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IDENTITY, COMMUNITY AND CONTINUITY
IN THE EAST GERMAN NOVEL

GEORGE DENNIS TATE,
B.A. (Dublin), M.A. (McMaster)

A Thesis for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
submitted to the University of Warwick

Department of German Studies

September 1977

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SUMMARY

This thesis demonstrates how East German fiction has liberated itself from the ideological preconception that citizens of the German Democratic Republic would automatically enjoy a qualitatively unique sense of identity. Although the novelists retain their socialist confidence in the perfectibility of man, they have shown that expectations of pre-industrial personal 'wholeness' and communal harmony are illusory in a technologically advanced society. Continuity is seen to be inseparable from conflict, in terms of individual, social and cultural development.

Socialist Realist theory of the 1930's is shown to have been influenced as much by Expressionist notions of identity and revolution as by the aspirations of the Weimar classicists and Marx. Its hostility towards Brecht's dialectical view of realism has proven ill-judged.

The five chapters highlight the main stages in the restoration of the criteria of realism to the depiction of man and society in the GDR. The utopian hopes of the exile years, and the inherent contradictions in Socialist Realism, are illustrated through the analysis of Becher's Abchied in the light of his Wiederandere fragment. The rhetorical insubstantiality of the first industrial novels is exposed through studies of the work of Claudius and Marchwitza. Chapters 3-5 show, by means of comparative analysis of three distinct groups of thematically related novels, how the new generation of writers has gradually established new standards of authenticity and formal subtlety. The detailed consideration of the 'Entwicklungsromane' centred

on the post-war identity crisis, the historical perspective on the GDR's development in the 'Bitterfeld' fiction, and the more penetrating 'subjective' prose-works of the late 1960's demonstrates the outstanding achievements of Strittmatter, Fühmann, Wolf, de Bruyn and Reimann.

An important body of modern German fiction is hereby placed in a revealing literary-historical context and new light thrown upon unjustly neglected individual works.

INTRODUCTION

Although the leadership of the East German
would be no longer in itself a source of...
and eventually guide through the... there is...
quite exceptional event the... in which cultural...
for the German Democratic Republic have defined the...
identity being built up in their homeland under socialism.
Throughout the first epoch in its existence, the period up to
1971 marked by Walter Ulbricht's leadership of the German
Socialist Unity Party (SED), East German literature has had to
come to terms with this totally idealized official view of
identity, which seems to reconcile self-unity, communal harmony
and the principle of organic continuity under which both are
held to be 'notwendig' achieved. It is no coincidence that
these grandiosest formulations of the ultimate communist

Der freie Mensch, das freie Volk auf freiem Grund ist die Forderung unserer Epoche geworden, aus der Forderung der Epoche Goethes hervorgehend. Dem Licht im Westen, das zur Zeit Goethes aufging, ist in unserem Zeitalter der Glanz gefolgt, den die russische Revolution über uns ausstrahlte ... Ein von einer unermüdlischen harmonischen Menschentätigkeit erfülltes Panorama, das ist die friedliche Aussicht, die uns Goethe als das Bild einer künftigen Menschengemeinschaft entwirft.

Johannes R. Becher¹

Schiller ist mit uns in diesem geistigen Befreiungsprozeß, in dem der arbeitende Mensch in seiner sozialistischen Entwicklung vom Ich zum Wir gleichzeitig zu einer bewußt handelnden, freien, voll mitverantwortlichen und allseitig entwickelten Persönlichkeit emporwächst ... (Heute) ist es ... unsere sozialistische Gesellschaft, ... die in ihrem weiteren Übergang zur kommunistischen Gesellschaft auch Schillers Traum einer harmonischen Gesellschaft ohne Klassenspaltung verwirklichen wird.

Alexander Abusch²

Although the leadership of any newly established state is bound to be eager to instil a sense of individual commitment and community pride amongst its citizens, there is something quite exceptional about the terms in which cultural spokesmen for the German Democratic Republic have defined the strength of identity being built up in their homeland under socialism. Throughout the first epoch in its existence, the period up to 1971 marked by Walter Ulbricht's leadership of the ruling Socialist Unity Party (SED), East German literature has had to come to terms with this totally idealised official view of identity, which seeks to reconcile self-unity, communal harmony and the principle of organic continuity under which both are held to be 'naturally' achieved. It is no coincidence that these grandiloquent formulations of the ultimate communist

goal occur in speeches made in Weimar, commemorating the bicentenaries of the birth of Goethe and Schiller, in 1949 and 1959 respectively, and that both speakers have been members of the SED's Central Committee and Ministers of Culture. Yet for all their festive rhetoric the speeches represent a consistent reiteration of the central argument in the Party's 'Kulturpolitik',³ that there is a logical progression from the ideals of 'Bildung' in Weimar classicism and communist 'wholeness' in Marx to the quality of life finally made possible through the socialist structures introduced in 1945.

It is impossible not to be struck by the discrepancy between these claims to be the natural heirs to a harmoniously continuous national culture and the markedly inorganic basis from which the GDR itself has had to develop. The destruction of the Third Reich inevitably had a shattering effect upon identity, in individual and collective terms, throughout Germany. The Soviet Zone of Occupation, carved out of the Reich in a fairly arbitrary manner, was anything but a natural historical entity, as the partitioned city of Berlin in the centre of its territory still serves to recall. East Germany's population - like those of the Western zones, if not more so - was remarkably rootless, with millions of emigrants from the provinces now part of Poland or the Soviet Union, and many others having lost their home and had their local community of family and friends broken up by the effects of war. The preservation of stabilising links with the recent past would have been anything but welcome to the Soviet regime, which, in turn, represented an alien and hostile authority to most of its subjects. The economic structure of the area was already partially urban and industrial, and was later to be impressively

developed in this direction - the very antithesis of the settled rural community.

For the minority of socialist pioneers, identity was initially based upon the intangible abstractions of 'Volk', 'Heimat' and 'Nation', which were now being 'purified' from the perversions of fascist ideology and given new meaning in terms of a unified socialist Germany of the future. The affirmation of a cultural heritage recognised as 'ours' rather than 'theirs', or 'true' and 'noble' as opposed to fascist or bourgeois versions, could, it appeared, be made to compensate for the lack of continuity in private life. Phrases like "die Kultur unserer deutschen Heimat", "die Pflege und Weiterentwicklung einer wahren, edlen Kultur der Nation", "die Weiterentwicklung des Erbes der Kultur unseres Volkes" were used incessantly to distinguish the GDR in absolute terms from a Federal Republic held to be in the grip of the "Ideologie der Heimatlosigkeit und Wurzellosigkeit".⁴ On the personal level, with the exception of the small core of intellectuals and political leaders who had consistently opposed fascism and spent the Hitler years in exile, the new generation of German socialists needed to start afresh the process of establishing identity. Since there was scarcely a valid traditional community to build on, the starting-point was generally within institutional groupings - at work or at college, in leisure organisations like the Free German Youth (FDJ), and in the SED itself - rather than in the immediate home environment.

The cooperative spirit was, however, conspicuously slow to manifest itself in such economically desperate times, in which sheer survival seemed the primary consideration. Inevitably, the SED had to place greater emphasis upon the

leadership abilities of the committed minority to rekindle it by example and inspiration, whether by becoming 'activists' in their sphere of work or helping to educate the public through exhortation and intellectual persuasion. The main difficulty has been the extent to which international pressures, which have made East Germany a cockpit of ideological conflict, have distorted this endeavour to re-create a sense of community from above and reduced the already problematical term 'Gemeinschaft' to a propagandist cliché. It is significant that, in recognition of the provisional origins of the GDR, community in its broadest sense always meant the national entity of a reunified socialist Germany, until the crisis of 1956, which forced the leadership to lower its horizons and consolidate the status quo finally confirmed by the erection of the Berlin Wall.⁵ Since then, a distinctive GDR identity has been intensively cultivated, with mixed results. While 'bei uns in der DDR' has become a phrase widely adopted by its citizens, the official references to the dawning of the 'sozialistische Menschengemeinschaft' smack too much of ideological abstraction.⁶

The danger that rhetorical compensation for the failure of a technologically advanced socialist society to develop in accordance with the ideals of the more homogeneous society in which Goethe and Schiller lived can prove counter-productive in the long term, was never recognised by the cultural politicians of the Ulbricht era. The achievement of East German literature over this period, in the face of such ideological simplifications, has been to demonstrate that identity has remained almost as contradictory and elusive a concept as it has proven to be in other conflict-torn, industrialised societies which have lacked socialist confidence in the

perfectibility of man and society.

For the talented representatives of the generation of authors who grew to maturity with the GDR itself - people like Erwin Strittmatter, Franz Fühmann, Christa Wolf, Günter de Bruyn and Brigitte Reimann⁷ - the creative breakthrough has resulted through the recognition of the inadequacies of the cut-and-dried value-concepts inherent, for example, in the opposition of 'Gemeinschaft' and 'Gesellschaft',⁸ and of the organic metaphors upon which the classical concept of 'Bildung' is based. At best, these are no more than a starting point for a meaningful literary analysis of character and society in the GDR. At worst, as in the 'Aufbau' fiction of the early 1950's, their uncritical application to current realities implied a complete abandonment of the principle of mimesis. Applying these insights to creative writing has, however, necessitated bringing about a major modification in the Party's view of the function of literature. This has been a slow business, dependent largely upon the writers' independent initiative and involving frequent disputes over such matters as what constitutes a partisan perspective, a typical personality or an antagonistic social conflict. It has meant leaving behind the notion of 'revolutionary romanticism' once central to Socialist Realism, which required them not only to affirm, but also anticipate socialist developments.

Interestingly, in relation to the negligible popular influence of serious literature in Western society, these writers have retained much of the traditional status (if not the aura) of the 'Dichter' in German culture. It was a title which the Party was initially happy to confer, in the expectation that they would prove effective advocates and illustrators of

its policies, then angrily threatened to abolish after 1956 in the name of cultural revolution, before the authors established their own claim to it through the remarkable popularity of their works and the unique critical function they have performed within East German society. If their more recent novels, like Wolf's Nachdenken Über Christa T. or Reimann's Franziska Linkerhand, continue to fulfil a valuable educational - as opposed to didactic - function, it is because their authors have had to embark on a difficult journey of self-exploration in writing them, and have recognised the typicality of the contradictions and conflicts in their own life-pattern for their readership as a whole.

