gedicht". He can take pleasure in recounting it to his friend Schorschi - in Ein Kind the boy has friends and has not yet become so dominated by his grandfather that contact with others is made difficult - and in doing so discovers the freedom of the storyteller:

Ich hatte die Fähigkeit, mein klägliches Scheitern am Ende mit ein paar kurzen Sätzen zu einem Triumph zu machen. Es war mir gelungen : der Schorschi war an diesem Morgen überzeugt, daß ich ein Held bin. Mein Großvater empfing mich mit einem strafenden Blick, gleichzeitig aber mit einem Händedruck, der mir sagte : alles in Ordnung. Was auch geschehen mag, es ist verziehen (Ki 35).

Through the intervention of his grandfather the boy escapes the expected chastisement from his mother, who in her "Hilflosigkeit" habitually punishes, physically and verbally, the child whom she sees as the foundation of her unhappiness. The family relationships familiar from the earlier books are seen here from a more intimate and personal angle⁵⁴. As the narrative progresses, the family background is given, Bernhard's non-linear method allowing for numerous digressions in the first fifty or so pages. A childhood "Paradies" is portrayed, in contrast to the usual "Bernhardian" rural landscapes of degeneration, doom and decay ; indeed he claims that "*Ich war nirgends glücklicher*" (Ki 28). He idolises his grandfather and uses quasi-religious imagery to describe the latter's home (the

⁵⁴ For another view of Bernhard's childhood, see Caroline Markolin : Die Großväter sind die Lehrer. Johannes Freumbichler und sein Enkel Thomas Bernhard, Salzburg 1988

"*heilige(r) Berg* " or "*Berg der Weisheit* "). His grandfather's fascination with thoughts of suicide, and his hatred of the "Kleinstädter", among whom the boy's family must live, are described, once again evoking obvious parallels with the central characters of Bernhard's fiction - and perhaps, too, with the public image of the author himself. The motif of the young Thomas's uncannily close resemblance to his father is carried over from previous volumes, here contributing to his mother's apparently harsh treatment of him ; the words which so hurt him were, he now realises, really directed at his absent father, and he insists that he and his mother loved one another, despite their stormy relationship. The grandfather insists that the boy is a genius and that his problems at school are the fault of the teachers, who are "Banausen". The boy finds himself caught between his grandfather's anarchism and love of the extraordinary, and his mother's desire for a normal family life. After the escapade of the bicycle ride, where the boy is supported by his grandfather for his independent spirit - the ride is, he claims, an instance of the "Genie" in him - the family background is examined in greater depth, and the painful circumstances of Bernhard's birth and early years are recounted in full, for the first time in the series. His mother's flight to Holland and her subsequent difficulties are sympathetically portrayed ; the "Wiener Jahre", his communist Onkel Farald joining his grandparents and his mother, are a vague memory for Bernhard but are recalled by the family as a "*Hölle*" and a time of material want, the move to Seekirchen alleviating this condition, if only a little. Because of Freumbichler's character (he is an "*Einzelmann*", totally devoted to his work even when it brings no material reward) he cannot provide for the family, which depends on the earnings of his devoted wife and daughter. Bernhard remembers rural life in Hippinghof as a "*Paradies*" (Ki 77-8) - the second time that this word has been used in such a context in Ein Kind. The section in which the word appears is exemplary for the absence of what are seen as typical Bernhard devices ; the long, complex, sometimes tortuous sentences and exaggerated, provocative rhetoric

give way to short, descriptive sentences which express deep emotion and a sense of gratitude to his grandfather:

Er war mein großer Erklärer, der erste, der wichtigste, im Grunde der einzige...Die Spaziergänge mit ihm waren fortwährend nichts anderes als Naturgeschichte, Philosophie, Mathematik, Geometrie, Belehrung, die glücklich machte...(Ki 80-82)

- together with a sense of loss at the exclusion from this childhood paradise. This is an unexpected tone in a writer usually renowned for his denial of positive emotion, and it continues even when the boy goes to school - the "Paradies" once more gradually turns into a "Hölle", and the family has to move to Germany. The boy's "Scheitern" in the German school and his being called an "Unfriedensstifter", after playing truant, his entry into the "Jungvolk", his bed-wetting and his mother's public humiliation of him, and the journey to the "Heim für schwer erziehbare Kinder" (which, he finds on revisiting what he calls the "Schauplatz meines Grauens", still exists, in the GDR), his return to the family, the "Schauspiel des Krieges" (Ki 164) and his grandfather's final decision to send him to Salzburg are all reported in the same, simple style - "ein eher schlichter Berichtstil", according to Sorg⁵⁵ who compares it unfavourably with earlier efforts, identifies "eine gewisse Beliebigkeit in Anlage und Abfolge", and suggests that many passages read as if they have been dictated. For Reich-Ranicki, on the other hand, Ein Kind represents a positive trend in Bernhard's development as a writer and, like Wittgensteins Neffe (also published in 1982) is written with "ungleich mehr Liebe als Haß"⁵⁶. Tschapke maintains that it closes the circle of what should be regarded as a single "Entwicklungsroman", evidence for this viewpoint being found in the abandonment of the defensive and provocative

⁵⁵Sorg, KLG, p.11

⁵⁶ Reich-Ranicki, Der Sieg vor der Abgrund. In : FAZ, 5.2.83

tendencies so prevalent in the author's earlier work. Throughout the book, he claims, there is the feeling that a great "*Leidensdruck*" has been removed from the protagonist, so that "*eine positive Urnatur, der noch nicht der Makel der herrschenden Zustände anhängt, kommt befreiend zum Ausdruck*"⁵⁷. Tschapke also speaks of "*Der neue Grundton*", epitomised in the opening passage - the "*mißglückte Fahrradtour*" - which "*zeugt von einer Umstellung emotionaler Beziehungen*", quoting Blöcker's comment that it is obvious how much "*freier, souveräner, man ist versucht zu sagen: glücklicher der Autor inzwischen geworden ist*"⁵⁸ - this in spite of "*zahlreicher narzißtischer Kränkungen*" and the evidence of public disgrace, cruelty and failure given in the book. Although one might dispute the claim that the author is happy - the tone of Ein Kind being one of nostalgic remembrance which, more than any other work of the series, recalls Bernhard's statement, mentioned earlier, that he decided to write about his childhood because he felt he did not have long to live - it is nonetheless true that, by virtue of his new ability to speak directly of the bleakest episodes of his past, a reconciliation with it is achieved. This is visible not only in the "*Großvaterverehrung*", but in the gentleness and understanding shown in the portrayal of his mother - contrasting with the hostile or repulsive female figures of earlier phases of his work (he also mentions his earliest "*Freundinnen*" in the later part of the book). She is viewed with a "*grundsätzlich unbarmherzige, aber nicht verdammende Rückschau*" (Tschapke). Furthermore, it is claimed, whereas the fury and bitterness evident in the earlier volumes reflect Bernhard's battle with a threatening and hostile "*Umwelt*", the intellectual revenge of a writer unable to find fulfilment in life and too honest to deceive himself with "*scheinbefriedigenden Lebenslügen*", the psychological disharmony reflected in the portrayal of the world is now replaced by a new inner calm and equilibrium. In line with the theme of initiation and renewal, Bernhard's failures are viewed by Tschapke as the consequences of a narrowed

⁵⁷ Tschapke, 158

awareness, his successes the result of the assimilation and overcoming of previously alien and hostile forces. Yet - paradoxically - this kind of "initiation" is no linear path, and leads to no final victory, as the final volume of the series shows; there is no complete deliverance from the past, no simple "Happy-End" - which could explain the curious fact that Ein Kind at times resembles, more than anything else in Bernhard's *oeuvre*, his sentimental early writings celebrating Salzburg and its people.

It is worth looking closely at Tschapke's conclusion, if only because his dissertation, unlike others preceding it, is able to fit all five volumes in the autobiographical series into its overall schema; it differs too from much critical opinion in seeing Ein Kind as an important part of the whole, contrasting with the view that it is a weaker work standing apart from its predecessors in form and content. His contention is that Bernhard's "Literarisierung" of his sufferings makes them much more than mere reflections of his private life. Rather, they display in an exemplary form qualities such as loss, "*Heimatlosigkeit*", "*Kälte*", "*Verlassenheit*", which affect everyone's life in an age of anonymity and automation; thus accounting perhaps for the books' appeal to a wide readership. The series is a product of "*der strebende Geist*" which "*gibt sich mit dem Erreichten nie zufrieden, er sucht die neuen Widersprüche, die die Fehler, aus denen man nur lernen kann, das Ringen, aus dem man erstärkt hervorgeht...*" While this, like much of the first section of Tschapke's thesis in which he defines initiation before applying it as an interpretative framework to Bernhard's "Jugenderinnerungen" might, before the 1980s and the revival of interest in myths and archetypes, have seemed somewhat high-flown and perhaps unfashionably robust, his conclusion is perhaps more in line with mainstream critical opinion:

Bernhards Lebensbeschreibung ist keine angenehme Biographie,

⁵⁸ Blöcker, FAZ, 25.9.82

die bequeme Schablonen enthält. Doch die Beschreibung birgt auch die Verschlüsselung der eigenen Lage, entdeckt die autotherapeutische Funktion des Veröffentlichens als Neuanfang in der Werkgeschichte. Mit Hilfe einer plastisch eindringlichen Imaginationskraft tastet sich ein Gegenwartsautor durch das Feld seiner zwanghaften Kindheits- und Jugenderinnerungen, schreibt sich - seine Veröffentlichungen seit Abschluß des Zyklus belegen dies - in einem umfassenden Sinne frei (Tschapke 165).

It is fair to say that many of Bernhard's admirers, Reich-Ranicki and Demetz among them, shared this view -yet it is by no means universally held. An example of a less positive opinion is given by Peter Handke, in the interview referred to previously:

Im Gegensatz zu euch find ich ihn gar nicht so witzig, eher einen halblustigen Menschen. Mehr ein Witzel als ein Komiker. Im letzten Jahrzehnt hat ihm das Dahinwitzeln schon sehr gut gefallen. Er kam ja damit sehr gut an. Da habe ich aber nichts mehr davon gehabt...

Then, in reply to the interviewer's suggestion that Bernhard's work was no longer a "Herausforderung", "Weil er die Erwartungsmaschinerie bedient hat?" -

Er hatte einfach keine Probleme mehr beim Schreiben. Ich habe ihn ein paar Mal getroffen und gedacht, so wie der redet, könnte er am Tag drei Stücke aufs Tonband reden. Bei der Prosa war er ein bißchen vorsichtiger, aber er hat fast so geschrieben, wie er gesprochen hat ⁵⁹.

Bernhard's work after the autobiographical series

While it is unsurprising that Handke should fail to appreciate Bernhard's move towards comedy - most of his own work, after all, reveals little predilection for the genre - his observations do raise questions about Bernhard's relationship to his public. In particular, the problem of "Dichtung" and "Wahrheit" is relevant not merely to the overtly autobiographical works, but to his entire corpus - and

⁵⁹. Der Spiegel, 16.4.90, 232 ; see also the interview with Gamper (1987) in which Handke is more sharply critical of Bernhard's later work

especially to the work of the 1980s in which autobiographical traits are visible behind a fictional framework. The most obvious example is Wittgensteins Neffe, which, like the third and fourth volumes of the "Jugenderinnerungen", begins with the narrator (it is 1967 and his book Verstörung has just been published, we are told on the very first page) receiving treatment for a serious illness, and tells of a friendship (the book's sub-title, again recalling the autobiographical series, is "Eine Freundschaft") which develops while he, and the Paul Wittgenstein of the title, are isolated from the world outside in different sections of the hospital on the

Baumgartner Höhe⁶⁰. This friend, although apparently insane, is as gifted as his illustrious uncle - "*ausgestattet mit beinahe allen Möglichkeiten*" (WN 63), but is nonetheless a victim of the kind of institutional cruelty familiar from *Der Atem* and *Die Kälte*, receiving electric shock treatment which leaves him "*gebrochen*" and "*erledigt*". However, the bleak tone of the author's previous accounts of illness and suffering is not typical of the remainder of *Wittgensteins Neffe*. Indeed, in focusing on a friendship, the book marks a change of emphasis in more than one sense. The narrator and his friend are part of a wider circle of friends and acquaintances who are mobile, sociable, and - at least sometimes - happy and at home in Vienna and the rest of Austria, even though they condemn the country in the expected fashion. At times, their exploits are highly comic, as incidents such as the hunt for a copy of the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (WN 88-90) illustrate. Further light is thrown on the celebrated *Grillparzer-Preis* incident, with Bernhard vigorously justifying his behaviour at the ceremony, as well as giving reasons for his provocative speech on receiving the *Österreichischer Staatspreis für Literatur*. These high-spirited episodes seem to bear out the belief that the author is enjoying himself and, as Handke puts it, finds writing less difficult and problematic than before; the central characters' similarities with the numerous "grandfather-figures" of his earlier fiction, tortured by grandiose projects which prove impossible to transfer successfully to the printed page, are, from now on, less striking. Music is a factor which cements the friendship portrayed in this novel, just as it was important for the "real" Bernhard and the "real" Paul Wittgenstein; yet once more the stylisation and the digressions prevent the book from being a "slice of life" which can be understood as a direct rendering of experience. According to Michael Hamburger, the veracity or otherwise of incidents and personages in *Wittgensteins Neffe* does not matter:

What matters is the exposure of vanity and avarice throughout Bernhard's

⁶⁰ A setting which was given added significance by the widely-reported scandals in Viennese hospitals in the 1980s; notably the 1989 murders at Lainz.

work, an exposure from which he does not exclude himself ; and that goodness which all his negations and self-accusations posit. What matters, too, is the brilliance of Bernhard's wicked clowning in that book ⁶¹.

Critics have, however, seen the book as a "*bewegendes Denkmal* " ⁶² to Paul Wittgenstein ; it is interrupted, however, by another characteristic tirade against the Burgtheater, the "*allererste(r) Theaterbordell der Welt* ", Bernhard choosing to honour it with this title after an unsatisfactory production of his play Die Jagdgesellschaft . This takes up around eight pages, and, although amusing enough in its own right and integrated (after a fashion) into the narrative, could serve as an example of what Handke calls "*Dahinwitzeln* ". This tendency is present in other works of this period, too - notably in Beton and Der Untergeher, works which , as much critical opinion has maintained, can be seen as variations on familiar themes and motifs, and are - despite their fictional nature - very similar stylistically, thematically and in narrative form, to Wittgensteins Neffe. A sign that the emphasis has changed, however, is the fact that the "Geistesmenschen" in these works are musicians, musicologists or music lovers⁶³, rather than scientists engaged in the kind of purely intellectual and written "Arbeit" or "Studie" typified by Konrad's "*ungeheuer schwierige, alle Augenblicke vollkommen zerbrechliche medizinisch-musikalisch-philosophisch-mathematische Arbeit* " ⁶⁴. This impossible task, which, according to Ria Endres's feminist interpretation of Das Kalkwerk⁶⁵, originates in "*das Territorium der Regression...ein Territorium..., in dem Angst und Schrecken vor der archaischen Mutter herrschten...*", gives way in later works to difficult but ultimately less perplexing reflections on the relationship between "Kunst" and "Leben" - perhaps because music is a more "social" form of artistic expression, involving not merely the pursuit of technical perfection but sensitivity to emotion and awareness of an audience - a concert is, after all, a public occasion,

⁶¹ Hamburger 1986, 258

⁶² Sorg, KLG, 13 ; see also Diana Kempff, Der Mensch plus Buckel, in Der Spiegel ,14.2.1983

⁶³See Andrea Reiter : Thomas Bernhard's "Musical Prose". In : Williams/Parkes/Smith (eds.) Literature on the Threshold, 1990, 187-207

⁶⁴ Das Kalkwerk, Frankfurt/M. 1973, 62

⁶⁵ Endres, 79ff

like the performance of a play. And although this study cannot offer an analysis of Bernhard's theatrical work, it is certain that his plays brought him to the notice of a wider audience during the 1970s. This development was facilitated by his friendship and collaboration with an equally provocative if more extrovert figure, the director Claus Peymann⁶⁶, and should not be overlooked in tracing the changes in outlook visible in his prose works⁶⁷. The narrator of Beton, for example, shares some of the characteristics of figures such as Konrad (as well as some of Bernhard's own) but is, as Günter Blöcker puts it, "*fähig..., aus seiner Gebundenheit herauszutreten*"⁶⁸ - helped not just by the object of his "Studie", Mendelssohn, but by the meeting with the young widow Anna Härdtl in Mallorca and the ensuing tragedy (176-200) which move him to abandon his self-centredness. This story could be based just as easily on a fait divers in a newspaper - the technique developed in Der Stimmenimitator - as on an authentic encounter ; although readers of Bernhard will know of his fondness for Mallorca⁶⁹, and the close and detailed recounting of the episode does seem to point to personal involvement. Fetz (1987) discusses the motif of suicide in this work, finding it the most obvious illustration of a change of attitude - no longer do the books conclude with a suicide which simply confirms what has been said earlier⁷⁰; rather, "*the transforming power of these suicides to cause self-reflection and even a kind of renewal in the narrators*" is emphasised⁷¹. According to this argument, Rudolf, "*isolated, self-absorbed, hypochondriac and melancholic*", is close to the static,

⁶⁶ See David Horton, Thomas Bernhard's Heldenplatz - The Scandal, The Play and its Reception, Quinquarime 12, 1 (1989), 101-113, for an account of the provocations and scandals following Peymann's appointment as Burgtheater director, which contributed both to the controversy surrounding Heldenplatz and to his continuing unpopularity with sections of the Viennese public.

⁶⁷ Meyerhofer (1985, p.51), Höller (in Jurgensen 1981) and Gamper (1977) all investigate the structural and thematic similarities between Bernhard's prose and his stage works - as well as his frequent use of "Theater" and "Bühne" as metaphors in the former.

⁶⁸ Blöcker, FAZ, 25.9.1982. Extract reprinted in Dittmar(Hg.), Werkgeschichte, 1990, 247

⁶⁹ From (e.g.) Krista Fleischmann/Wolfgang Koch, Thomas Bernhard - Eine Herausforderung. Monologe auf Mallorca [Film], ORF FS 2, 11.2.1982

⁷⁰ Although Auslöschung (1986) will return to this pattern ; see Kraetli(1987), Klug(1990), Weinzierl(1990) for discussions of this work in the context of Bernhard's development.

⁷¹ In : Bullivant(ed.), The Modern German Novel (1987), 102

"frozen" situation of Strauch and Saurau, until Anna Härdtl's "real entombment" delivers a shock which enables him "to escape the figurative entombment, the existential death into which he had withdrawn".

A new humanity and more scandals

Rudolf's change does, in any event, stand for the introduction of a new, "human" quality into Bernhard's prose work, which could be said to have begun with the autobiographical cycle and in particular with Ein Kind. Barbara Saunders (1985, 73) argues that these works go "a long way towards destroying the image the media have created of Bernhard's misanthropy and misogyny". They also "show how far-reaching his experience of community life of all kinds actually was, and the reasons for his present isolation. They do not suggest that Bernhard is by nature disagreeable, callous and antagonistic...". This is true enough; Seymour-Smith (1985, p.658), though, remarks that "Bernhard is perhaps a very nasty man, although it is more likely that he protects himself under the guise of being one". Certainly he did not cease to enjoy creating controversy and scandal; if one examines the latter years of his career it would seem that the reverse is the case. His reminders of Austria's Nazi past and his disgust with the present-day republic were expressed with increasing frequency, both in attacks on politicians - Kreisky, "Der pensionierte Salonsozialist", is "eine süßsaure Art von Salzkammergut- und Walzertito"⁷², Vranitzky (who as Finanzminister had objected to his alleged belittling of Austria in the play Der Theatermacher) was described as "ein eitler Geck"⁷³ - and in laments for the provincialism and mediocrity of Austrian artists and cultural institutions, typical of which are the comments on the Burgtheater cited above. In fact, Bernhard was probably more

⁷² Der pensionierte Salonsozialist. In : Die Zeit, 29.6.1979

⁷³ Vranitzky. Eine Erwiderung. In : Die Presse 13.9.1985. Reprinted in Dittmar(Hg.), Werkgeschichte (1990), 295-299

celebrated in his own country for his provocative comments on national life than for his literary achievements - which, according to Schmidt-Dengler⁷⁴, most of his countrymen preferred to ignore (the prose works most of all). These interventions, although drawing skilfully on the Austrian tradition of exaggeration and tirade, sometimes embarrassed even Bernhard's admirers ; critics noted, for example, that the passages in his plays in which he criticises his compatriots for their suggestibility to, or tolerance of, Nazi attitudes, were frequently greeted with laughter from audiences, a sign that his "Beschimpfungen" had become predictable, and that he was, in effect, preaching to the converted. This was not always the case, though ; as the law-suits which followed some of his works proved, he was capable of being uncomfortably specific in his accusations. The real-life model for "Onkel Franz" in Die Ursache successfully sued Bernhard for libel, forcing him to delete a number of sentences containing comments deemed to be defamatory.⁷⁵ .

The most significant of Bernhard's brushes with the law followed the publication of Holzfällen in 1984. This book was subtitled "Eine Erregung", and, as Der Spiegel's account of the affair points out, the work had precisely that effect in the Viennese cultural circles which were the object of the author's scorn⁷⁶. Bernhard's former friend and collaborator, the composer Gerhard Lampersberg (the same "*geniale(r) und genauso verrückte(r) Komponist...*" who is mentioned in passing in Wittgensteins Neffe, 135), felt himself particularly insulted by the scurrilous portrait of the composer in the book, and sued Bernhard for libel. The ensuing confiscation of all copies of the work by "*die bewaffnete Polizei*"⁷⁷ provoked Bernhard to retaliate by banning the sale of all his books in Austria for

⁷⁴ Wendelin Schmidt-Dengler : Bernhard-Scheltreden. Um- und Abwege der Bernhard-Rezeption. In : Pitterschscher/Lachinger 1985

⁷⁵ The Residenz Verlag edition (1975, 116) contains the passage linking Catholicism and National Socialism in the dominant Salzburg mentality ; this was deleted from subsequent editions (including the paperback, published by dtv) following the successful libel case brought against the author by the "real" "Onkel Franz", who, Bernhard had claimed, exemplified these qualities. For an account of this episode and its consequences, see Martin Huber : Romanfigur klagt den Autor. Zur Rezeption von Thomas Bernhards Die Ursache. In : Wendelin Schmidt-Dengler /Martin Huber(Hg.) : Statt Bernhard. Über Misanthropie im Werk Thomas Bernhards, Wien 1987, 59-110

⁷⁶ Who's who in Wien, Der Spiegel, 3.9.1984

⁷⁷ T. Bernhard, FAZ, 15.11.1984. Reprinted in Dittmar(Hg.), 1990, 270-271

fifty years. The affair was soon settled, neither the suit nor the ban being pursued, but "*a very dramatic public and media-promoted spectacle was created*"⁷⁸ - and Holzfällen became a best-seller. As Michael Hamburger said:

*Undoubtedly it was wicked of Bernhard, as well as cavalier and lazy, to pick on identifiable persons, some of whom had been close friends, for another of his farcical exposures of vanity and pretentiousness, more tirades against the depravity and decadence of Vienna, more grumbles about its music and literature. The magnanimity demanded of those travestied in that book was the recognition that their real selves could no more be identical with those characters than the narrator's persona could be identical with Bernhard's real self...*⁷⁹

Perhaps so ; but the impression given is of another quasi-autobiographical work, which, like, say, Beton, is in the typically Bernhardian mode of "*Schimpftiraden und Scheltarien*" (Reich-Ranicki 1983) for most of its length until a change occurs in the final section. The "*Bedürfnis nach Zuwendung*" which Reich-Ranicki finds in the book, and the increasing humanity which he sees as a factor in the author's development, is signalled here by the closing passage, where the narrator declares that he loves Vienna and its people, even though he scorns and curses them. At least one Viennese, the critic Sigrid Löffler (never one of Bernhard's keenest supporters), was not convinced by this; in her essay on Holzfällen in Der Spiegel⁸⁰ she merely comments that "*Die Bosheit kippt um in Larmoyanz*" (a remark taken up by Meyerhofer 1985, 50, who, although much more an admirer of Bernhard is equally unhappy with the book's ending) and accuses Bernhard of "*Liebeskitsch*" and "*Haßkitsch*". Perhaps she lost patience with Bernhard's exaggerations - "*Diese Prosa lebt von ihrer Unverhältnismäßigkeit...*" - she would hardly be the first critic to do so. Or, more probably, she may have felt that the author had been unfair to the "*Wiener Halbberühmtheiten*" lampooned in the book ; the opening paragraphs of her essay

⁷⁸ Gerald Fetz, Thomas Bernhard. In : K.Bullivant (Ed.), The Modern German Novel, 1987, 103

⁷⁹ Hamburger 1986, 259

⁸⁰ Löffler, Die misanthropische Wortmühle, Der Spiegel, 10.9.1984. For a fuller account of the controversy, see Eva Schindler : Holzfällen. Eine Erregung. Dokumentation eines

suggest that she is certainly aware of the identities of those concerned.

What Bernhard achieved in Austrian cultural circles with Holzfällen was repeated in a wider context with the play Heldenplatz, which in 1988 (the fiftieth anniversary of the "Anschluß") struck a sensitive nerve at a time of international controversy over revelations of the war record of Austria's President, Kurt Waldheim, fears of a resurgence of anti-Semitism in Vienna, a continued rejection by many Austrians of "Vergangenheitsbewältigung" in the German manner, and a succession of scandals in public life which sapped national self-confidence and seemed to bear out Bernhard's damning judgments on his compatriots⁸¹. The play's political argument, expressed through the medium of a Viennese Jewish intellectual family whose members had been forced into exile (in Oxford), was that nothing had really changed in Austria since 1938, and that Nazism had not been eradicated but was only lying dormant, ready to re-emerge at a suitable moment. This was by no means a new insight for readers of his earlier works - for example, Die Ursache had given an equally condemnatory view of Salzburg - but what in 1975 might have been dismissed as mere rhetorical exaggeration seemed in the late 1980s to contain an uncomfortable grain of truth. Certainly the furious response of politicians and public indicated that this was Bernhard's greatest success in his career as a "Nestbeschmutzer" and "Störenfried", and critics were not slow to observe that the politicians who called for the play to be removed from the programme of the *Burgtheater* were reacting just as the author had wished. In refusing to give their consent to the performance of a play dealing with anti-Semitism, they were reminded, they would only confirm the outside world's worst suspicions of modern Austria⁸² ; so that, in the end, the play was premiered in

österreichischen Literaturskandals. In ; Schmidt-Dengler/Huber 1987, 13-58

⁸¹ See Josef Haslinger (1987) : Politik der Gefühle. Ein Essay über Österreich : and Gerhard Melzer (1988), Heimkehr mit Hindernissen. Streifzüge durchs tiefe Österreich. In : TuK Sonderband ; Bestandsaufnahme Gegenwartsliteratur.

⁸² Dittmar(Hg.), Werkgeschichte, 330-331

Vienna on November 4th, 1988, to a mixed critical reception.⁸³

It was the final work of the author - *In der Höhe*, which appeared three months later, was a "Jugendwerk", and Bernhard died in April 1989, leaving the literary world to unravel the paradox of how this intensely private and reclusive writer could have come to end his career with a huge public scandal and yet be one of the most admired, even loved, figures of his generation. The gap between public image and reality accounts for at least some of this puzzlement ; if Bernhard did shun the company of fellow writers and kept his distance from the *Literaturbetrieb* , that did not mean that his relationship to the world at large was always marked by the helplessness and hopelessness characteristic of many of his fictional characters. He travelled widely, despite his reluctance to leave Austria for good, and even after his "withdrawal" to Ohlsdorf this way of maintaining contact with a wider world continued to form a significant part of his stubbornly independent way of life..

Bernhard and "England "

Skwara (*MAL* 21, 3/4, 1988) claims that : "*Nur Österreich erhält feste Konturen in diesen vielen Dutzenden von Büchern, das Ausland dagegen, das Bernhard nur für seine Gegenentwürfe braucht, bleibt x-beliebig...*"(277). For the British reader, it is interesting to consider this statement in the light of the numerous mentions of England and the English which appear in his work. Critics have been slow to acknowledge this feature of Bernhard's writing (Craig 1972 is an exception) - Sebald (1990), in his obituary of the author, refers to the special significance of "England" for him, while Mayer (1989, 152) sees Bernhard's period of residence in England as being crucial in his development as a writer. Certainly his "England-Komplex" can evoke a strange mixture of associations, which contrast sharply with the somewhat morose and pessimistic tone often

⁸³ See Horton, Thomas Bernhard's *Heldenplatz....* for details.

adopted by post-World War Two British writers who concern themselves with the nation's self-image.

Many of Bernhard's central figures either spend time in England or encounter English characters - and in most cases find that the experience is a positive one (apart from the problems posed by the English climate). Examples include the year in Folkestone spent by the brothers in Amras, remembered as "*unser schönstes..., wie sich jetzt zeigt ; das Studium einer höheren Unklarheit...*"(76) ; in Verstörung, Saurau's memory of a visit to London, obsession with his absent son who is studying there, and fascination with old copies of the Times ; "Midland", in the story Midland in Stilfs, who seems to be typical of the civilised and well-balanced Englishmen recurring in Bernhard's work : Roithamer's Wittgenstein-like career in Cambridge in Korrektur ; the "*Enttäuschte Engländer*" and other English characters and episodes of Der Stimmenimitator ; the idea of Oxford as a place of refuge for the persecuted Viennese Jewish intellectuals in Heldenplatz.

Bernhard's conception of "England" - references to Scotland and Wales do occur too, but only rarely - certainly owes something to his own experience ; the time he spent in England, at the end of the 1950s and beginning of the 1960s, would seem to have coloured his view of the country. He claimed to have worked as a librarian at the Austrian Institute in London from 1960 to 1961 ; in the previous year, according to the Notiz to the *Gedicht Ave Vergil*, published in 1981, he was living in Oxford for at least part of the period in which the poem was written ("*Ave Vergil ist in den Jahren 59 und 60 in England, vor allem in Oxford, und in Sizilien, vor allem in Taormina, entstanden...*"). The section Fort (26-28) has a London setting, and some critics, noting Bernhard's own admission(in the Notiz) that among the works he was studying at the time was T.S.Eliot's The Waste Land, have detected the influence of Eliot in both the setting and tone of what is generally regarded as a somewhat derivative work. In a wider sense, this period must have been decisive for the development of Bernhard's prose writing - Frost was

published two years later, signalling his abandonment of poetry and bringing him widespread recognition for the first time. Later, in Verstörung, the Fürst's attraction to London ("*London...ist die einzige Stadt, in der ich auf Lebenszeit leben möchte...*", 161), although expressed in Saurau's typically contradictory fashion, could well reflect the city's own attraction for Bernhard in this period. The confident, cosmopolitan and prosperous London of the early 'sixties may well have seemed a very relaxed and civilised "Großstadt", making Vienna appear still more provincial and hateful to the Austrian writer haunted by the memories reflected in the autobiographical series. Another reference to London - in Der Keller(88), seems to hint at this ; "*London ist heute in Europa die einzige wirkliche Großstadt, und die ist nicht auf dem Kontinent, aber immerhin in Europa...*", he claims. He maintains that elsewhere in Europe, society is composed of "*Kunstmenschen*", produced by the school system, and is characterised by "*Marionettismus*" - a consequence of the process of industrialisation. What he calls the "*London- und Hausruckeffekt*", according to which one must live either in a genuine *Großstadt* or in the real countryside, is, says Bernhard, the only way of escaping the oppressive dominance of conformist bourgeois values, which are at their worst in small to medium-sized towns - like the Salzburg of his youth, as described in Die Ursache and Der Keller.