The very fact that it took until the second half of the 1960's for committed socialist authors in the GDR to achieve significant creative autonomy, and still in the face of strong opposition from cultural-political spokesmen, reflects the questionable influence of the cultural heritage which was claimed to provide such a life-giving continuity. For not only does this heritage prove to have been rather more complex and disharmonious within the history of the German Communist Party (KPD) than the festive orations would suggest. It can also be seen to have excluded the vital strain of Marxist literary theory from the crucial debates of the 1930's, with which Bertolt Brecht was particularly associated, and which has been a liberating influence upon recent East German literature.

The rhetoric of Becher and Abusch has its roots in a literary movement which regarded itself as totally at odds with Weimar classicism and the concept of 'Bildung', and which reached its peak of political significance in the period immediately after the Russian revolution - Expressionism.

Whatever the vehement denunciations of the ideology and method of Expressionism by the Moscow-based cultural politicians of the exile years - Georg Lukács, Alfred Kurella and Becher himself - may suggest to the contrary,⁹ the conviction held by many Expressionist poets that their emotive moral absolutes had the power to inspire the masses left a firm impression in Communist Party circles in the 1920's. The belief of poets like Becher that they could renounce their organic 'self' and find a new strength of identity within a revolutionary mass-movement, through being transformed in a quasi-religious sense into a 'neuer Mensch', was also of considerable political significance to a party concerned to build up its strength quickly. His poem acclaiming the success of the Russian revolution is positively idyllic in its vision of universal brotherhood:

Die goldene Sichel! Und der goldene Hammer!
O Ozean-Rüste! Morgen! Ahren-Kranz! ...

Ihr werdet hart rein! Und sehr unerbittlich.
Und nicht vergessen! Wahret euer Recht.
Wälzt um! Befreit! Und dann erst -:
wahrhaft friedlich
Erhöbe sich das göttliche Geschlecht.

Dann -: welche Söhne! Solche Frauen ...
Massen -
Freiheit und Gleichheit. Edles Brudertum.
O Symphonie der fernsten Völker-Rassen. 10

The problem with this, and countless similar Expressionist poems, was, as Lukács rightly pointed out, that the value-concepts with which the alternative to the capitalist deformation of man and society was described were lacking in any specific historical or political content.¹¹ Just as in the 'Jugendbewegung' in the same period, their ideals of freedom, equality and above all 'Gemeinschaft' seemed to refer back in an almost sentimental way to the imagined harmony of an

irretrievable pre-industrial society, and bore little meaning in terms of a revolutionary future.¹² Interestingly, Kurella and Abusch were both active in socialist groups within the 'Jugendbewegung', and the same remoteness from political realities is revealed in Kurella's articles on the possibility of reconciling the 'völkisch' and socialist elements within the movement in bringing about a new 'Deutsche Volksgemeinschaft'.¹³

These simplified ideas of collective harmony and the irrelevance of individuality gained strength through various aspects of the KPD's 'Agitation und Propaganda' programme in the 1920's. In the proletarian dramas spoken by anonymous 'Sprechchöre', for example, the emphasis was on winning over the audience by emotional exhortation rather than rational argument. In Hans Lorbeer's Liebknecht - Luxemburg - Lenin (1927), the exchanges between the various choirs, representing workers' groups, communist activists, martyrs of the class-struggle, mothers, youth and so on, build up into what are often dangerously insubstantial rhetorical climaxes:

Wir hören aus den Kerkern!
Wir hören aus den Gräbern!
Wir hören aus den Massen uns'rer Brüder,
Uns'rer Schwestern!
Wir hören den Anmarsch!
Der Wahrheit!
Der Klarheit!
Des Rechtes!
Der Gerechtigkeit!
Wir hören:

Heiligen Aufruf der Revolution!
Brüder marschier!
Schwestern marschier!
Wir Mütter sind erwacht!
Wir schreiten, schreiten
Mit Euch! 14

The implication for literature was that the author's individuality, seen in terms of creative originality, was irrelevant if the work achieved an immediate mobilising effect. With the

establishment of the 'Bund proletarisch-revolutionärer Schriftsteller' (BPRS) in 1928 and its attempts to coordinate the work of socialist writers as the political struggle became more acute, it was striking that the middle-class apostles of 'Gemeinschaft' from the previous decade were amongst those most willing to forsake the 'bourgeois' notion of quality.¹⁵ Kurella redefined it as a 'social' rather than a 'formal-aesthetic' category and made 'Inhalt, Richtung und Umfang der Wirkung' the decisive criteria for literature:

Und so kann ein holpriger Gassenhauer, der
im Munde von Tausenden zum Kampflied gegen
Reaktion und Faschismus wird, ein in jeder
Hinsicht größeres Kunstwerk sein als ein
formvollendetes Sonett von Stefan George. 16

This standpoint, however, not only failed to consider whether less esoteric aspects of high culture, like the realistic novel, had any continuing role to play in moulding socialist consciousness, it also ignored the fact that 'Agit-Prop', on the model of this notional 'Gassenhauer', was failing to make any significant impact upon the real mass-audience of the Weimar Republic. The millions of 'unpolitical' petit-bourgeois citizens exposed to the massive 'Bewußtseinsindustrie'¹⁷ made up of the popular press and escapist fiction emanating from the publishing empires of Hugenberg, Ullstein and Scherl, and the new mass-media of radio and film, were simply not being reached by 'Agit-Prop', despite its successes in proletarian quarters.¹⁸ By 1930, a feeling of crisis was perceptible, as it became clear that while the BPRS regarded the creation of an alternative mass-culture on similar lines as its cultural priority, it totally lacked the economic basis to produce it.¹⁹

There was another major weakness in the proletarian literature of these years, which the BPRS scarcely even seemed

to recognise. Not only militant socialism, but fascism as well, had derived many of its central value-concepts from Expressionism and the 'Jugendbewegung', with the result that each side was claiming exclusive rights to the 'natural' language of 'Volk', 'Heimat' and 'Gemeinschaft'. However unmistakable the mythology of race and blood or the cult of the messianic 'Führer' in National Socialism might have been, there was a dangerous ambiguity here which the genuinely revolutionary party should have had the skill to avoid.²⁰ It seems ironical that an instinctive cultural conservative like Thomas Mann should have been more aware of the need to abandon the traditional German 'Kulturidee', with its quasi-metaphysical, aristocratic basis, in order to come to terms with the era of industrialisation and the class-struggle. His essay of 1928, "Kultur und Sozialismus", recognises the inter-relatedness of political and cultural ideologies, and marks Mann's personal commitment to democratic socialism. He makes it clear that the "kulturelle(r) Ideenkomplex von Volk und Gemeinschaft" is now no more than "bloße Romantik". Socialism, particularly through the thinking of Karl Marx, has brought about "die Zersetzung der kulturellen und antigesellschaftlichen Volks- und Gemeinschaftsidee durch die der gesellschaftlichen Klasse".²¹ The politicisation of culture should therefore involve a radical reappraisal of its conceptual framework as well as its content.

Although this crucial line of argument was not taken up within the BPRS, its crisis was resolved with the arrival of Mann's kindred spirit of earlier years, Georg Lukács, in Berlin in 1931, fresh from his researches into the wealth of unpublished work of Marx and Engels in Moscow. As is now generally recognised, Lukács quickly and authoritatively took the

initiative and laid the foundations, in his articles of 1931-32 in the Bund's periodical Die Linkskurve, for a systematic theory of literature which contradicted most of the dominant preconceptions of the 1920's.²² What is striking is the apparent ease with which the leadership of the BPRS accepted Lukács' arguments. The document of early 1932, drafted by Lukács, and intended to define the Bund's cultural policy, is a fundamental 'Selbstkritik', admitting its failure to make headway against "der ganze gewaltige Apparat der Massensliteratur der Bourgeoisie".²³ The vitally important lesson to be drawn is that literature of qualitative distinction - rather than the politically useful 'Agit-Prop' or any simplified 'popular' fiction - is the only way to transform the consciousness of the masses:

Massenwirkung und Spitzenleistung sind in unserer Literatur keine Gegensätze, wie in der bürgerlichen Literatur der Gegenwart, im Gegenteil, sie bedingen sich wechselseitig. Nur durch die Erhöhung der künstlerischen Leistung, die wiederum nur durch Bewältigung und Anwendung des dialektischen Materialismus in unserem Schaffen ermöglicht wird, können wir eine wirkliche Massenbeeinflussung erreichen. 24

The Expressionist conviction that the alienating complexity of urban society has destroyed the individual's hope of achieving an organic wholeness of personality is swept aside, as is the related assumption that individuality needs to be reduced in the service of the 'Gemeinschaft'. Instead, the portrayal of personality growth - as a gradual and contradictory process, not a dramatic 'Wandlung' - is held to be the way to educate the reader, through the psychological process of empathy. Continuity is further stressed by the recognition of the vitality of the "klassisches Erbe" in the panoramic novels of

Tolstoy and Balzac and the humanitarian aspirations of the Weimar classicists. The literary goal thus becomes "das große proletarische Kunstwerk" - the novel which achieves this blend of psychological insight into character and social totality, from a perspective which shows "die großen treibenden Kräfte der gesellschaftlichen Entwicklung" to be those of revolutionary socialism.²⁵

With historical hindsight, it seems strange that a programme of this kind was formulated during what were to prove the last desperate months of ideological struggle before the Nazis came to power. The creation of Tolstoyan masterpieces on the principles suggested would have been the task of years, assuming that literary talent of this order was available at all, while the connection between 'Spitzenleistung' and 'Massenwirkung' might well have been regarded as rather less certain in the age of the electronic media than in the lifetime of Dickens and Balzac. Yet, in view of what was happening in the cultural world of the USSR in 1932, it was fortunate in the longer term that Lukács' faith in quality prevailed in the BPRS. There was enough superficial similarity between the definition of Socialist Realism under which Stalin and Gorky set out to unify literature in the Soviet Union, and Lukács' idea of 'das große proletarische Kunstwerk', to allow him to remain a highly influential figure in the coming years of exile in Moscow.²⁶ There were also, as shall be seen, continuing and significant differences.