It is noticeable that throughout Bernhard's career the complex of ideas and associations evoked by "England" hardly seems to change. In his fiction, references to the country seem to focus on the triangle London-Oxford-Cambridge; on the equilibrium and inherited wisdom of the "Engländer", who contrast with the anguished and obsessed Austrian characters; on the "newspaper of record", the Times, which contrasts with the corrupt and unreadable Austrian press; on the elegance of the Savile Row clothing favoured by many of his vain and fastidious male characters. The fact that all this can amount to an almost touristic, clichéd vision, which appears to have little in common with the *real* England or Great Britain, might lead one to assume that this "England" is no more than a collection of

clichés which can be set against the shortcomings of Austria, as Skwara implies ; another example of the "Kulturtourismus" which seems to have been a feature of Bernhard's life⁸⁴ . For example, the purchase of the Times by Rupert Murdoch, and the paper's subsequent loss of prestige, find no reflection in Bernhard's work ; in Alte Meister, Reger is music critic for that newspaper, even though he resides permanently in Vienna. Similarly, the social changes which rendered "Oxbridge" less important as cultural centres and made London a rather more typical, less comfortable "Weltstadt" do not appear.

On the surface, this is hardly surprising. Bernhard has never sought to be a writer whose works can be read as social realism - he, and his central characters, are essentially preoccupied with philosophical and aesthetic questions, and the impacts of the external world, although often portrayed extremely vividly, tend to be filtered through the consciousness of the narrator or monologising central figure. Yet that does not mean that he, or his characters, show no awareness at all of current events. For example, in Midland in Stilfs the narrator describes how his relationship to Midland originated through the friendship of their fathers : "..., dessen Vater mit meinem Vater vor fünfundzwanzig Jahren auf der damals noch mit ihrer Bedeutungslosigkeit kämpfenden Londoner Universität studiert hat..." (16). In his speech Der Wahrheit und dem Tod auf der Spur, written in 1968 - a year whose events have, as pointed out in Chapter 1 of this study, developed into a "myth", signifying revolt and social unrest - Bernhard gave a surprisingly full cataloguing of those contemporary topics from which he seemed curiously detached and did *not* write about (essentially, the world-wide political turbulence of the time) because, he believed, they could only distract him from what he felt were his basic themes. The social and political problems he mentions includes "*das hilferufende England...*" - showing that if he does tend to idealize the country's cultural traditions, he is not unaware of its economic weakness. This theme

⁸⁴ See Der Stimmenimitator, Frankfurt/M. 1978, where the settings of the stories/anecdotes give a fair reflection of his itinerary.

reappears in Beton, when the sight of British sailing ships and yachts for sale in Palma provokes Rudolf's reflection : "...: *jetzt hat auch England abgedankt, sagte ich vor mich hin...*"(205)⁸⁵. Again, in Heldenplatz the ideal of Oxford as a refuge for Jewish intellectuals fleeing from the anti-Semitism of Vienna is relativised by a reference to British fascists (90). These examples show that, despite the apparent rejection of political action, Bernhard, as a compulsive traveller and a "victim" of the "*Zeitungskrankheit*" to which he admits in Der Atem, was certainly aware of events in the world around him, even if his response was to express disgust at politics and politicians in general.

Such sentiments are not unknown in post-war British literature, of course, and it is interesting to speculate on the extent to which Bernhard might have been influenced by, or felt an affinity with, his British contemporaries. Certainly, the British (and Irish) authors he mentions as influential - Joyce, Forster, Yeats, Eliot, Virginia Woolf - seem to belong to the European modernist tradition in general, rather than to the rather more parochial literary movements which emerged after World War Two. Seymour-Smith (1985, 658-9) compares Bernhard favourably to Ted Hughes, and concludes ; "...*the notion that Great Britain has anyone, of this generation, of this calibre, would be foolish*", while calling him an "*incorrigible curmudgeon*" - but as Seymour-Smith maintains, the sheer intensity of Bernhard's "*despairs and hatreds*" - at least in his major works - do make the irritability of the generation of the "Movement" or the "Angry Young Men", with their much narrower frame of cultural reference, seem somewhat trivial⁸⁶.

⁸⁵ Related to this statement are his remarks in the film Monologe auf Mallorca, reproduced in Krista Fleischmann, Thomas Bernhard. Eine Erinnerung (Vienna 1991), p. 57 : "...*die Engländer hab ich gern, weil die haben völlig abgehaust, sie liegen vollkommen am Boden...(sie) haben irgendwie vollkommen ihre hochtrabende Art aufgegeben...*"

⁸⁶ Some similarities are suggested, however, by the public images of some British writers of this period ; for example, Kingsley Amis's conservatism and misogyny, Philip Larkin's self-stylisation as the misanthropic, lonely bachelor - although differences in cultural and personal preoccupations are equally obvious. While Bernhard travelled widely, spoke several languages, and was influenced by many writers from beyond the German-language area (reflecting both the "multi-cultural" Austrian tradition and the long-established tendency of *Literaten* in mainland Europe to ignore national boundaries), the British writers both seemed to react to the modern world in a more parochial way, cultivating a defensive cultural nationalism.

If individual influences might be difficult to establish, then the mood of post-imperial nostalgia, which is common to both Britain and Austria at this time, could prove a more reliable measure of the importance of "England" in Bernhard's scale of values. Both societies remain marked by their imperial past, and in spite of the rise to power of the "Kleinbürger", be they Conservative prime ministers in Britain or Socialist chancellors in Austria, the "aristocratic" codes of behaviour common to the former ruling élites of both countries retain a powerful attraction - particularly in cultural matters⁸⁷. In Bernhard's case, this seems to find expression not merely in his preference for "high" culture and respect for tradition, but even in his life. Many of his friends and associates, from the Lampersbergs to the Wittgenstein family, came from Austria's upper class, and the snobbery which many of his (often ironically portrayed) characters express, although exaggerated to the point of parody, has at times been taken as reflecting his own views ; in this respect he might be compared with English writers displaying similar inclinations, such as Evelyn Waugh. This attitude can be contrasted with the American-inspired egalitarianism and materialism of the West German *Wirtschaftswunder*, and with the Soviet-influenced collectivism and egalitarianism of the post-war European Left (and, as mentioned in Chapter 1, can also be viewed as a reaction characteristic of many twentieth-century artists in modern bourgeois-liberal societies). Traditionally-minded Austrian and German-Jewish intellectuals, made uneasy by these tendencies, could find a more congenial climate in England's two ancient universities. Rudolf, in *Beton* (166-167) , talks of this :

Und einmal hatte ich gedacht, nach England zu gehen, möglicherweise ist es Oxford oder Cambridge, hatte ich gedacht, mich mit dieser Idee gleich in eine Reihe unserer hervorragendster Geister stellend, deren ein paar von den allerbedeutendsten ja in England und also in Oxford und in Cambridge studiert haben und dann dort unterrichtet haben...

⁸⁷ For earlier examples of Austrian anglophilia and the cult of the "English gentleman", influencing figures as diverse as Hofmannsthal and Theodor Herzl, see Carl E. Schorske, *Fin de Siècle Vienna : Politics and Culture* (London 1980)

One of the most illustrious of these "Geister" is Ludwig Wittgenstein ; the connections established by Bernhard with the Wittgenstein family, through his study of Ludwig's work - Seymour-Smith (1985, 659), claims that Bernhard "*has been obsessed rather than influenced*" by him - and his friendship with the philosopher's nephew, Paul (the subject of his 1982 book), are well known. Bernhard's view of England, therefore, can be seen as a product of both his own personal experience - an apparently happy sojourn in the country at a relatively untroubled time in post-war British history - and of his own intellectual inclinations - a fascination with cultural tradition, and cultural decline, combined with an intensive study of Wittgenstein and an admiration and longing for the aristocratic individualism and uncorrupted intellectual heritage which he associates with "Oxford" and "Cambridge". Hence the idea of study in England as an escape from Austria and its intellectual constrictions - as in Auslöschung, where Murau returns against his will from a year's study in London (in 1960, like Bernhard) to the family estate (Wolfsegg has five libraries, which are never used) and to an uncomprehending family - "*Warum muß es London sein, Oxford, fragten sie immer wieder, wo es doch Innsbruck auch täte*" (60). Bernhard is capable of telling jokes against the British - the three "Enttäuschte Engländer" who meet their end in the brief anecdote of that name in Der Stimmenimitator (51) are worthy citizens of Birmingham, and one wonders whether the author is deliberately adding to the store of jokes about that city, whose reputation for puritanism, philistinism and sheer ugliness has often made it the butt of witticisms from the self-consciously "cultured"⁸⁸. Similarly, the "*Engländer aus Wales*" encountered by Reger in Alte Meister speaks "*dieses von den Engländern gebrochene Deutsch, das alle Engländer sprechen, wenn sie glauben, sie können Deutsch, was aber niemals der Fall ist...*"(150). Yet such remarks do seem to reveal a genuine affection for

⁸⁸ It is typical too of the absurdist, Monty Pythonesque episodes which are so common in his work - e.g., the bird-stuffing scene in Korrektur, the Fürst's father eating pages from Schopenhauer's Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung in Verstörung, the grandfather's manuscript being eaten by a goat in Ein Kind, etc.

"England" on Bernhard's part. How this relates to his world-view in general is revealing ; seen in this light, he no longer seems to be the misanthrope who can only make damning public statements about his homeland, and an indication of the breadth of his cultural interests is given.

Donald G.Daviau reports that at the Linz colloquium of 1984, held in Bernhard's honour, "*members of the general public* " as much as scholars displayed enthusiasm for the author, defending his work with "*intensity and emotionalism* " ⁸⁹. If the cause of this reaction can be identified, then perhaps his own intensity and emotionalism, demonstrated not only in his unique prose style but also in the provocativeness of his public statements and the candour of his gradually more and more self-revealing prose works, are the key factors. At a time when many of his contemporaries were preoccupied with problems of political engagement, or struggling with abstract or idealised notions of what a "Dichter" should be, Bernhard was still able to ironise his role, as can be seen as early as in the film Drei Tage, when he says:

Was mich betrifft, bin ich kein Schriftsteller, ich bin jemand, der schreibt... Na, ich gelte ja als sogenannter ernster Schriftsteller, wie Bela Bartok als ernster Komponist, und der Ruf verbreitet sich...Im Grunde ist es ein sehr schlechter Ruf...Mir ist absolut unbehaglich dabei...(DT 152)

By following his grandfather's example of industriousness and dedication, writing against the odds as a "Lebensnotwendigkeit", he was able to overcome at least some of the disasters of his early life, and - in both his fiction and his autobiographical series - to produce work which Michaelis could characterise as "*Protokolle einer verzweifelten Überlebenslust* " ⁹⁰. This seemed to derive from a "commitment", to employ a familiar term from post-World War Two literary

⁸⁹ In : MAL 21, 3/4 (Special Thomas Bernhard Issue), i

⁹⁰In: R. Michaelis, Einmal Hölle und zurück. "Die Kälte - eine Isolation". Der vierte Band von Thomas Bernhards Jugenderinnerungen. Die Zeit, 27. März 1981

history, of a quite new kind. Bernhard described himself as "*der typische Geschichtenzerstörer*", at a time when German-language writers were often straining for their "Geschichten", and their moral "messages", to be taken seriously. This unorthodox self-definition illustrates how, whether inspired by a professed "Gleichgültigkeit" deriving from his own early experiences, or by a self-confidence which made him wary of conventional stories with more or less explicit meaning, his stylistic eccentricities and apparent literary "extremism" were able to throw new light on the question of the writer's relationship to his audience and to his world in the post-1945 period. And it is true that, in spite of his constant negation, his determination to communicate it to an audience and his position in society as a successful and much-honoured author paradoxically functioned as a negation of that negation, as Esslin (1985) points out. Schmidt-Dengler (1986, 87) makes a similar point, when, in discussing Alte Meister, he talks of Bernhard's "*Kunstvernichtungskunst*" - an idea which is expanded by Sorg⁹¹ :

Aber wir kennen den Traktat (i.e. from Der Weltverbesserer - CDE) doch gar nicht ? Dahinter scheint sich mir der geheime Sinn aller Bernhard-Texte über gelungene oder noch zu schreibende Werke zu verbergen : sie selbst sind das oder wollen das sein, wovon sie, als Andeutung handeln. In ihnen hält der Autor zwar Gericht über andere Autoren (Künstler, Wissenschaftler, Denker) karikiert und ridiculisiert sie (und damit sich), aber jeder dieser Texte strebt nach künstlerischer Perfektion und damit Verbesserung der Welt. Thomas Bernhard dürfte nach dem Tod Arno Schmidts der einzige bedeutende deutschsprachige Autor sein, der trotz aller präntendierten Nonchalance, so emphatisch an der Kunst als letzte Sinngebung des Sinnlosen glaubt.

The quality which Helen Chambers⁹² identifies as crucial to Bernhard's writing, "*an ability to combine the subjective and the objective, the inner and outer world*" could be seen as the key not only to the autobiographical series but to Bernhard's work as a whole. Personal experience and inner reflection combine to create both a distinctive aesthetic and a world-view peculiar to the author. Examples of the latter include the intense preoccupation with culture and its negative effects

⁹¹ In : Bartsch/Goltschnigg/Melzer(Hg.), In Sachen Thomas Bernhard, 1983, 157

⁹² Helen Chambers, Thomas Bernhard. In : K.Bullivant (Ed.), After the Death of Literature : West German Writers of the 1970s, Oxford/Munich/New York 1989, p.209

on the personality, his view of the importance of history and cultural tradition, as reflected in his idea of "England" as well as in his often bleak and disturbing portrayals of Austria, or in the distinctively "Bernhardian" tyrannical obsessives and destructive family relationships which recur in much of his work. Yet, as the tributes to him demonstrated, his highly individual treatment of these themes was capable of provoking reactions of enthusiasm, identification and irritation in equal measure. If his sheer productivity makes it difficult to formulate a conclusion as to the status of much of his work, it is obvious that the early novels and the "Jugenderinnerungen" stand among the most striking German writing of the last three decades. The publication of In der Höhe, and the recent re-discovery of his journalistic work for the Salzburg newspaper Demokratisches Volksblatt in the 1950s, mean that more attention is now being given to Bernhard's earliest writings - with fresh perspectives on both the biographical and literary levels as a result. The autobiographical series can therefore be regarded as the point in Bernhard's career when he began to reveal what lay behind the "*dickleibiger Panzer gegen permanente Existenzbrüche*" (Tschapke, 89), which he had acquired as a result of his early experiences ; the "real" author behind the "*deliberate and in certain senses courageously maintained solipsist mask*" (Seymour-Smith 1985, 659) became a little more comprehensible. But it is characteristic of Bernhard that these revelations were far from complete ; doubtless future biographers will fill in the large gaps left by the fragmentary nature of the "Jugenderinnerungen", although even then the question of his radical negation, of his refusal to acknowledge simple notions of "individuality", will remain to challenge anyone who claims to have found the "truth" about his life.

CHAPTER FOUR

PETER HANDKE

Like his Austrian contemporary Thomas Bernhard, Peter Handke came to be identified as representative of a tendency in German-language writing which set him apart from most of the literary figures of his time. Just as the Swiss authors Max Frisch and Friedrich Dürrenmatt had won acclaim in the 1950s and 1960s with plays and prose works which expressed a predominant mood of the post-World War Two period - the examination of the individual conscience, the re-evaluation of the past, protest against unthinking obedience and social and intellectual conformity - the more radically inner-directed and formally innovative nature of Handke's and Bernhard's early work coincided with the mood of questioning which followed the political upheavals of the late 1960s and the proclamation of the "end of literature" by the revolutionaries of the West German Student Movement. According to its critics, this much-debated "Neue Innerlichkeit" or "Neue Subjektivität" was nothing more than solipsism, a retreat into self-exploration which had little direct relevance to society at large and revived suspect tendencies from pre-1945 German literary history - but it nonetheless became a significant movement during the 1970s, and has continued to influence the course of German-language writing ever since. Yet both Bernhard and Handke had established their reputations before 1970, and, even though they would both disavow purely political aims in their writing, their public statements show that neither was totally indifferent to the world around him ; as Austrians, both have been concerned with the problem of national identity, as well as developing individual strategies for survival in the face of a world perceived as hostile and sometimes incomprehensible.

Even in purely biographical terms, the two men have much in common. Both grew up in the Austria of the Second World War and its aftermath, thereby experiencing the chaotic conditions and shortages of the time, as portrayed in

Bernhard's autobiographical volumes, in Handke's Wunschloses Unglück and in the numerous passages in his other novels, from his debut Die Hornissen (1966)¹ to his 1980s work (particularly Die Wiederholung), in which the narrator recalls his childhood. In the opening pages of Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied, feelings of horror and fear are traced back to childhood experiences such as hearing bomber aircraft overhead in wartime ; and this passage has been taken as the key to the moods of "Angst" and "Panik" which, it is claimed, tend to dominate Handke's characters and works. Similarly, in Die Ursache Bernhard gives an account of the bombing of Salzburg which, even if (as some critics maintain) it is not truly autobiographical but a "selective", exaggerated, or even fictionalised account, hints at childhood traumas portrayed more explicitly elsewhere in the book. In both cases irregular family circumstances also played a significant role ; both writers were born out of wedlock, for Bernhard's bourgeois family a scandal which necessitated sending his mother away to Holland, where the child was born in humiliating conditions in 1931². Although mother and child soon returned to Vienna to find acceptance in the family, Bernhard locates the origins of his "Mißtrauen" in this experience and, according to his autobiographical writings, only achieves a kind of reconciliation with her when she is on her deathbed. The dominant figure in the family was his maternal grandfather, the writer Johannes Freumbichler, an imposing and eccentric figure to whom Bernhard repeatedly pays tribute in the autobiographical volumes and who also furnishes the model for many of the "Männerfiguren" in his novels. Only his grandfather, "*der mich wirklich geliebt hat*", provided a relief from his feeling of "*Alleinsein*", he says - providing a link with Handke, whose grandfather was a formative influence in the midst of a similar, difficult family situation³. Handke too has written on his relationship with his

¹ For an account of the regional and social background to Handke's first novel, see Hans Widrich : Die Hornissen - auch eine Mosaik aus Unterkärnten. In : Fellingner 1985, pp.25-35

² See Drei Tage, in Der Italiener, 1971 , p.146

³ See Pütz, KLK, p.2, for an account of Handke's early life, and interesting speculations as to how family circumstances might have influenced his literary work.

mother - the book Wunschloses Unglück is entirely devoted to an account of her life and was prompted by her suicide, its personal and autobiographical tone drawing praise from critics previously unimpressed by his experimental, formally innovative early works. As the novel demonstrates, after a brief period in East Berlin the family lived in poverty in the Austrian countryside ; the grandfather was a Slovene, and Handke has increasingly stressed his Slovenian origins in his recent work. He himself spoke Slovene as a child, and has, on occasion, claimed that German is his second language ; brought up in a mixed community in the border region of Kärnten, he is certainly aware of both its disputed history and the continuing discrimination against the Slovene minority on the part of the German-speaking majority of his - and Ingeborg Bachmann's - home province. Perhaps this factor helps account for his mistrust of both the Austrian state and language in general, which, as numerous commentators have observed, draws on the tradition of "Sprachskepsis" associated with Wittgenstein, Hofmannsthal's Chandos-Brief, Karl Kraus, etc., yet seems rooted far more in personal experience. It even extends to a rejection of conventional biography, as he tells Herbert Gamper (1987) :

Also so viele Leute, viel zu viele, die mich - was an sich schon eine Zumutung ist - beschreiben wollen, machen das auch mit Hilfe der Geschichte und verdoppeln dann das Ungehörige. Ich fühl mich nicht beschreibbar...(132)

- denying that his identity is separate from that of natural phenomena or man-made objects, he feels, he says, "*wirklich geschichtslos und sogar antigeschichtlich*". A conventional life-story is "*eine Sache des Boulevard, auch wenn das in Büchern steht, auch wenn das sich als seriös gebende Wissenschaftler anstellen*" (Gamper 133). This statement is related to the rejection of historically determined identity in his work, a tendency which sometimes, rightly or wrongly, irritates critics, but there is no doubt that some knowledge of the author's life helps to place his work in context ; even if Handke does reject the conventionally

chronological and descriptive approach, there are numerous echoes of autobiography in his writings.⁴

Like Bernhard, Handke attended a traditional Catholic school and was thereby exposed to traditional Austrian cultural values ; both writers rebelled against this upbringing, but in each case the rebellion took a distinctive form. Bernhard channeled his revolt into a rejection of the path planned for him by leaving school and going "*in die entgegengesetzte Richtung*", only to contract the illness which was to determine the course of his life. Handke was rather more fortunate in that his adolescence occurred in the 1950s, a dozen years after Bernhard's, and in peacetime. Austria was beginning to recover from the depredations of the war, and more possibilities were opening up, even to an "outsider" of humble origins such as himself - in this respect he is unlike Bernhard, whose family connections helped him to find work as a journalist on the Salzburg newspaper Demokratisches Volksblatt, and whose musical knowledge and ability would guarantee him acceptance in Austrian cultural circles. Indeed, Bernhard's studies at the Mozarteum were cut short by the illness which forced him to abandon his intended career as a singer, but his abiding love of music helped him not only to survive, but to develop that close involvement with the cultural traditions of his country which can be seen particularly in his later writing. Handke too showed an interest in music, but of a very different kind ; he grew up at a time when Austria, along with the rest of Europe, was beginning to experience the impact of American popular culture, and cites Faulkner as one of the first authors to inspire him. Later, his taste for American - and British - rock, blues and country music was plain from many passages in his works, as was his enthusiasm for Hollywood cinema.

⁴ It may well be that he has abandoned this hostility ; in addition to the increasingly autobiographical tone evident in his recent *Versuche* , he did not object to Adolf Haslinger's Peter Handke. Jugend eines Schriftstellers (Salzburg 1992), a work which was published too late to be considered in this study. However, this book, which gives a detailed account of Handke's life from childhood to his literary breakthrough, shows a close knowledge of its subject's social and family background, and includes numerous extracts from Handke's school work and from letters to his mother - all of which would indicate that Handke, in spite of the comments cited above, was willing to assist Haslinger in his biographical project.

Handke is also prone to criticise his homeland in strong terms - his most quoted remark of this kind being "*Das Fette, an dem ich wüрге : Österreich*"⁵. Yet, unlike Bernhard, he has chosen to live outside Austria for much of his career, after his early association with the avant-garde *Grazer Gruppe* ; making his name with a broadside delivered at the 1966 meeting of *Gruppe 47*, the group of writers which had done much to determine the course of post-war German literature⁶. This made good copy, as much for Handke's youth and Beatle-like appearance as for his criticism of the "*Beschreibungsimpotenz*" of the works featured in the public readings. The event had taken place in the United States, at Princeton University, an indication that this once challenging group was coming to represent a kind of "establishment" - and Handke seemed to stand for the new and questioning generation which was seeking its identity in the Student Movement. For a time, it appeared as if Handke was happy to go along with this, signing a contract with the prestigious Suhrkamp publishing house, moving to Germany and producing a series of formally experimental prose (and stage) works which were a radical departure from the post-war norms established by the likes of Böll, Grass and Frisch, yet fully in tune with the mood of experiment and revolt which marked cultural production throughout the Western world in the late 1960s. In the process Handke became "*the first media personality of German literary history*" (Demetz 1986). Yet he was far from being an orthodox West German revolutionary - a fact which can be explained in part by his Austrian background.

Critics have pointed out that the rebellion of the younger generation in post-war Austria was aesthetic rather than political, reflecting both the country's tradition of apolitical writing and the precarious nature of the *Alpen-Republik*, seeking inspiration in the Habsburg past. This led to a conservatism, expressed in literature by the writers associated with the Austrian branch of the PEN club. However, the

⁵*Das Gewicht der Welt*, 1977, p.21

⁶ Reproduced in : Im Wortlaut : Peter Handkes "Auftritt" in Princeton und Hans Mayers Entgegnung. In : *TuK*, H.24, 5.Aufl., November 1989, pp.17-20

cultural inheritance from the late Habsburg era and the inter-war period included many of what have since come to be regarded as the key works and major figures of modernist and avant-garde movements in twentieth-century Europe - Freud, Wittgenstein, Rilke, Musil, Kraus, Schönberg, Berg, Webern, Klimt, Kafka - the list is virtually endless, and today the Austrian government is only too happy to acknowledge the artistic achievements of the past, energetically promoting them throughout the world (Keuschnig, the hero of Handke's Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung and press attaché at the Austrian Embassy in Paris, would undoubtedly have participated in this). In the 1950s and '60s, however, this was not the significant (and lucrative) cultural industry it has since become, and the recovery of the modernist tradition in literature was signalled by the emergence of small groups of avant-garde writers in Graz and Vienna (see Best/Wolfschütz 1980). Both groups continued the tradition of linguistic and formal experimentation - in direct contrast not only to the "restaurative" tendencies of the older generation but also the predominant mode of realistic and socio-critical writing in West Germany. Handke's Princeton speech, and his early prose texts with their clear debt to Robbe-Grillet and the French *nouveau roman* illustrate this, showing how far removed he was from the preoccupations of the West German "mainstream" ; even though, as Linstead (1988, p.31) observes, he shares this distance with many Vienna and Graz writers less famous than himself.

Handke and popular culture

Handke's development is characterised by a provocative public image (which he has tried to live down in recent years), a high level of literary "productivity", and a complex style which encompasses fictional creation, autobiographical elements and direct authorial interventions in varying combinations, depending on the work in question. His initial "image" was comparable to that of the rock idols of the 1960s, whom he admired so much ; the Beatles, the Rolling Stones and Bob Dylan. This

was not simply the consequence of his fashionable appearance. Like many of his contemporaries he came under the influence of American popular culture, as is plain in his early work. In his essay on the *Gruppe 47* meeting at Princeton, he claims that his attendance was a result of this enthusiasm :

...ich habe keine Meinung über die Gruppe gehabt und kann mich deshalb als unbefangen bezeichnen. Ich habe mich gefreut, nach Amerika zu kommen, weil ich bis dahin noch nicht in Amerika gewesen war. Ich habe mich gefreut, endlich nach Oxford in Mississippi zu kommen, wo William Faulkner gelebt hat. Ich habe mich gefreut auf die Beatbands, die ich vielleicht dort kennenlernen würde...⁷

In 1966, this passage would have seemed daring ; the Vietnam war was producing waves of anti-American feeling among the radical young, and Handke, as an admirer of Bob Dylan, would know his song *Oxford Town*, which commented bitterly on the hostile treatment meted out to Civil Rights campaigners in the Deep South. Yet, characteristically, he ignores "causes" and talks of visiting Oxford merely because of Faulkner's residence there - an enterprise which would itself be risky, given the suspicion which might be provoked by a long-haired and fashionably-dressed young foreigner in the tense climate of Mississippi at that time. Furthermore, he talks of "Beatbands" - in Mississippi he would be more likely to encounter blues- or country and western singers, and in any case "beat" music, as it was then known, was still regarded as the province of teenagers, unlike jazz, which, like the cinema and the detective novel, had attained a kind of respectability among European - particularly French - intellectuals.⁸ This was to change in the next few years, as "beat" music, in line with its audience, grew up to become "rock" - today an established, generally predictable form of music which has found its place in the commercial entertainment industry and is discussed even in the *Feuilletons* of the most distinguished newspapers. Yet in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the time of Handke's early work, it still carried subversive, rebellious overtones, signalling a

⁷ *Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms*, 1972., p.29

⁸It had even penetrated into German literature - witness Oskar Matzerath's post-war stint as a jazz drummer in *Die Blechtrommel*, and Grass's recent public readings with a jazz drummer as accompanist.

rejection of the traditions of commercialised entertainment and a desire to make more personal statements than those permitted by the conventions of the "sophisticated" popular song. It thus became a part of the general cultural revolt which produced both the highly politicised West German Student Movement (with its equivalents in other countries) and the vague, international movement, sometimes drug-inspired, often hedonistic, encompassing the established avant-garde and elements of pop culture and referred to as the "Underground" - with interaction at various levels between the two groups. Both literature⁹ and youth culture throughout the German language area were influenced by this generational shift, particularly in West Germany, transforming the overall cultural climate - due to the irresistible momentum of the commercial entertainment industry - and influencing society in general, with the emergence of the "Alternativler", who seem to have become a permanent feature of German society long after the original American hippies, and those of other European countries, have disappeared.

Recently Handke has commented that, in the earlier phases of his career, he was to a great extent a "*Kind meiner Zeit*" (Gamper 1987). His statement in Das Gewicht der Welt (1977), rejecting the "Universal-Pictures" which formerly impressed him, could be interpreted as a recognition of the transient nature of the popular culture of his time - were it not for the fact that "*die konkrete Poesie*", structuralism and Freud are among the items rejected. Given his subsequent development, it would indeed be erroneous to categorise him, even on the basis of his early works, under the heading "Literature and sub-culture". It is true that some of this early output is, in both form and content, fairly typical of what could be found in late-sixties underground newspapers and small literary magazines - e.g., parts of the collection Die Innenwelt der Außenwelt der Innenwelt or some of the essays and reviews on film and other aspects of popular culture. Yet, unlike many of his contemporaries, he was equally interested in, and capable of drawing upon

⁹ See Bullivant/Hinton Thomas, 1974 ; Waine, in Bullivant 1989 ; etc., etc.

influences from, his own tradition - as shown by his essay on Horváth and his praise of Bernhard's *Verstörung* - while his criticisms of Brecht and of "Engagement" in literature portend the distancing from the mainstream Left which was to become increasingly explicit in his work during the 1970s and 1980s. It was this grounding in European, or even Austrian literary tradition which enabled Handke to avoid the pitfalls of much of the pop-inspired writing of the '60s ; just as the youth culture could scarcely achieve self-sufficiency without recourse to the benefits, financial and otherwise, of the consumer society it claimed to reject, so the total rejection of literature, with the exception of a few cult figures, from Hesse to Ginsberg, only produced a mass of shallow, and now very dated writing. Perhaps it was a recognition of this fact which provoked Handke's renewed emphasis on the importance of tradition - even though the path he has subsequently taken seems to be influenced by his experiences of the 1960s, in more than one aspect.

A useful way of assessing Handke's attitude to pop culture may be to compare its role in his work with that expressed in a book by an author both stylistically and ideologically more typical of the West German mainstream : *Heißer Sommer*, by Uwe Timm. This novel, which won praise for its portrayal of student life in the late '60s, tells the story of a representative hero, the student Ullrich, who develops from a frustrated and anarchically-inclined would-be bohemian, bored with his studies and sceptical of the "*Lauter vertrocknete Seminar marxisten*" of the SDS, into a convinced revolutionary, as a result of increasing politicisation and in particular the example of the DKP member Petersen. Before this decisive step is taken, there are numerous passages set in the apartments and "*Wohngemeinschaften*" of the *Szene* in Munich (Schwabing) and Hamburg ; in these, reference is frequently made to aspects of the student/youth culture of the time - particularly its music¹⁰. The performers and records mentioned in these scenes are those whom the young

¹⁰ Although Ullrich takes his girlfriends to the cinema to see Godard films and old Westerns ; Handke would share his preferences, as his writing on film indicates ; so would Wim Wenders, then writing film criticism in Munich - see *Emotion Pictures*, 1989, for examples

Handke would also have listened to - the Rolling Stones, the Byrds, the Beatles, the Mothers of Invention (whose records and shows satirising the "American Way of Life" were acclaimed in Germany and beyond as rock's nearest equivalent to European political cabaret), Bob Dylan, the MC5 (spokesmen for the curious "White Panther Party"). Yet this music functions mainly as the background to Ullrich's development, in contrast to Handke's tendency to foreground, in a far more personal way, the impact made by his preferred singers or groups. In the end, Ullrich abandons all that it seems to stand for - i.e. the hedonism and self-indulgence of the student "revolutionaries" - for organised political activity in the wider society. Yet, unlike Handke's lonely rejection of his contemporaries' way of life in *Kindergeschichte*, there is a sense that he is putting away childish things to assume a conventional adult role, rather as if joining the Party were for him the prelude to the acquisition of a wife and a mortgage - which, given the political developments of subsequent years, could be seen as a possible outcome. Critics have indeed found the novel's "*Happy ending*" unconvincing, and Timm's characterisation of his hero somewhat sketchy; although Bullivant (1987) remarks that Ullrich is seemingly motivated by "*fear of existential emptiness*" and is thus "*a sort of latterday Werther*" rather than a stalwart revolutionary - a view which interestingly echoes what has been taken by some critics to be Handke's own motivation.

Handke's development was, however, rather different from that of Ullrich. His early public image hinted at an aggressive, sometimes violent assertion of the right to live his life as he wished¹¹; this recalled his mid-sixties contemporaries on the pop scene, notably Bob Dylan, with his abandonment of folk-protest songs for a more personal, sceptical, beatnik-influenced style of writing and living¹², and Mick

¹¹ Hern (1971, p.12) reports an arrest following a fracas outside a Frankfurt rock'n'roll club.

¹² Dylan's performance at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival, accompanied by an electrically amplified rock group, challenged the conventions of the "folk" music world and generated a controversy (between academic, sometimes politically committed, traditionalists and modernist, pop-influenced experimenters, representing two "generations" in the folk song revival movement) oddly similar in tone to that which followed Handke's Princeton appearance a year later.

Jagger, with his "Swinging London" dandyism and amoral outlook. In its time, this was a characteristic pose among the young, but it did not necessarily impress seasoned literary critics, and Handke subsequently found it necessary to live it down. He had become the victim of his image, attracting sarcasm from establishment critics such as Marcel Reich-Ranicki even when, in the 1970s, his writing had taken on a less overtly provocative style. And, although he had been nurtured, in a sense, by the "counter-culture", in many of his later works he began to express a deep mistrust of the forms it had taken in the West German context ; for example, the passages in Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire and Kindergeschichte in which he makes it plain that the mores of the post-1968 generation have very little in common with his own. Nonetheless, this change of heart was not accompanied by an abandonment of his interest in "popular" modes of expression, as the references to pop songs, film and television in his fiction (and his notebooks and journalism) show ; even in 1990, when he might well have been expected to have "grown out" of this early enthusiasm, he published a Versuch über die Jukebox.

In fact, during the 1970s Handke involved himself increasingly in film-making, from the early collaboration with the director Wim Wenders, entitled 3 amerikanische LPs and based around rock music and its emotional impact, to films of his own novels, with Wenders (Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter, Falsche Bewegung) and in his own right (Die linkshändige Frau). This coincided with the international success of what was referred to as the *New German Cinema* - the group of talented directors whose films made West Germany, for a few years, the home of the liveliest national cinema in Europe¹³. The themes of many of these films, particularly Wenders' "road movies", echo those of Handke's novels of the 1970s - lonely, alienated heroes seeking to establish a "lost connection" and travelling through vividly-filmed wilderness and urban landscapes in journeys which recall Sorger's in Langsame Heimkehr. The soundtracks of Wenders' films

¹³ See Elsaesser, A Retrospect on the New German Cinema, GLL XLI, April 1988, pp. 271-292

employ pop music in a way which invites comparisons with its use in Handke's work - it is used in a selective, "personal" way, to suit the mood of the scene (for example the little-known Kinks' song reflecting the dilemma of the central character of Der amerikanische Freund). This is quite different from the predominant Hollywood fashion of using familiar rock music on film soundtracks in the hope of attracting the "youth market", and reflects the fact that Wenders, as his early writings¹⁴ show, shares Handke's enthusiasm for the rock of the 1950s and '60s - to the extent that, when forced to review a sub-standard film, he would dismiss it in a few words and use the remaining space to praise new LPs instead, thereby illustrating the tendency in this period to treat pop records with the seriousness previously reserved for forms of expression based on, or related to, literature.

Handke's "French connections" - residence, reception and translations

Indeed Handke's closeness to the cinema, rock music and detective fiction¹⁵ greatly facilitated his international reception. Whereas in the German-speaking world he remained a controversial - if widely-read - writer, his absolute rejection of the conventional radicalism of the German New Left winning him few friends during the politically turbulent 1970s and the increasingly personal tone of his work leading, as he admits,¹⁶ to a decline in its sales, his reputation elsewhere continued to grow. He had initially attracted attention beyond Germany because of his early plays, which appeared during a widespread mood of experimentation in world theatre and were performed in translation in Britain and the United States, to some acclaim. His change of emphasis in the early 1970s, from drama to prose works, was accompanied by a move to Paris, a city which is still, perhaps, more of a

¹⁴ Collected in Emotion Pictures, 1989

¹⁵ E.g. Patricia Highsmith - whose Ripley's Game was the source of Wenders' Der amerikanische Freund - Raymond Chandler, whose The Long Goodbye inspired the title Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied, etc.

¹⁶ See the interview in Der Spiegel, 16/1990, p.230

cultural capital than any major city of the German-speaking world (he had left Austria soon after the publication of his first works and had subsequently lived in Düsseldorf and Berlin). Handke remained there for much of the decade, and it serves as the setting for much of his work of the period, from sections of Als das Wünschen noch geholfen hat (1974) to Kindergeschichte (1981). This extended period of residence hinted at an affinity with French literature and culture, which had found expression in early essays such as Die Literatur ist romantisch¹⁷ where he takes up, and criticises, Sartre's idea of the writer's *engagement*, as well as in his preoccupation with structuralism and interest in the various types of film which fascinated French *cinéastes*, from Hollywood genre cinema and B-movies to avant-garde experimentalism and the *films d'auteur* of such well-known French directors as Godard and Truffaut. In particular, a French influence can be perceived in Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung (1975) with its Paris setting and central character whose thoughts and behaviour recall both the unpredictable leading (male) characters of Godard's 1960s films and Roquentin in Sartre's La Nausée. French influences will assume a still more prominent role in Handke's 1980s writing - not merely through the choice of Cézanne as the "*Menschlichkeitslehrer der Jetztzeit*" in Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire, but also with a series of translations from the French - of works by a wide range of authors : Emmanuel Bove, Francis Ponge, René Char, Georges-Arthur Goldschmidt, Marguerite Duras, Julien Green and Patrick Modiano. This openness to influences from beyond the German-speaking world could be interpreted, once again, as a consequence of Handke's Austrian background ; the Graz and Vienna Groups, with their interest in linguistic experimentation, were receptive to movements such as Surrealism and Dada, which were, in the literary world at least, mostly ignored or derided in post-war West Germany. In addition, there are some affinities in the area of cultural history - an imperial past, a Catholic tradition and an idea of culture as a kind of "universal",

¹⁷ In : Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms (1972), 35-50

civilising, even spiritual endeavour - between Austria and France, which create a kind of mutual understanding seldom found in recent Franco-German cultural relations. But the Parisian literary world is also far more susceptible to fads and fashions than its equivalents in other major cities, and Handke, a demonstrably "modern" figure with the appearance of a student or rock musician, experimental texts, stubbornly independent way of life and interest in film and the *série noire*, fulfilled the French media's requirements of a successful contemporary author. The films of Wenders, himself, like all film-makers of ability, regarded as an *auteur* in France, only added to Handke's cultural *standing*, and he made his film of Die linkshändige Frau there. Later, the French discovery of the heritage of *fin-de-siècle* Viennese culture in the early 1980s, stimulated by such events as the "Vienne 1900" exhibition in Paris's Centre Pompidou¹⁸, contributed to the prestige not only of Handke, but of Austrian writing in general.

The French admiration of Handke reached extraordinary heights, a process described by the French *germaniste* Jacques LeRider, who compares it with the (then) much more modest reception of Thomas Bernhard's work in his country and concludes that much of it is merely a question of fashion. To support this argument, he quotes the Austrian writer Georg Schmid :

*Nie näher geprüfte Mechanismen wie journalistische Meinungsbildung führen schließlich, nach repetierender Ingerenz der Germanistik, zur Erstellung des Kanons. Aus unangreifbaren Positionen werden schließlich Wahrheiten verkündet. Ein amüsantes Beispiel aus Westeuropa : Poirot-Delpech, literarischer Chefkolumnist von Le Monde, sagt uns daß Handke der ultimate Dichter des 20. Jahrhunderts sei und daß niemand sonst eigentlich noch zu schreiben brauche, weil das denkmögliche Optimum bereits erreicht sei.*¹⁹

Nevertheless, the fact that Handke's work has continued to find a positive reception in France, together with his recent return to Paris, hints at an enduring affinity with French culture which will be discussed in more detail later in this

¹⁸ See the book published to accompany this exhibition, Vienne 1880-1938 : L'Apocalypse Joyeuse (sous la direction de Jean Clair), Paris 1986

¹⁹ Quoted in J. LeRider, Bernhard in Frankreich. In : Pittertschatscher/Lachinger 1985, pp. 162-3

chapter. Yet, between outbursts of fan-like enthusiasm such as that described above, and total rejections of his work - for one British Germanist it is characterised by "*pretentiousness...an underlying affected inscrutability, a wilful obscurity, cloaking nothing in particular, that has all too often overawed and intimidated the critics...*"²⁰ - although an exception is made for Wunschloses Unglück - it is sometimes difficult to attain a balanced perspective on Handke's writing. And, what is more, it could be argued that there is little in Handke's fictional work to connect with, say, the idea of the *honnête homme*. His central characters are usually isolated figures who seek to escape from their unhappy condition, and who achieve it not through any concerted plan of action, or by means of interacting with, and learning from, others, but rather from moments of sudden and mysterious illumination which can bewilder the reader accustomed to looking for patterns of cause and effect in fiction. It is this which provokes the diversity of responses to Handke's writing, particularly as it has become the predominant feature in his recent work. If such a tendency can be subjected to rational analysis, then perhaps the title given by Peter Demetz (1986) to his chapter on Handke, "*A Fragile Witness*", could serve as a definition of the psychological state of the central characters/narrators, and hence of the background against which the moments of epiphany or transcendence have to be seen. Again, parallels with Bernhard spring to mind ; although Handke's central characters, unlike Bernhard's, neither suffer from feelings of megalomania and frustrated artistic ambition nor express precisely-catalogued and obsessive justifications for their rejection of society, they are caught up in their own patterns of thought in much the same way. The main difference seems to be that whereas in Bernhard the key factor which puts all human endeavour into its proper perspective is the inevitability of death (his most frequently quoted remark being, "*es ist alles lächerlich, wenn man an den Tod denkt*"), Handke's characters, while equally sensitive to the impacts of the outside world on the individual's consciousness (e.g.

²⁰ Sandford, in NGS 7, 1979, p.222

Bloch in Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter) can also find sources of healing, even of enlightenment, in external reality. To illustrate this it is only necessary to look at the typical portrayal of nature in Bernhard (who, like Handke, acknowledges the influence of Stifter in this context) - for example in Verstörung, in which it reflects Saurau's overwhelming sense of doom and decay, with Handke's tendency in his work of the 1980s to find in natural forms a refuge and a way of knowledge leading to both self-development and what is perceived as true artistic creativity ; this is stated most directly in Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire.

LANGSAME HEIMKEHR and its consequences

Mention of a "way of knowledge" evokes the language of mysticism, and it is with the tetralogy Langsame Heimkehr that this tendency begins to play a significant role in Handke's work. The tetralogy has been widely understood as a change of direction, in much the same way that Bernhard's autobiographical volumes were seen by critics as a new departure - although neither set of works really signalled a radical break with the author's past literary practice.²¹ Indeed the first section of the tetralogy, the *Erzählung* Langsame Heimkehr, is a fictional narrative which has many points in common with its immediate predecessors : the lone hero moving through the world in a somewhat "disconnected" and alienated way, as the geologist Sorger travels home from his research station in Alaska via San Francisco, Berkeley, the Rocky Mountains and New York (reversing the direction of the westward journey of Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied); the alternation of landscapes of wild nature and modern cities; the detached account of the relationship with the Indian woman; the re-appearance of rock music with the concert by the "Sänger" in Berkeley; and finally (and most significantly) the mysterious and illogical "moment of true feeling" - the "*gesetzgebender Augenblick*" (LH 179) - in

²¹ Nonetheless Wesche, in GQ 1989, identifies the new element in Handke's work as "*Die Sehnsucht nach einem größeren Zusammenhang*".

the New York coffee shop, which results, we are told, in the "healing" by Sorger of another human being. Up to this point, Handke's characters have been, as Demetz puts it, "*enclosed in their emotions*", and have displayed an "*unwillingness or inability to believe that religiosity or philosophies of the past or present offer hope or consolation*". While at the beginning of Langsame Heimkehr the former point is still valid for Sorger, the narrators/central characters of the remainder of the tetralogy come to develop a personal "law" which often seems to incorporate traditional religious or mystical traits; and Sorger himself changes during the course of his journey, as he adjusts to the realities of the modern world, enjoys the friendship of his neighbours on the West Coast and reconciles his earlier discoveries with his new-found openness. One should, however, be careful not to over-estimate the extent of this change. The description of the city given here ("*..als ein mächtiger Naturkörper lebendig.*", LH 180) recalls Lévi-Strauss's portrayal of it as an organic unit in Tristes tropiques²², implying that Sorger is still somewhat detached from it ; although he is fortified by his experiences of epiphany, what Demetz calls a "strangely fragile" quality remains, due not simply to the fact that the text is, once again, "devoid of dense realism", but also to the awareness that these epiphanies have been fleeting moments. Some idea of Sorger's mental state can be gleaned from the beginning of Langsame Heimkehr :

Sorger hatte schon einige ihm nah gekommene Menschen überlebt und empfand keine Sehnsucht mehr, doch oft eine seltsame Daseinslust und zuzeiten ein animalisch gewordenes, auf die Augenlider drückendes Bedürfnis nach Heil. Einerseits zu einer stillen Harmonie fähig, welche als eine heitere Macht sich auch auf andere übertrug, dann wieder zu leicht kränkbar von den übermächtigen Tatsachen, kannte er die Verlorenheit, wollte die Verantwortung und war durchdrungen von der Suche nach Formen, ihrer Unterscheidung und Beschreibung, über die Landschaft hinaus, wo ("im Feld", "im Gelände") diese oft quälende, dann auch wieder belustigende, im Glücksfall triumphierende Tätigkeit sein Beruf war.

This carefully composed passage hints, in both style and content, at much of what is to come in the tetralogy ; it signals an immediate contrast with the descriptive

²² Claude Lévi-Strauss, Traurige Tropen (1970), 82-3

simplicity of his 1970s work, an impression which will be confirmed in all four books and indeed in much of Handke's subsequent writing. Sorger's motivations are described in language drawn from the vocabulary of religion and mysticism ("*selbstlose Daseinslust*", "*Bedürfnis nach Heil*"), as are the qualities he can display ("*stille Harmonie...eine heitere Macht*") ; the sensitive nature of previous Handke characters is seen again in Sorger's being "*zu leicht kränkbar von den übermächtigen Tatsachen*" - suggesting, once more, a certain vulnerability in the face of impacts from the external world, which will be confirmed by the *Erzählung* Langsame Heimkehr in particular, yet is equally applicable to the central figures of the other works of the tetralogy. At the same time Sorger is the first "man of action" among Handke's heroes, even if his scientific activities are gradually replaced by what Sharp (1981, 605) describes as a "*desperate search for self*" ; beyond its purely religious connotations, Handke's language here has been compared to that of Heidegger²³ , of Ernst Jünger, even of Nazism, by critics mistrustful of his work. Yet Sorger's work both defines his relationship with the world ("*kannte er die Verlorenheit, wollte die Verantwortung und war durchdrungen von der Suche nach Formen...*") and reflects the moods and the stages of the journey which will be described in the tetralogy ("*diese oft quälende, dann auch wieder belustigende, im Glücksfall triumphierende Tätigkeit...*") The description of the geologists' research station follows ; again, the fact that it is an American landscape is significant. Although Alaska lacks the "contemporary" resonances of previous American settings - notably, of course, in Der kurze Brief... - it has, like the Wild West, literary²⁴ and cinematic connotations of which Handke is doubtless well aware. Yet the precision and intensity of the landscape descriptions in the section entitled "Die Vorzeitformen" owe little to adventure-story models. In this context, Sharp remarks that "*At times the boundaries between self and world appear close to*

²³ Zorach (1985,182) points out that the name Sorger suggests a "homelessness" deriving from Heidegger's category of "Sorge"

²⁴ Handke's first "Lese-Erlebnis" was provided by the works of Karl May ; see Schmiedt, Peter Handke, Franz Beckenbauer, John Lennon und andere Künstler... In : TuK H.24,1978, p.87

dissolution in Sorger's mind : his absorption into an undifferentiated mass of self and world close at hand". Hence, as Handke will point out later in the tetralogy, Goethe and Stifter come to serve as examples for the kind of "increasingly ceremonious and archaic literary style" (Rita Felski) which he sees as appropriate to his aims. These are expressed in the title Langsame Heimkehr - although, interestingly, Handke has since stated that he had originally planned to call the tetralogy Ins tiefe Österreich, changing his mind when it proved impossible, "*ein tiefes Österreich zusammenzuphantasieren oder freizuphantasieren*"²⁵, and thus illustrating once more the Austrian writer's ambivalent relationship to his homeland. Yet Handke ultimately rejects the identification of this - or any other - country with what Gerhard Melzer calls his "Identitätsraum", as the latter need not be restricted by geographical or political definitions. Specialists in Austrian literature, following the example of Claudio Magris's Der habsburgische Mythos in der österreichischen Literatur, have in recent years been much concerned with problems of national identity and their reflection in literature ; Sebald (1985, 10-13), for example, sees the distinctiveness of the Austrian tradition as lying in the lack of barriers between different areas of knowledge and thought - a perception confirmed by a consideration of the works of those Austrian modernists mentioned in the opening chapter of this study. In Handke's case, Sebald's idea of "Grenzübergängen" suggests - in addition to his travels and his precise portrayals of psychological states - his alternation of closely observed traditional landscapes and modern cities, his deliberate use of word-play, contemporary slang and archaisms, his cultivation of a literary style which, although "modern", is hardly typical of his own generation, and his ability to sustain a genuine interest, without condescension, in both the "classics" of European literature and art and the products of the commercial entertainment industry, i.e. pop music and Hollywood film - unlike his German

²⁵ See Melzer, *Heimkehr mit Hindernissen*. In : H.L. Arnold (Hg.) : *Bestandsaufnahme Gegenwartsliteratur*. Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Deutsche Demokratische Republik. Österreich, Schweiz. TuK, Sonderband 1988, p.308

contemporaries, who would tend to discriminate much more between these apparent opposites. The fact that the tetralogy coincided with Handke's return to Austria provoked some to see in it another example of "crossing boundaries", i.e. a making of peace with his homeland; doubtless the incorporation of traditional elements, the descriptions of Austrian landscapes and the references to Stifter contributed to such an interpretation²⁶, but, just as Handke himself has continued to travel in subsequent years, the fact remains that most of the tetralogy is set outside Austria, and the classical theme of the wanderer adrift in an alien world is never entirely abandoned, in spite of the moments of happiness which his characters or narrators experience.

Sorger, in Langsame Heimkehr, begins by moving from Alaska to the West Coast of the United States, and specifically to the San Francisco Bay area - renowned not merely for its geological formations (seen in the passage dealing with the "Erdbeben-Park") but for its modernity (Sorger can see the city as "*automatisiert*", LH 120); it was also the centre of the hippy-psychedelic culture, and the feelings of acute disorientation which Sorger experiences show interesting parallels with accounts of the psychedelic experience - although the precision which marks Handke's description of Sorger's inner life seems to set it apart from the typical hippy literature, or anti-literature, of the 1960s. And, furthermore, Sorger is not a hippy in search of mystical experience but a research scientist who continues to work on his projects in the university (which seems to resemble Berkeley) while undergoing his spiritual crisis - the "*Raumverbot*" - and then rediscovering human companionship with the help of his neighbours, who function as a kind of idealised family. Yet the curious, dream-like encounter with the two women in the park (like spirits, they reappear directly after the "*gesetzgebender Augenblick*", in the New York sequence near the end of LH) - if indeed it is not taken purely as an example of the odd, personal humour which surfaces at times in the book - again seems to owe

²⁶Adolf Haslinger, in his review of Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire (Salzburger Nachrichten, 29.12. 1980), called it "*Der zweite Teil von Peter Handkes Salzburger Triptychon*".

something to the 'sixties dream of sex as an impersonal but liberating process, as with the phenomenon of "groupies" in the rock music scene. It is hardly surprising that feminists have problems with this aspect of Handke's work ; his women characters are usually sketchily-drawn figures on the fringe of the main events of the books, and he seems unable, or unwilling, to portray the reality of an intimate and individualised male-female relationship ²⁷ - unlike, say, one of his preferred French authors, Emmanuel Bove, whose (male) central characters nevertheless, like Sorger, Bloch and Keuschnig, display signs of disorientation. Indeed, this quality rather than a simple hatred of women is the distinguishing factor of Handke's characters. It is not simply that they feel uneasy with, or threatened by, the opposite sex ; at times, their deep self-doubt makes them perceive the entire external world as dangerous and alien, as the phases of Sorger's journey demonstrate.

During his stay in the "Westküstenstadt", Sorger attends a concert given by a "Sänger" - who, we are told, was a hero of his youth. The singer is not named, which corresponds to the convention Handke adopts in this book ; the descriptions are painstaking, but places and individuals are not named, leading to an overall impression of detachment, and thus reflecting Sorger's own state. The performance is clearly that of a pop or rock singer of Handke's generation - one who deliberately ignores the conventions of show-business in an attempt to achieve a kind of authenticity which transcends traditional stagecraft. (This can be contrasted with the description, in Der kurze Brief..., of the narrator's disappointment with Lauren Bacall's "mechanical" performance in the Broadway show.) The "*kleiner breiter Mann, der überkräftig und ganz abwesend wirkte*", who "*trug seine Lieder nicht gefühlvoll vor, sondern suchte, wie ein Wahnsinniger, ein ihm selber rätselhaftes Gefühl*", and seems to suggest a "*fast rachsüchtige Weltabgekehrtheit*", appears to Sorger to be a "*widerwillige(n) Freiheitssänger*" who finally uplifts him with songs which are compared to "*Hymnen*". It is possible that Handke has created a

²⁷ For a discussion of this problem, see Eifler, 1985, pp.122-129.

composite portrait here ; yet nonetheless there are clear affinities in this description with the stage mannerisms of some of the rock singers he favours.²⁸ Handke's admiration for his near-contemporary Bob Dylan is well documented in his work ; Dyer ²⁹ interprets this passage as referring (indirectly) to Dylan, who was indeed "verehrt" by many members of Handke's generation in the late 1960s, has subsequently produced much disappointing work and is renowned for his inconsistent and sometimes awkward stage performances. Another possibility - as Bartmann (87) suggests - is Van Morrison, who is also of Handke's generation, is "*ein kleiner breiter Mann*" , often seems to be unaware of the presence of an audience and sings with an intensity similar to that described here. This intensity - on the part of both performer and audience - is, for a rock critic like Dave Marsh (1985), what distinguishes rock music at its best from mere commercial "*entertainment*" of a "*middle-class, middle-brow*" nature ; but it also connects up historically with the Southern traditions of blues and gospel song from which most American rock music is derived. Hence, in this context, the mention of a "Hymnus" is no surprise, especially as both Dylan and Morrison have performed gospel music in recent years. This tradition of emotional worship can be extremely alien to Europeans raised in a very different religious tradition³⁰ , but it does provide the kind of communal "lifting of spirits" which is not so different from the cathartic effect of the "Sänger's" performance. Indeed, to a detached observer, the enthusiasm of a Californian rock-concert audience and that of a modern American gospel congregation would appear very similar, even identical - justifying Handke's comparison of the audience to a "Sekte". In order to illustrate this perhaps unexpected affinity, he develops the familiar theme of a California separate from the rest of the United States, "*Losgesagt von der Nation*", to illustrate Sorger's searching and the disorientation and isolation he experiences. It is, the narrator

²⁸ See Bartmann, 1984, pp.86-7 for examples.

²⁹ In Thompson/Gutman 1990, pp..281-2

³⁰ As shown by, for example, Frisch's description of the black church service in Stiller

claims, an environment in which "*keine Einheit*" exists, paralleling Sorger's own condition ; but it also evokes, or demands, a new kind of "spirituality", which, while owing something to pre-existing traditions, remains purely personal and grounded in individual experience ; thus emphasising that what is seen as "spiritual" in the tetralogy is not necessarily to be equated with the familiar, traditional kind of nature mysticism. As Felski says :

...the descriptions of the outside world are subsumed and ordered according to a metaphysical perception which relates the spaces of inner and outer worlds in a private cosmology...(in the Erzählung) the outside world remains a remote and hazy phenomenon, filtered through the generalised perceptions and ceremonious language of a consciousness concerned with the search for totality and all-embracing harmony.

Furthermore, it is not that this search is a purely intellectual problem. Thomas F. Barry (1984) stresses that it grows out of "*experiences of extreme alienation and the subsequent dislocation or disorientation of consciousness...These experiences...are often accompanied by feelings of utter speechlessness - an absolute negative for Handke - in which the self is perceived as being so horrible that there is no language to describe it ; consciousness becomes incommunicable, beyond the universal of language. Where there are no words to connect the self to the world, the individual identity ceases to exist...*" Thus, for Barry, "*The imaginative activity of reading and writing serves an essentially therapeutic goal for Handke...The creation of an imaginary 'Bezugssystem' offers the estranged self a mode of transcendence which allows a revitalised sense of contact to reality*" . It is possible that some critics have underestimated the strength of these feelings of anxiety, familiar from earlier works (e.g. Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung) but newly emphasised in Sorger's case - he would not be "*durchdrungen von der Suche nach Formen*", were this "*Ekel und Trennungsschmerz zwischen ihm und der Welt*" not so deeply-felt. Certainly, statements such as the long speech beginning "*Hören Sie mich an. Ich möchte nicht zugrunde gehen...*" (LH 146-7), the feeling of the "*Raumverbot*" (LH 138) and the following, which occurs in both Langsame

Heimkehr and Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire, can scarcely be regarded as the product of an untroubled consciousness :

Der Zusammenhang ist möglich. Jeder einzelne Augenblick meines Lebens geht mit jedem anderen zusammen - ohne Hilfsglieder. Es existiert eine unmittelbare Verbindung - ich muß sie nur frei phantasieren. (LH 117, LSV 78-79)

The most significant event of the last section of the book is the curious "epiphany" in the New York coffee shop ; after this Sorger becomes less burdened by his past and aware of the need to take responsibility for his own personal history, according to Sharp (1981). He can therefore return to Europe "*no longer obsessed by the search to ground the self*", and accompanied by the curious message "*Touch home soon*" which recurs, for a second time in his journey, this time from a hotel chambermaid . This may well be an example of the grotesque humour which, Zorach (1985) suggests, is a feature of this final section (for example, in the scenes following Sorger's "healing" of Esch) and undermines the serious impression (of a quest for self-legitimation expressed in what she calls "*a sort of fictionalisation of Heidegger*") given earlier in the book. Zorach also draws attention to "*the shift from the third person to the second, and the shift from the narrative to the lyric*" which occur in the final two pages of the book. This, like the mention of the "*Evangelium der Fälschung*", characterising the artist as a trickster or joker figure, is interpreted as revealing that the book really tells the story of the narrator ; narrator and protagonist are seen to merge. Therefore, when Sorger "disappears" at the end of the first part of the tetralogy, to be replaced at the beginning of Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire by a first-person narrator who seems to resemble Peter Handke himself, the change of narrative voice (and of continent) does not mean that all connection with the preceding work is lost - the narrator eventually admits that "*Sorger, der Erdforscher, hatte ich ja in mich einverwandelt...*" The preoccupation with the natural world also remains ; the Lehre of the title derives from an

"Augenblick der Ewigkeit" (*Nunc stans*)³¹ - which Handke claims to have experienced at Mont Sainte-Victoire in Provence, the site of Cézanne's celebrated series of paintings. "*Naturwelt und Menschenwerk...bereiteten mir ein Beseligungsmoment*", he proclaims. The book is built around this incident, and, in contrast to its predecessor, totally abandons any conventional narrative framework for an exploration of the relationship between the self, nature and the modern world with particular reference to the process of artistic creation. Where in *Langsame Heimkehr* very little is described by its everyday, given name, here there is a proliferation of names, both of places visited (Provence, Paris, Berlin, Yugoslavia) and of individuals whom Handke considers relevant to his "lesson". There are writers - Stifter, Goethe, Homer, Flaubert, Christian Wagner, Ludwig Hohl, Hermann Lenz, Borges, Nicolas Born - "der Philosoph", Spinoza, quoted repeatedly but never mentioned by name, is the only exception to this rule ; painters - Cézanne, Courbet, Jakob von Ruisdael, Edward Hopper, the Georgian Pirosmeni, "der andere Maler"³²; film-makers and actors - Handke's "Meister" John Ford, Alfred Hitchcock, Yasujiro Ozu, Joseph Cotten, Henry Fonda, "Inspektor Columbo". Information is given about Handke's own family background, his relationship to his stepfather and to his father (both of them Germans), the Slovenian descent of his mother's side of the family - including his mother's brother, whose letters he would read again and again (and will eventually quote in *Die Wiederholung*) - as he delves into previous experiences in order to clarify his personal development and his present attitudes. Of the book's nine sections, the chapter entitled *Das kalte Feld* can be seen (e.g. by Dinter) as the most autobiographical - in it he examines his life in Austria, West Germany and France, and it is worthy of close examination, as present and past concerns are here

³¹ Interestingly Gamper(1977, 10) uses this term to describe the unrealisable "Poesie" of *Bernhard's* fictional characters.

³² And subject of a recent film which is described at length in Botho Strauß's *Trilogie des Wiedersehens*, 56-57 (1976, dtv)

combined to relate the expression of Handke's artistic "Lehre" elsewhere in the book with an insight into its origins.

The opening pages contrast Paris with the recently-visited landscape in Provence which has provided an *"Analogie von Farben und Formen"*, recurring *"fast alltäglich"*; the narrator climbs two hills which have wartime associations, again evoking the sense of guilt which Handke often associates with his German ancestry. Then follows a mention of Cézanne and the frequent comparisons of his work with music, a concept given a personal twist by the author; *"als ich nämlich die Gegenwart, um sie zu erhalten, schütteln wollte 'wie eine Marimba' "*. Next, a short, lyrical passage describes the sensation of aesthetic delight in living in the present, in terms which echo the book's themes of colour and form as expressions of a higher truth:

Am Abend schaute ich dann von einer Straßenbrücke am Stadtrand auf die Peripherie-Autobahn hinunter, die sich in beweglichen Goldfarben zeigte; und es kommt mir auch hier noch vernünftig vor, was ich damals dachte: daß jemand wie Goethe mich beneiden müßte, weil ich jetzt, am Ende des 20. Jahrhunderts, lebte.