The importance of Lukács' criticism for the course to be taken by East German literature has been fundamental, but in a complex and ambivalent way.²⁷ His conviction, derived from the classical concept of 'Bildung', that the organic laws of

nature apply equally to the growth of personality and creative writing, has since served to protect authors from Party pressures to simplify literary reality. It has also served to delay until the middle 1960's any consideration of the pluralistic view of identity basic to post-war literature in West Germany.

The language of his Linkskurve essays illustrates the problem well. The growth of personality is a constant "Prozeß" governed by the laws of the dialectic, and change results from a gradual "Entfaltung" of consciousness. Willi Bredel's characters are unacceptable because they show "keine Entwicklung" or, at best, "verwandeln ... sich mit einem Ruck". The development of Ernst Ottwalt's hero, on the other hand, is too dependent upon a rational "Schema", becoming a "Rechenexempel" as the individually plausible episodes reveal the "pedantische() Systematik" behind them. Ottwalt's exclusion of the unpredictable element of "Zufall" amounts to a betrayal of "Wirklichkeit". Successful characterisation, in contrast, is acclaimed in what often seem like dangerously subjective terms. Tolstoy's figures are "lebende Menschen aus Fleisch und Blut" and he portrays "wirkliche Leiden wirklicher Menschen". Bredel's fictional framework is lifeless, "ein bloßes Skelett", because it lacks "lebende Menschen und lebendige, wechselnde, sich im Prozeß befindliche Beziehungen zwischen den Menschen". Where Lukács passed judgment so categorically over 'life' and 'reality' - albeit as part of a polemic in which forthright criticism was vitally needed - it was no wonder that he alienated proletarian writers like Bredel and Hans Marchwitza, as well as 'linksbürgerlich' intellectuals of the stature of Ottwalt and Bertolt Brecht.

The 'Dichter' is still for Lukács an exceptionally gifted and relatively autonomous individual, whose distinctive task is that of "Gestaltung". His "Kunstwerk" must reflect the "Gesamtprozeß" of social development, illustrating the dialectical "Wechselwirkung" between the particular and the general. Contrary to the widely held view within the Party, there is no difference between "Parteilichkeit" and the objective truth of great realistic literature. Furthermore, creative necessity can even lead to the recognition of the dynamic forces of social change against the author's conscious design and despite his "falsches Bewußtsein", as in the case of Balzac. In ascribing this ultimate mystery to "dichterische Wirklichkeit", Lukács was, ironically, presenting the case for creative independence just as the most severe ideological control over literature was being established in the Soviet Union.²⁸

When Socialist Realism was authoritatively defined by Andrei Zhdanov at the first congress of the new Soviet Writers' Union in 1934, other leading cultural spokesmen for the exiled BPRS in Moscow, like Becher and Kurella, might well have been reminded by his terminology of the years before Lukács' arrival in Berlin. Although there was continuing emphasis on the classical heritage and the social novel, Zhdanov's slogan of 'revolutionary romanticism', his exhortations to writers to fill themselves with enthusiasm and ardour and incarnate their dreams of the socialist future, and his neat catalogue of bourgeois vices and the corresponding socialist virtues, still had much in common with Expressionist rhetoric. Partisan commitment was again to be, in Lukács' terms, much closer to "Tendenz" than to "Parteilichkeit". Individuality is again severely reduced: all the references to the 'new man' of socialism

and the 'positive heroes' who were already the representative citizens of the Soviet Union left little scope for differentiated portrayal and the complex processes of personality growth.²⁹ The fact that the novel was still rated so highly might have had more to do with the prestige and the sense of historical legitimation it was felt to bestow upon the regime, than with any desire to reflect the totality of a society undergoing a turbulent transformation.

The striving for patriotic unanimity which lay behind the Soviet conception of Socialist Realism was taken up with remarkable vigour by most of the German writers who had chosen to emigrate to the USSR. At least part of the reason was that the circumstances of exile made the temptation to intermingle sentimentality and utopian wishful-thinking with creative perception stronger than before. Their thoughts were directed more towards 'Volkstümlichkeit' than towards 'Massenwirkung', in the face of Hitler's totalitarian control over culture and information within the Reich, even though they courageously kept up their opposition, and co-ordinated it impressively on an international scale through the Popular Front.³⁰ The possibility that the Soviet Union could now become the 'Heimat' denied to them in Germany had a powerful emotional influence upon their thinking. In Kurella's words of 1934:

Freiheit, Frieden, Vaterland, Familie, Glauben
an den Sieg, diese herrlichen Dinge, denen
die Stimme unseres Herzens im stillen immer
entgegenschlug, auch wenn wir gegen ihre von
der Fäulnis der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft
zerfressenen Zerrbilder kämpften - wir können
sie jetzt ohne Zaudern und offen auf unsere
Fahnen setzen. 31

For Willi Bredel the following year, it was still a matter of filling the emotive terms exploited by the Nazis with the spirit of socialism:

Der Faschismus hat wenig beachtete Wörter der deutschen Sprache popularisiert und dadurch alten Begriffen scheinbar neue Wertungen gegeben. Volkstum, Volksseele, Ehre, Gewissen, Würde, Mannestum und viele andere im Dritten Reich heute üblichen Wörter und Begriffe nehmen wir und unsere Genossen in Deutschland einfach nicht zur Kenntnis. Das Ergebnis ist, wir reden oft am Ohr der Massen vorbei ... Wir lächeln über die verlogene, verkrampte Demagogie und - Schluß. Statt anzuknüpfen, solche Worte mit unserem Geist zu füllen, für unseren Kampf auszunützen, gehen wir daran vorüber, als sei es eine Schande, diese den Massen geläufigen Worte zu benutzen. 32

That Lukács too was by no means immune to the magic of the old values is amply illustrated in his essays from the middle 1930's onwards, with which he begins his outstanding, comprehensive analysis of the German cultural heritage and the tradition of realism in fiction.³³ They abound in imprecise references to 'Volk', 'Heimat', 'Volkstümlichkeit' and the poet's natural 'Verbundenheit' and 'lebendige Wurzeln' within his home community.³⁴

There is still, however, sufficient evidence of differentiation to throw light upon the profound dilemma faced by Lukács in these years, which led him frequently to compromise the theoretical principles through which he had asserted socialism's unique claim to the heritage of European culture, in order to demonstrate the deep loyalty he still had for the Soviet leadership.³⁵ Through the grim period of Stalin's purges, Lukács continued to criticise - with considerable circumspection - the disastrous lowering of literary standards brought about in the name of Socialist Realism. In his essay of 1936 on Gorky, he pointed out that the latter's 'Volkstümlichkeit' had "weder mit einer Simplifizierung der Probleme noch mit einem bloß agitatorischen Charakter der Literatur etwas zu tun",³⁶ while in "Die intellektuelle Physiognomie des

künstlerischen Gestaltens" of the same year he asserted that many recent Soviet novels were "statt mit Menschen mit einer Silhouettengalerie lebloser Schemata bevölkert".³⁷ He remained committed to the organic view of personality and the uniqueness of each individual's identity, in rejecting the suddenly transformed 'neuer Mensch' of Socialist Realism:

Der neue Mensch entsteht nicht fertig, nicht als ausschließender Gegensatz des alten, mit dem er dann gar nichts Gemeinsames hätte. Seine Existenz ist vielmehr von dem Kampf mit den Überresten des Kapitalismus überhaupt nicht zu trennen. Erst in diesem Kampfe entstehen und entfalten sich jene menschlichen Eigenschaften, die den neuen Menschen wirklich und konkret charakterisieren. 38

He thus attacked "jene abstrakte 'Gemeinschaft', die dem bürgerlichen Individualismus gegenübergestellt wird" as a bourgeois concept, from which socialism needed to liberate itself.³⁹ As he stressed in his essay on Gottfried Keller, the goal of wholeness, depending upon the harmonious reconciliation of "individuelle Erfüllung der Persönlichkeit und fruchtbare gesellschaftliche Wirksamkeit", is an elusive and long-term objective.⁴⁰

These significant tensions between Lukács' position and the Socialist Realism of the exile years need to be understood, in order to show how restricted the main frame of reference was which continued to apply in the GDR of the Ulbricht era, and yet how fundamental these differences of emphasis were for the credibility of the depiction of character and society in the novels which followed after 1945. They do not, however, tell the whole story. Indeed, if they did, then the thesis of the 'two German literatures' - "zweierlei Sprachverständnis, zweierlei Begriffsapparaturen, zweierlei Denkstrukturen"⁴¹ - would appear incontestable. The rigid separation of literature

in the GDR and the Federal Republic would have been an incontrovertible fact if the cultural politicians in each camp had had their way, but there is a vital strain of productive common ground, which also has its origins in the Marxist debate of the 1930's. The exceptional influence of the work of Bertolt Brecht in both Germanies can be attributed to a considerable degree to the manner in which his creative writing and his literary theory reflect a recognition of the inter-relationship between language, ideology and literary form.

The insights from which Brecht's arguments derive can be attributed directly to Karl Marx. Martin Walser has stressed the originality of Marx's conceptual language in Das Kapital, in which a vocabulary untainted with traditional associations, constituting "eine neue Klasse von Wörtern", comes into existence to convey a radical new understanding of human relationships. As Walser explains:

Da wird nichts zur weitreichenden Metapher eingeschmolzen wie bei den Dichtern, da werden keine suggestiv strahlenden Begriffe erzeugt wie bei Hegel. Diese Wörter repräsentieren rational. Sie sind auf Durchschaubarkeit angelegt. Was sie zusammenfügen, besteht erkenntlich aus seinen [i.e. Marx's] Additions-Elementen. Das Vokabular wird so zu einer Instrumentensammlung. Es dient. 42

In the present context, the freshness of Marx's language is indicated by his avoidance of the dualism of 'Gemeinschaft' and 'Gesellschaft' in his projections of the new quality of social relationships in communist society. In the Manifest der kommunistischen Partei, for example, Marx and Engels use the more explicit, and modern, term "Assoziation" and refer to the strength of the "assozierte() Individuen" under communism.⁴³ They also show a marked preference for urban life, rather than the "Idiotismus des Landlebens".⁴⁴ In Marx's article of 1853

on "The British Rule in India", he makes the firm point that the much sentimentalised "idyllische() Dorfgemeinschaften" there have been the foundation of despotism:

... sie (beschränkten) den menschlichen Geist auf den denkbar engsten Gesichtskreis ..., (machten) ihn zum gefügigen Werkzeug des Aberglaubens, zum unterwürfigen Sklaven traditioneller Regeln ... und (beraubten) ihn jeglicher Größe und geschichtlicher Energien ... 45

It is this decisive breaking with the value concepts of a decaying ideology which paves the way for the principle of 'Verfremdung' fundamental to Brecht's thinking.