- the visual image harking back to the mention of the Farbenlehre at the beginning of the book. After this, the chapter's main section is announced, with the statement: *"Die Kreise um die Sainte-Victoire wurden immer weiter, ungewollt; es ergab sich so"*. Sketching in his family background, Handke here stresses the Slovenian side of his ancestry and informs the reader that Slovene was his first language - a theme he will later explore in greater detail in Die Wiederholung. Then, he gives his impressions of Austria and West Germany over the course of his life in those countries. Austria is criticised in terms of language - *"...in Österreich, wo - es war eine Erfahrung - kaum jemand meine Sprache sprach..."*: in West Germany, where, he tells us, he lived for a decade, Handke feels a little more at home, and he praises the Germans for their passion for reading:

Es ist mir immer noch vorstellbar, dort zu leben; denn ich weiß, daß es nirgends sonst so viele von jenen "Unentwegten" gibt, die auf die tägliche Schrift aus sind; nirgends so viele von dem verstreuten, verborgenen Volk der Leser.

On a purely matter-of-fact level, this could be taken, given the overall tone of the tetralogy, as a typically archaic way of describing the Germans' enthusiasm for books - statistics show that they do indeed buy more books than anyone else in Europe³³. And Handke, like other Austrian writers, is certainly aware that the majority of his readership - to say nothing of his publishers, the Suhrkamp Verlag - can be found in the Federal Republic. So it is possible, therefore, to see this passage as Handke's way of complimenting his readers by portraying them as a kind of Stendhalian "happy few" - and those critics who have accused Handke of élitism in his aesthetic programme would doubtless interpret such a definition in a negative sense. Yet nonetheless the readers are invested with exceptional powers ("*so viele von jenen 'Unentwegten' "*"), the religious overtones of Handke's language seemingly making of this "*verstreuten, verborgenen Volk der Leser*" a kind of elect. Gabriel (1984) deals with this concept at some length, arguing that, through the tetralogy, Handke attempts to solve the problem of a "*Situation, in der der Dichter sich im Gegensatz zur Gesellschaft begreift, sich von ihr ausgeschlossen fühlt*"³⁴ - and that the notion of a "*Volk der Leser*" grows out of this effort. Sorger's loneliness, gradually ameliorated by the "*gesetzgebende Augenblicke*", serves as the starting-point of a return journey seen as a "*Heimkehr zu sich selbst, und das heißt auch zu den anderen*". Gabriel also observes that the "*Beziehungsfähigkeit*" which Sorger gains as a consequence of the three "*Begegnungen*" - with Lauffer, the "*verstorbenen Schulfreund*" and Esch - is bound up with thoughts of such a journey. Furthermore, these relationships are based not on the exchange of ideas and feelings through dialogue, but rather on an emotionally-based sympathy, a "*gefühlte Gemeinschaft*". For example, Sorger admires the "*kindliche Offenheit*" of his neighbour's wife; and this ideal of relating to others is taken up in Kindergeschichte, where, on the very first page, the adult's imagined life with a child includes "*die Vorstellung von einer wortlosen*

³³ See Schnell 1986, pp.29-31, 36-40

³⁴ Handke admits to Gamper(1987, 48-49) that he is conscious of this.

Gemeinschaft..." According to Gabriel this provides the adult with "*das Gefühl der Wirklichkeit und eröffnet ihm den Blick auf die Natur*". As is pointed out, this view owes something to the Austrian tradition of language scepticism which Handke inherits (although it also recalls the 1960s utopianism of the "flower-power" era, in which the cultivation of naive, childlike qualities was seen as a means of attaining happiness). Yet Gabriel notes that, with the tetralogy, the relationship to language of Handke's previous works, which has been more directly linked to that tradition, is abandoned in favour of a new position in which "*Dichtung erfährt ihren Antrieb durch die Faszination des Objektiven*"; the emphasis on the affinity between literature and painting in Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire goes hand in hand with a rejection of the use of language in a purely functional, rational sense. This explains both the "project" of that book - "*Verwandlung und Bergung der Dinge in Gefahr*", suggesting a recovery through language of the essence of things, such as Cézanne had achieved in painting (and recalling the work of Francis Ponge, which Handke was reading and translating at the time Die Lehre... was written) - and the continued avoidance of passages of conventional dialogue. In the social field, this finds expression in concepts such as the "*Volk der Leser*".

In fact, as Gabriel shows, there is considerable sympathy for "verborgenes Volk" in Handke's work. The Slovenes are the most obvious example - not unnaturally, in the light of Handke's ancestry. There is also the passage in Kindergeschichte in which the Jews are praised - as a true "Volk" with an intact tradition, the "*älteste und strengste Gesetz der Welt*" and as the only "Volk" to which the narrator had ever wished to belong. Yet he knows that he can never fully integrate himself into these communities. As Gabriel points out, in Austrian literature there are numerous earlier examples of Slav or Jewish characters being invested (by German-language writers) with special qualities of purity and humanity, but the "*verborgenes Volk*" of Handke's tetralogy is something more mysterious than this; something less easy to define. For Gabriel, it is a product of the author's programme : the epiphanies described in the work do not, it is claimed,

simply grant the author freedom to create personal laws through aesthetic activity, but also to employ his creative powers to convince others of the need to follow his example - thereby founding a community. However, Handke is equally well aware of the problems of "Dichtung als Lehre", and the consciousness of the near-impossibility of bringing his ideas to fruition gives rise, according to Gabriel, to the *"Stimmung der Trauer und Melancholie, die in der Tetralogie...herrscht"*, accounting for the *"Allgegenwart der Haltung des nachsinnenden Melancholikers"* in the work. The argument is summarized in Gabriel's abstract; *"In his critical reconsideration of literary tradition Handke arrives at a new definition of literature in terms of "das Element des Sozialen". He envisages a "Volk der Leser", a community grounded in aesthetic experience"*.

It is nonetheless true that, as Gabriel observes, the *"Haftiraden"* which surface from time to time in Handke's work can be seen as *"Ausdruck einer fast tragischen Situation"* - illustrating the gulf between the author's Utopian project and the world he rejects. The section of *Das kalte Feld* dealing with the *"immer böser und wie versteinerte Bundesrepublik"* is an example of this. At first it can appear as a somewhat poetic and imaginative piece of "Kulturkritik", recalling the speech by "Der Hausherr" in *Falsche Bewegung* (pp.44-45 ; *"Ich möchte nur kurz von der Einsamkeit hier in Deutschland sprechen....Die toten Seelen von Deutschland..."*). Then, a more personal note is introduced:

Damals verstand ich die Gewalt. Diese in "Zweckformen" funktionierende, bis auf die letzten Dinge beschriftete und zugleich völlig sprach- und stimmlose Welt hatte nicht recht. Vielleicht war es woanders ähnlich, doch hier traf es mich nackt, und ich wollte jemand Beliebigen niederschlagen...

He then compares his hatred of the "functional" world of modern West Germany with the violent feelings he held in childhood against his - German - stepfather. Sudden outbreaks of violence are, of course, nothing new in Handke's work, perhaps unsurprisingly for a writer who once claimed that *"Amokläufe"* were

for him the only conceivable kind of political activity³⁵. Yet they are frequently more shocking than Bernhard's tirades, for example, precisely because they contrast so obviously with what tends to be a generally controlled and "cool" narrative style. Here, the critical reader may briefly wonder if there is such a great difference between those described earlier in the passage as "Meuten" and the narrator. The moment passes quickly, though, and the reflections on the German landscape which make up the remainder of this section are of a much more tranquil nature. Once again, a reconciliation is achieved with the aid of geology; an exploration of the city of Berlin provides the narrator with a new awareness of its geographical position and its resonances of personal and national history. Literary figures are mentioned; Hölderlin (*"Ich las neu den Hyperion, begriff endlich jeden Satz und konnte die Worte darin betrachten wie Bilder"*), the brothers Grimm, his contemporaries Hermann Lenz and Nicolas Born, even a "*Langenscheidtstraße*" - together with Dutch painting, with its "Northern" landscapes. The narrator's visit to his father is also marked by forgiveness - even though he also feels frustration at the lack of real communication between them. This leads directly into the vision of "*ein anderes Deutschland*" which closes the chapter³⁶, and could be interpreted as the final stage in Handke's analysis of his past relationship with the country - as well as, perhaps, the incorporation of Germany into the book's schema; Dinter (1986) draws attention to the word "*Mittelsinn*" - "*das heißt Sinn für die Vermittlung der Dinge untereinander*", as in Cézanne's work. Yet the final sentence of the chapter expresses the provisional nature of this vision:

Und der es sah, kam sich schlau vor wie der Inspektor Columbo bei der Lösung eines Falls; und wußte doch, daß es nie ein endgültiges Aufatmen geben konnte.

In Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire, confirmation of the above observation is given by the section entitled *Der Sprung des Wolfs*, in which the narrator's encounter with what at first may seem to be a typically ferocious "*chien méchant*" - aggressive

³⁵ In Das Gewicht der Welt, p.159

³⁶ Although Salyámosy [1989, 749] finds this "*etwas verschwommen*".

guard dogs being a seemingly unavoidable characteristic of modern France - takes on an almost hallucinatory quality, becoming an "*identitätsbedrohende Erfahrung*"³⁷ for him. The animal becomes a "Feind" and an embodiment of evil, in stark contrast to the calm and tranquility of the nature descriptions elsewhere in the book. It is a passage whose singularity has attracted some critical comment ; even speculations as to whether Handke was using the extremely vivid description of the "Dogge", marked by the imagery of hatred, brutality, mass murder and ghettos, symbolically, in order to settle scores with his "enemies" in the literary world by portraying their hostility in animal form. Yet he again draws a moral from this encounter, his confrontation with the animal forcing him to recognise the futility of hatred : "*Für das, was ich vorhabe, darf ich nicht hassen*".

Rita Felski identifies in "visions" such as this a general tendency in the tetralogy: "*The child (i.e., in Kindergeschichte), like the mountain of Sainte-Victoire, is important not in its concrete individuality but in its capacity to generate certain potent feelings and associations of innocence, mystery, other-worldliness which play an important function in Handke's mythology*". As she says, there is a great difference between solitary contemplation in Mediterranean landscapes and the "*autobiographical treatment of his experiences in society as a single parent*" - which is the theme of the next work of the tetralogy. In this context, Demetz commented ; "*What is still missing in his fictions, and perhaps in his life, is a trusting workaday love for a woman or a man*" - something which seems to be reflected in his work in his depiction of relations between the sexes. This loneliness, which could be considered a consequence of the idea of the writer's role as a transmitter of knowledge to those lacking his own special gifts or insights, is a constant factor in Handke's work. As Demetz (1986) says, this gap in his life is - or was, in the 1970s - "*filled in his fiction by Amina, his adored daughter, who slowly emerges as a mystical child illuminating the darkness of our world*" ; this comes through

³⁷ See J. Pfeiffer, in Mauser et al(1986), Phantasie und Deutung...

most clearly in Kindergeschichte. Yet Felski can also find a "rigid hostility to the outside world" in this work, making, in her view, his attempts to portray harmony between himself and his child seem somewhat strained. Given the secular, rational and authoritarian tradition of French state education, it is doubtful whether Handke, even if he does take issue with "progressive" ideas, would view it as suitable for his child; rather, he finds worrying echoes of his own education in the "staatlich(e)" school, associating the state's role with the enforced conformity he resists. In contrast, he describes his daughter's time at the Jewish school in glowing terms. This also connects with his awareness of the Jews as the "Volk" bearing an ancient, unbroken and still meaningful tradition. Felski regards this reaction as "indicative of the nostalgia for an ordered existence which also conditions his reactivation of a model of the family in terms of a stern patriarch who watches over the wife and child entrusted to his care...". Furthermore, the book, according to her, "reveals the extent to which Handke's metaphysical sensibility can be seen as an expression of and reaction to his isolation in the politicised society³⁸ of the sixties and early seventies". Yet - in line with the writer's own biography - much of the book is set in France, itself politicised by *les événements* of May 1968, about which Handke remains silent. In fact, the lack of concrete dates and place-names lends to the book what Gabriel (1984, 198-9) calls the "Abstraktion von einer Fabel". Handke is still sensitive to the criticism "daß er sich, so wie er lebe, und mit dem, was er tue, der Gegenwart entziehe und die Realität übersehe"; hence the vehemence of his tirades against the self-righteousness of the "Realitäts-Tümler", "diese geborenen Staatsanwälte" with their "Bemessung der Wirklichkeitsgrade". Professing a certainty which he says derives from the experience of a "Sicherheit..., endlich frei von dem Lügenleben der 'modernen Zeit'...", and thus transcends everyday reality, he condemns his left-wing contemporaries in startling terms:

³⁸ I.e., of West Germany; the "Berliner Szenerie am Ausgang der 60er und am Beginn der 70er Jahre" is portrayed in the book's opening chapter, claims Dinter(173)

Solche "Wirklichkeitler" oder "Wustmenschen" - es wimmelte wohl seit jeher von ihnen - erschienen dem Mann als die Sinnlosen Existenzen : fern von der Schöpfung, schon lange tot, machten sie so gesund wie böse weiter, hinterließen nichts, woran man sich halten könnte, und taugten nur noch für den Krieg. (67)

While it might be possible to sympathise with Handke's reactions, as a single parent, to the narcissism and intolerance of some radical groups, here he comes close - intentionally or otherwise - to the rejection, common to 1960s revolutionaries and hippies alike, of much of humanity as "greys", an inferior race of lifeless and negatively-minded people from whom creativity, or sympathy, cannot be expected - rather like the "Blue Meanies" in the Beatles' cartoon film Yellow Submarine. Handke doubtless surprised his contemporaries by referring to them in such terms, although his intervention in the controversy surrounding Dr. Kurt Waldheim some years later was to be marked by a similar use of language ; he condemns the Waldheim "type" as "*die ewigen Lemuren aller Länder*"³⁹. Again, this is closer to the hippy's instinctual dislike of the holders of power, rather than the reasoned opposition of the political radical, and it is tempting to see in his 1980s work a confirmation of this tendency. His work since the tetralogy does contain some characteristics which correspond to hippy or "New Age" ideas - a reverence for nature, a conscious distancing from the hurly-burly of modern urban reality, an interest in - and perhaps even a nostalgia for - traditions which go beyond analytical and rational thought, and, above all, the yearning for a teacher who will embody the "Gesetze" he seeks (in Die Lehre... he speaks of "*das Bedürfnis nach einem Lehrmeister*", 27). Handke is of course too sophisticated to be attracted by the various groups and individuals offering commercialised and debased forms of mysticism; indeed a feature of his 1980s work is his recourse to precedents in his own language and culture. Goethe is quoted in Kindergeschichte ("*Ohne meine Liebe zur Form wäre ich Mystiker geworden*", 119), and a general preoccupation with figures such as Stifter, Hölderlin and other "Klassiker" becomes significant at

³⁹ Die gespaltene Zunge ist sein Wappentier. In : Cohn/Rosenzweig, Der Waldheim-Komplex(1987), 150

this time. Handke does sometimes appear to be rather too keen to play the role of the humble disciple of the great masters of the past, but this can be regarded either as a projection of his own enthusiasms, or as a deliberate strategy to direct the attention of his readers towards unexpected affinities and influences. For example, it has been widely remarked that Heidegger's influence is present in the *Erzählung Langsame Heimkehr*, both in the book's curious prose style and choice of vocabulary ("*Sein im Frieden*", "*Ding-Bild-Schrift in einem*") and in its philosophical underpinning - as shown by the surname Sorger, with its origin in Heidegger's depiction of a certain type of relationship between self and world. Yet, in the long interview with Gamper (1987, 206), Handke is nonetheless critical of Heidegger's use of language. His admiration for Cézanne does, however, seem to be less equivocal ; proof perhaps that, save for a growing interest in Zen and Taoist thought⁴⁰ he is, unlike many of his 1960s contemporaries, mainly interested in the European-American tradition.

In *Kindergeschichte*, however, the role of teacher is given to the narrator's daughter. At first, as pointed out previously, he is caught up in the mood of the period : "*Das Kind kam ihm dann vor wie seine Arbeit : als seine Ausrede vor der aktuellen Weltgeschichte...*" (19). But soon his attitude changes ; his marriage breaks up, he becomes estranged from the "*Gruppen*" to which he had formerly expressed an allegiance, and, in "*eine Zeit ohne Freunde*" is drawn closer to his child. She takes on a special significance for him in this state of isolation :

Ohne je eine Meinung zu "Kindern" im allgemeinen gehabt zu haben, glaubte er eben an dieses bestimmte Kind. Er war überzeugt, daß das Kind da ein großes Gesetz verkörperte, welches er selber entweder vergessen oder nie gehabt hatte. War es ihm dann nicht im ersten Moment schon erschienen als sein persönlicher Lehrherr ? Nicht erst irgendwelchen besonderen Äußerungen aus "Kindermund" also glaubte er, sondern seinem bloßen Vorhandensein, dem Menschenwesen, das war, das es war. Das-es-war gab dem Erwachsenen das Wahrheitsmaß an ; für ein Leben, wie es sein sollte. (49)

⁴⁰ See e.g. his *Am Felsfenster, morgens*. In : *manuskripte*, , 27, 1987, p.6

To describe a female child as a "*persönlicher Lehrherr*", at a time when feminism was beginning to call such seeming anomalies of the German language into question, indicates how far Handke is distancing himself from radical movements. But the notion of the child as an exemplar to be followed is accompanied by a feeling of intense loneliness:

Eines Nachts, beim Heimkommen, steht er in der grellstillen Wohnung irgendwo angelehnt und kann sich denken, wie Leute vom puren Alleinsein tot umfallen. (65)

In this vulnerable condition he is ready to attribute extraordinary qualities to the child. Thus, his sense of shame after hitting her is described in Biblical vocabulary ; he is a "*Verworfenener, und seine Tat konnte durch keine weltliche Strafe gesühnt werden...*" ; a "*Verdammer*" (43) - and, as Linstead points out, the whole incident is introduced by a sentence recalling the idea of Judgment Day ; "*Und es kam der Tag der Schuld, und die Stunde des Kindes*" - so that the child's forgiveness is equated with redemption. Later in the book the narrator's observation of babies in the world at large provokes the following reflection :

Es wurde ihm dann klar, "die modernen Zeiten", die er doch so oft verwünscht und verworfen hatte, gab es gar nicht ; auch "die Endzeit" war nur ein Hirngespinnst : mit jedem neuen Bewußtsein begannen die immergleichen Möglichkeiten, und die Augen der Kinder im Gedränge - sieh sie dir an ! - überlieferten den ewigen Geist. Wehe dir, der du diesen Blick versäumst. (97)

Although the final few pages which follow this statement return to a more personal note, in which the father's love for his daughter is celebrated in a calmer, more lyrical style, it is this insistence on the special quality of the child's vision - and the consequent rejection of history - which has provoked much critical debate. Christa Bürger (in Bohrer 1983) sees the book, with its non-linear gathering-together of a series of "significant" moments, as confirming the author's desire for such events (familiar from his previous work), and thereby contributing to the creation of a surrogate myth in which the "*Instrumentalisierung*" of the child is an indication of the falseness of the endeavour. Both C.Bürger and Linstead find the ahistorical nature of Handke's "*andere Weltgeschichte*" difficult to accept, siding

with the "Aufklärer" whom the author totally rejects. Bürger sets Kindergeschichte against comments on irrationality, myth and memory from Adorno and Horkheimer's Dialektik der Aufklärung, while Linstead views the book in the light of Handke's earlier works and perceives in it a resurfacing of the previous pattern, in the attempt to go beyond history by means of the sudden revelation of an "*allgemeines Gesetz*". It is true that, as Linstead observes, the child is never given a voice of her own, and that the author tends to be preoccupied with his own needs, wishes and expectations - indeed Handke portrays himself as only gradually becoming aware that his child can lead a life independent of his own. In the religious traditions from which Handke draws some of his vocabulary and imagery, childhood is generally associated with purity, freshness and innocence. Handke remains more or less true to this tradition but thereby invites the criticism that - as Linstead puts it - he ignores the development of his child as a historical subject. There may well be something in this view ; but, on the other hand, any literary treatment of a father-daughter relationship has to be selective, and the book does provide some information about the child's development, for example, in the sections dealing with her schooling⁴¹. Again, his apparent rejection of fashionable, child-centred learning may lead some to see him as a reactionary ; but Dinter (1986, 181) interprets Handke's intentions here as showing his daughter's development not in terms of the unthinking application of educational theory (in "*Expertisendeutsch*" , LSV 41) but "*durch die spontane Herzlichkeit menschlicher Beziehungen, die sein Vertrauen in das neu entdeckte Gemeinschaftsleben bestätigen*" - with examples such as the "*alte Lehrerin*" in the small school (95, 105f.) bearing this out. Peter Strasser ⁴² goes so far as to declare that Kindergeschichte is "*das Schlüsselwerk Handkes*", "*ein zutiefst berührendes und tiefreichendes Dokument des dichterischen Scheiterns im Gelingen*", because :

⁴¹ Still more can be found in the entries in Das Gewicht der Welt, 1977, concerning the child "A" - presumably standing for Amina.

⁴² In : Der andere Balken des Andreaskreuzes. Essay über Peter Handke aus Anlaß seiner Erzählung Die Abwesenheit. In : *manuskripte*, 27, 1987, pp.11-23

die Spannung zwischen der Figur des Kindes, die nicht erdacht und herbeiphantasiert, sondern dem Erzähler intim vertraut ist, und des Dichters Menschheitsauftrag, der sich an eben seinem Kind erfüllen soll, am prägnantesten, auch vertracktesten zum Ausdruck kommt...

Both this work and Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire conclude with a passage set in rural surroundings, on the outskirts of Salzburg. This reflects the fact that the author's own "langsame Heimkehr" took place as the tetralogy was written ; and, as is stated in Die Lehre... that Sorger's return to Europe led to a transformation of the fictional character into "himself" as narrator of that book and of its successor. The final part of the tetralogy, Über die Dörfer, takes up the fictional framework once more, although the family conflict in rural Austria which it portrays contains, as A.Haslinger (1987) shows, hints of autobiography. At the same time, the influence of Greek classical drama can be seen, and the linguistic and philosophical tendencies of the tetralogy are present here in their most heightened form ; as a "dramatisches Gedicht" it falls outside the scope of this study, which concentrates on the prose works, but it is worth noting that, just as the work took up the themes of those books, so its reception too followed a similar pattern; a mixture of praise - often from Austrian critics - and derision - often from Germans. Über die Dörfer was performed at the Salzburg Festival of 1982, and re-united its author with Wim Wenders, whom Handke selected to take charge of the production - although Felski reports that the "*serious and ceremonious*" approach upon which Handke insisted had to be abandoned when the play was produced in Hamburg, in order to make it acceptable to a German audience. In 1987 Wenders and Handke again collaborated on what was to become the most successful German film of recent years on the international "art cinema" circuit, Der Himmel über Berlin. While it would be erroneous to compare this film too closely with Handke's "dramatisches Gedicht" - Wenders is credited not merely with direction but with co-authorship of the screenplay⁴³ - there is nevertheless a similar alternation of everyday reality and the

⁴³ Although, according to Barry, in MAL 1990, 3/4, Handke wrote all of the main speeches, and Wenders used them as the "backbone of the movie"(54).

"otherworldly" (Nova in the play, the angels in the film), and the script, with its attempt to express a "*sense of existential affirmation*" and demonstrate an "*authentic and revitalised connection to experience*" (Barry), bears more of a resemblance to the "gehobener Ton" of Handke's recent work than to the typical naturalistic dialogue of most films.

Handke's work after the tetralogy - fiction, autobiography, nationality and identity

In his writings of the 1980s Handke has continued to explore the themes dealt with in the Langsame Heimkehr tetralogy. In Der Chinese des Schmerzes (1983) the Salzburg setting reappears, and Andreas Loser, the classics teacher who is the book's central character, is another troubled loner, preoccupied - through his work and his hobby, archaeological research - with the past. Pütz (1990) shows how this surname, like "Sorger", is connected with the character's function ; furthermore, he sees the novel as a key work of the 1980s. In spite of his professional and personal preoccupation with antiquity, Loser lives in typically modern surroundings - in a flat directly above a supermarket, in a newly-constructed housing estate on the outskirts of Salzburg, a setting which is described in careful detail at the beginning of the novel ; he is separated from his wife and children whom he occasionally visits. The novel recounts Loser's crisis ; like Sorger, he has temporarily given up his normal job in order to complete a "*Bericht*", which in his case is built around the theme of "*Türschwellen*" in his archaeological studies. The notion of the "*Schwelle*" or threshold takes on a wider significance in the book, not only as a symbol of Loser's condition - according to Pütz, he is living in a "*Zwischenstadium*" - but as the topic of a lengthy philosophical discussion between Loser and three friends who meet ostensibly for a game of "Tarock"; as a reflection of the geographical aspects of the work, with movement from the edge of the city to the centre and back again ; as

indicative of Loser's psychological condition, exemplified by the puzzling alternation of sacred (the references to the religious significance of the Easter calendar) and profane, or mythological (the murder of the "Erzfeind" in the form of a sprayer of swastikas, which Loser justifies by saying, "*Dieses Zeichen ist das Unbild der Ursache all meiner Schwermut - all der Schwermut und des Unmuts hierzuland*"). Pütz even regards the "Schwelle" as "*an image of the epic*", of storytelling itself, and the notion of the storyteller himself as threshold as characteristic of the "*state of anticipation*" which has marked literature in the 1980s. Yet for all this there are also echoes of Handke's earlier work ; the lyricism of the descriptions of Salzburg and its outskirts follows on from similar passages in the tetralogy, and not only the murder but also Loser's coupling with an anonymous woman at the airport recalls Bloch in Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter, although the context is very different - "resurrected" (it is Easter weekend, when, after committing the murder, the narrator experiences his crisis), Loser goes to Italy, pursuing his research and his interest in Virgil , references to whose Georgics form another strand in the narrative - and, on his return, is able to resume his normal life.

Handke told Gamper that the Zen *koan* was a source of inspiration for this novel, and certainly there is no shortage of references to religion and the classics, symbolic vocabulary (Haslinger lists *Schwelle, Grenze, Brücke, Übergang* and *Bogen* as relating to the novel's "*Übergangsthematik*"), or characters whose gnomic utterances are invested with great significance - leading to the accusation that, as with Über die Dörfer, Handke was trying too hard to be profound and consequently overloading his text with symbolism. An example is Loser's reaction to observing his teenage daughter and her friend listening to pop records :

Die Mädchen tuschelten, kicherten, schimpften, machten sich lustig, und strahlten dabei von den Stirnen, den Wangen, dem Hals, den Schultern den Glanz von Bräuten aus, die, so anspruchsvoll wie bescheiden, so geduldig wie zukunftsicher, den Bräutigam erwarten. O Jugend. Und : O verjüngte Welt. (236)

- although there is a tendency in Handke criticism to confuse a statement by a fictional character such as this with the author's own opinions, as Pütz observes.

But the scene in the "Epilog" a few pages later, on the bridge over the canal (*"Der Betrachter findet ein ungebräuchliches Wort für die Tätigkeit des Wassers, der Bäume, des Winds, der Brückenbohlen : sie walten"*. [252]) provokes a scornful response from Wallmann : *"Ja, es waltet mächtig in diesem Buch"*. For him Loser is a "Kunstfigur" whose story serves merely to illustrate Handke's ideas, the book's language often *"raunend und verquast"*. Yet this was not the only reaction to the novel, as Wallmann admits by quoting Peter Hamm, who saw it as a *"Beitrag zur Rettung der Welt"* ⁴⁴ ; and it gained favourable criticism in the United States and Great Britain - perhaps because Ralph Manheim's translations tend to smooth out some of the peculiarities in Handke's German, or because readers outside the German-speaking world are less likely to be influenced in their judgment of the work either by an awareness of such peculiarities, or of Handke's public persona.

Generally - and this seems to be a common German reaction to Handke's 1980s work - the descriptions of landscapes and natural phenomena draw admiration, whereas the characterisation, and the philosophical or poetological strain in his writing, evoke a more mixed, sometimes sceptical response. This was to culminate in the mid-1980s controversy which became known as the "neudeutscher Literaturstreit", in which the methodological competence of many leading West German literary critics was called into question. Handke found himself bracketed together with Botho Strauß as the leading proponent of a kind of writing which was categorised as "post-modern", and represented a challenge to the *Gruppe 47* ethos of socio-critical realism which had found its way into literary criticism not just through the efforts of writers such as Grass, Böll and Andersch, but through the generation of critics who had been their contemporaries. These included Marcel Reich-Ranicki, who had been a member of *Gruppe 47* before achieving eminence as literary critic on the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* ; Handke had challenged his

⁴⁴ See Peter Hamm : Die (wieder) einleuchtende Welt.PH's Der Chinese des Schmerzes. *Die Zeit*, 16.9.1983

authority as far back as 1968⁴⁵, and he had responded in kind by dismissing most of Handke's work - but what was seen as Reich-Ranicki's conservative aesthetic, expressed in his constant rejection of experimental writing, began to provoke a reaction among younger critics as French structuralist and post-structuralist theoreticians were somewhat belatedly recognised in Germany. The wider ramifications of this debate are dealt with in Chapter 5 - yet it is worth considering how Handke's work relates to it.

In Phantasien der Wiederholung (1983) Handke praises "*die unschuldigen, naiven Denker*" - such as Ludwig Hohl - and fulminates against "*die professionellen, von Durchschau-Zwang blicklosen Denkpolicisten mit Aufklärungsfimmel*". Bullivant (1989) quotes this disapprovingly but omits the following lines, in which Handke, reflecting his interest in French literature, contrasts the typical present-day German "Aufklärer" with "*jener notwendige, menschenfreundliche, wunderbare Aufklärer des 'Zeitalters der Lichte'*" (e.g. Voltaire, Diderot) (PW 68). Some "Aufklärer" did, however respond to this; Michael Schneider (1984) compares the history of the "Aufklärung" in France and Germany, in the process demonstrating why the movement tended to assume a didactic tone in the German context. In his article *Über einen neuerdings in der deutschen Literatur erhobenen vornehmen Ton* (its title deriving from Kant) Jörg Drews (1984) analyses recent works by Handke (and Botho Strauß, whom he finds "*intelligenter und menschenverachtender als Handke*") in the light of their use of language, so different from the familiar social realist tradition. He comments on Handke's predilection for "*feierliche Sprache*", archaic and ceremonial forms which imply that the "*urwüchsige und esoterische Ich*" has an important message to impart. While not denying the permissibility of the need to find a language appropriate to the expression of visionary or mystical experiences, he doubts

⁴⁵ See the essay *Marcel Reich-Ranicki und die Natürlichkeit*, in Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms, 203-7; reprinted, in the interests of "Fairness", by Reich-Ranicki as an afterword to his Lauter Verriße (1970), 167-171

whether Handke's, for him, uncritical reverence for the "*Klassiker*" and "*Reflexionsfeindlichkeit*" can produce anything other than a "*Selbstfeier in der Absonderung als Gestus, die Attitüde selbstverliehenen Priestertums*". Even so, he praises Handke's "*vielen Augenblicke, die von ruhiger, unbeirrter Aufmerksamkeit auf Menschen und Sprache zeugen, die vielen Notate nicht-besserwisserischer Beobachtungen, die vielen Formulierungen, in denen Handkes Sehnsucht an ihr Ziel kommt...*" This critical but nonetheless appreciative verdict on Handke's writing was followed by more unambiguously enthusiastic judgments from critics such as Lüdke (1985), Pütz and Winkels.