Brecht's work shows a consistent development from his early, embittered response to the manipulation of the masses through government abuse of the ideals of patriotism, comradeship and courage during the First World War, as illustrated in a poem like the "Legende vom toten Soldaten".⁴⁶ His reaction to the rhetoric of National Socialism - but equally to the counter-claims from the Popular Front that it was the 'true' guardian of the same traditional values which fascism sought to defend - was prompted by the same principle. In his "Fünf Schwierigkeiten beim Schreiben der Wahrheit" (1935), one of his primary concerns was to eliminate the "faule Mystik" surrounding words like "Volk" and "Boden" by adopting alternatives with a more precise economic connotation, such as "Bevölkerung" and "Landbesitz", as part of a campaign of "Propaganda für das Denken".⁴⁷ At the anti-fascist Congress for the Defence of Culture in Paris in the same year, he criticised his colleagues' love of "die großen Wörter", "die Beschwörungen", "die unvergänglichen Begriffe", and their preoccupation with "Kultur", which were distracting attention from the central objective of transforming the economic structure of

society.⁴⁸ While these arguments may have been directed as much at his politically unaligned compatriots as at the Party leadership, Brecht had evidently no wish to differentiate on this issue.

Although Brecht was to become a co-editor of the Front's periodical Das Wort (1936-39), the plans for which were laid at the Paris congress, it is a fact of considerable historical import that he desisted in this capacity from developing the implications of his critical position for literary realism, on the grounds of maintaining solidarity within the anti-fascist ranks.⁴⁹ During the fundamental Marxist debate on realism which followed, notably in Das Wort, in the next few years, he withheld his arguments in the face of what seemed to him like the monolithic cultural conservatism in the attitudes of the dominant figures in Moscow - Lukács, Becher and Kurella.⁵⁰ Views akin to Brecht's were in fact expressed by Hanns Eisler, Ernst Bloch and Anna Seghers in the course of this debate, but his own unpublished commentaries - like much of the then neglected cultural analysis of his friend Walter Benjamin - were not to be considered until the 1960's.⁵¹ Although Brecht's creative influence on writers in the socialist world grew after he returned from America in 1948 to establish the Berliner Ensemble, the views he was expressing on fictional realism in the late 1930's were still almost as urgently in need of consideration in the GDR a decade after his death as they had been in exile circles then.

The central point of his dispute with Party orthodoxy was over Lukács' insistence that the bourgeois concept of identity remained valid for the era of socialism. Brecht saw this as an irresponsible denial of the radically changed understanding of

personality brought about by the new sciences of psychoanalysis and sociology. Lukács was still dangerously close to the mythology of "Blut und Boden" and the "anrühige() Metaphysik des Organischen",⁵² whereas revolution presupposed violent ruptures in continuity and the establishment of inorganic social relationships.

For some time, Brecht had, in a decidedly polemical manner, been endeavouring to undermine the traditional belief in the importance of individuals in determining the course of human progress. Mann ist Mann (1926) represented the extreme position that there is nothing unique about anyone's identity and that life is an infinitely variable process of conditioning into roles - any man can be "wie ein Auto ummontiert".⁵³ His Marxist 'Lehrstücke' of the early 1930's, like Die Maßnahme, had demonstrated, less deterministically, the need for the conscious obliteration of the private 'self' during periods decisive to the socialist cause. Later, however, he revealed that the recognition of a collective identity was no more than the point of departure for the pursuit of an individuality which, in its complexity and elusiveness, was not markedly different from the ideal described by Lukács:

Natürlich entfaltet der Kampf um das volle Menschentum in den kämpfenden Menschen wieder die Menschlichkeit, aber das ist ein komplizierter Prozeß, und er findet eben nur bei den Kämpfenden statt. 54

Indeed, with a similar concern to that of his antagonist that Socialist Realism should avoid depicting the quality of life in a post-revolutionary society in utopian terms, Brecht stressed that the "Schwierigkeiten in ihrer furchtbaren Gesamtheit" had to be acknowledged.⁵⁵

The extent to which Brecht modified his idea of the

individual, at least partially in reaction to the ruthlessness of collective authority in the Soviet Union in the later 1930's,⁵⁶ is indicated by his - not entirely disinterested - creative preoccupation during those years with 'great men' of history. Galileo, Francis Bacon, Giordano Bruno, Julius Caesar and Socrates are still depicted with a view to deflating the cult of personality in bourgeois historiography, but Brecht's studies also show that some of these figures, hitherto regarded as 'great' for the wrong reasons, have contributed significantly to progress through isolated actions in their highly imperfect lives.⁵⁷ On the one hand, a private dimension is thereby restored to identity, since there is some intellectual and moral consistency behind the scientific pursuits of a Galileo or a Bacon. On the other, the concept of the 'hero' is shown to be as misleading as that of the organic personality, because both assume the exceptional noteworthy deed to be illustrative of inherent virtuousness, rather than as part of a many-featured, contradictory whole - a standpoint with obvious implications for the 'positive hero' of Socialist Realist theory.

These insights lead logically to Brecht's concern with the formal structures of realistic fiction - a surprising concern, perhaps, in view of his primary creative interest in drama and poetry, and his belief, shared with fellow Marxists like Walter Benjamin, Hanns Eisler and Erwin Piscator, that the future of socialist culture should be intimately linked with the technological evolution of mass communications. Yet the debate in exile about realism tended to presuppose that prose fiction had the central role to play in illustrating the historical transition towards socialism, and Brecht was quite

prepared to respond accordingly. The same convictions which had brought about the creation of the 'epic theatre' in the Weimar Republic led him to reject the structures of the 'Entwicklungsroman'⁵⁸ and the nineteenth century panoramic novel, which Lukács and Socialist Realism still held to be uniquely appropriate. The sense of the orderly progress of individuals and society, the resolution of their conflicts within the fictional action, the narrator's omniscient assurance about the psychology of his characters and his claim to reflect the totality of society through the interplay of these characters - it would clearly be a source of strength for the author and reader alike to believe that the modern world functions so comprehensibly. For Brecht, all of this represented an unacceptable simplification of reality. If socialist fiction wanted to serve the pursuit of truth, then it would have to look - critically - at the scope for differentiation offered by the wealth of new narrative techniques developed by bourgeois authors such as Joyce, Dos Passos, Dublin and Kafka. Inner monologue, montage, 'Verfremdung' and multi-perspective narration had been prematurely rejected as 'decadent' by the Party's cultural politicians. The narrator needed to admit his subjective limitations and his lack of overall perception, the illusion of totality would have to give way to fragments of experience, and the reader be made to face the immense unresolved contradictions of life in advanced industrial society.⁵⁹ No technique could be regarded as 'decadent' or 'formalistic' in itself - the decisive criterion was the end to which it was used:

"Über literarische Formen muß man die Realität befragen, nicht die Ästhetik, auch nicht die des Realismus. Die Wahrheit kann auf viele

Arten verschwiegen und auf viele Arten gesagt werden. Wir leiten unsere Ästhetik, wie unsere Sittlichkeit, von den Bedürfnissen unseres Kampfes ab. 60

Furthermore, Brecht had no doubt that realistic writing of the quality he envisaged would also be 'volkstümlich', insisting that the proletarian readership he knew in his Berlin years was more discriminating and demanding than the one to whom the Party's patronising "Volkstümlichkeit von oben herab" was directed.⁶¹

Although critical principles of this kind were to contribute very substantially to the post-war revival of the novel in the West, through the work of authors like Max Frisch, Uwe Johnson and Martin Walser, they were to remain heretical in the GDR until well after Brecht's death. He did attempt to gain official support for his basic point about the inter-dependency of 'neue Inhalte' and 'neue Formen' after returning to Berlin,⁶² but the less established authors who grasped its urgency were able to make little headway against a 'Kulturpolitik' suspicious of any creative innovation. Their indications of dissatisfaction with prescribed techniques have been necessarily cautious, but have become more insistent with the passing years. The short stories of the post-Stalin 'Thaw', the subjective narrative voice and the perplexing conflicts emerging in the "Bitterfelder Weg" fiction, and the introspective parables of the middle 1960's have all arisen from the search for ways to break through the constricting framework imposed upon experience in the name of Socialist Realism.

The main line of development in East German fiction up to 1971 has, however, been within the limits defined in the 1930's by the views of the individual and society held by figures like

Lukács, Becher and Kurella. The problems evident then in the attempt to reconcile the Weimar ideal of wholeness with the rhetoric of 'Gemeinschaft' and 'der neue Mensch' have had to be faced by most aspiring novelists in the GDR ever since. It is therefore no paradox to emphasise that East German fiction begins with a novel like Becher's Abschied, written in exile before there ever was a German socialist state, since Becher's dilemma regarding the whole matter of identity has continued to haunt the post-war generation of authors.

From this point of departure there is a logic, almost an inevitability, about the course taken by East German fiction and the way it falls into phases far more distinctive than any to be detected in its heterogeneous West German counterpart. Once the visionary expectations of Abschied have been converted into a transparently unconvincing reality in Marchwitza's Roheisen, the short-lived 'Thaw' marks a significant caesura. Thereafter, the creative necessity to place the fictional self, his socialist environment and the developments which both have undergone, in a plausible problematic light, builds up its own momentum. It is not a story of dramatic progress, rather one of continuing struggle to restore the status of literature as a unique vehicle for exploring personal experience in its historical complexity, and as such fascinating at every turn.

CHAPTER 1

THE UTOPIAN PROJECTION.