When *Die Wiederholung* appeared, in 1986, it was received by critics with much more general approval than *Der Chinese des Schmerzes*, perhaps because Handke had succeeded, to a much greater extent than in much of his 1980s work, in integrating his "moments of true feeling" into a credible and (comparatively) conventional fictional narrative. It is his longest work of the decade, and for many readers his best ; Quack (1987), for example, calls it "*das gehaltvollste Werk des Autors*", while for Lüdke (1986) it is a "*großer Roman*". The book contains, once again, strong autobiographical elements : the family background of the central character, Filip Kopal, is similar to Handke's own ; like Handke, he attends a Catholic boarding school (a fact which Barry sees as exerting "*a profound influence on... [his] personality and on his project as a writer*" through its "*rigid discipline and highly structured moral system*") and, unhappy at home, dissatisfied with his teachers and with the discomforts of boarding-school life, becomes a loner, isolated from both his village contemporaries and his schoolmates. The central event of the novel is the journey to Yugoslavia by the 20-year-old Kopal, told by the 45-year-old narrator Kopal, who, in re-assessing his past experiences, reconstructs his identity and is confirmed in his chosen path as a story-teller through a new awareness of the significance of "*Schrift*", "*Dichtung*" and "*Erzählung*" - a motif which has recurred in Handke's work in recent years. This in turn is connected with Kopal's recovery of his Slovenian heritage, previously repressed by the need to adapt to the prevailing

German-language culture of the border area of Kärnten, where the family lives. There are obvious parallels with Handke's own biography here ; he has spoken of the significance of his journeys to Yugoslavia, particularly that of 1971, in the development of his attitude to life⁴⁶ ; he has translated work by the Slovenian writer Florjan Lipus and, according to A.Haslinger(1987), has been studying the Slovene language. Haslinger also draws attention to the recurrence of characters named Gregor in Handke's work, and shows that the name is derived from Handke's uncle, who died in the Second World War, leaving a "*literarischer Nachlaß*" , a series of letters which were to serve as a kind of model for the young Handke, and are quoted extensively in the text of Die Wiederholung. These factors can be seen as a complement to the journeys into remote regions which are so common in Handke's work since the tetralogy, and which seem to contrast with his earlier enthusiasm for the quintessentially late twentieth-century urban culture of film and pop music ; yet the dissatisfaction with an identity based on enforced social conformity underlies all of these movements away from prevailing norms. Even in the "Verzauberung" which the landscape of the Karst brings forth in the narrator, modernity intrudes, in the shape of the cinema - the memory of seeing a film starring Richard Widmark, set in the "*Mojave-Wüste*" (p.299) is a contemporary reference which stands out in contrast to the descriptions of the Karst, its timeless landscape and seemingly Maya-like people (a typical Handke juxtaposition, it nonetheless also recalls his 1968 "Feuilleton" on Austrian "Landkinos").

Kobal travels away from the centres of "civilisation", as represented in the book by Austria, into a region which, for him, is marked more by history, and a kind of timelessness, than by the imprint of the twentieth century. As in Bernhard's autobiographical series, there is a combination of realistic, seemingly autobiographical detail and symbolic or fantastic elements which can provoke a reading of the novel as a kind of initiation story ; Henrichs (1986) claims that it

⁴⁶ Although later, in Versuch über die Jukebox, he maintains that this key experience really took place near Salzburg.

begins as a "Kindheitsgeschichte", becomes a "Reisebericht" and then a "Märchen". Towards the end of the book the motifs of initiation do become more explicit - Kobal witnesses a death (310), finds a mysterious mentor in the "Karst-Indianerin", in the service of whom he overcomes the inhibitions and anxieties caused by his father's influence, and, equally mysteriously, is confirmed in his vocation by the eyes of an unknown woman (311-312). Afterwards, however, he has to leave this fairy-tale environment and return home. The negative portrayal of Austria, as the country of fear, repression, compulsory education and compulsory national service, is contrasted with the friendly and "natural" behaviour he encounters in Slovenia. For Kobal, Austria is characterised by conformism and dissimulation, and on his return to the land of his birth his dislike of his compatriots is expressed with a ferocity worthy of Bernhard :

Ich wollte Feuer speien gegen sie, wie sie da marschierten, stolzierten, trippelten, schlichen und schlurften, wie sie im Schutz der Fahrzeuge einander angrinsten, wie ihre Stimmen, mit denen verglichen das Knarren eines Astes oder das Schaben eines Holzwurms beseelt war, schadenfroh, weinerlich, frömmelnd, das Blaue vom Himmel und das Grün von der Erde wegwischten, und wie jedes Wort, das sie sagten, Redensart war, eine liebloser als die andre, vom "Aus dem Verkehr ziehen !" zum "Ein Gedicht und so". Diese Zeitgenossen waren durchwegs reinliche Leute, wohlfrisirt, adrett gekleidet, blinkende Abzeichen auf Hüten und in Knopflöchern, duftend nach diesem und jenem, topmanikürt, in Hochglanzschuhen(wobei es auffällig war, daß ihre Willkommensblicke zuallererst auf mein staubiges Schuhwerk zielten) - und doch hatte der ganze Zug eine geradezu schuldhafte, strafwürdige Häßlichkeit und Unförmigkeit... (DW 324-325)

Attempting to find reasons for this impression (which must have corresponded quite closely with the feelings of many twenty-year-olds in the 1950s and 1960s, confronted with the Austrian bourgeoisie "on parade"), Kobal realises why he is so disgusted by his fellow-countrymen. The sentiments are familiar from Handke's previous works :

In den Zwanzigjährigen lebte auf, wie in dieser Menge nicht wenige ihre Kreise zogen, die gefoltert und gemordet oder dazu wenigstens beifällig gelacht hatten, und deren Abkömmlinge das Althergebrachte so treu wie bedenkenlos fortführen würden. Jetzt zogen sie dahin als die rachsüchtigen Verlierer, mißmutig über die schon gar zu langdauernde Friedenszeit...(DW 325)

He continues : "*in mir war geradezu ein Lechzen nach dem einen, ja, christlichen Blick, den ich hätte erwidern können. Idioten, Krüppel, Wahnsinnige, belebt diesen Geisterzug, nur ihr seid die Sänger der Heimat...*" It is true that, as in the passage from Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire quoted earlier in this chapter, the narrator's anger passes quickly, and a more conciliatory scene (in the "Spelunke") follows ; but this troubling recollection of the Nazi past is one of many which can be found in Handke's work, and may well be indicative of his continuing refusal to conform to norms set out by Germans, whether in family relations, the political sphere or in literature. In addition to his rejection of the ideology of the West German Left, he is, as a native of Kärnten (and as Die Wiederholung illustrates), conscious of the sufferings imposed on the Slovene minority by the region's German-speakers, and consequently has bitterly opposed the recent successes in Austrian national politics of the charismatic Carinthian populist (and German nationalist) Jörg Haider, leader of the right-wing Freedom Party - as shown by the interview with Bruno Kreisky, in which Handke refers to "*die Freiheitliche Partei, dieses Pack...*" ⁴⁷ Although a statement such as this might give the impression that he is siding with the liberal forces of his country in condemning a party which has demonstrated neo-fascist tendencies ⁴⁸, in literature, his work sometimes seems to be designed to provoke the politically "progressive" but aesthetically unadventurous circles who dominated literary debate in West Germany from the mid-60s until the end of the 70s (although he does not seem to be nearly so hostile to left-wing *Austrian* writers such as Michael Scharang and Peter Turrini). Even Die Wiederholung was criticised in some quarters, e.g. by Henrichs, who found it "Lesefolter", and the book's style - particularly what was referred to as passages of "Landpfarrerdeutsch" - drew some hostile comments. Handke's regular French translator Georges-Arthur Goldschmidt declined to translate this work, disturbed by

⁴⁷ In Melzer/Tükal, 1985, p.17

⁴⁸ In the interview, it is noteworthy that Kreisky does not condemn the Freedom Party in such sweeping terms - perhaps, as the "elder statesman" of Austrian politics, seeking to differentiate between the liberal-democratic faction of the FPÖ and the increasingly vocal neo-fascist, nationalist element with its highly controversial leader.

"*un côté irrédentiste*" which he found in it.⁴⁹ Yet the author's "langsame Heimkehr" has caused other critics to assume that he was "*ready to make his separate peace with the country of his origins*" (Demetz). This is true, in so far as he did move back to Austria at the end of the 1970s and subsequently showed a new willingness to explore his own family history in the works which followed this move ; but it is plain from the passage from Die Wiederholung quoted above that this was what Melzer (1988) refers to as a "*Heimkehr mit Hindernissen*".

In spite of his reputation as an apolitical figure Handke spoke out against the candidacy of Dr. Kurt Waldheim for the Austrian presidency, saying, "*Man hat nie begonnen, hierzulande, die Vergangenheit aufzuarbeiten. Und wenn man die Vergangenheit vergißt, dann hat man keine Gegenwart...*" and condemning "*diese widerwärtigen Mitläufer*" who refuse to acknowledge their former Nazi sympathies. This statement was widely reported abroad - for example, a translation appeared in the French newspaper Libération ⁵⁰ - and Handke was later to express disappointment that it had not made much impact in Austria. In the same interview he warned of the dangers of a creeping Nazism in the country ; but by the late 1980s Melzer, listing a series of recent scandals, could say that "*nach Reder, Glykolwein und Waldheim*", the face that Austria showed to the world was "*die häßliche Grimasse eines korruptionsfälligen, geschichtsblinden Landes*", and that "*Österreichs Identität ist angeknackst*" ⁵¹. Clearly this particular "Österreichbild" would provide little encouragement for Handke in his effort, "*ein tiefes Österreich zusammenzuphantasieren oder freizuphantasieren*". Nor would the "habsburgischer Mythos" provide much comfort to him ; unlike Bernhard, who claimed to be under its spell ⁵², his rural, impoverished and partly-German background meant that he was not born into an intact and unified Habsburg culture, and, because he grew up

⁴⁹ See the interview with Goldschmidt in Laurent Cassagnau, Jacques Le Rider, Erika Tunner (ed.) : Partir-Revenir. En Route avec Peter Handke. Paris 1992, p.20

⁵⁰ No. 1571, 7-8 juin 1986

⁵¹ Melzer, Heimkehr mit Hindernissen, TuK 1988, pp. 296-7

⁵² See Spectaculum, 39, 1984, p.242-5

in the more open social climate of the 1950s and 1960s, did not need to depend on the approval of the traditional Austrian bourgeoisie to anything like the same extent. And, indeed, if Filip Kobal's picture of Austrian middle-class conformism bears any relation to the views of the author, then Handke was - and is - utterly uninterested in winning its approval ; like many Austrian writers, he has complained of his compatriots' indifference to literature⁵³. From the very start, he had looked beyond Austria for inspiration, and his "slow homecoming" was to lead to the discovery and cultivation of a more personal, intangible "sense of place", characterised by Melzer as "*innere Geographien*", "*Heimatsuche im umfassenden Sinn*" ; at various points in the tetralogy he refers to "Form", "Erzählung", "Schrift", even to French language and culture as a "Reich" or "Heimat" (LSV 64). Of course, there are precedents for this search for truth through language and the act of artistic creation in the Austrian tradition, and Handke has expressed admiration for numerous Austrian authors, from Raimund and Nestroy⁵⁴ to the present generation⁵⁵. But he is a voracious reader, "international" in outlook, and just as likely to quote from non-German sources as to refer back to important figures from his "own" tradition (if it can be seen as such ; as pointed out earlier, Handke has sometimes claimed that Slovene, not German, was his first language, thus reinforcing his feeling of standing apart from the mainstream). This tendency is most pronounced in the notebooks, where inner reflection and observations of everyday events are combined with a multiplicity of references to authors and other creative artists who interest him.

In Phantasien der Wiederholung, for example, there are reference to a range of influences extending from Homer and Virgil via Wolfram von Eschenbach, Goethe, Nietzsche, Balzac, Valéry and Rilke to Faulkner, Ludwig Hohl, Emmanuel Bove and favourite Westerns (Red River, Rancho Notorious, River of No Return) - not to

⁵³ See, e.g., the interview "Der Alltag ist schändlich leblos", Der Spiegel, 16, 16.4.1990

⁵⁴ Whose works he appreciated at school - see Arnold 1978, p.23

⁵⁵ See Gabriel, Peter Handke und Österreich(1983), 82, for a complete list

mention the Tao Te Ching - and all this in a book of barely a hundred pages. This is an aspect of Handke's work which creates problems for critics - and not merely those of keeping up with his reading. In his case it does not seem to conform to the stereotype of the post-modern writer who displays his cleverness by ostentatiously citing a multitude of sources and denying differences between "high" and "low" forms of culture. He is genuinely passionate about his preferred books, films and records, and frequently scathingly dismissive of work which he dislikes. This contrasts with the "*neue Beliebigkeit*" - the supposedly post-modern attitude of detachment, indifference and/or scepticism in the face of the diverse range of cultural activity in the modern world ; indeed Handke has drawn criticism precisely because of his enthusiasm for the work of figures of the past.

Wolfgang Lange (1985) accuses him of "*Eklektizismus und Epigonentum*" in the tetralogy, of having a "*naive, unkritische Verhältnis zur Tradition*" - which makes him imitate, unsuccessfully, the language of Goethe and Stifter, and to admire Cézanne in a "kultisch" fashion, indeed to make a "Fetisch" of art in general ; thus explaining the failure of the attempt, at the end of Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire, to apply the "laws" of painting to a piece of descriptive prose. Furthermore, Lange questions the whole mechanism of the "Beseligungsmomente" ; for him they are not direct experiences of eternity, or epiphanies as usually understood, but are "*präformiert...durch die Lektüre von Literatur*", and Handke is so "*befangen durch die Tradition*" that he is dependent on it, in life as in his writing. This may be an unfair criticism ; in spite of his respect for tradition Handke, both in the tetralogy and in his subsequent work, continues to show a fascination with some aspects of modern life, and has been careful to avoid aligning himself with any particular religious or political grouping of a conservative nature. Were he to do so, it is possible that his life could become easier and his work gain a social dimension. Yet at the same time such a move would necessitate a radical change of direction for him ; as he repeatedly says, he sees groups in general as enemies, and his choice of a lonely and difficult path follows from this, perhaps irrational, belief. The positive

and negative qualities of his work, its strengths and limitations, are the consequences of this decision, and are accompanied by his own awareness that he is capable, for all his affirmative aims, of making mistakes.

Reactions to Handke's 1980s work - France, the USA, Britain and Germany

Although critical reaction to his work continues to be mixed, Handke is one of the few living German-language writers to enjoy an international reputation. As has been previously mentioned, the French have shown a particular enthusiasm for his work ; but it would be erroneous to dismiss *all* of his French admirers as mere followers of fashion or cultists indulging in fan-worship, even though the uncritical tone of some of the contributions to the issue of Austriaca (1983) devoted to his work would tend to give that impression. Yet there is also the recognition of a kindred spirit ; Wesche (1985) reviews the connections with France which mark both Handke's life and work, pointing out the affinities with the French writers Handke has translated - in particular Emmanuel Bove and Francis Ponge⁵⁶ - as well as the more widely-acknowledged literary influences, from Balzac and Flaubert to Camus, Sartre and Robbe-Grillet. Wesche concludes, interestingly, that although Handke's move to France may superficially resemble his "*Ausweichen in die Vereinigten Staaten : auf der Suche nach dem Anderen, Fremden und nach der darin winkenden Anonymität*", he did, in fact, find more sympathy - and more intellectual challenge - in France than in the United States, not least because French literary critics were less likely to write him off as a renegade "68iger" by means of an "*ihm unangemessene soziologisch ausgerichtete Kritik*" (279) as practised in West Germany, than to be interested by his use of, and concern with, language.

⁵⁶ Whose Le Carnet du bois de pins and La Mounine ou Note après coup sur un ciel de Provence were translated by Handke while he was working on Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire ; the works share, says Wesche, the same "*phänomenologisch-semiotische(n) Ansatz*" [276]

Certainly, it would be hard to think of a German critic who would view the *Erzählung* Langsame Heimkehr from an *Ausgangspunkt* comparable to that of Daniel Oster (1983), unmistakably French in its mode of expression yet sympathetic to Handke's intentions :

Tout porte à croire que telle est la prégnance de l'espace qu'il n'existe pour l'esprit aucune issue qui ne passe par la soumission pure et simple à ses topiques. L'idée même d'issue accapare et oriente tous nos autres avatars. Locaux, locataires, localisés, nous sommes structurés comme un territoire dont nous pensons être l'inventeur et non le greffier. Mais il serait étonnant que la littérature même, elle à fortiori, ne reproduise pas à sa manière les étapes d'un processus plutôt que les détails q'un état...La littérature, qui est le récit des mises en formes, "la littérature sans nouveauté qu'un espacement de la lecture", selon Mallarmé, est d'abord, pour produire cet effet, une problématique de l'espacement. (70)

In the United States, on the other hand, Handke's reception was initially facilitated by his thematisation of America and its culture, so that his work has subsequently found favour with both Germanists and sections of the literary public. The rock critic Greil Marcus, for example, found the vision of America in Der kurze Brief... - the epiphany on the Mississippi steamboat Mark Twain - relevant to his own beliefs, as a member of Handke's generation, disillusioned with his country's politics after Vietnam and Watergate, but still professing a faith in the "American Dream" . Marcus seemed to respond to the "mythical America" which Handke finds in the films of John Ford, the paintings of Edward Hopper, or his favoured rock music - reflecting the fact that the relationship between reality and myth in the construction of personal and national identity concerns both Americans and Austrians⁵⁷. Demetz, writing as an American Germanist of the "older generation", claims that, in "*fighting for the emancipation of individual perception from everything that may force it into prescribed moulds of tradition*" Handke "*articulates one of the central concerns of our age*", and says that in his recent work he has "*learned to look away from himself, turned to the classics, and wooed the given world of luminous things and landscapes harbouring the secrets of people*",

⁵⁷ Marcus's book Mystery Train, with its (sometimes rather strenuous) attempts to relate American popular music traditions to the country's history and legends, is a good example of this tendency, and at times shows interesting parallels with episodes in Der kurze Brief...

even though this endeavour involves "*a new way of trying and groping*". It is noteworthy, too, that the bulk of English-language secondary literature on Handke has appeared in the United States, including recent books by Schlueter (1981) and Klinkowitz and Knowlton (1983).

In the German-speaking world, the reception of Handke's work has been closely bound up with the political and aesthetic debates of the time, with critics schooled in the "aufklärerisch" tradition stressing the problematic nature of his conception of the "ontological split" between the self and the world, and questioning the validity of his use of apparent epiphanies to overcome this : while those critics impatient with, or hostile to, the dominant post-war literary aesthetic have sought to claim him either as a conservative traditionalist, or - more frequently - as an exemplary post-modernist⁵⁸. The controversy of the mid-1980s, known as the *neudeutsche Literaturstreit*, was an illustration of the divisions provoked by his 1980s work - even though it became an examination of the state of West German literary criticism itself. Yet British Germanists - in contrast to London newspaper critics, who have at times responded enthusiastically to translations of his recent work - have tended to echo the comment made by Frank Schirrmacher of the FAZ, that Handke indulges in "*a case of 'alternative emotion', undisturbed by banal reality*"⁵⁹.

In spite of the overwhelmingly positive reception of Die Wiederholung in West Germany, Bullivant found in it a "*disturbing proximity...to the regressive mysticism of Hesse and (Gerd) Gaiser*"⁶⁰. McGowan casts doubt on Handke's concept of a "*vergessene, anonyme Sprache aller Menschen*" which is not formed by specific "*social and cultural determinants*", and sees in his recent work an example of "*the neo-Romantic return in the 1980s, of attempts to transcend reality by aestheticising it, seen in the influence of Novalis on Strauß and Handke, and the return of the author (or the text) as a visionary force with the power to create counter-worlds*" :

⁵⁸ See, for example, Winkels in :Jochen Hörisch/Hubert Winkels (Hg.) : Das schnelle Altern der neuesten Literatur (1985), 21ff.

⁵⁹ Schirrmacher, On the magic mountain, TLS, Oct. 7-13, 1988

⁶⁰ K.Bullivant, After the "Death of Literature", p. 388

but, it is claimed, this potentially liberating endeavour only produces, in the work of these two writers, a "*sense...of immobilisation, of an anchoring of the desire within the hermetic world of the text*"⁶¹. Linstead⁶² examines Handke's development, from his earliest published texts to the Langsame Heimkehr tetralogy, and finds that the lack of a social dimension in the later work invalidates, for him, its claims of liberation and enlightenment through the creation of personal laws.

He backs up his argument by contrasting these texts with the works by Handke - notably Wunschloses Unglück and Die Unvernünftigen sterben aus - in which the main characters' personalities are seen to be determined by definite social factors which can be identified and confronted, so that self-development is possible within society as it stands, without dependence on "gesetzgebende Augenblicke" or withdrawal into the individual's own inner world. This analysis is consistent enough, but sometimes borders on the rather carping - and unduly prescriptive - tone of some of Handke's German critics. Is it sufficient to condemn Handke (and, presumably, his readers) for a lack of social responsibility? Given the catastrophic role that various forms of irrationalism have played in recent German history, the reaction is understandable; but although Handke draws on religious and literary tradition in a way which readers may find provocative, naive or irritating, his distinctiveness, and his continuing international success, are due to his curiosity and willingness to explore new perspectives on reality, qualities which are lacking in many of his intellectually somewhat conformist contemporaries. Eifler picks up on this when, in her review of Linstead's study, she accuses him of condemning Handke for not joining in with the "*rah-rah-rah of the boys*", i.e.. of the social realists (MAL 1990, 151) - and in using a term derived from American college slang hints at the "female" sensibility she finds in his work.

⁶¹ Moray McGowan, *Neue Subjektivität*. In ; *ibid.*, pp.63-68

⁶² Michael Linstead, Outer World and Inner World. Socialisation and Emancipation in the Works of Peter Handke (1988).

Pütz (in Williams 1990) claims that "*because he contains so many tensions within himself*" Handke is "*one of the most interesting German authors of the 1970s and '80s*". And, indeed, it is obvious that, for all his references to traditional models, Handke remains a modern figure, even when (or perhaps, because) he reacts with hostility to some manifestations of the modern world. The stress in his recent work on the importance of traditions of storytelling and myth and the still troubling awareness of his German cultural and family background are combined with "Austrian" characteristics - a search for an all-embracing "Ordnung", a tendency to deliver sharp messages of "Kulturkritik", and a hint of what in 1978⁶³ he called "*un individualisme un peu dérisoire*", a characteristic which, he claimed, he admires in the best Austrian writers. His ability to celebrate nature and moments of individual happiness may well be undervalued by those who look for "relevance" in literature or insist on its strictly social purpose. Yet this is not to say that Handke does not run risks in his writing. Some of his more enthusiastic admirers do him no favours by interpreting his work in a quasi-mystical fashion⁶⁴; while Grass's recent comment that perhaps some fine words from "Schriftsteller Handke" will stop the forests from dying illustrates the hostility still provoked by his conscious distancing from contemporary political problems.⁶⁵ Pütz (1990) talks of his "*problem...how to resist the uncomplaining acceptance of negativity without himself slipping into a smirking acceptance of the status quo*"; and of the challenge confronting him - "*how he makes a distinction between himself and those with whom he is in danger of being confused...*" So far, at least, Handke has not sought to link his individual vision to a specific religious or philosophical "path", and, having attained the age of fifty, seems - at least for the time being - to have settled into the style which found

⁶³ In Les Nouvelles Littéraires, 29 juin 1978; Voix de l'Autriche et de l'Europe Danubienne. Quoted in Gabriel 1983, 44-45

⁶⁴ E.g. Peter Strasser: Der Freudenstoff. Zu Handke eine Philosophie. (Salzburg 1991)

⁶⁵ The collapse of Yugoslavia, and the foundation of a Republic of Slovenia, have provided the most serious challenge to the identity constructed by Handke in his 1980s work; a bitter opponent of the partition of the country, he has left Austria and returned to France, his essay Abschied des Träumers vom neunten Land (1991) having created a controversy in which he lost - albeit temporarily - the support of many of his Slovenian acquaintances..

its first full expression in the stylistic, cultural and personal explorations of the Langsame Heimkehr tetralogy. If this state of affairs continues, Handke will doubtless continue on his own chosen way of self-exploration - travelling, intensive reading, translating and writing - and seek to communicate his discoveries to his loyal readership, whether or not the results meet with critical approval.

CHAPTER FIVE

LITERATURE AND CULTURE IN THE 1970s AND 1980s : THE SELF
AND THE "POST-MODERN" WORLD

The second half of the post-war period as defined in Chapter 1 - i.e. from 1968 until the end of the 1980s - saw further changes in the status of literature in the German-speaking countries. On the one hand, it seemed at first to be challenged, as a means of cultural expression, by the post-1968 generation with its political and sociological orientation and preoccupation with the popular culture of film, television, rock music, etc ; and as a recreational pastime, by the growth of the organised leisure industry and the spread of new developments in the electronic media. Conversely, the academic study of literature developed both quantitatively and in terms of a more varied and enquiring range of methodologies , a consequence of the upheaval in the universities being the examination of *Germanistik* as an academic discipline and a re-evaluation of what had often previously been regarded as an immutable literary canon.⁹⁷

During these two decades, the German-speaking lands seemed to consolidate the economic and political gains of the period of reconstruction described in Chapter 1, forming a prosperous, politically stable and technologically advanced region in the middle of Europe, with West Germany finding a new role at the heart of the successful European Economic Community. Despite the residual social and generational tensions revealed by the hostile response to the student revolt, and then repeated in the *deutscher Herbst* (and its smaller-scale Swiss counterpart) a decade later, efficiency, affluence, and relative political harmony

⁹⁷ See Helmut Kreuzer : Vom "Sein" zur "Postmoderne". Streiflichter auf vier Dekaden der Literatur und Literaturwissenschaft im westlichen Deutschland. In : Paul Michael Lützeler (Hg.) : Zeitgenossenschaft. Zur deutschsprachigen Literatur im 20. Jahrhundert Festschrift für Egon Schwarz zum 65. Geburtstag (1987)

characterised the societies of the Federal Republic, Switzerland and Austria. Yet cultural expression, as ever, presented a more complex situation. In terms of quality, the literary output of the 1970s and '80s in particular drew mixed responses. Typical of the unfavourable verdicts of some West German critics was that of Schirmmacher⁹⁸, who, like his mentor Reich-Ranicki, identified only a modest amount of new talent in the period; whereas the majority of established names produced work which, he maintained, failed to surpass the earlier achievements which had brought them renown - usually before the beginning of the period in question. Although he dismisses Handke and Strauß's later work for its "*streak of artistic religiosity*" which is "*not unlike that of George, Klages and Kassner*", he cites Bernhard as one of "*those authors who take the intellectual potential of literature seriously*" and who can thus help to re-establish the historical perspective which, he claims, is sorely lacking in most contemporary writing. For Bullivant (*Realism Today*, 1987), though, the "highly political" 1970s were an impressive era for the novel in Germany, whose qualitative impact surpassed that of the 1960s; whereas in that decade, according to some commentators, e.g. Parker⁹⁹, "*German literature..., like other aspects of German life..., flattered to deceive*". Even so, it is remarkable that hardly any of the novels discussed by Bullivant made any impression outside Germany - as if to confirm Schirmmacher's and Durzak's¹⁰⁰ claims that German literature had become provincial. The 1980s, another decade marked by high literary "productivity" (which, it was said, could lead to writers falling into a "Routine" and producing work devoid of real content) also produced critical controversies - in this case heightened by the general decline of the prevalent tendencies of the previous thirty years, as many of the leading post-war authors died, became

⁹⁸ Frank Schirmmacher : On the magic mountain. In : *TLS*, Oct.7-13, 1988

⁹⁹ Stephen Parker : West and East Germany. In : Don Piper/Spencer Pearce : *Literature of Europe and America in the 1960s* (1989), p.112

¹⁰⁰ Manfred Durzak : Ist die deutsche Literatur provinziell ? Ein Blick auf die deutsche Literaturszene von den Rändern her. In : *Amsterdamer Beiträge 25* (1988) - *Literaturszene Bundesrepublik - Ein Blick von draußen*

unproductive in their old age, or produced disappointing work. The newcomers were often of a very different cultural background, leading to the claim that, for better or worse "post-modernism" was taking root in the German literary scene, courtesy of a generation of writers described by Durzak as "*Young Urban Professionals*".¹⁰¹

If a characteristic can be singled out as typical of the time, it might well be an increased self-consciousness - deriving not merely from the modernist tradition, as discussed in Chapter 1, but from the increasing pressures - aesthetic, sociological, political, commercial - confronting the professional writer (and everyone else) as the world began to take on aspects of the "global village" hailed by McLuhan in the 1960s and the "information explosion" penetrated all aspects of life, even literature. Botho Strauß's work often expresses this feeling, for example in Paare Passanten (e.g., in the section containing the assertion that "*Man schreibt unter Aufsicht alles bisher Geschriebenen...*",¹⁰²), and it is possible to apply it to many works of the 1970s and '80s - including those by Frisch, Handke and Bernhard. As well as a keen sense of the problems, and possible advantages, of celebrity for the writer, a particular quality which was common to all three was an awareness of their *own* past writings. This can be seen in, for example, Frisch's technique of quoting extensively from, and commenting on, his earlier works in Montauk, Handke's re-working and adaptation of his previous themes in Der Chinese des Schmerzes and Die Wiederholung, and Bernhard's constant re-examination of the same issues, and employment, with little change, of the style originated in his first novels - exemplified in Auslöschung, which, although it drew appreciative reviews from experienced Bernhard readers, who saw in it a skilful "orchestration" of the author's preoccupations, is perhaps - if only because of its sheer length - not a

¹⁰¹ Durzak, *ibid.*, pp. 296-8

¹⁰² Paare Passanten, 1981, 103

work which would easily "convert" the unconvinced, or those coming to the author for the first time.

Some have seen in this evidence of the fact that the West German *Literaturbetrieb*, like other industries in what its adherents praised as a model liberal-capitalist society, partook of an efficiency which dictated the high rate of "productivity" mentioned above, tempting - or forcing - writers into a "*Professionalisierung*" (Durzak) which allegedly had a deleterious effect on the quality of their work ; a situation was created in which certain kinds of writing were considered "marketable" and other kinds less so. Successful works in the eyes of influential critics such as Reich-Ranicki were usually, it was claimed, the kind of socio-critical, conventionally "realistic" narratives which ironically enough, had been considered radical and provocative ten or twenty years earlier. Although the popularity of Handke and Bernhard would seem to contradict this assertion - neither, after all, can be seen as a social realist - it is true that the prevalent aesthetic in West German literary criticism remained heavily influenced by the generation of *Gruppe 47*, despite episodes such as the Princeton meeting of 1966 and Enzensberger's attack on the political impotence of his contemporaries, and in spite of the new influences permeating *Germanistik* after 1968.

Yet in retrospect, a reaction against the "post-war" aesthetic was inevitable, if only because of the changing cultural and social circumstances discussed in Chapter 1. The "new trans-national outlook" identified by Pearce and Piper in their book on literature of Europe and America in the 1960s eventually made inroads into German literary consciousness ; initially through the growth of the so-called "Neue Subjektivität" or "Neue Innerlichkeit"¹⁰³, which owed as much to the mood of the time - what in the United States was referred to as the "Me Decade", that post-1968 period in which the preoccupation with self-exploration

¹⁰³ See e.g. Moray McGowan ; *Neue Subjektivität*. In : Keith Bullivant (Ed.) : *After the 'Death' of Literature. West German Writing of the 1970s* (1989)

and self-discovery became fashionable, and which saw the proliferation of numerous forms of psychotherapy, religious cults and self-analysis groups¹⁰⁴ - as to the German tradition of "inwardness" from which it also drew. The surveys by Frieden (1983)¹⁰⁵ and Saunders (1985)¹⁰⁶ both focus on the prevalence of autobiographical modes of writing in the 1970s as a reflection of this trend ; Elsaesser¹⁰⁷ makes an important point when he observes that this , far from being a simple retreat from political activism into solipsism, really expressed the "other side" of the 1960s rebellion, the experimentation with new lifestyles which complemented the political protests but which many formerly "engagierte" *Germanisten* of the 'sixties generation have belittled, or preferred to ignore. The slogan derived from Marcuse and much repeated in the 1970s, "*the private is the political*",¹⁰⁸ helps to put the trend for "inwardness" into a clearer perspective ; while the political turbulence in the later years of the decade, and the atmosphere of near-panic created by the deeds of the Baader-Meinhof terrorists, serve to illustrate the co-existence of utopian introspection and direct action which characterised the West German student movement. Yet it would in any case be erroneous to assume that the majority of participants in this process displayed a long-term, "realistic" political commitment. The "carnival" element which some commentators identified in the events of May 1968 in Paris also existed in Germany. Although politically counter-productive in the short-term, it may well have contributed to an increasing tolerance of various kinds of non-conformity in West German society ; just as in France where, in subsequent years, the country's traditional and inflexible social hierarchies were gradually replaced by a new

¹⁰⁴ See e.g. Fritz J. Raddatz, Vom Neo-Marxismus zum Neo-Narzissmus : die Literatur der siebziger Jahre, in his Die Nachgeborenen : Leseerfahrungen mit zeitgenössischer Literatur (1983), p.315

¹⁰⁵ Sandra Frieden : Autobiography : self into form : German-language autobiographical writings of the 1970s (1983)

¹⁰⁶ Barbara Saunders : Contemporary German Autobiography : literary approaches to the problem of identity (1985)

¹⁰⁷ Thomas Elsaesser : A Retrospect on the New German Cinema. In : GLL XLI, 3, April 1988, pp.271-292

¹⁰⁸ Quoted by McGowan, in Bullivant 1989, p.56

informality more appropriate to a modern industrial society - a development which, it was claimed, had been set in motion by the "festival" atmosphere of the 1968 events. In addition, the international youth culture of the late 'sixties gradually assumed a distinctive form in Germany, with the growth of the hippy movement contributing to a fashion for ecology, nature mysticism and communal living ; one which had many precedents in German history . This led to a rediscovery of what Elsaesser calls the *"ambivalent heritage of Romanticism"* ; a tradition which, as he observes, has always posed problems for an orthodox, rationalist German Left whose thought *"tends to be fixated on the category of production"* and is therefore suspicious of the *"neo-romantic but by no means conformist ethos of inwardness and melancholy"* usually more associated with the *"conservative tendencies of (German) intellectual and artistic life"*.

As Elsaesser shows, it was in the "New German Cinema" of the 1970s that this heritage was most strikingly expressed ; it brought the "new" West Germany, its society and culture, into the consciousness of an international audience which may often have been unfamiliar with the country's post-war literature, while also representing a belated contribution to European cinema history. The rise and fall of this "movement" - if, indeed, it could be described as such - is analysed succinctly and perceptively by Elsaesser ; particularly intriguing is his linking of the phenomenon to wider cultural contexts, and not simply as a case study of the problems of European cinema in a time of increasing Hollywood hegemony and the changing relationship between state institutions, the free market, film, video and television. He also shows how :

...an analysis of the dominant narratives and contradictions that structure (these films) points to a national mythology of the post-war period. These turn upon a number of key notions, such as the family, paternity, home, exile. From the evidence it seems clear that in the decade of the 1970s, certain constellations emerged which made the preoccupation with identity - emotional, sexual, national - into a sort of super-genre for German films, which in turn provided a repertoire of motifs for directors. For instance, one finds quite a distinct interpretation of German history, especially post-war history, perceived not only through a complex and broken relationship with authority in general and paternal authority in particular, but also confronting at almost every point the historical conditions

under which West Germany came into being. One might foreshorten it by saying successful German films could have only one of two subjects : German history and the German family (288).

This recalls the theme of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* which had, all along, been the key preoccupation of post-war literature. It could even be claimed that the subsequent changes in literary expression were accelerated by the discovery that film (or, for that matter, television) could be a more appropriate medium for the recounting of the kind of "realistic" narratives and themes (such as those mentioned in the above quotation) which had previously been the prerogative of the novel. The peculiarly German predilection for "Literaturverfilmungen" may well be an expression of this belief (as well as - as Elsaesser states - being a side-effect of the system of official subsidy), even if it does contradict the view prevalent in other countries, i.e. that good books are not necessarily suitable raw material for good films.¹⁰⁹ But if this search for identity within the framework of national history became initially, as Elsaesser maintains, "*the German cinema's marketable international appeal*" and then "*a cliché convention because its basis in historical fact was fading fast from the memory of a new generation*" , then it could also be argued that the New German Cinema reflected, in its decade or so of existence, the literary developments, from documentary forms to *Neue Innerlichkeit*, of the entire post-war era.

That decade may also in some respects have served to "de-mythologise" much of the literature of the period immediately preceding it ; as the media, and the technology which supported them, became more sophisticated, so the fascination with topics and themes which had been regarded as exotic, daring, "underground" or "*Geheimtips*" in the 1960s - particularly those deriving from American popular culture - diminished, familiarity depriving them of their aura of novelty

¹⁰⁹ See also John Sandford : The "Literaturverfilmungswelle". In : Bullivant 1989, 155-175

or revolt. For example, Krätzer¹¹⁰, in her study of the "Amerikabild" in modern German writing, points out that journeys to America only became a "*Selbstverständlichkeit*" for German writers after World War Two ; in the 1970s they were followed by film-makers (notably Wenders), and eventually by the general public as increasing prosperity enabled German tourists to travel across the Atlantic in large numbers. At the same time, the integration of Anglo-American pop music into the mainstream entertainment industry (see Hermand 1988) robbed it of many of its subversive overtones - perhaps leading to the post-1968 generation's increasing fascination with the then comparatively neglected medium of cinema.

The careers of Wenders and Handke are interesting examples of this tendency. Handke's early development seems to owe much to that "*mixture of the high French intellectual culture and the low American popular culture*" which Laura Mulvey (Green 1988, 11) sees as crucial to her generation - Handke's near-contemporaries - who inspired the British "underground", which in its turn influenced him through its music. He shares the "*movement towards a popular culture*", from an avant-garde or "intellectual" starting-point, characteristic of the 1960s¹¹¹. The selective interest in popular culture shown by the preceding generation had been centred on those aspects which corresponded to their world-view ("humanist" cinema - e.g., Chaplin, Italian neo-realism, the early Soviet classics ; in popular music, a preference for the seemingly "uncommercial" forms of jazz and folksong, protest singers, *chansonniers* and *Liedermacher*) ; this was to change in the light of the demographic, economic and even philosophical developments of the 'sixties. While the growth of an increasingly suburban,

¹¹⁰Anita Krätzer : Studien zum Amerikabild in der neueren deutschen Literatur (1982)

¹¹¹ This development was also facilitated by the fact that some pop and rock singers of the period were, like some of their literary contemporaries, beneficiaries of the increased opportunities for higher education after 1945 (e.g. the art college background of the Beatles and numerous other British rock performers), and had thus, unlike older, "traditional" entertainers, been able to develop comparatively broad cultural interests.

consumerist society challenged the preceding generation's more idealistic, even puritanical, notions of a "people's culture", new currents in philosophy gave rise to a more detached, analytical interest in the *formal* aspects of rock music and Hollywood film - which can be seen in Handke's early essays, with their debt to Structuralism and Russian Formalism. But, in line with the new willingness to ignore cultural boundaries, his fascination with the less "artistic" forms of pop culture nevertheless did not lead to a simple abandonment of an essentially "intellectual" stance in favour of populist commercialism - as Handke's films, so dissimilar to those of the Hollywood directors he admires, demonstrate. Later in his career, the translations from the French which constitute so much of his 1980s output testify to the lasting influence of (not merely "high") French culture ; this initially found expression in essays such as Literatur ist romantisch, with its taking up of the issues raised in Sartre's Qu'est-ce que c'est la littérature ? ; and in his praise for the films of Godard and Truffaut. Equally, his interest in popular music remained¹¹², centred on the rock groups and singer-songwriters of his generation, even though, as he entered middle-age and began to draw inspiration from classical writers, his own "image" became less and less comparable to that of a rock star. His taste in rock music, although sometimes idiosyncratic, is "mainstream" rather than avant-garde, and not so different from that of an intelligent professional rock critic; in his 1990 Spiegel interview he claims, characteristically, that the songs of the (almost forgotten) late 'sixties rock group Creedence Clearwater Revival¹¹³ (from whom he derived both the quotation

¹¹² He told Gamper (1987) that Über die Dörfer was inspired by a song by the Belgian *chansonnier* Jacques Brel.

¹¹³ The American rock critic Dave Marsh, whose book Fortunate Son (1985) takes its title from a song by this group, says of its leader and songwriter John Fogerty : "*Fogerty is obsessed with the utter failure of human communication*" (315), yet in his songs expresses this in a curiously offhand way, "*as though such terminal inability to communicate was not a private problem, but a universal one...*" (314) Handke's particular fondness for this group may well be a consequence of its lack of "image", in the pop sense of the word, and of its simple music, a mixture of folksy, idyllic Americana - appropriately, they are mentioned in Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied - and modern anxieties, elements of "*pessimism, paranoia and puritanism*" (Marsh) which surface in Fogerty's songs, as in his own work.

"*Somewhere I lost connection*" in Als das Wünschen noch geholfen hat and one of the two mottos for Über die Dörfer) contain, for him, more reality (are more "welthaltig", as he puts it) than most socio-realistic novels. In 1970, Wenders, too, could write :

The new American films are bleak, like the new unusable metal pinball machines from Chicago, on which you try in vain to recapture the pleasure of pinball. Music from America is more and more replacing the sensuality that the films have lost ; the merging of blues and rock and country music has produced something that can no longer be experienced only with the ears, but which is visible, and forms images, in space and time .(Wenders 1989, 49)

Here, Wenders is discussing the West Coast-inspired, "progressive" rock music of the late 1960s - a music which was to lose its impetus, and its special appeal for European intellectuals, during the subsequent decade, as the social climate changed ; commercial elements of the pop business gradually re-asserted themselves in face of the less marketable, idealistic and experimental music (and the self-indulgent lifestyles) of the hippy era. Like Handke, he relates this music, and its evocation of archetypal American "images", to the films of John Ford. However, unlike Handke, his passion for American film and music led him to settle in the United States for seven years, spending much of that time in a vain attempt to make his own kind of films within the commercial framework of Hollywood ; this after the enthusiastic reception of the American films of the 'fifties and sixties in his early criticism. Yet this seeming familiarity with American culture did not make the task of adapting to its conventions any easier. The long prose poem he wrote to reflect on this experience, The American Dream,¹¹⁴ has no particular value as literature, but nonetheless represents, in a way which is perhaps without precedent among German writers who visited, or settled in the United States during the period, his coming to terms with the reality of America, and his disappointment that the country "*that had given me/a*

¹¹⁴ In : Emotion Pictures, pp.116-146

concept of pleasure" through the movies, comics and rock'n'roll could not live up to his expectations. Having struggled for four years to make his film Hammett without undue interference from the producers, he condemns the American tendency to "advertise" rather than "narrate", states that "entertainment" is "totalitarian" (shades of Adorno and Horkheimer's *Kulturindustrie*) and proclaims that, as far as he is concerned, "THE DREAM IS OVER" (146; a phrase borrowed from John Lennon's song commenting on the break-up of the Beatles and the fading of Sixties utopianism). Like Handke, he returned to his home country; and achieved success with perhaps his most "German" film, Der Himmel über Berlin.

The fact that Wenders, usually mistrusted by the German Left as a neo-Romantic, should nevertheless condemn the United States in what had become an almost traditional fashion is an indication of the more general disillusionment and pessimism which seemed to be an inescapable feature of the Reagan-Brezhnev era; at this time, Germans felt particularly vulnerable, their country the probable site of conflict if, as was widely feared, the existing tensions between the superpowers were to escalate into nuclear war. In such a cultural climate, socially and politically conscious literature could do little more than register anxiety and despair (as did Grass's Die Rättin and Wolf's Kassandra); yet for many, such literary "alternatives" as were proposed at this time seemed perplexing - as the *neudeutscher Literaturstreit* was to demonstrate.

The *neudeutscher Literaturstreit*

Kinder's claim that a generation gap had developed in German literature ("*Es handelt sich um einen handfesten Generationskrach*")¹¹⁵, expressed in the

¹¹⁵ Text und Kritik H.100, Oktober 1988, Über Literaturkritik, S.35

disdain of the generation of *Gruppe 47* for their successors, appeared to be borne out by the *neudeutscher Literaturstreit* of the mid-1980s. In generational terms, this seems to make sense - as the 1966 Princeton incident and the "Tod der Literatur" had long since implied. Yet the fact that, as late as 1988, an issue of Text und Kritik could be devoted to literary criticism and contain several articles attacking Marcel Reich-Ranicki and a perceived "*Steuerung der Literaturgeschichte durch den Literaturbetrieb*" (Kinder 34) showed that the transition was far from complete ; the established generation, like its predecessor in the 1950s, was not about to surrender power easily. If the issue of Text und Kritik in which this judgment appears is entitled Über Literaturkritik, it is all the more remarkable that around half of it should be devoted to strong criticism of Reich-Ranicki and his (allegedly conservative) aesthetic. This does, indeed, reveal another "gap" in German *Literaturkritik* - between *Germanistik* and the popular journalistic criticism of which Reich-Ranicki was the best-known and most skilled practitioner. For the non-German reader, it is surprising to see just how intense are the passions aroused by the status accorded to a single critic. The only parallels in Anglo-Saxon cultural journalism are New York theatre critics such as Clive Barnes and Frank Rich, both of whom have been credited with the power to "make or break" Broadway shows with one positive or negative review. However, they inhabit the world of show-business, where, exaggeration, "hype" and hysteria are commonplace ; in both the United States and Britain, literature is generally regarded as a more sedate affair, in spite of occasional controversies, and no single critic wields great power. Perhaps, therefore, this can be seen as another example of the "*broken relationship with authority*" which Elsaesser discusses above.

Indeed, Wefelmeyer¹¹⁶, commenting on the critical reception of Botho Strauß's Der junge Mann and Handke's comparison, in his *Petrarca-Preis* speech

¹¹⁶ Fritz Wefelmeyer : Botho Strauß's *Der junge Mann* und die Literaturkritik. In : Literaturmagazin 17, 1985, 51-70

of 1984, of the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung's literary critics with Nazi book-burners¹¹⁷, comes to similar conclusions ; regarding such reactions as symptomatic of the German tendency to grant excessive respect to authority-figures. It would be difficult to imagine, he says, a speech comparable to Handke's appearing in the New York Times or the Times Literary Supplement ; simply because readers in countries other than Germany are accustomed to a plurality of opinions and can enjoy their preferred works without feeling that these works, or their authors, possess an "*Erlösungsmacht*", or exaggerating the threat posed by hostile criticism.

The background to the *neudeutscher Literaturstreit* , therefore, is provided by an unusually intense, anxious, demanding and committed literary climate. The issue of Literaturmagazin (17, 1985) which bears this title contains Lüdke's comment that the criticism of recent work by Handke and Strauß reveals the desperate methodological inadequacy of German "*Kritik*", which, according to him, amounts to a "*Trauerspiel*" and a "*Misere* " in its inability to come to terms with the two writers without resorting to scornful dismissal of their attempts at innovation. The debate was taken up by the issue of Text und Kritik devoted to *Literaturkritik* ; Lorenz¹¹⁸ (105), commenting on the controversy which, he says, was prematurely abandoned because of its limited "*Unterhaltungseffekt*" (and certainly the *Historikerstreit* of the mid-Eighties made a greater public impression both within Germany and abroad) sets out what he considers to be the task of the contemporary literary critic : the "*Herstellen einer Öffentlichkeit, die aufmerksam wird auf die nicht-zweckgebundene, begriffslose und gewaltfreie Sprache der Literatur*" in the face of "*das Gewaltpotential des wissenschaftlich-technischen Verfügungsdenkens*". Lorenz is clearly influenced by French theory, deriving his theme of *Literatur als Gespräch* from the notion

¹¹⁷ Peter Handke : Einwenden und Hochhalten. Rede auf Gustav Janus. In : Die Zeit 27, 29 Juni 1984

¹¹⁸ Otto Lorenz : Literatur als Gespräch. Zur Aufgabe von Literaturkritik heute.. In : TuK, H.100

of *discours* propounded by Barthes and Foucault, whom he quotes in the course of his essay. Hence, too, his preference for "*offene(n) Formen*", a familiar concept to readers of contemporary French and American criticism, yet somehow still regarded as strange and suspect by large sections of Germany's critics, scholars and *Literaten*.

The "*massive investment in the Subject and subjectivity*" which Phelan¹¹⁹ takes to be the characteristic peculiar to modern literature in German seemed threatened by theories which postulated an unstable, fluid or even non-existent "self"; hence the wariness of "*the efforts to displace, or dis-locate, the Subject on the other side of the Rhine (or, for that matter, on the other side of the Atlantic.)*" (193). As Phelan says, it is not that the French thinkers he discusses have no counterparts or parallels in the German philosophical tradition - he cites the early Romantics, Reception Theory, Bense, Heißenbüttel - but that they "*seem to fly in the face of a certain tradition in German culture*" - a tradition which, as has been shown in Chapter 1 of this study, had been to the fore during most of the post-war period. From an American viewpoint, Holub¹²⁰, reviewing recent German theoretical work, identifies a "*stagnation...at least as far as it relates to literary matters*" which he claims has endured since the end of the Student Movement and the innovations (Reception Theory, the sociological approach, Critical Theory) in *Germanistik* of the late 'sixties; and surmises that this may account for the increasing interest in post-structuralism in Germany.

Kreuzer (1987, 309) recounts that: "*Die Diskussion der Postmoderne hat 1985/86 die Feuilletons, die Tagungen, den Büchermarkt, die Universitätsseminare - auch der Literaturwissenschaften - bis in den letzten Winkel der Bundesrepublik erreicht...*". Indeed, in the mid- and late 1980s a number of books concerned with the *Postmoderne* appeared, dealing with the

¹¹⁹ Anthony Phelan: *Deconstructing Classicism - Goethe's Helena and the Need to Rhyme*. In: Richard Sheppard [ed.], *New Ways in Germanistik* (1990)

¹²⁰ Robert C. Holub, *Germanistik and Theoretical Discourse in the 1980s, Monatshefte* 1988, pp.364ff.

phenomenon, perhaps appropriately, from a variety of viewpoints (see Huyssen/Scherpe 1986 ; C & P Bürger 1987 ; Kemper 1988). In one of these, Fehér¹²¹, in a generally sceptical essay, says that for him the *Postmoderne* "beinhaltet...eben nichts anderes als das intensive Gefühl des 'Danach' ('the feeling of being after'), der Ausdruck des Pyrrhussieges der Kunst und Literatur in ihrem Kampf um Befreiung" - and leads "zu einem seichten, unfruchtbaren Gefühl" (27).

This remark echoes, no doubt accidentally, the titles of some significant English-language publications on German literature and culture which appeared at around the same time ; Peter Demetz's After the Fires, Michael Hamburger's After the Second Flood, Andreas Huyssen's After the Great Divide (all 1986), and After the 'Death of Literature' , edited by Keith Bullivant (1989). Although in each case the emphasis differs - Demetz and Hamburger both consider a broad spectrum of post-war writing, from distinctive personal viewpoints, Huyssen deals with the interaction between modernism, mass culture and postmodernism, while the anthology edited by Bullivant focuses on West German writing in the 1970s - "*the feeling of being after*" seems to be the common denominator which links all four books. One suspects, though, that while Fehér interprets it to signify a sense of living in a bleak, epigonal era, the choice of titles suggestive of a retrospective view for the works mentioned above is related more to a need to take stock after periods of intense social and political experiences or significant creative activity - in the hope , perhaps, of gaining a clearer perspective on the present. It is interesting to observe that this convergence of individual thought-patterns should occur in the second half of the 1980s ; it suggests that, in literature and culture, the "end of the post-war era" was apparent long before the political events of 1989 signalled the end of the Cold War and of the balance of power which had been established after 1945.

¹²¹ Ferenc Fehér : Der Pyrrhussieg der Kunst im Kampf um ihre Befreiung. Bemerkungen zum postmodernen Intermezzo. In : Bürger 1987

A "New Age" ?

Yet another image which has repeatedly been evoked in recent discussions of German literature is that of the threshold or *Schwelle* - deriving, of course, from Handke's Der Chinese des Schmerzes and discussed above, in the chapter on Handke. It has been used not only by Pütz in his essay on Handke and literature in the 1980s, but also as the title of a recent anthology of essays on German writing of that decade¹²². It may be a truism worthy only of the more facile kind of sociologically-oriented criticism to state that both tendencies - looking back in order to take stock, and waiting attentively and patiently in the expectation that momentous events will occur at some unspecified future time - represent a turning away from the basic concerns of the immediate present. Yet it has also been argued that today this attitude is precisely what is needed. Here, for example, is Winkels¹²³ on the present situation :

Dem Dilemma entkommt eine weitgehend noch literarisch sozialisierte Gesellschaft auch dann nicht, wenn sie bereits defensiv vor dem kalten Wind der neuen Medien und Verkehrsformen geschützt glaubt.

DAS BESTE an der neuesten Literatur ist denn auch die Aufnahme des Kampfes mit der Vielfalt und der obszönen Unmittelbarkeit der "motion pictures", mit der selektiven Rigidität der Datenverarbeitungsprogramme, mit den losen und lose (hin-)gestreuten Reden in den informationstheoretischen Grauzonen von Slang bis Graffiti...

He continues, "*Handke kennt den Kampf, von dem hier die Rede ist...*" (23) ; and indeed his interpretation of Der Chinese des Schmerzes is based on the ideas expressed in the passage quoted above. More generally, the notion that technology and the mass media have become an oppressive force is echoed by Botho Strauß, who has even gone so far as to call for the establishment of esoteric

¹²² Literature on the Threshold, ed. Williams/Smith/Parkes, 1990

¹²³ Jochen Hörisch/Hubert Winkels (Hg.) : Das schnelle Altern der neuesten Literatur (1985), 21

communities and circles, to re-establish a sense of privacy which, he claims the modern world threatens to destroy - and furthermore, to protect and disseminate the kind of knowledge which cannot be entrusted to "*die allesdurchdringende, allesmäßige Öffentlichkeit*" ¹²⁴.

Strauß's statement is indicative of the widespread interest in various forms of esotericism which became a feature of the 1980s, and, as Pikulik shows, found expression in literature from Castaneda, Tolkien and Ende to Handke and Strauß. The now familiar term "New Age" is generally used to identify this tendency, which is historically related to the hippy and "alternative" philosophies of earlier decades, yet permeates literary and other forms of artistic activity in a way which fringe philosophies of the 'sixties did not ; its relevance to recent scientific and philosophical developments (e.g., the "New Physics", the concept of "holism") and to movements in literature such as Latin American "Magic Realism" (itself a term used to characterise some German writing of the early post-war years) has been noted. In addition, it does represent a change in the relationship between the writer and what tends to be called the "real" world of politics and economics ; for example, Hamburger, writing on modernist poetry in the 1960s, could still differentiate between Robert Graves' "*rejection of the very fabric of modern civilisation*", the "*profoundly romantic, and therefore reactionary*" nature of the "creed" set out in his The White Goddess, and the same author's "*moderate and liberal*" political views ¹²⁵. Yet, the upheavals of 1968, the apparent inertia of political and social life even in the most advanced Western liberal democracies, and the growing interest in myth and feminism, might all be regarded as providing evidence to bear out Graves' judgment on the inadequacy of a civilisation dominated by utilitarianism. Thus, in recent years the separation of poetic and political expression, throughout the literary world, has become much

¹²⁴ Quoted in Lothar Pikulik : Mythos und "New Age" bei Peter Handke und Botho Strauß. In : Wirkendes Wort 2/1988, 235-252

¹²⁵ Michael Hamburger, The Truth of Poetry (1969), ch. 5 : "Absolute Poetry and Absolute Politics"

less clear-cut, and formerly "Utopian" beliefs are now presented as a necessary counter-balance to the destructive tendencies of late twentieth-century technological civilisation. Seymour-Smith¹²⁶, surveying world literature in the mid-1980s, expresses similar sentiments to Winkels (see above) in a much more "Anglo-Saxon" manner :

But the wheel has come full circle. Once the sentimentive writer was truly modernist ; now it is the turn of this kind of writer to be modernist by searching for naivety (in the Schillerian sense of it) ! Myth, dream, belief, affirmation ; all these things so reprehensible to the sullen, pseudo-certain, modernist mind, saturated as it is with journalistic triviality, are now as "offensive" as the truly modern was fifty or more years ago. Then Joyce's Ulysses shocked and horrified "traditionalists" : the book had to be fought for. Now the very people who take it for granted, as orthodox, are themselves shocked by the lyrical or the genuinely naive ! Emotion has become embarrassing, the feminine absurd. Some substantial part of "feminism" consists of women's rejection of their own femininity.

Furthermore, his definition of "*the truly modern*" recalls recent German-language statements on the same theme. As with the scepticism regarding feminism, and the emphasis on the affirmative and "naive" approach to literature, it evokes parallels with Strauß and (especially) Handke :

The validly modernistic looks back into the ancient past to discover "new" connections between the individual and the world. The validly modernistic recognises change, but rejects progress. The validly modernistic rejects pseudo-modernistic inanity as mere socio-anthropological manifestations ("happenings" , the now outdated silliness of the enterprise that was the nouveau roman) ; but it accepts the need to set up situations which force people to look into themselves for new values.....(Seymour-Smith 1985, xvi)

This rejection of intellectual fads for what are perceived to be more or less "eternal", or at least reliable and enduring, qualities, is the "other side" of the so-called "*Neue Beliebigkeit*" of 1980s post-modernism ; Handke, in Das Gewicht der Welt (1977), had anticipated it by rejecting what he called "*Universal-Pictures* ", turning away from an interest in trends preoccupying the media, or

¹²⁶ Martin Seymour-Smith : Introduction, to his Macmillan Guide to World Literature (1985), xix

even the "*Feuilletons*" - indeed from "*other-determined subjectivity*"¹²⁷ in general - for a pursuit of less modish, but more private and personal concerns. Seen in this light, the fashionable post-modernism which has preoccupied some commentators in recent years may be less the expression of a "*Bewußtseinswandel*" than a "*voreilige(n) Posaunenstoß*"¹²⁸ : as Pikulik suggests, real change may entail not just a replacement of one short-term literary trend by another¹²⁹, but a re-examination of tradition and the eventual realisation that "Aufklärung" and "New Age" are not two warring factions but tendencies which are inextricably linked in what he calls a relationship of "*Challenge und Response*" (249), each containing the germ of its opposite. This assertion can be examined by means of an investigation of the relationship of these opposites - or complementary qualities - in the work of the three writers with whom this study has largely been concerned - particularly in view of their response to the literary climate of the 1980s.

Frisch, Bernhard and Handke in the 1980s

Frisch, after his Tagebuch 1966-1971, displayed an increasing awareness of the process of ageing and tended to (understandably) play down his earlier image as a "Weltbürger", returning again and again to the problems of Swiss identity and citizenship. Rather than mellowing with age, his dissatisfaction with the political and financial Establishment of his country increased, reaching its high point a few weeks before his death, when, in response to plans for the celebration of the 700th anniversary of the founding of Switzerland, he stated that he could not participate because the only connection he retained with the present-day

¹²⁷ McGowan, in Bullivant 1989, p.63

¹²⁸ Pikulik 1988, p.238

¹²⁹ See Kreuzer 1987, pp. 309-310, for a critical summary of tendencies in "post-modern" criticism.

country was through his passport¹³⁰. His speeches (collected in Werke 7 and Schweiz als Heimat ?) often return to a defence of the *Aufklärung* against the right-wing forces so powerful in his country and so influential throughout the Western world during the 1980s. In spite of this he refuses to give up hope of a "*linke Utopie*" and retains a respect for the Swiss "*Modell*", if not for the form into which it has developed in recent history.. He is sceptical, too, of the claims of post-modernism, as *Frage 17* of the Fragebogen 1987¹³¹ shows :

*Fürchten Sie nicht, daß der Mensch ohne die große Utopie unweigerlich verdummt, oder fühlen Sie sich grad deswegen so postmodernwohl ?*¹³²

Yet, as the chapter on Frisch demonstrates, there is "another side" to his work, beyond the stance of the social critic ; the "utopian" reader of Bloch and Benjamin, the agnostic who is still the inheritor of typically Swiss moral and religious preoccupations, the reader of Jung and of Greek myth who in his early drama is attracted to the parable form, the teller of tall tales who is fascinated by "*das Unsagbare*" and "*Das Weiße zwischen den Worten*" (Tagebuch 1946-1949, 42) and who "*admirably manages the astonishing feat of being a sceptic and a romantic at the same time*", according to Demetz¹³³. Indeed Frisch may have contributed, indirectly, to the revival of interest in myth. The 1970s and '80s saw Homo faber come to be regarded as a standard text on school syllabuses in West Germany ; so that, rather than simply exercising an influence on the *Literaturbetrieb* itself, Frisch, through his most symbol- and myth-laden work, may well have sensitised its youthful readership to the possibilities of the kind of

¹³⁰ Quoted by Volker Hage in : Max Frisch, ein Album. Wirkliche und imaginäre Bilder eines Schriftstellerlebens. Zum Tode des großen Schweizer Dichters. In : Die Zeit, Nr.16, 12. April 1991, S.54

¹³¹ In : Monatshefte 1987, 421-423

¹³² See also Frisch's ironic comments on the alleged end of the *Aufklärung* and the "*Heiterkeit der Postmoderne*" in his speech "Am Ende der Aufklärung steht das Goldene Kalb", in : Max Frisch : Schweiz als Heimat ? (1990), 461-470

¹³³ In his Foreword to : Max Frisch, Novels, Plays, Essays. (1990)

inquisitive, mythical-psychological approach to literature¹³⁴ which is now increasingly applied, not merely to modern texts.