JOHANNES R. BECHER : ABSCHIED

THE EFFECTS OF EXILE

There can be few more striking contrasts in the development of German socialist writing than that within the work of Johannes R. Becher, between the period following his wholehearted commitment to the KPD in 1923/4 and his years of exile from Hitler's Germany after 1933. As President of the Bund proletarisch-revolutionärer Schriftsteller he was deeply involved in the fundamental debate about the nature of revolutionary literature carried on in Die Linkskurve (1929-32), which resulted in the major shift of emphasis away from the forms of reportage and autobiographical sketch adopted by proletarian writers like Bredel, Grünberg and Marchwitza, towards the traditionalistic conception of realism defined by Lukács in his essays from late 1931 to the end of 1932.¹

For Becher, who, as a member of the Moscow-based Internationales Büro für revolutionäre Literatur since 1926, had taken editorial responsibility for the 'Proletarische Feuilletonkorrespondenz', these changes amounted to a wholesale reversal of views widely propagated in his speeches and essays of the 1920's.² The "wirklichkeitsbesessene Dichtung" he had advocated was one whose essential function was to provide easily digestible political information and stimulate radical activity amongst working-class groups.³ He had spoken of the aspiring proletarian writers as "ganze, tolle Kerle, die von Unruhe brodeln und ihre SMTze hinbauen, daß die Sprache platzt",⁴ and made it clear that matters of quality were of minor importance compared to the revolutionary needs of the moment:

Wir sind keine Qualitätsammler, keine literarischen Meßbeante. Wir interpretieren nicht die Welt, sondern versuchen sie, so

weit das in unseren Kräften liegt, zu ver-
ändern. 5

Despite frequent references to himself as a 'Dichter', with all the associations of bourgeois elitism it conveys, there is a consistent line of argument in these essays against the values and cultural traditions of his middle-class past, advocating a radical new concept of literature to reflect the fundamental upheaval of society to which the KPD was dedicated. The starting point in this upheaval was, in Becher's powerfully presented view, the Expressionist movement to which he owed his own literary beginnings:

Bei allen Dichtern, denen die Sprache Element ist und die in einer handfesten Wirklichkeit und nicht gerade auf einem metaphysischen Monde leben, konnte man in den letzten Jahren dies bemerken: alogische Bomben unterminieren den traditionellen akademischen Satzbau, die bürgerliche Spracharchitektur: Rhythmik, Melodik, Metaphorik schwankt; die Sprache selbst produziert, unabhängig von ihrem Schöpfer, scheinbar unlösbare, eigengesetzlich gegeneinander sich bewegende, anarchische, gegenseitig explosivartig sich pressende Verknotungen. Das Gedicht wird Über-dichtet. 6

While admitting that some Expressionists had become completely obsessed with formal literary problems, Becher suggested that there was a direct line of development from the revolutionary attitudes to culture in Expressionism towards active political commitment in the 'Übergangszeit' of the 1920's:

(D)er Funktionswechsel der künstlerischen Tätigkeit kann nicht bestritten werden, und die Aufgabe der Kunst dieser Zeit kann nur die sein: die rücksichtsloseste Entlarvung und Destruktion aller bürgerlichen Denk- und Seinsformen, die analytische Gestaltung des 'Arrangements' der bürgerlichen Ideologien (Religion, Pazifismus, Humanität, Vaterland, usw.), die motorische, 'künstlich-anorganische' sprunghafte Beschleunigung des Auflösungsprozesses der heutigen Gesellschaft ... die Aufzeigung des Ausweges aus diesem 'Tal der Verwesung'; Manifeste, Kampfschriften, im intensivsten Zusammenhang mit der aktuellen politischen Bewegung ... 7

With this aggressively subversive literature, the proletarian writers were to play the leading role: the writers of reportage were the new avant-garde,⁸ and they aimed to provoke spontaneous emotional reactions: "die Kunst ... spürt die Gefühlsmassen auf und bringt sie in Bewegung, sie pumpt Blut."⁹ At the same time, however, Becher recognises the vital and far-reaching changes in the perception of life in modern society brought about by 'bourgeois' writers like Joyce, whose Ulysses was amongst their impressive "Experimente in der Richtung des Lebens":¹⁰ none the less, within a few years, he derides Döblin's Berlin Alexanderplatz for its "wahnwitzige, lebensunfähige Konstruktion" and the uncommitted pacifism of the powerful anti-war novels of Remarque and Renn, along with the futuristic excesses of his own 'epic' depiction of gas-warfare in Levisite (1926).¹¹

Such apparent contradictions can be closely related to the growing influence of Moscow 'Kulturpolitik' in the late 1920's, insisting on a clear differentiation between proletarian-revolutionary literature and all forms of 'bourgeois' experimentation, which included the supposed anarchic confusion of Expressionism.¹² In consequence, we find Becher by 1929 criticizing the "Denkunfähigkeit und Verwirrung der Gefühle" amongst Expressionists like himself, compared to the "Klarheit" in the writings of Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht and Lenin.¹³ Yet even after the influence of Lukács and his conception of 'das große proletarische Kunstwerk' is established in Die Linkskurve by mid-1932, there is no sense of immediate agreement from Becher. On the contrary, he suggests that the obvious weaknesses of proletarian literature up to then - its much-criticised 'Zurückgebliebenheit' - might be better overcome by a qualitative improvement of the 'kleine Formen' and the

study of the 'Erbe' of medieval pamphleteers and satirists in relation to new visual and electronic media, than by the adoption of the 'große Form' and the narrative traditions of the 19th century Realists like Balzac and Tolstoy advocated by Lukács.¹⁴ Becher in fact appears to have assumed the role of mediator here between the conflicting concepts of socialist literature held by Lukács and the heretical 'Nicht-Aristotelianer' Brecht and Benjamin, in the interests of flexibility (just as he did a generation later in his address to the crucial IV. Schriftstellerkongreß in 1956¹⁵) but the dispute was out short within months, when all the leading participants had to flee into exile to escape Nazi persecution.

It seems safe to assume that the conditions of exile, particularly in Stalinist Russia, made for caution rather than the niceties of intellectual debate, particularly when there was an overriding need to establish a broad sense of solidarity amongst all writers and political groups involved in anti-Fascist activity. Only recently has the task begun of assessing the harrowing psychological effects of an insecure, semi-nomadic existence in alien surroundings, with the 'Lebensangst' and intellectual constraints which accompanied it.¹⁶ On the surface, Becher in Moscow appears to have led a more highly organised and stable existence than most of his fellow-exiles,¹⁷ but was clearly subject to political pressures as a writer which are not evident in, for example, the work of Anna Seghers during the same period. Living in France and Mexico, Seghers was able to write a formally unorthodox novel like Das siebte Kreuz (1942) and carry on the fundamental debate about the techniques and epic scope of the novel in her correspondence with Lukács in 1938/39.¹⁸ In stark contrast, Becher makes no further

references to the matter once he has expressed general agreement with the official view of Socialist Realism at the 1934 Moscow Writers' Conference, where it was defined in detail by Gorki, Zhdanov and others.¹⁹ But in any case, the emotional effect of being cut off from the 'Heimat' seems to have been particularly strong in Becher's case, and led to a complete revision of his attitudes to the cultural traditions he had rejected so totally a decade earlier. Suddenly finding much more time for reflection and study, he developed a completely new understanding and feeling for the 'humanistisches Erbe'. In the face of the distortions of national culture propagated by Nazi spokesmen like Goebbels, Becher recognised the pressing need for German writers in exile to sink their differences in order to 'save' and 'purify' their Classical heritage:

Wem die großen Namen und Werke der Vergangenheit teuer sind - Goethe, Lessing, Hegel, Hölderlin, Schiller, Büchner, Heine, und alle die anderen ... wer das große Erbe retten und reinigen will von der faschistischen Beschmutzung, der wird sehen, daß der Sieg der Arbeiterrevolution das einzige Unterpfand ist für die Wiederherstellung und Weiterentwicklung des Besten aus dem kulturellen Erbe der Jahrhunderte. 20

This became much more for Becher than an awareness of a continuity of moral perspective over the centuries: it developed into a profound desire to emulate the harmony of personality and the artistic discipline he found in the life and works of Goethe in particular. He saw this as a new way of overcoming the contradictions within himself and achieving 'wholeness' of personality, and he developed a completely new interest in the traditional literary forms through which this sense of wholeness and harmony was conveyed. He seized on Goethe's 'Stirb und werde' as a justification for cutting

himself off ruthlessly from the errors of the past in order to achieve "eine lebendige Solidität",²¹ without reference to that other essential concept of Goethe's relating to growth of personality - the idea of metamorphosis based on gradual organic development through the interaction of dynamic inner forces and environmental influences, without sudden changes or painful amputations. What he described as "dieses gestaltende Ordnen meines Lebens" was the prerequisite for creating literature that would be truly "durchgestaltet".²² He found a new pleasure in mastering the disciplined structures of the sonnet - its "heilsame Zucht" had become for him "ein Bollwerk gegen das Zerfluten"²³ - and spent years working more meticulously than ever before on the poems of Der Glücksucher und die sieben Lasten (1938), which impressively reveal his detailed understanding of Germany's cultural heritage as well as his deep emotional longing for his 'Heimat'.

Becher also devoted the same years to a more ambitious project - the attempt to come to terms with his own past and explain his development from comfortable middle-class origins to wholehearted commitment to the proletarian cause. He defined his objective, and that of the whole generation of writers in exile, in his speech at the Paris 'Schriftstellerkongreß zur Verteidigung der Kultur' in June 1935, as that of self-transformation through breaking decisively with the past:

Es ist ein neuer Wille da. Es kommt eine neue Wertung. Nimm Abschied, heißt es, Abschied für immer, Abschied jede Stunde, eine ganze Zeit lang ... Abschied von vielen in dir selbst, ohne Umschauen und Tücherwinken, nicht durch Tränen zu erleichtern. Streif die Larve ab, zynisches Sichbescheiden, daß sie nicht Deinen Wesen verwächst und du nicht gerinnst ... Man hat uns viel Zeit gelassen, unsere Dinge zu ordnen. 24

Almost the same phrases and feelings are echoed in the preface

to his autobiographical novel, Abschied, which in its structure reveals the extent to which Becher's interest also extended to that other traditional and uniquely German form, the 'Entwicklungsroman', and in its conception reflects a similar intention to that of the earlier outstanding exponents of the genre, Goethe and Keller, to emphasise the representative nature of his development from self-centred artistic ambition to mature recognition of social and moral obligations.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STRUCTURE OF 'ABSCHIED'

There is in Becher's work an acute sense of conflict between the desire to write in a vivid autobiographical vein and the desire to embody the prevailing Party view of his generation's experience, which may be largely attributable to the pioneering role he adopted as a literary apologist for Communism in the 1920's and 1930's. Although Hopster, in his study of Becher's early poetry, suggests there is "eine untrennbare Einheit von Kunst und Leben" throughout his work,²⁵ the relationship is much more complex than this. Becher's attitude to his own individuality is subject to remarkable fluctuations and contradictions over these years, suggesting both the tendency to over-react to changes in 'Kulturpolitik', and a continuing search for identity within the socialist community, which is so intense that it can be rapidly transformed in times of crisis into profound disillusionment.