In the case of Bernhard, a similar dichotomy can be traced. Like Frisch, he has talked of the necessity of a "Utopie" ¹³⁵ ; Donnenberg interprets the reluctance of the author to portray Utopias as a consequence of his desire to stimulate his readers by means of his relentless negativity ; Bernhard is quoted as saying that he prefers to provoke "*das Idealbild im Betrachter...des Kunstwerks*".. His own style, as much as his subject matter, is intended to disconcert the reader ; Schmidt-Dengler has interpreted this technique as follows : "*Er [i.e. Bernhard] ist der Übertreibungskünstler, denn nur in der Übertreibung wird sichtbar, wie notwendig es ist, die Welt zu entstellen, um sie kenntlich zu machen*" ¹³⁶. This is visible not merely in his prose works and plays, but in the speeches, letters and interviews to which Schmidt-Dengler gives his attention. For example, in an interview with Hofmann¹³⁷ , Bernhard gives his own assessment of the course of post-war German literature, in the process seemingly stylising himself as a kind of "realist" :

...Die Literatur nach dem Krieg war ja orientiert an allem, an der berühmten Literatur, die aus Amerika und England und Frankreich gekommen war. Damals, außer den Nazidichtern, Nazidichtern unter Anführungszeichen, haben die Leute ja, auch die bekannten, immer Romane geschrieben, die in Oklahoma gespielt haben oder in New York. Kein Mensch ist auf die Idee gekommen, daß er das beschreibt, wo er lebt und wo er aufgewachsen ist und wovon er wirklich was weiß. Die Hauptfigur in den Romanen damals war immer irgendein Joe oder eine Miss Temple oder Plempl oder Plampl, und damit war die Literatur ein völliger Scheißdreck, die in den ersten fünfzehn Jahren nach dem Krieg geschrieben worden ist. Weil sie nichts wert war, blieb sie nur eine blinde, billige Nachäffung der Amerikaner...

¹³⁴ See e.g. Kreuzer 1987, 310-311

¹³⁵ In an interview quoted by Josef Donnenberg, in : Thomas Bernhards Zeitkritik und Österreich, in : A.Pittertschatscher/J.Lachinger (Hg.) : Litterarisches Kolloquium Linz 1984 : Thomas Bernhard Materialien, Linz 1985, S.58

¹³⁶ In : Pittertschatscher/Lachinger 1985, 111

¹³⁷ Quoted in : Kurt Hofmann, Aus Gesprächen mit Thomas Bernhard (1991), pp.26-7

Bernhard maintains that, after some experimentation, he arrived at the style characteristic of Frost and his subsequent prose work ; he sees it, no doubt correctly, as a new departure in post-war writing - even though many literary historians would argue with the singular and damning judgment of his contemporaries cited above. It is indeed true that Bernhard recognisably portrays the very landscapes and villages of the regions of Austria in which he lived, despite the overwhelmingly negative overtones of his descriptive style, and despite his remark, quoted frequently in Bernhard criticism, that everything in his work was "*künstlich*".. On the other hand, many aspects of his work do create a distance from the everyday ; the "musical" prose, with its repetition and its restriction on the outer "Handlung" of his books ; the journeys into remote and inhospitable regions, which correspond to the penetration into the inner worlds of his isolated and intensely vulnerable central characters ; a conscious avoidance of conventional dialogue and "*intersubjective understanding*"¹³⁸ , reflected in the tendency for human relationships to be based on dominance and hierarchy, and in the recurrence of indirect and partial reporting of events (most noticeable in Das Kalkwerk) ; the emphasis on an inescapable sense of tradition and heritage, seen both in the settings and characters of the novels (large estates ; nobility and upper bourgeoisie of independent means) and in the artistic preoccupations of the "*Geistesmenschen*" (the literary, musical and philosophical inheritance of those members of his generation who, like the author, received a traditional education).

All of this might appear to make Bernhard a very unlikely candidate for literary renown in the 1980s ; yet the decade saw him attain his greatest popularity. As stated in the chapter on Bernhard, this may partially have been due to the appearance of his five volumes of autobiography, which coincided with the wave of autobiography and the *Neue Subjektivität* of the 1970s, and was certainly

¹³⁸ Leventhal, in MAL 1988, 27 ; his essay shows how Das Kalkwerk in particular demonstrates this

facilitated by the success of his plays, which dealt with the same themes as his fiction but in a more comic-grotesque and easily accessible form. In addition, his harsh comments on the shortcomings of the Austrian Second Republic began to be echoed by many of his fellow writers, from Hilde Spiel's accusations of " *a uniform provincialism*" and criticisms of " *petty family squabbles in public life, the general low standard of the press and the absence of stimulating intellectual controversy*" in contemporary Vienna¹³⁹, to Josef Haslinger's expression of the unease felt by some of the younger generation in the face of political developments of the 1980s, particularly the anti-semitic and fascist tendencies which were revealed by the Waldheim affair and the rise of Haider's FPÖ¹⁴⁰. Sebald too could talk of Austrian writers' concern with the " *tiefgreifenden Schädigungen*" which, he maintains, are the result of " *Instanzen des fortwirkenden alltäglichen Faschismus in einer in ihren unteren Schichten weitgehend unmündigen Provinzbevölkerung*" , and are reflected in Bernhard's " *von manchen als paranoid empfundene Haltung*", as well as in the characteristic anxieties of Handke's work. Because of this " *Unheimlichkeit der Heimat*", claims Sebald, " *Es ist offenbar nicht leicht, sich in Österreich zu Hause zu fühlen*" ¹⁴¹. These factors combined to bring Bernhard into the centre of public debate in the Austria of the late 1980s ; it was noted that, in the season 1987-88, his plays were performed more frequently " *auf den Bühnen der Bundestheater*" than those of any other author, including Shakespeare ¹⁴² ; and that, in the following year, the topics chosen by school-leavers sitting the Matura examination were dominated by " *Umweltthemen und Fragen zu Thomas Bernhard*" ¹⁴³.

¹³⁹ Hilde Spiel, *Vienna's Golden Autumn, 1866-1938* (1987), 25-26

¹⁴⁰ Josef Haslinger, *Politik der Gefühle. Ein Essay über Österreich* (1987)

¹⁴¹ W.G Sebald, *Unheimliche Heimat. Essays zur österreichischen Literatur* (1991)

¹⁴² "Thomas Bernhard überflügelte Shakespeare", *Tiroler Tageszeitung* (Innsbruck), 6.März 1989, S.14

¹⁴³ Stefan May : Letzte Steine auf den Weg zur Reife. Maturathemen sind in vielem ein getreuer Spiegel der Zeitgeschichte., *Die Presse*, 10.07.1989, S.3

Nonetheless, Bernhard's inner world, with its consciousness of the Habsburg heritage and "*das Gewicht der Geschichte*" (see de Rambures 1984) might seem to have little relevance to the post-modern dilemmas of the 1980s. A possible connection, however, might be established by a consideration of the role of "*Märchen*", or the absence of them, in Bernhard's imaginative world. He refers directly to this concept in the speech given in 1965, when he received the *Literaturpreis der Freien und Hansestadt Bremen*. He begins by lamenting the disappearance of :

....die Märchen von den Städten und von den Staaten und die ganzen wissenschaftlichen Märchen ; auch die philosophischen ; es gibt keine Geisterwelt mehr, das Universum selbst ist kein Märchen mehr ; Europa, das schönste, ist tot ; das ist die Wahrheit und die Wirklichkeit....

Without "Märchen", he says, the modern world has become dominated by scientific knowledge, which brings in its train a destructive "Kälte" :

Wir sind von der Klarheit, aus welcher uns unsere Welt plötzlich ist, unsere Wissenschaftswelt, erschrocken ; wir frieren in dieser Klarheit, aber wir haben diese Klarheit haben wollen, heraufbeschworen, wir dürfen uns also über die Kälte, die jetzt herrscht, nicht beklagen. Mit der Klarheit nimmt die Kälte zu. Diese Klarheit und diese Kälte werden von jetzt an herrschen. Die Wissenschaft von der Natur wird uns eine höhere Klarheit und eine viel grimmigere Kälte sein, als wir uns vorstellen können. ¹⁴⁴

Such a statement which may have seemed distant, abstract and even somewhat dated in the optimistic, technology-obsessed 1960s, has much in common with the "*Katastrophenstimmung*" which was widespread in the 1980s. Bernhard could be said to have anticipated the rejection of narrow scientific rationality and utilitarianism, which found its expression in the phenomenon of the "New Age" movement, ecology, the protests against nuclear power, etc.¹⁴⁵. And although his

¹⁴⁴ Mit der Klarheit nimmt die Kälte zu. In : *Jahresring* 1965-66, S.243-245

¹⁴⁵ And in the popularity of various types of *Märchen*-like literature, be it Ende's *Unendliche Geschichte* or Handke's *Die Abwesenheit*, which he called a *Märchen*.

world-view is frequently taken to be that of a cultural conservative, he has stated that his favourite opera is Die Zauberflöte and that he was influenced by the drama of Raimund and Nestroy - indicating that if the "*Märchenwelt*" is absent in his own work (at least in its traditional form), then that does not necessarily imply that he is unable to appreciate fantasy or allegory, or works, like Mozart's opera, whose overall tone and "message" are positive and optimistic.

The identification of "another side" to Bernhard's work, in the light of the 1980s, is therefore less problematic than it might previously have appeared. Fetz, for example, says he "*grapples consistently, consciously and self-consciously by means of his considerable intellectual and artistic talents with the ambiguous, dark and incomprehensible parts of life and death*" ¹⁴⁶ ; his negativity is offset by the intensity of this "grappling", which lends to his work a positive, even stimulating quality - a determination to fight back (shown especially in the autobiographical series) , and to communicate ; which contrasts with the helplessness and paralysis of the "*Katastrophenliteratur*" of the '80s, and could well account for his popularity in the period.

Of the three writers under consideration, it is Handke, above all, who seems to provoke the application of "New Age" concepts in critical analyses of his work. While Lubich's view of Frisch as a (possibly unwitting) herald of a new matriarchy and Tschapke's interpretation of Bernhard's autobiography as a very personal kind of "initiation story" are both inspired by certain identifiable aspects of the original texts, it cannot be ignored that these readings both seem to go against the prevailing current of criticism, which prefers to see in Frisch a socially concerned writer of the "post-war" type and in Bernhard a chronicler of - perhaps "heroic" - failure, rather than an adherent of the "open" and modern, if not post-modern, form of the novel (this in spite of his "musical prose"). Handke, however,

¹⁴⁶ Gerald Fetz : Kafka and Bernhard. : Reflections on Affinity and Influence. In : MAL 1988 (Special Thomas Bernhard Issue), 233

at one point states explicitly "*Es muß ein neues Zeitalter anfangen !*"¹⁴⁷, and expresses a desire to free himself of the burden of historical identity, be it through an investigation of popular culture, close observation of the physical environment or a re-examination of literary tradition. This contrasts with Frisch's acknowledged debts to his Swiss literary forebears, interest in the work of his Swiss contemporaries, and willingness to encourage younger Swiss authors ; and with Bernhard's inability, and perhaps unwillingness, to escape from the shadow of the Habsburg culture still existing in his childhood.

For both writers, national identity is important and an engagement with their own societies is expressed in public statements and social criticism. It is not that Handke is, as some critics have maintained, so unworldly as to be completely silent on public affairs - the chapter on him above gives much evidence to the contrary ; yet this tendency takes second place in his writing to an exploration of a very personal inner world, and to solitary contemplation of specific places and objects. His work of the 1980s, beginning with the Langsame Heimkehr tetralogy, seems to lend itself far more readily to "New Age"-style interpretations than that of the two authors previously discussed. Pikulik (1988) demonstrates this, noting the religious overtones of its vocabulary ("*Wiederholung, Ruhe, Dauer, Gleichmaß*") and the "magical" qualities attributed to storytelling and to language (for example, the German-Slovene dictionary in Die Wiederholung[317]). Handke himself, as a member of the 'sixties generation, presents a public image which also bears similarities to some of the cult figures of the "underground", with their fascination with Eastern mysticism ; he continues to travel widely, long after the eclipse of the 'sixties fashion for going "on the road" or journeying to the East in search of gurus and ancient wisdom. Yet how far can these comparisons be taken? As pointed out in the chapter on Handke, a distinguishing feature of his approach to literature is the passion - a quality not

¹⁴⁷ In : Die Geschichte des Bleistifts (1982) , S.6

normally associated with "New Age" thought - with which he expresses his likes and dislikes. It finds full expression in the long interview with Gamper (1987) , when Andersch, Frisch, Dürrenmatt and Bernhard (among others) are all sharply criticised ¹⁴⁸. Raddatz ¹⁴⁹ also quotes a similarly decisive judgment on his supposedly fellow "New Age" writer, Botho Strauß.

An overview of Handke's work of the 1980s - including the translations, which become an increasingly important part of his total output during the decade - reveals an unusual eclecticism, ranging from a re-consideration of the role of the jukebox in his life to translations from Shakespeare and Aeschylus as well as a wide range of French authors. His own work of the late 1980s seems to develop - or, to his critics, merely repeat - certain motifs and styles found in his previous writings ; Nachmittag eines Schriftstellers takes up the autobiographical overtones and Salzburg setting of the tetralogy, with more than a hint of the anxiety and pessimism which underlies his pre-1980s work ; Die Abwesenheit and Das Spiel vom Fragen are characterised by the vague, near-fairytale quality which marks parts of Über die Dörfer ; the first two Versuche, which deal respectively with "Müdigkeit" and the "Jukebox", both contain further autobiographical resonances and the mixture of neo-"classical" reflection and awareness of the present moment which has come to characterise his recent work. ¹⁵⁰ In the Versuch über die Müdigkeit, there are further recollections of

¹⁴⁸ As if to emphasise his tendency for harsh criticism and temperamental outbursts, he also tells Gamper that he is not by nature a "harmonischer Mensch".

¹⁴⁹ Raddatz 1989, p.64 ; Handke condemns Strauß as "durch und durch ein Intellektueller", who "kann nichts in Ruhe lassen" ; conversely, there are passages in Strauß's work - like the discussion of "der neue Gnostiker, der 'strukturelle Mehrwässer'"(148) and the condemnation of cat-lovers - like Handke, who repeatedly refers to cats in his work - as egotists (191) in Niemand anderes(1987) - which seem to contain implicit criticism of, or comment on, aspects of Handke's writing.

¹⁵⁰ For British reactions to his recent writing, see e.g.W.L. Webb, "Pens in the afternoon", The Guardian, 30 August 1990, p.22(review of Ralph Manheim's translation of The Afternoon of a Writer) ; and Michael Hofmann's review of Absence, TLS, May 24 1991, p.20 ; in spite of the mixed response given to Handke's 1980s work in Germany, both (German-speaking) reviewers are surprisingly positive - despite Hofmann's comment that Handke can seem "fatuous" in German and that Manheim makes him more "readable".

childhood and adolescence, of a sense of being an "outsider" among his student contemporaries ; he identifies with the Kinks' song "I'm Not Like Everybody Else" and is alienated from the "*Massenmord-Buben und -Dirndeln* " (31-32) of Austria. His consciousness of being on the fringe of events is expressed in his reflections on the jukebox ; he shows signs of being more aware of his image as a "*Weltflüchtling*" and - significantly - talks of, for once, describing his life without resorting to a fictional framework. Again, there are accounts of his travels, observations of landscapes and attempts to capture a sense of place, and a re-appearance of his preferred rock music, from the (nostalgic) reference to the impact made on him by the Beatles¹⁵¹ to praise for the songs of John Fogerty's Creedence Clearwater Revival - even if, as he admits, "*Sein Haus war mit der Zeit tatsächlich ein Haus ohne Musik geworden...*" (98). The quest can take on something of the aspect of a "campaign for real jukeboxes", on the lines of the British "Campaign for Real Ale" ; for Handke, the required atmosphere can only be found in the course of journeys, or in environments such as a "Zuhälterbar" or "Arbeitslosencafé" (105), and the jukeboxes in middle-class areas, or those allegedly controlled by the Mafia, which he finds in France and which always play the same few songs, are to be avoided.

This can be regarded as another aspect of Handke's familiar search for authenticity of experience ; yet, in contrast to, say, *Die Abwesenheit*, would seem to have little to do with the "New Age" school of criticism. It resembles far more the wanderings of the Surrealists - notably Aragon and Breton - in the forlorn or nondescript districts of Paris in the 1920s, in the hope of discovering unexpected and evocative objects or juxtapositions which would stimulate the imagination, or even transmit a kind of illumination to the observer. It is quite possible that Handke writes with this in mind¹⁵² ; among his translations from the French in

¹⁵¹ At the time of his involvement with the Forum Stadtpark in Graz ; see pp.88-90 , and his 1964 essay on "Beatlemania", *Der Rausch durch die Beatles*.

¹⁵² In his Kafka-Preis speech he talks of "erschütternde Schönheit", recalling Breton's idea of "beauté convulsive" in *Nadja* (1929)

this period is Emmanuel Bove's Bécon-les-Bruyères, which, although not a surrealist work, employs a related technique in its description of the Paris suburb of that name. Perhaps, too, it is an example of how Handke seems - or seeks - to escape the critical schemes into which he is placed. This is not to say that Handke's Versuche count among his major works, the volume on the "Jukebox" being marked by a nostalgia which, although on a higher, more personal literary level than the typical pop radio "Oldies" programme, can nonetheless sometimes appear excessive. Indeed, by 1990 a supporter of Handke's work such as Winkels had begun to be a little more on the defensive :

Handkes Tiraden gegen die entseelte Urbanität, seine Abscheu vor den Massenkommunikationsmitteln, seine Flucht vor der Flüchtigkeit der Blicke und Gefühle, seine Apotheose der Langsamkeit und Genauigkeit, das hat doch Radikalität, das hat die Qualitäten eines nicht-begrifflichen Lebens- und Literaturprogramms. Der Mann nimmt es ernst, warum nimmt ihn niemand so ? Warum erklärt kein Kritiker und öffentlicher Literaturverteidiger diese Litanei der Ruhe und des überschaubaren Raums, der Bindungen und der stillen Gemeinschaft zum höchsten der Gefühle, zum Muster einer Weltbetrachtung, zum notwendigen Lebensmittel ? Weil wir von der Literatur längst nicht mehr erwarten, daß sie uns vom Zustand der Welt berichtet, daß sie uns mit uns selbst vertraut macht, daß sie sagt, wie zu leben sei. Wie zu lesen sei, das sagt sie..¹⁵³

Winkels here seems to imply that Handke's literary programme has failed to convince his contemporaries ; again, he chooses to express his impression of the author's intentions in quasi-"New Age" terms which draw on Handke's own religiously-inflected vocabulary ("*Litanei*", "*stille Gemeinschaft*"). Interestingly enough, the (oddly prescriptive) notion that literature should teach us how to read recalls Schirrmacher's comment that too many young German writers are bad readers and are not acquainted with the important texts of the past; yet the idea of literature as a "way of seeing" is hardly a new one. Its acceptability must ultimately depend on whether the creative works which it inspires fulfil the promise inherent in the claims for the uniqueness of literature, "Erzählung" or "Schrift". Handke has done enough in his career to show that such an approach

¹⁵³ Hubert Winkels, Im Schatten des Lebens. Eine Antwort an die Verächter und die Verteidiger der Gegenwartsliteratur.. In : Die Zeit, 2.3.1990., S.79

can indeed yield impressive results ; but the suspicion has been expressed that the emphasis on repeated declarations of the "magical" power of the act of writing in his work of the 1980s may actually detract from his undoubted ability to *create* evocative and surprising literary "Bilder". It would be unreasonable to expect a masterpiece from Handke, or any other writer, with each new publication ; in his 1990 *Spiegel* interview he admits that he needs to gather his energies to produce significant work, yet he continues to publish at a prolific rate.

The end of "post-war" literature ?

Handke's motif of the "threshold" is taken up again by Lüdke in his essay on the state of German literature in the 1980s¹⁵⁴. His view of the situation echoes much that has already been said in this chapter. He sees the decade as being characterised by three major developments - what he refers to as the *"Tod der Moderne"*, *"the generation change...which has become definitive in the 1980s"* and which amounts to *"the end of postwar literature"*, and *"the change in the general literary climate, that is, the loss of Utopia entailed by the substitution of aesthetics for philosophy of history"*. These changes represent, in a sense, the outcome of the process set in motion in the late 'sixties by the collapse of *Gruppe 47* and the rise of the Student Movement, coterminous with the new methodologies and "ways of seeing" symbolised by Handke's 1966 Princeton appearance. Lüdke interprets the *"massive criticism"* from the students as *"accelerating the erosion of modernism"* ; the consequences are that what Peter Bürger had identified as the *"Institution Kunst"* is no longer rigidly divided from the *"Kulturindustrie"* (as defined by Horkheimer and Adorno), and that : *"In the 1980s, the producers of literature have become aware of its marginal position"*. As Lüdke says, the 'eighties are characterised by *"tremendous accelerations in*

¹⁵⁴ Martin Lüdke : German Literature on the Threshold of the Twenty-First Century : A Critic's Perspective. In : Williams/Smith/Parkes 1990

development", typifying, for him, a *"threshold between epochs"* ; *"the situation...is anything but clear"*. He is a critic who has shown considerable sympathy for the work of Handke and Strauß, and was a major participant in the *"neudeutscher Literaturstreit"* ; nevertheless even he finds it difficult to define postmodernism, seeing *"the idea of postmodernism"* as *"a cipher for a mood which grows essentially out of negation"*, i.e., of the death of modernism. It is necessary, though to look at what is meant by "modernism" here. As the numerous references to the German philosophical tradition would imply, it is not "modernism" in the Anglo-American or internationalist sense, but the *"Projekt der Moderne"* defined by the Frankfurt School of philosophers (many of whom are mentioned in Lüdke's essay) through *"the interlinking of aesthetics, social theory and the philosophy of history"*.

None of this is new to the German readership for whom the essay was originally written, but the translation, appearing in an anthology of English-language articles, could well pose problems for the British or American reader, with no particular background in *Germanistik*, who may merely wish to know why German literature cannot produce a "new" Böll or Grass. The implication is that national traditions, or historical developments, in literature are more resistant to "international" trends than adherents of post-modernism would wish to believe - and this despite the fact that the past ten years have seen the emergence, in Western Europe, of a kind of European "Kulturindustrie", and, on the part of many European artists and intellectuals, a reaction against the dominance of American popular culture (as the example of Wenders has shown). In contrast to the situation pertaining during the 1960s and 1970s, the film and pop music industries no longer seemed to offer viable alternatives for young artists seeking new means of self-expression. While in earlier decades Benjamin's optimistic vision of the possibilities opened up by the new means of electronic reproduction could be taken to justify such phenomena as the "auteur" film and the "progressive" ethos of post-Beatles pop music, the increasing commercialisation

of the entertainment industry was to work against these tendencies by emphasising the difficulties (for the songwriter or film-maker) of making "personal" statements in work intended, paradoxically, for a mass public. Notions of a culture which would combine the best aspects of classical and popular forms were, therefore, threatened by the realities of an enormously successful and economically powerful entertainment industry concentrating almost exclusively on the mass market. In the German context, the continuing dominance of pornographic films, tawdry comedies and *Heimatfilme*, *Volksmusik* and the "Schnulze", combined with the increasing influence of a tabloid press which - as Böll's Katharina Blum illustrates - was just as unscrupulous in its journalistic methods as its Anglo-Saxon counterpart, hardly augured well for such a development. The consequences of this included a realisation by some observers that popular culture as such - in both the Anglo-Saxon and German-speaking countries - was more easily understood by means of the detached, socio-anthropological approach of "Cultural Studies", than by the enthusiastic promotion by critics of another generation of (not necessarily "popular") cult figures, be they rock singers or film directors. Despite the fact that such an analysis can, equally, shed valuable light on both the creation and reception of literature, the recognition of the essentially "private" and personal nature of literary expression has only served to reinforce its position within a general culture in which, for artists as much as for those engaged in other professions, the need to make commercial compromises often restricts personal freedom. So far, for example, the eclipse of the New German Cinema and the subsequent "internationalization" of some of its leading directors (Wenders, Schlöndorff, Herzog) has found no equivalent in literature; even if, as Michael Hofmann suggests, Handke is more readable in Ralph Manheim's English translations, he, or any other German-language author, is not, unlike most European film-makers, under pressure to produce work for an English-speaking market. Indeed, it is no coincidence that the world's largest annual trade fair for publishers, the

Frankfurter Buchmesse, is held in Germany. The German *Literaturbetrieb* is in a much healthier economic condition than any European film industry, despite its "marginal" position ; and this must have a definite influence on the writer's relationship to his public, and to his world.

It also means that the possibilities for misunderstanding, or perhaps for productive alternative (or mis-) readings of literature in German, are greatly increased when texts are studied outwith the environment of a "pure" *Germanistik*. Hoesterey¹⁵⁵ compares the negative overtones of the term "Postmoderne" in the German-speaking world, where the likes of Jürgen Habermas had seen in it a threat to the "*Projekt Moderne*" (as outlined in the essay by Lüdke cited above), with the more "progressive" image of post-modernism in the United States, and in doing so illustrates the "*Diskurskollisionen*" to which regional variations in the definition of such a problematic term can give rise.¹⁵⁶ As she observes, American commentators whose background is in English and American literature and comparative literary studies, rather than in German studies, have enthusiastically applied their preferred critical methodologies to German texts, with the result that Austrian authors, including Handke and Bernhard, have been singled out as particularly suited to this approach. For two decades, says Hoesterey, Handke was seen by German readers and critics as a writer "*verwurzelt in der Moderne Kafkas, der Philosophie und Literatur der Sprachkrise, insbesondere der Sprachkritik Wittgensteins, sowie geprägt vom nouveau roman Robbe-Grillet*" (68) This is, she claims, due to differences in historical perspective, the language crisis and "*Erzählreflexion*" of Hofmannsthal's *Chandos-Brief* and Rilke's *Malte Laurids*

¹⁵⁵ Ingeborg Hoesterey : Postmoderner Blick auf österreichische Literatur : Bernhard, Glaser, Handke, Jelinek, Roth. In : *MAL* 23, 3/4, 1990

¹⁵⁶ The postscript to the English version of Kreuzer's 1987 essay on the history of post-war German literary criticism (in : *New Ways in Germanistik*, ed. Sheppard, 1990) identifies four differing national interpretations of "post-modernism" ; Spanish (where it stands for literature of the first half of the twentieth century), British (post-1875 history in Toynbee's definition), the North American literary-critical use of the term, from the 1950s to the present, and the German "Postmoderne", which derives from, but is not identical with, the American version.

Brigge creating a context for German-speakers, in which Handke's earlier work did not appear so radically "avant-garde" as was the case in literatures where such precedents did not exist. Bernhard's work too has, according to Hoesterey, proved amenable to American interpretations, with its multitude of quotations from, and references to, writing of the past, lending itself particularly well to studies concentrating on *"Intertextualität und Allegorie"*. This contrasts with the Austrian reception of his work, which, as the chapter on Bernhard shows, is often heavily influenced by his public image rather than by close consideration of his work in a wider literary context.

CONCLUSION

Yet the "anxiety of influence"¹ which has been identified in Bernhard's writing is an expression of that self-consciousness singled out at the beginning of Chapter 5 as a distinguishing feature of the literature of the 1970s and '80s - and especially of the work produced by the three authors with whom this study is concerned. If they are not the most "representative" German-speaking writers, all three originating from the fringes of the German-speaking world - even Bernhard's Salzburg is comparatively remote from the main centres of population in West Germany - then this "distance" may well, for German readers, contribute to the distinctiveness of their work, while ensuring its relevance to a wider world. Again, it is Handke, with his memories of growing up in a border region, his broad cultural interests, his travels and his thematisation of *Schwellen* and *Zwischenräume*, who draws most consistently on this factor; yet Frisch, Bernhard and Handke all struggle, in their different ways, with the problems of their personal, social and cultural inheritance and with the dilemmas of life and literature in the second half of the twentieth century. If the results of these efforts vary in relation to each writer's intentions, then it is striking that their explorations of the changing relationship of self and world in this volatile, sometimes perplexing era continue to draw a large and committed readership. This shows that, despite the challenges of new philosophical and methodological approaches, the concern with self-exploration and self-orientation, perhaps even for self-realisation, through literary activity remains a major preoccupation of both writers and readers of German literature. Although this tendency continues to give rise to strong criticism from those who prefer to emphasise the social function of literature, its fascination may well be due to its very "personal" nature and its emphasis on the individual. The very open-endedness and incompleteness of these literary portrayals of

¹ See Hoesterey's discussion of Bernhard's *Alte Meister* for an illustration of this point.

experience contrast with the sometimes "closed" nature of orthodox religious or political belief-systems and formal methods of self-analysis which attempt to confront the same dilemmas - but, whether consciously or not, can often seem to have as their main aim the reinforcement of social conformity. Indeed, Sebald² claims that the Austrian literature treated in his study - including works by Bernhard and Handke - is "*in ihren psychologischen Erkenntnissen...den Einsichten der Psychoanalyse in vielem gleichwertig und in manchem voraus*", giving a truer and more penetrating "*Vorstellung von der Natur menschlichen Derangements*" than "*die Schulweisheit der Psychologie*" - which, he says, seems a "*vergleichsweise oberflächliches und indifferentes Geschäft*".

It is necessary, however, to define more precisely the particular contribution made by the three writers in question to this complex and absorbing process. What do they have in common, apart from the features already mentioned in Chapter 1 ? Of course, they also share widespread popularity, a prolific output generally published by the Suhrkamp Verlag and a literary consciousness formed in the Central Europe of the mid-twentieth century ; but can certain common themes, or influences, be identified ? All three can be considered "famous" writers, a factor which cannot be ignored in evaluations of their development, and their portrayals of the self or literary "Ich". Therefore reader-response too, is often influenced by an awareness of the author's public image and a curiosity about the facts of his life ; an approach which, at its worst, can lead to uncritical cultism, or to the pursuit of biographical trivia at the expense of a serious evaluation of the works themselves. (It is also reflected in some journalistic *Feuilleton* criticism, which in its attempts to portray the critic's empathy with his subject forsakes analysis in favour of an apparent imitation of the style of the author concerned.) Nonetheless, Frisch's willingness to engage in political and cultural debates made him a public figure and doubtless stimulated curiosity about possible connections between his life and his literary

² *Die Beschreibung des Unglücks* (1985), 9-10

portrayals of failure, illness and troubled man-woman relationships. Similarly, Bernhard's reclusiveness and later image of "court jester of the Second Republic" has led to a curiosity which the autobiographical volumes scarcely satisfied, and which, if the few years since his death provide any indication, could well be met by popular biographies and books of Bernhard memorabilia rather than by close study of his work³; while Handke's repeated attempts to escape pigeon-holing, by the rejection of a historically determined identity, together with his frequent hostility to criticism, do little to discourage journalistic curiosity about his private life. At the same time, it would be misleading to suggest that some knowledge of these authors' lives cannot offer at least a few insights into their later, autobiographically-coloured fictional writings. Yet the primary aim of each writer is not necessarily - as in the "*Selbsterfahrungsliteratur*" characteristic of the 1970s - to present an inquisitive public with fragments of his life-story in order to evoke empathy and "*Betroffenheit*". Frisch's use of irony within a fictional framework, Bernhard's predilection for obsessive protagonists, complex narrative perspectives and repeated exaggerations and Handke's preoccupation, in his notebooks as in his fiction, with momentary perceptions (frequently quoted out of context by unsympathetic critics) can point to the author's willingness to assume a role and present his literary persona in a light which is revealing for the perceptive reader, but seldom flattering for those who would wish to identify naively with the author-narrator as role-model.

Furthermore, well-known statements of intent by the three authors in question seem to point to thematic similarities: for example, Frisch, in the Tagebuch 1946-1949, remarks that "*Schreiben heißt: sich selber lesen. Was selten ein reines*

³ The lavish, large-format volume Thomas Bernhard. Portraits. Bilder und Texte (Weitra 1991), Hg. von Sepp Dreissinger, brings together numerous photographs from the various stages of Bernhard's life and a diverse range of texts, some of them significant (e.g. Carl Zuckmayer's review of Frost. Botho Strauß's 1970 essay "Komödie und Todesangst"); the book seems to confirm Bernhard's (posthumous) status as a cult-figure in Austria. An interesting contrast is provided by Maria Fialik, Der konservative Anarchist. Thomas Bernhard und das Staats-Theater (Vienna 1991), in which the background to Bernhard's career is investigated, and its controversies and scandals put into perspective by means of interviews with influential, opinionated and knowledgeable figures from Vienna's intrigue-filled cultural and political life.

Vergnügen ist..." (22) ; Bernhard, in Drei Tage, claims that "*Mich interessieren nur meine Vorgänge, und ich kann sehr rücksichtslos sein....*" (156) ; while Handke, in his essay Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms, states, "*Ich habe keine Themen über die ich schreiben möchte, ich habe nur ein Thema ; über mich selbst klar, klarer zu werden....*" (26). That this is not mere narcissism should be obvious from the preceding chapters. An interest in the workings of the self inevitably leads to consideration of one's relationship to the external world, be it perceived as the family or nation, human society in general, nature and the world of objects, or simply as the "Other". Even so, it is clear from these statements, as from the preceding chapters, that the preoccupations of each of these three writers also display individual "trademarks" - be they stylistic, historical, or temperamental - which are equally significant. What, then, can be identified as a common motivating factor for the self-scrutiny of Frisch, Handke and Bernhard ?

One recent commentator on "negative autobiography"⁴, focusing on the French classical tradition from which Frisch, Handke and Bernhard have all drawn inspiration⁵, talks of a "*strange, negative knowledge*", deriving from "*the many moments in autobiography that tell of swoons, sleep, hallucinations, dreams, epiphanies, fugue-states, losses of consciousness, failures of memory, self-abstractions, ecstasies and so forth ; all the lacunae, hiatuses, cæsurae, losses, negative histories and anti-matter that compose the autobiography....*"⁶. According to this argument, this knowledge is a kind of "*renaissance'....as Descartes will say a 'nouvelle connaissance'...*" - the vocabulary employed here recalling the idea of initiation and rebirth, as discussed in the chapter on Bernhard. More generally, it is easy to see how "*the systematic negation of the normative self*" serves "*as a constitutive moment in the positive accumulation of*

⁴ Shaun Irlam : Showing Losses, Counting Gains ; "Scenes" from Negative Autobiography. In : MLN, Vol.106/No.5, December 1991, 997-1011 (Comparative Literature Issue)

⁵ Particularly Montaigne, who is quoted in works as different as Montauk, Der Keller(see Saunders 1982 for a discussion of this in both works) and Handke's notebooks and also provides important evidence for Irlam's argument.

⁶ Irlam, p.1011

knowledge"⁷ in the writings of the three authors with whom this study is mainly concerned. Even if many of these moments occur in fictional works which cannot be interpreted as direct autobiography, their "spiritual" significance for the central character, narrator or literary "Ich" is obvious to the reader.. This is frequently expressed in its purest form by passages or fragments which portray out-of-the-ordinary events ; the writings of Frisch, Bernhard and Handke - especially the three series of more or less thematically-connected books which have been discussed above - provide numerous examples. Scenes such as, in Frisch's novels, those set in the United States, leading up to (and following) Stiller's "angel" experience , Faber's descent into breakdown and (perhaps) terminal illness, the curious yet familiar no-man's-land inhabited by the *Buch-Ich* in Gantenbein , illustrate his desire to stimulate thought in the reader and, through the fate of his central characters, warn of the dangers to the self (and to society) of destructive, unreflected behaviour-patterns. In Langsame Heimkehr, Sorger's strange journey, with its general atmosphere of vagueness and distance, is punctuated not only by fleeting epiphanies but by moments of complete disorientation characteristic of Handke's work (as is, later in the tetralogy, the confrontation with the "Dogge" in Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire). Handke intends the tetralogy to stand as a thematically unified whole, for all its formal diversity. It thereby demonstrates his concept of a fragile, apparently unstable yet stubbornly independent self (the "disappearing" protagonist at the end of Langsame Heimkehr, the narrator preoccupied with the problems of artistic creation in Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire, the lonely father in Kindergeschichte), on the edge of a social world often seen as hostile, yet attracted to natural phenomena and acutely sensitive to their impacts. The young Bernhard's struggle, in the autobiographical volumes, to resist what he sees as a succession of institutions, individuals and natural processes unremittingly threatening not only his identity but his very

⁷ Irlam, p.1008 (discussing Descartes)

existence, can be regarded as an autobiographical account of aspects of the author's childhood and adolescence. Yet its selectivity, variation of narrative perspective and typically "Bernhardian" stylisation set up a kind of "Erlebnismuster", to use Frisch's term, which relativizes the autobiographical content, relating it to both the author's fictional themes and his combination of self-protection and self-assertion in the public sphere.

Although the numerous, sometimes perplexing motifs of initiation, illumination and illusion scattered throughout these works often seem to resist the esotericist's wish to trace a linear pattern of development leading to self-realisation or self-fulfilment, the confrontation with extraordinary and often harrowing areas of past experience can be seen as the factor which unites the works two Austrians with those of their Swiss near-contemporary. In each case, too, the reader's response is often facilitated by the possibilities for identification created by the tendency to portray events from the perspective of a dominant central character who, if seldom a directly autobiographical figure, usually carries at least some traits of the author. This can be seen when, for example, Frisch's journalistic writing of the early and mid-1950s is compared with his Stiller and Homo faber; the themes of architecture, Europe and the United States, technology and nature, Swiss conformity, etc., are treated initially in short journalistic essays and then - often with surprisingly little change - incorporated into the works of fiction. While it is clear that neither Anatol Ludwig Stiller nor Walter Faber "is" Max Frisch, the preoccupations of these fictional characters do nonetheless tend to reflect the interests of their creator. Frisch's diaries and later fiction provide further evidence of this, the "autobiographical" Tagebücher containing lengthy fictional passages and the prose fiction (until Blaubart) traces of autobiography. With Handke and Bernhard, a similar process causes the boundaries between fiction and autobiography to become less clear-cut. As their careers develop, both writers deal increasingly with the problems of growing up in difficult family circumstances in Austria, and the country's landscapes are given as much attention as the social and

family background of the central characters - in each case, however, in a manner which reflects an awareness of earlier literary portrayals of nature and of similar family configurations, as much as a desire to recount personal experiences. Yet these "realistic" factors can create a context in which the reader is willing to suspend his or her disbelief and follow the author into more subjective and problematic territory. As Sebald points out with regard to Bernhard and Handke, "*das Medium der Schrift*" can serve as a "*Form des Widerstands*", enabling the author to analyse and overcome his "*Erfahrung des Unglücks*"⁸ - a notion which is equally applicable to Frisch's work. What is more, whether this exploration of the darker side of inner experience is viewed as a kind of auto-therapy for the writer (as with Frisch's Montauk), or as a complement (or alternative) to the historically-based *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* of other post-war German-language writing, it clearly has a strong appeal for a wide reading public. It could even be argued that twentieth-century history in the German-language countries has furnished a kind of *collective* "negative knowledge", to use Irlam's term - "*the upheaval of tradition and its widespread effects on memory*"⁹ leading to an awareness which finds expression not only in the works considered in the early pages of this study, which deal directly with historically-based experience, but also in the more "inner-directed" writings of Frisch, Handke and Bernhard. In both cases, an attempt to come to terms with the past - to analyse and identify "*the long term causes of uncertainty*", as Saunders¹⁰ puts it - is combined with a search for new possibilities which is reflected in numerous subjective, ironic or "modernistic" presentations of the self and of individual experience. All this relates to Butler's idea of the "collapse of the self" discussed at the beginning of this study; however, it is significant that these works are also characterised by an unwillingness to surrender to this process. Clearly, writers and readers,

⁸ *Die Beschreibung des Unglücks* (1985), 12

⁹ Saunders 1985, p.128

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p.131

confronted by the modern world's many threats to individual freedom, are anxious to retain some sense of an independent self, and to explore the possibilities of self-analysis, self-discovery and self-development through literature - even if current theories of a fluid or unstable self appear to make these efforts more problematic than in earlier eras. This is counterbalanced by the alert writer's awareness of the multiplicity of creative possibilities available, perhaps for the first time, in the "post-modern" era - accompanied by a corresponding openness to the idea of a changing self and to new perceptions of individual identity. However, in the works surveyed in this study, the insistence upon the presence of a controlling intelligence and the selective use of modern literary techniques to portray, re-order and analyse individual experience, no matter how negative, is far removed from that alienating "*late twentieth century dehumanisation of literature*" which Carey¹¹ associates with some modern European writing. Rather, it is this combination of the historical and the deeply personal, together with the intense consciousness of those specifically modern problems and dilemmas which, in the final decade of the twentieth century, have come to be seen as affecting not just one particular geographical region or area of culture, which gives the confrontation of self and world in twentieth-century German literature in general - and in the works of Bernhard, Frisch and Handke in particular - its distinctiveness and fascination.

¹¹John Carey : The Intellectuals and the Masses (London 1992), p.215

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- Malcolm J.PENDER (1985) : Creative Imagination and Society. Aspects of the German-Swiss "Künstlerroman" in the Twentieth Century (Glasgow)
- Walter SCHMITZ (1985) : Max Frisch. Das Spätwerk (1962-1982). Eine Einführung. (Bern)
- Helmut NAUMANN (1986) : "Anatol Stiller alias James Larkin White. Ein Beitrag zur Arbeitsweise Max Frischs. In : MLN, H.3 S.697-704
- Frederick Alfred LUBICH (1986) : "Homo fabers hermetische Initiation in die Eleusinisch-Orphischen Mysterien". In : Euphorion, H.3 S.297-318
- Richard EGGER (1986) : Der Leser im Dilemma. Die Leserrolle in Max Frischs Romanen Stiller, Homo faber, und Mein Name sei Gantenbein (Bern/ Frankfurt/M)
- Michael BUTLER (1986) : Öffentlichkeit als Partner ? Zur Textinterpretation von Max Frischs **Der Mensch erscheint im Holozän**. In : H-J. Althof, K. Bullivant et al (Hg.), Subjektivität - Innerlichkeit - Abkehr vom Politischen ? Tendenzen der deutschsprachigen Literatur der siebziger Jahre (Bonn)
- Walter SCHMITZ (Hg.) (1987) : Max Frisch (Frankfurt/M)
- Victor BROMBERT (1987) : Frisch, Cheever and the Prison Cell. In : Rivista di Letterature moderne e comparate, 40, S.59-67
- Wendy STERBA/Klaus MÜLLER-SALGET(1987) : What about Julika ? Anmerkungen zu Max Frischs **Stiller**. In : ZfdP, Bd.103, H.4, S. 577-591
- Nicholas HEWITT (ed.) (1989) : The Culture of Reconstruction (London)
- Jürgen H. PETERSEN (1990) : Max Frisch (Stuttgart)
- Richard SHEPPARD (ed.) (1990) : New Ways in Germanistik (Oxford/New York/Munich)

Frederick A. LUBICH (1990) : Max Frisch : Stiller, Homo faber, Mein Name sei Gantenbein (Munich)

Nicholas DE JONGH and Christopher DRIVER : Parables for violent times (Obituary : Max Frisch). In : The Guardian, April 5, 1991

Volker HAGE : Max Frisch, ein Album. Wirkliche und imaginäre Bilder eines Schriftstellerlebens : zum Tod des großen Schweizer Dichters. In : Die Zeit, Nr. 16, 12. April 1991, S.53-54

Marcel REICH-RANICKI : Wie wir die Frauen lieben und den Tod fürchten. Anmerkungen zu Max Frisch. In : Die Bühne, Nr.5/91 (Mai 1991), S.20-21

CHAPTER THREE

1. Works by Bernhard

For the autobiographical series, listed below, the first date given is that of the publication of the first hardback edition, by Residenz Verlag, Salzburg : the second is that of the paperback, published by Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, Munich.

Die Ursache (1975/1977)
 Der Keller (1976/1978)
 Der Atem (1978/1981)
 Die Kälte (1981/1984)
 Ein Kind (1982/1985)

All works listed below are published by Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt a.M., except where otherwise indicated. Page-references are generally taken from the Suhrkamp editions identified here. Key : Ur = Die Ursache : Ke = Der Keller : At = Der Atem : Kä = Die Kälte : Ki = Ein Kind.

Frost (1963/1972 : Frankfurt a.M., suhrkamp taschenbuch 47)
 Amras (1964)
 Verstörung (1967/1988 : suhrkamp taschenbuch 1480)
 Ungenach (1968)
 Das Kalkwerk (1970/1973 : suhrkamp taschenbuch 128)
 Der Italiener (Salzburg : Residenz Verlag, 1971)
 Midland in Stilfs (1971 : Bibliothek Suhrkamp 272)
 Korrektur (1975)
 Der Stimmenimitator (1978)
 Die Billigesser (1980)
 Ave Vergil (1981)
 Wittgensteins Neffe (1982)
 Beton (1982)
 Der Untergeher (1983)
 Holzfällen (1984)
 Ritter, Dene, Voss (1984)
 Alte Meister (1985)
 Auslöschung (1986)
 Heldenplatz (1988)
 Erzählungen (1988)
 In der Höhe. Rettungsversuch. Unsinn (Salzburg : Residenz Verlag, 1989)

2. Secondary literature

"*Ich könnte auf dem Papier jemand umbringen*" , Der Spiegel, 26.Jg., 34, 23 Juni 1980, 172-182
 Jean-Louis de RAMBURES : Thomas Bernhard im Gespräch mit Le Monde. In : Spectaculum, 39, 1984, 242-245
 Kurt HOFMANN, Aus Gesprächen mit Thomas Bernhard, Munich 1991
Über Thomas Bernhard, Hg. von Anneliese Botond, Frankfurt/M., 1970
 Jens DITTMAR(Hg.), Thomas Bernhard Werkgeschichte. Zweite, aktualisierte Auflage, Frankfurt/M. 1990
 Herbert GAMPER : Thomas Bernhard München : dtv 1977
 Bernhard SORG : Thomas Bernhard. München 1977
 Bernhard SORG, Thomas Bernhard. In : Kritisches Lexikon der deutschsprachigen Literatur, Munich 1988, p.13
 Nicholas J.MEYERHOFER : Thomas Bernhard. Berlin : Colloquium-Verlag 1985 (Köpfe des 20. Jahrhunderts ; Bd. 104),
 Wendelin SCHMIDT-DENGLER : Der Übertreibungskünstler. Zu Thomas Bernhard Wien :

Sonderzahl 1986

Wendelin SCHMIDT-DENGLER/Martin HUBER(Hg.) : Statt Bernhard. Über Misanthropie im Werk Thomas Bernhards, Wien, Edition S, 1987

MAL 21, 3/4 1988(Special Thomas Bernhard Issue)

Ria ENDRES, Am Ende angekommen. Dargestellt am wahnhaften Dunkel der Männerporträts des Thomas Bernhard, Frankfurt/M. 1980

Urs BUGMANN, Bewältigungsversuch. Thomas Bernhards autobiographische Schriften, Bern 1981

Reinhard TSCHAPKE, Hölle und zurück. Das Initiationsthema in den Jugenderinnerungen Thomas Bernhards, Hildesheim, 1984

Manfred MITTERMAYER, Ich werden. Versuch einer Thomas Bernhard-Lektüre, Stuttgart 1988

Sebastian NEUMEISTER : Der Dichter als Dandy : Kafka, Baudelaire, Thomas Bernhard.

München : W.Fink 1973

Caroline MARKOLIN : Die Großväter sind die Lehrer. Johannes Freumbichler und sein Enkel

Thomas Bernhard, Salzburg 1988

Maria FIALIK : Der konservative Anarchist. Thomas Bernhard und das Staats-Theater. Vienna 1991

Sepp DREISSINGER (Hg.) : Thomas Bernhard. Portraits, Bilder und Texte, Weitra 1991

Stephen D. DOWDEN : Understanding Thomas Bernhard. Columbia (South Carolina) 1991

Manfred JURGENSEN(Hg.) : Bernhard. Annäherungen. Bern : Francke 1981 (Contains :)

Ria ENDRES : Das Dunkel ist nicht finster genug (*response to B's 1980 Spiegel interview*)

Jens DITTMAR : Thomas Bernhard als Journalist beim "Demokratischen Volksblatt"

Jens DITTMAR : Korrektur der Korrektur (Buchobjekte)

Hans HÖLLER : "Es darf nichts Ganzes geben", u. "In meinen Büchern ist alles künstlich". Eine Rekonstruktion des Gesellschaftsbilds von Thomas Bernhard aus der Form seiner Sprache.

Manfred MIXNER : Vom Leben zum Tode. Die Einleitung des Negations-Prozesses im Frühwerk von Thomas Bernhard.

Manfred JURGENSEN : Die Sprachpartituren des Thomas Bernhard

Jürgen H. PETERSEN : Beschreibung einer sinnentleerten Welt. Erzählthematik u.

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Kathleen THORPE : Der Guckkasten des eigenen Kopfes. Anmerkungen zum Theaterbegriff in **Frost**.

David ROBERTS : Korrektur der Korrektur ? Zu Thomas Bernhards Lebenskunstwerk

Korrektur

August OBERMAYER : Der *locus terribilis* in Thomas Bernhards Prosa

Erika TUNNER : Scheitern mit Vorbedacht (**Ja**)

K.BARTSCH/D.GOLTSCHNIGG/G.MELZER(Hg.), Für und wider eine österreichische Literatur, Königstein/Ts., 1982

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Königstein/Ts, 1983

Keith BULLIVANT/R.Hinton THOMAS, Literature in Upheaval, Manchester 1974

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Barbara SAUNDERS, Contemporary German Autobiography ; literary approaches to the problem of identity, London 1985

Peter DEMETZ, After the Fires, San Diego/New York/London 1988

Hans MAYER , Die unerwünschte Literatur, Berlin 1989, 151-158

Peter HANDKE, Als ich *Verstörung* von Thomas Bernhard las. In : Über Thomas Bernhard, pp. 100-106

D.A.CRAIG : The novels of Thomas Bernhard - a report. In : GLL, XXV, 4, 1972

Peter LAEMMLE, Stimmt die partielle Wahrheit noch ? Notizen eines abtrünnigen Thomas Bernhard-Lesers. In : text+kritik 1974, H.43, p.46

Hugo DITTBERNER : Die heimliche Apologie der Macht. In : *ibid.*, 22-28

Marcel REICH-RANICKI, Thomas Bernhards entgegengesetzte Richtung. In : Entgegnung. Zur deutschen Literatur der siebziger Jahre, Stuttgart 1979

3. Essays, reviews and articles dealing with the autobiographical series

- Elisabeth EFFENBERGER : Scheitern in Salzburg. **Die Ursache** von Thomas Bernhard - eine Stadtbeschimpfung im Residenz Verlag. Salzburger Nachrichten, 13. September 1975.
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- William J. DONAHUE : Zu Thomas Bernhards **Die Ursache, Eine Andeutung**. In : MAL 1988, 3/4
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- “ “ Atemnot. Zum dritten Teil des Thomas Bernhard'schen Autobiographie. In : Merkur, , 947-949
- Karin KATHREIN : Herausforderung zum Leben. (Das Buch der Woche) Die Presse, 22. März 1978
- Hermann BURGER : Atem-Wende. Thomas Bernhards dritter Autobiographieversuch. Die Weltwoche, Nr. 20, 17. Mai 1978
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- Rolf MICHAELIS : Himmelsturz, Höllenflug. Autobiographie als Erziehungsroman. Die Zeit, 4. Juni 1982
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- Thomas Bernhard. **Ein Widerspruch**. Ein Film von Krista FLEISCHMANN
- Martin ESSLIN : Beckett und Bernhard : A Comparison. In : MAL, 18(1985), 2, 67-78
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- Robert H. VELLUSIG : Thomas Bernhard und **Wittgensteins Neffe** : Die Bewegung des Hinundher. In : MAL, 23, 3/4, 1990
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- Christian KLUG : Interaktion und Identität. Zum Motiv der Willensschwäche in Thomas Bernhards **Auslöschung**. In : MAL, 23, 3/4, 1990
- Ulrich WEINZIERL : Bernhard als Erzieher : Thomas Bernhards **Auslöschung**. In : GQ, 63, 3/4, Summer/Fall 1990, 455-461
- David HORTON : Thomas Bernhard's **Heldenplatz** - The Scandal, The Play and its Reception. In : Quinquereme, 12, 1 (1989), 101-113
- Donald G.DAVIAU : Thomas Bernhard's **Heldenplatz**. In : Monatshefte, Spring 1991 Vol. 83 No. 1, 29-44
- Nicholas J. MEYERHOFER : The Laughing Sisyphus : Reflections on Bernhard as (Self-) Dramatist in the Light of his **Der Theatermacher**. In : MAL, 1988, 3/4
- Thomas F.BARRY : On Paralysis and Transcendence in Thomas Bernhard. In : *ibid.*
- Francis M.SHARP : Thomas Bernhard : Literary Cryogenics or Art on Ice . In : *ibid.*
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- W.G. SEBALD : Thomas Bernhard (1931-1989). In : Edward Timms/Ritchie Robertson (eds.) : Vienna 1900. From Altenberg to Wittgenstein. Austrian Studies 1(Edinburgh 1990)
- Rolf MICHAELIS : Hohe Schule der Einsamkeit (review of **In der Höhe**). In Die Zeit, 44, Nr 13, 24. 3. 1989
- "Thomas Bernhard überflügelte Shakespeare", Tiroler Tageszeitung (Innsbruck), 6.März 1989, S.14
- Stefan MAY : Letzte Steine auf den Weg zur Reife. Maturathemen sind in vielem ein getreuer Spiegel der Zeitgeschichte., Die Presse, 10.07.1989, S.3
- Gabriel JOSIPOVICI, Genius on a settee (review of **Old Masters**). In : The Independent, 29 July 1989
- Andrea REITER : Thomas Bernhard's "Musical Prose". In : Williams/Parkes/Smith (eds.) Literature on the Threshold, 19 . 187-207
- Andreas HERZOG : Über Thomas Bernhard. In : Zeitschrift für Germanistik 10(1989), S.209-215
- Valentine CUNNINGHAM : Great snacks from Vienna (review of **The Cheap-Eaters**), The Observer, 6 January 1991, p.35

CHAPTER FOUR

1. Works by Handke

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- Publikumsbeschimpfung und andere Sprechstücke (1966)
 Begrüßung des Aufsichtsrats (Salzburg : Residenz Verlag, 1967 : Suhrkamp 1981)
 Die Innenwelt der Außenwelt der Innenwelt (1969)
 Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter (1970)
 Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied (1972)
 Wunschloses Unglück (Salzburg : Residenz Verlag, 1972 : Suhrkamp 1975)
 Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms (1972)
 Als das Wünschen noch geholfen hat (1974)
 Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung (1975)
 Falsche Bewegung (1975)
 Die linkshändige Frau (1976)
 Das Gewicht der Welt (Salzburg : Residenz Verlag, 1977 : Suhrkamp 1979)
 Langsame Heimkehr (1979)
 Das Ende des Flanierens (1980)
 Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire (1980)
 Kindergeschichte (1981)
 Über die Dörfer (1981)
 Die Geschichte des Bleistifts (Salzburg : Residenz Verlag, 1982 : Suhrkamp 1985)
 Der Chinese des Schmerzes (1983)
 Phantasien der Wiederholung (1983)
 Die Wiederholung (1986)
 Die Abwesenheit (1987)
 Nachmittag eines Schriftstellers (1987)
 Das Spiel vom Fragen (1989)
 Versuch über die Müdigkeit (1989)
 Noch einmal für Thukydides (Salzburg : Residenz Verlag, 1990)
 Versuch über die Jukebox (1990)
 Versuch über den geglückten Tag (1991)
 Abschied des Träumers vom neunten Land (1991)
- Der Rausch durch die Beatles (1965). In : Ver sacrum, (Wien/München) 1974
 Am Felsfenster, morgens. In : manuskripte, 27, 1987, H.97, S.3-10
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2. Translations from the French

- Francis PONGE : Das Notizbuch vom Kiefernwald und La Mounine. Deutsch von PH. Frankfurt a. M. ; Suhrkamp, 1982
 Francis PONGE : Kleine Suite des Vivarais. Deutsch von PH. Salzburg : Residenz, 1988
 Patrick MODIANO : Eine Jugend. Deutsch von PH. Frankfurt a. M. ; Suhrkamp 1985
 Emmanuel BOVE : Armand. Deutsch von PH. Frankfurt a. M. ; Suhrkamp 1982
 Emmanuel BOVE : Meine Freunde. Deutsch von PH. 1981
 Emmanuel BOVE : Bécon-les-Bruyères. Deutsch von PH. 1984

Emmanuel BOVE : Antwort auf die Frage nach seiner Biographie, verfaßt 1927, zwei Jahre nach dem Erscheinen von **Armand**. In : **Armand**, Deutsch von Peter Handke, Frankfurt/M. 1982 (+ *PHs Nachwort to Bécon-les-Bruyères*)

See also :

Ulrich WESCHE : Peter Handke und Frankreich. In: German Studies Review, VIII, No. 2, May 1985

3. Periodicals and books devoted to Handke's work

Austriaca, 9, Mai 1983 N° 16 - Peter Handke

(**Contains** : Claude MAURIAC : "Une manière absolue de participer..." ; Hector BIANCIOTTI : Rencontre ; Daniel OSTER : **Lent Retour** de Peter Handke. Une expérience contradictoire de la souffrance de l'espace ; A - Fr. BERNARD : Le Chat dans **Lent Retour** de PH : du symbole à l'emblème du nouveau rôle positif de la nature dans l'art ; Jürgen JACOBS : PHs "Botschaft" zur **LSV** ; Th. THORNTON : PH : La leçon de S.V. ; Inga M. KOHN : L'Élément autobiographique et sa fictionalisation dans l'oeuvre de PH)

TuK, H.24/24a/PH. Vierte Auflage September 1978

(**Includes** : Helmut SCHMIEDT : Peter Handke, Franz Beckenbauer, John Lennon und andere Künstler. Zum Verhältnis von Populärkultur und Gegenwartsliteratur. ; P.H. : Die Laternen auf der Place Vendôme ; Das Gewicht der Welt (Materialien zu nichts Bestimmten) ; Peter PÜTZ : Wiegt oder gewichtet H. das Gewicht der Welt ? ; Gustav ZÜRCHER : Leben mit Poesie ; Michael BUSELMEIER : Das Paradies ist "verriegelt" ; Heinz F. SCHAFROTH : Von der begriffsauflösenden und damit zukunftsächtigen Kraft des poetischen Denkens. PH, sein Elfenbeinturm und die Wörter "politisch", "engagiert", "poetisch" ; Uwe SCHULTZ : Zwischen Provokation und Reflektion. Über PHs Stücke ; Walter Helmut FRITZ : Kreatürliche Sätze. PHs frühe Prosa. ; Rolf MICHAELIS : Ohrfeigen für das Lieblingskind. PH und seine Kritiker. Eine Beispielsammlung)

TuK H.24 (PH), 5.Auflage. November 1989

(**Includes** : Hugo DITTBERNER : Der panische Übersetzer. Zu PH ; Peter PÜTZ : PHs "Elfenbeinturm" ; Thomas ANZ : Emil Staiger, PH und der Zürcher Literaturstreit ; Christoph BARTMANN : **Das Gewicht der Welt** - revisited)

Manuskripte 27, 1987, H.97

Michael BUSELMEIER : Die Landschaft der Freiheit. Über PH anlässlich des neuen Buchs **Nachmittag eines Schriftstellers**. S. 24-26

Peter HANDKE : Am Felsfenster, morgens. S.3-10

Peter STRASSER : Der andere Balken des Andreaskreuzes. Essay über PH aus Anlaß seiner Erzählung **Die Abwesenheit**. S.11-23

Raimund FELLINGER (Hg.) : Peter Handke. Frankfurt a. M. 1985.

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Manfred DURZAK : Für mich ist Literatur auch eine Lebenshaltung. Gespräch mit PH. In : Gespräche über den Roman : Frankfurt a. M. ; Suhrkamp (st 318) 1976

Herbert GAMPER (im Gespräch mit PH) : Aber ich lebe nur von den Zwischenräumen. Zürich 1987

June SCHLUETER : The Plays and Novels of Peter Handke. Pittsburgh 1981

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Norbert HONSA (Hg.) : Zu Peter Handke. Zwischen Experiment und Tradition. 1983

Thomas K. THORNTON : Die Thematik von Selbstausslöschung und Selbstbewahrung in den Werken von PH Frankfurt a. M./Bern/New York : Lang 1983

Norbert GABRIEL : PH und Österreich. Bonn 1983

Christoph BARTMANN : Suche nach Zusammenhang. Handkes Werk als Prozeß. Wien 1984

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Margret EIFLER : Die subjektivistische Romanform seit ihren Anfängen in der Frühromantik. Ihre Existenzialität und Anti-Narrativik am Beispiel von Rilke, Benn und Handke. Tübingen 1985

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 Ellen DINTER : Gefundene und erfundene Heimat. Zu PHs zyklischer Dichtung **Langsame Heimkehr**. Köln 1986
 Michael LINSTEAD : Outer World and Inner World. Socialisation and emancipation in the works of Peter Handke, Frankfurt a. M./Bern/New York 1988
 Margret EIFLER : review of Linstead, Outer World and Inner World, MAL, 23, 2, 1990, pp 150-1
 Isabelle BERNARD-EYNARD : Peter Handke - La Sagesse déraisonnable. Paris 1990 : France Autriche 13 ; Centre d'Études et de Recherches Autrichiennes : Publications de l'Université de Rouen N° 160
 Peter STRASSER : Der Freudenstoff. Zu Handke eine Philosophie. Salzburg : Residenz 1991
 André-Francois BERNARD : Peter Handke : Errance d'un Autrichien. Lille 1991
 Laurent CASSAGNAU, Jacques LE RIDER, Erika TUNNER (ed.) : Partir-Revenir. En Route avec Peter Handke. Paris 1992 ; Publications de l'Institut d'Allemand d'Asnières

Peter DEMETZ : A Fragile Witness. In : After the Fires. New York 1986
 Miklós SALYAMOSY : PH. In : Österreichische Literatur des 20. Jahrhunderts. Hg. vom Kollektiv für Literaturgeschichte im Volkseigenen Verlag Volk und Wissen, Berlin 1988
 Ulrich GREINER : Der Tod des Nachsommers (1979)
 W.G. SEBALD : Die Beschreibung des Unglücks. Zur österreichischen Literatur von Stifter bis Handke. Salzburg ; Residenz 1985
 W.G. SEBALD : Unheimliche Heimat. Essays zur österreichischen Literatur . Salzburg ; Residenz 1991

4. Articles devoted to works and themes discussed in the chapter on Handke

Albert VON SCHIRNDING : Der vermessenste aller Landvermesser. Merkur, 1980, H.2, S.195-198
 Norbert GABRIEL : Das "Volk der Leser". Zum Dichtungs-begriff in PHs Tetralogie **LH**. In : DVJLUg, 1984, H.3, S.475-496
 Cecile Cazort ZORACH : The Artist as Joker in PH's **LH**. In : Monatshefte 77(1985), S.181-194
 Rita FELSKI : Peter Handke's **Langsame Heimkehr**, AUMLA 1984, 208-225
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