In the prose fragment "Quo Vadis" (1924), which reflects Becher's newly-won belief in the uncompromisingly divisive nature of the class-struggle, the bourgeois 'Wanderer', Hans Unfried, after witnessing the exploitation of the natural

resources of his beloved Bavarian surroundings and the ruthless suppression of factory workers by their capitalist masters, seeks a new and fulfilling purpose in life in fighting the cause of socialism and humanity. The lesson he learns at a workers' meeting is that individuality is irrelevant in a situation where unwavering solidarity is called for:

Die private Persönlichkeit ist für einen revolutionären Kämpfer ein für allemal ausgelilgt ... Diese Stunde, in der sich zwei Weltkräfte messen, erfordert als erstes Gebot von euch: Disziplin! Disziplin, Genossen, Einordnung, unbedingten Gehorsam. 26

For Hans, entry into the socialist 'Menschengemeinschaft' can only be described - significantly, as will be shown later - in terms of death and rebirth:

... der Mensch (muß) sich von der gegenwärtigen Gesellschaft ablösen ... bis er eines Tages über die Einsamkeit, über sich selbst hinaus wieder die Gemeinschaft findet, die notgezwungenermaßen eine Kampfgemeinschaft ist. Dieser allen uns heute lebenden Menschen aufgedrungene Entwicklungsweg gleicht einer Passion, mit mehr als nur zwölf Stationen; die Einsamkeit ist die Kreuzigung, die Wiedererweckung des vereinsamen Ichs zur Gemeinschaft: die Auferstehung ... 27

Although the same basic message and concept of 'conversion' runs through Levisite, Becher devotes considerable attention to the childhood experience of its autobiographical hero, Peter Friedjung. The novel emphasizes how Friedjung's identification with the revolutionary cause in the aftermath of war and the 1918 revolt involves an absolute break with his 'Elternhaus', but is so structured that his personal development is depicted from two perspectives: there is not only an 'omniscient' account by the narrator in Chapter I, but also the uncommented presentation of Friedjung's 'Aufzeichnungen', discovered after his death in a May Day massacre which heralds the

resources of his beloved Bavarian surroundings and the ruthless suppression of factory workers by their capitalist masters, seeks a new and fulfilling purpose in life in fighting the cause of socialism and humanity. The lesson he learns at a workers' meeting is that individuality is irrelevant in a situation where unwavering solidarity is called for:

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outbreak of class-warfare in Germany in the unspecified future. These memoirs form Chapter VII of the novel and represent a 'subjective' attempt to explain the particular significance of his liberation from bourgeois 'fatalism', as well as being an ecstatic hymn to the victory of the harsh but necessary proletarian crusade against an evil world. Not only can the depiction of Friedjung be seen as a first attempt by Becher to give an exemplary slant to his own more contradictory development, but he also sketches out motifs in the pattern of Friedjung's experience here which become fundamental elements in the structure of Abschied: the dialectic of 'Abschiednehmen' and 'Anderswerden', the traumatic recognition of his father's role as executioner - the agent of bourgeois justice, the instinctive, if powerless, awareness on the mother's part that the younger generation must make a decisive break with the past, the vision of utopian harmony in the 'neues Leben' established by the revolutionary community.²⁸ The essential difference is that the framework of Levisite is much more ambitiously extensive, including a number of other exemplary figures in the working-class struggle, like the proletarian hero Max Herse and the American activist Mary Green (another Rosa Luxemburg), and depicting a mining disaster, vicious class-warfare and the imagined horrors of the ultimate 'Gaskrieg' (presented on a pseudo-scientific basis in the aim of making the novel a "Synthese von Kunst und Wissenschaft"²⁹).

Yet as if Levisite had never existed, we find Becher, in the same year as its publication in 1926, seeking to obliterate all links with his past when the matter of an autobiography is raised, in "Aufgefordert, eine Biographie zu schreiben":

Das war mein Bestes:
Daß Schulter an Schulter ich mitschritt
Im Marschschritt kühner Erobererheere ...
Daß mein irrisblendendes Angesicht
Ich von mir abtat,
Wie man feurigen Staub abwischt ...
Und daß das Auge ich mir ausriß,
Das mich ärgerte,
Und es zu Scherben warf ... 30

Interest in the details of his, or anyone else's, past life, is seen as irrelevant beyond the depiction of the decisive step towards political commitment:

Man kann Einzelheiten, Daten geben. Wen interessiert das? Es ist nicht das Entscheidende. Das Entscheidende ist die Überwindung des 'toten Punktes', der 'Sprung'. Davon will ich sprechen. 31

The same sense of concentration on immediate political objectives, on a 'Minimum von Tempoverlust' in literature, dominates Becher's essays and speeches during the years of the BPRS, but personal reminiscences and a sense of grappling with the past form an important constituent of his volume of poems and prose, Ein Mensch unserer Zeit (1929), which he describes in the foreword as "eine Abrechnung mit der Vergangenheit, die die Vergangenheit, die Tragödie einer ganzen Generation ist".³² It is therefore no surprise that, with the release from hectic day to day political duties and the new appreciation of the German 'Kulturerbe' gained in exile, Becher should attempt to come to terms with the tragedy of his generation in a more coherent autobiographical manner than had previously appeared feasible or desirable.

There were undoubtedly many conflicting impulses which Becher attempted to reconcile in Abschied: there was primarily, as has been suggested, the powerful 'inner necessity' which Roy Pascal has described as the properly autobiographical motivation - the consciousness of a "weight of experience (which)

is a burden that cannot be borne until it is composed in the autobiography",³³ and yet Becher's feelings towards the 'truth' of his past were highly ambivalent. It was an obvious embarrassment to Becher that his wholehearted involvement in revolutionary politics had followed almost a decade after his first references to concerted activity uniting intellectuals and the masses, in poems like "Vorbereitung":

Der Dichter meidet strahlende Akkorde.
Er stößt durch Tuben, peitscht die Trommel
schrill.
Er reißt das Volk auf mit gehackten Sätzen. 34

He had experimented widely with drugs and fallen prey to 'subjectivist' obsessions with religious experience and the ideas of elitists like Nietzsche, he had been involved in manslaughter and suicide attempts; and even though he had been the first German poet to pay tribute to the achievement of the Russian Revolution, he had withdrawn in disillusionment from the German revolutionary failure of 1918/19 and sought a new redemption in mysticism: it had been, in other words, a harrowing and conflict-ridden transition for the middle-class idealist proclaiming a new world and the brotherhood of man to accept the harsh realities of political confrontation.³⁵ Yet once he found himself leading a cultural propaganda campaign on behalf of the KPD, the temptation to accept their simplified view of the totally different values represented by 'bourgeois' and 'proletarian' ideologies, and rewrite his own past in a more exemplary manner depicting this clear-cut choice, must have been very strong.

This urge to depict the representative nature of his experience rather than his 'untypical', personal difficulties after he had gained his fundamental insight into the nature of

class-conflict, was stimulated from two directions: most immediately, he had to reflect the Party view that Expressionism was a bourgeois movement without any firm radical basis, an aberration to be overcome before political maturity might be attained; and then, for more profound artistic reasons, he was eager to emulate the "Dichtung der Wahrheit" achieved by Goethe, Keller or Thomas Mann in their 'Entwicklungsromane', by showing like them the contemporary struggle of the individual to find a valid social purpose for his idealism in a situation of moral and political turmoil.³⁶ As well as the identification with Goethean concepts of personality development referred to above, we know that Becher shared Lukács' view of Keller as a writer of world class and particularly admired his achievement in Der grüne Heinrich in presenting the integration of his hero into an existing 'plebeian' community within the Swiss Federation; according to Huppert's account of Becher's life in Moscow in the 1930's, he kept Keller's novel, together with Hölderlin's works, at his side throughout the time he worked at Abschied: "dem "Grünen Heinrich" entsprangen bedeutungsvolle Impulse für die epische Pinnselführung manches "Abschied"-Kapitels".³⁷ In the case of Mann's Zauberberg, written a decade earlier but dealing with the same pre-war crisis of middle-class values, there is a striking similarity in the authors' point of departure. As Mann said of his novel:

... es ist das Buch eines guten Willens und Entschlusses, ein Buch ideeller Absage an vieles Geliebte, an manche gefährliche Sympathie, Verzauberung und Verführung, zu der die europäische Seele sich neigte und neigt und welche alles in allem nur einen fromm-majestätischen Namen führt. - ein Buch des Abschiedes, sage ich, und pädagogischer Selbstdisziplinierung; sein Dienst ist Lebensdienst, sein Wille Gesundheit, sein Ziel die Zukunft. 38

Although Mann was able, in 1924, to see Hans Castorp's transformation wholly in spiritual terms, and depicted the problems of middle-class society as metaphysical rather than political-economic, it is scarcely inappropriate that Becher's variant on the same situation, written in the aftermath of Hitler's rise to power, should take a more comprehensive view of the malaise and suggest the inadequacy of humane Bürger attitudes to combat corrupt authoritarianism (as Mann himself had already done in Mario und der Zauberer (1930)).

In Abschied, set in Munich between 1900 and 1914, the obvious difference between its central figure, Hans Gastl, and Becher, the fact that Gastl is some four or five years younger, must be seen in the light of Becher's idea of 'representative' experience. It means that Gastl begins his literary career as an Abiturient shortly before the outbreak of War, and not, like Becher, in the vanguard of the Expressionists from 1910. Consequently, there is nothing of Becher's Berlin experiences (1911/12) in the novel, and a total contrast between his aggressive role as a leader of opinion and the reflective role of Gastl, who, on the fringe of activity in the Café Stefanie in Munich, is caught up in the general mood of anarchic decadence but is able to extricate himself easily when the approach of war shocks him into serious political awareness.³⁹ Even though Gastl's surroundings and experiences are otherwise broadly similar to Becher's own, the 'exemplary' purpose of the novel is unmistakably indicated through the implication that middle-class intellectuals like Gastl allied themselves decisively with the working-class movement against the war. It is an unfortunately simplified argument, which runs counter to historical fact, in the sense

that the political resistance to the War, led by the Spartacists, was scarcely organised before 1916, and that the intellectuals were generally more committed to 'Geist' and the dream of a pre-industrial, utopian 'Gemeinschaft' until the later part of the war.⁴⁰ Furthermore, the fact that Becher's years of creative development are, as Herzfelde said, "rück-sichtslos zusammengestrichen"⁴¹ means that Gastl's artistic leanings materialise in a seemingly spontaneous way, and his ability to impress the clientele in the Café Stefanie with his poems is taken for granted. In general, as will be shown below, Becher's later failure to continue Abschied in the way he had intended can be directly attributed to the unconvincing and largely negative portrayal of Gastl's artistic career, which leaves him liberated but in a total vacuum at the end of the novel.

The narrative structure of Abschied comes as a considerable surprise, in relation to the normally traditional pattern of other novels written in the spirit of Socialist Realism as defined at the 1934 Conference in Moscow, like Bredel's Die Väter, Marchwitza's Die Kumiaks, or Arnold Zweig's Erziehung vor Verdun, with their omniscient narrators and solid chronological progression towards a better future. The fictional first-person perspective is extremely rare, even though autobiographical accounts of conversions to socialism, like Toller's Eine Jugend in Deutschland or Uhse's Söldner und Soldat were more plentiful: and in a first-person novel like Abschied one might still have expected the secure, committed perspective of the present to be contrasted to the confusions and errors of the past. Becher, however, presents events in the novel largely as Gastl would have experienced them at the

appropriate stage of his development, in an apparently fragmentary fashion, and without either 'objective' assessments by an older and wiser 'Ich' or anything more than general reference to historical chronology. This may well reflect some degree of artistic conviction that the 'subjectivist' stream of consciousness techniques, whose potential he had earlier recognised in his reference to Joyce, might now be fruitfully adapted in conjunction with a 'proletarian' perspective (despite the comprehensive strictures at the 1934 Conference against 'decadent' modern techniques).

It is however more likely to have been a convenient solution to the problems of referring in any direct sense to Russia in the period of the post-1935 'purges', even though Becher made repeated reference to the 'Heimat der Heimat' in his cultural essays of the period. What is clear is that Lukács, whose detailed, sympathetic review of Abschied in Internationale Literatur (Heft 5, 1941) is the only indication of critical interest in the novel after its publication in Moscow in 1940, was initially quite unhappy about its narrative structure:

Becher erzählt nicht die Begebenheiten selbst, sondern gibt nur den Fluß der seelischen Reaktionen auf sie. Sein Buch ist ein Ich-Roman in einem äußerst radikalen Sinn: im Grunde genommen wird nur der Erlebnisstrom des jungen Gastl - allerdings mit weiser Auswahl - an uns vorbeigeführt. Menschen, Dinge, Ereignisse kommen überhaupt nur so weit vor, als sie sich in diesem Erlebnisstrom spiegeln. Abstrakt gesehen, ist das der Stil der modernsten Erzählungskunst, etwa seit der starken Einwirkung von Joyce. 42

The novel is, however, framed by two historical turning-points; it opens with the New Year celebrations of the year 1900, which in every sense mark the dawning of a new era, and ends with the nationalistic fervour greeting the first German victory in the

first World War, which coincides with the crucial decision of the adult Gastl to refuse military service and make a total break with his bourgeois past. There is no detailed reference to historical events within the Wilhelmine period, since they do not impinge on Hans' consciousness except in the indirect sense that general trends influence his moral and intellectual development. It is the mood of these years, and its effect on the values and priorities expressed by the range of characters with whom Hans comes into direct contact, which Becher is particularly intent on depicting, and for him the crucial factor, to which everything else is subordinate, is the polarisation of society into two classes - totally distinct not only in political-economic terms but in the whole moral and ethical basis of their existence: on the one hand, the bourgeois, intent on destroying themselves and the rest of the world by their imperialistic ambitions and concealing their inner emptiness behind a façade of authoritarian discipline - 'das strammstehende Leben'; and on the other, 'das Volk', exploited and deprived through their adherence to communal values and responsibilities, yet in harmony with nature and humane tradition and still leading a fulfilling, many-sided life - 'das standhafte Leben'.

Within the opening pages, the vague phrases used by adults and child alike become established as central motifs: "ich stand wie die anderen, das Glas erwartungsvoll erhoben, um von dem alten Jahrhundert Abschied zu nehmen" (A 8) ... "Die Großmutter flüsterte: Es soll anders werden" (A 11).⁴³ These motifs of 'Abschiednehmen' and 'Anderswerden', clearly associated here as in Becher's preface -

Es gilt Abschied zu nehmen, von Menschen und Zeiten. Von vielen, was uns verwandt und

teuer war, nehmen wir Abschied, und das
Scheiden tut weh ... Abschied. Und: es soll
anders werden! Mach dich fertig! A 6

define the structure of the novel, along with the many associated motifs which make it most appropriate to speak, as Ernst Fischer has done, in musical terms, of the contrapuntal structure of the novel.⁴⁴ The two central motifs determine its entire progress, showing how, out of the general sense of discontent as regards personal fulfilment and the state of society, there arise two utterly irreconcilable views as to what is to be abandoned and what form the change shall take. By 1914 the majority, even the old Social Democrats, has succumbed to the imperial dream of conquest and world supremacy, while only the dedicated few, like Hans Gastl, have had the courage to put the cause of social justice and morality before jingoistic ambitions.

The crucial factor within this process of polarisation is, as the narrative perspective emphasises unmistakably, the evolution of attitudes among receptive members of the younger generation of the bourgeois, like Hans Gastl. Although Becher clearly intended that Gastl's development should be as representative as that of earlier 'Bildungshelden' like Wilhelm Meister or Heinrich Lee, in the same kind of historically critical period, there is a significant difference in Becher's idea of 'growth': he implies that Gastl gains nothing positive from his bourgeois surroundings, that he must utterly reject the considerable portion of his experience which derives from family and school, since nothing of the humanistic culture associated with the Bürger since the 18th century can prevail in this atmosphere. In other words, Gastl does not mature 'organically', his 'errors' are wasteful and a serious threat

to his inherent goodness, without any of the long-term value in terms of sharpening his sensibilities and increasing his insights that, for example, Wilhelm Meister's erroneous pursuit of a career in the theatre has. Here is in fact a complete rejection of the wisdom offered to Wilhelm by the 'Gesellschaft des Turms':

... alles, was uns begegnet, läßt Spuren
zurück, alles trägt unmerklich zu unserer
Bildung bei; doch es ist gefährlich, sich
davon Rechenschaft geben zu wollen ... Das
Sicherste bleibt immer, nur das Nächste zu
tun was vor uns liegt. 45

What emerges in Abschied is that, although Gastl's recollections appear both spontaneous and fragmentary, the hero's experience is reduced to an essential line of development and each incident serves to illustrate a specific aspect of his personality, a 'self' which he can isolate and evaluate in terms of his subsequent growth. In the later stages of the novel, he then reviews his past in terms of the 'selves' which have upheld the standards of 'das strammstehende Leben' and those which have contributed to his liberation into 'das standhafte Leben'. Each self is defined in a word which becomes an important associative motif in the structure of the novel - on the negative side he is 'der Kriegsspieler' or 'der Henker', while during his transitional pursuit of meaning and purpose in life he becomes 'der unentwegte Frager', 'der heimliche Leser' and so on, until he approaches integration with the underprivileged as 'der Andere'. Not only does this view of development deny the whole idea of 'organic' or 'unified' personality in relation to modern bourgeois life ('das Volk' is in contrast integrated and fulfilled in a completely unproblematical fashion, as will be shown below), but it also conflicts seriously with the immediacy of the narrative

perspective, in that it introduces a didactic and highly schematic point of view inappropriate to the thoughts of the 18 year old Gastl. As Lukács rightly pointed out, it creates a sense of 'Überdeutlichkeit' which suggests "ein stellenweises Hineintragen der heutigen [i.e. 1940] Wertungen Bechers in die damalige Zeit",⁴⁶ and thereby destroys the unity of perspective which had already made possible a vivid and more subtle presentation of the attitudes and tensions of the day as incorporated in the wide range of characters with whom Gastl comes into contact.

THE BOURGEOIS ETHOS: "DAS STRAMMSTEHENDE LEBEN"

Becher's analysis of bourgeois life in Abschied is based on the view that the rapid economic and industrial expansion of Germany in the period following the creation of the Reich in 1871 brought about changes which destroyed the humane basis of middle-class life and established ruthless, self-seeking and authoritarian attitudes in its place. The most destructive aspect of this wide-ranging social transformation was clearly, in his eyes, the fact that large sections of the predominantly rural population had been either forced, for economic reasons, or enticed, in the interests of social ambition, into severing their links with their native community and entering the heartlessly competitive and alienating world of the city. Through his characters, Becher reflects in an absolute sense the general change from 'Gemeinschaft' to 'Gesellschaft' analysed by Tönnies in 1887.⁴⁷ But whereas Becher adopts Tönnies' point that the rise of capitalism is the direct consequence of the loss of community and the whole range of moral values -

love, genuineness, mutual esteem, loyalty and so on - which it embodies, he takes a much more extreme view of Gesellschaft: the Munich of 1900 presented in Abschied has nothing of the spirit of liberalism, the refinement of sensibility through culture, or the desire for progress on a rational basis, which might indicate something of the positive moral basis of urban society, except as they are weakly reflected in the helpless older generation. For the parents of Hans Gastl, social life exerts unremitting pressures which have a corrosive effect on personality, while injustice, repression and moral decadence spread all around them.

It is significant that both Gastl's parents have humble country origins, and that there is always an atmosphere of tension hanging over their household, indicating the frustrations behind the façade of achievement, in a life totally dedicated to social betterment by means of hard work, self-sacrifice and a rigidly ordered daily existence. Through his unflinching efforts, Heinrich Gastl has attained the highly responsible office of public prosecutor and has all the material comforts of a city residence. To the young Hans, he emphasises that his success is a vindication of a life based on hard work and self-reliance - "er (hatte) es durch 'eigene Kraft' zu was gebracht" (A 45) - without recourse to 'good connections' or nepotism. In his insistence that he is morally entitled to his wealth and social esteem and in his utter rejection of any movement, particularly through the political demands of the Social Democrats, towards a redistribution of wealth and power, Gastl embodies the aspect of the 'Protestant Ethic' which Weber saw as the moral driving-force behind the economic and technological changes leading to institutional

capitalism.⁴⁸ But for Gastl there are harsh consequences to be reckoned with: his affirmation of the harsh competitive spirit brings about his own personal isolation. He may be "höherer Staatsbeamter und pensionsberechtigt", but his life is nothing apart from the endless pressures of work and his capacity for spontaneous feeling in the home or creative activity outside it has been destroyed: even the weekly musical 'Trio' in which he takes part is reduced to a mechanical gesture towards a remote cultural tradition. For Gastl, the State is an absolute moral force - "das Abbild der sittlichen Idee" (A 119) - in the service of which all personal impulses have to be eliminated, so that life becomes a process of "Selbst-Überwindung". But the price of subservience to an unchallenged absolute force is a high one: Gastl becomes the arbiter of the biased class-justice upon which the State is founded, where legal decisions are based on "Standesgefühl" rather than morality, so that the underprivileged are always more severely punished and the death penalty is widely used to uphold the existing order. It is the realisation that his father, prosecuting in a murder-trial, has taken upon himself the role of "Henker", that first brings home to Hans in a traumatic fashion the nature of his work.

On the domestic plane, Heinrich Gastl is a repressive tyrant towards his son. For young Hans, life is a series of "Verbotstafeln", of warnings against any form of undisciplined behaviour which conflicts with the undefined notion of "Standesgefühl". The father reveals a constant fear of "Skandal" and threatens terrifying consequences if Hans' misbehaviour should continue - "auf dem Schafott endet es" (A 66). Even though his mother is emotionally opposed to this stifling

regime, she proves too weak to exert any effective opposition to it. In conversation she is always "dagegen", yet always yields in the end to the demands of urban social propriety, whether in refusing to show tenderness towards Hans or in giving up her undoubtedly progressive determination to hold down an independent job.

The generation differences between Hans' parents and ~~grand~~parents emphasise how substantial the moral decline of the bourgeois has been. The cultural sensibilities and tolerant, sympathetic attitudes of his ~~grand~~mother (and also, we understand, of his deceased ~~grand~~father, the connoisseur of Italian art, whose portrait looks down with concern on the confused scenes heralding the dawn of "die neue Zeit" as the novel begins), recall the finer days of the 'Bürgertum', when the spirit of Goethe still prevailed. Although she is as powerless as Hans' mother in instituting change, she does articulate her criticisms in a manner which Hans gradually grows to understand, and teaches him to paint and appreciate the fine arts. In her final gesture of opting to be cremated, in line with the heretical ideas of the Social Democrats, she is able to reveal publicly her dissent against the bourgeois world.

It is scarcely surprising that, under these conditions, with few signs of family affection or sympathetic interest, Hans' moral growth is seriously affected. Although naturally lively and highly curious, he receives no other stimulation from his parents except through their gifts of toy soldiers and books on martial themes, aimed to direct his interest towards the idea of national expansion through military conquest, which his father wholeheartedly endorses. Otherwise his parents offer him nothing in their predictable, monotonous existence,

and leave Hans to search for illicit excitement as "der Heimlichtuer", whether in secretive explorations of the house and petty pilfering from his grandmother's "altmodisches Schränklein", or by frustrating the attempts of his parents to insulate him from the corrupting influences "von unten", in the shape of his affectionate nurse Christine and the bragging, irreverent Xaver in the stables.

Because of the terrifying image of authority presented by his father, Hans soon learns that it is easier to lie and deceive than to face dire threats and beatings. This process is intensified as Hans begins school and discovers that the educational system is based on exactly the same principles. Goll, the class teacher, is another petty tyrant in the Professor Unrat mould, indeed much more of a caricature than Heinrich Mann's figure. Goll is just as much dedicated to the jaundiced view that working-class children are by nature criminally inclined as the elder Gastl, and soon helps to distort Hans' sense of morality to a more threatening extent, when he encourages Hans to let his proletarian friend Franz Hartinger take the punishment for a day of truancy in the amusement-arcades of Munich, which Hans had in fact planned and financed, with money stolen from his grandmother. The fundamental 'educational' principle brought home to Hans as he holds down Hartinger and watches Goll beat him, is that it is always less painful to relinquish responsibility and become part of the acquiescent mass: a socially-inferior scapegoat can always be found. Even though this feeble act of betrayal earns Hans the mockery of his schoolmates and the nickname "Henker" to share with his father, it is only the beginning of a long period, not just of acquiescence, but of active participation -

in alliance with Feck and Freyschlag, the budding tyrants within the class - in the preservation of an iniquitous authority based on intimidation of the weak and persecution of dissenters like Hartinger.

There is much in these school-scenes which is reminiscent of Robert Musil's Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törless: we are not just concerned with corrupt authority-figures like Goll, but also with the psychology of children in groups. Despite the general similarities in the craving for power and sadistic tendencies revealed by Feck and Freyschlag, like Musil's Reitling and Basini, it must be said in criticism of Becher that his classroom tyrants are too inherently depraved, for reasons of birth rather than circumstance, to be more than flat clichés. They do not change in any way over several years and throw little light on the origins of Fascism, as they were presumably intended to do. Hans Gastl, however, in his bewildered involvement (at times the cruellest of all, then tormented in his guilt-ridden dreams) in a degrading and vicious process, is a narrator compelling in ways that the more 'objective' Törless is not.⁴⁹

At the secondary level, the corrupting nature of what passes as education is most grotesquely illustrated during the year which Hans is forced to spend in the 'Erziehungsanstalt' in Öttingen as a punishment for his continuing unsatisfactory progress in school, and particularly for further thefts of his grandmother's money (even though his motive is more altruistic, in the sense that the money is to finance the follies of Feck rather than his own). Fürtsch, the principal, is not just a sadist who tortures at will and prides himself on his ability to get pupils to confess to anything, but also delights in

titillating his salacious mind with details of adolescent sexual 'crimes'. The institutionalised existence contributes even more directly to the maintenance of State authority, through the greater scope it allows for the reduction of leisure time to an incessant glorification of military discipline and imperial ambitions.

Fortunately for the novel, there is a greater degree of differentiation in Becher's depiction of the Wilhelm-Gymnasium in Munich, to which Hans returns once his parents have forgiven him. Not only are there liberal voices, like that of the Jew Löwenstein, to be raised effectively in class against the bullying practised by Hans, Feck and Freyschlag, but there are also educationalists, like the mathematics teacher Waldvogel, who still uphold the humanistic values on which the school was founded. But even here, Becher's unrelenting concept of the utter, irreversible decline of the Bürger prevails, as Waldvogel is deliberately humiliated by the class tyrants in front of a school inspector and forced into premature retirement. Like Hans' grandmother, he can only make a gesture of dissent, in this case an improbable piece of rhetoric in which he attributes the destruction of values to the activities of a malevolent minority of "Barbaren" and "Hunnen" (A 195), which moves Löwenstein and the otherwise silent majority of the class to pay brief tribute to him.

Only in the case of Heinrich Gastl does Becher attempt to include a problematical element, which shows some recognition of the complex psychological factors determining the motivation of even the most ruthless authority figures, and gives some credibility to what might otherwise have remained a crude categorisation of a many-layered sector of society. As the

novel progresses, Heinrich Gastl reveals - in rare moments of emotion - that the publicly esteemed aspect of himself he normally displays is nothing more than a distorted outer shell, a disintegrated fragment of his potential self, as the mirror reflections watched by Hans through a keyhole suggest:

Ein mächtiger Vater stand da im Gang vor dem Spiegel, zwei Väter, einer vor dem Spiegel, einer im Spiegel. Ein Vater mit zwei Köpfen, und im Seitenflügel des Spiegels erschien ein dritter, überall Väter. Alle wie schwarz lackiert und mit dem gleichen aufgezwickelten Schnurrbart. A 37

Although for long periods Hans sees in him only the roles which society forces him to adopt - "der Frühaufsteher", "der Strammsteher", "der Richter" and so on - Heinrich Gastl still has an essential core of goodness and warmth which he reveals briefly, in his overtly affectionate behaviour towards his wife during the 1900 New Year celebrations, or in his transformation into a lover and connoisseur of nature on holidays in the Bavarian countryside. Yet something in himself has been destroyed by society, as is suggested by his failure to communicate, even at the most simple level, with a childhood friend whom he sees working in the forest near Hohenschwangau. Despite his efforts to regain command of the local - 'natural' - dialect, there remains an unbridgeable gulf between Gastl and his friend:

Der Holzfäller war daheim, aber der Vater hatte die Heimat verlassen und war in die Stadt gezogen, nützte ihm nichts, daß er die Stimme verstellte, der Holzfäller lebte weit weg von ihm ... A 120

As time passes, the ironical situation develops, that Gastl - the uncompromising individualist - realises that his scope for social betterment is just as rigidly limited (albeit on a higher plane) as that of the militant workers whom he despises. Because of his lowly social origins, he has no chance of

gaining a State decoration or being elevated to the nobility: the gradual realisation of this inescapable social law brings about a steady decline of his intellectual faculties and his sense of purpose. He lapses into reverie, talks disjointedly to himself, and even - briefly - considers the possibility of combatting the evils of social discrimination, but it is too late for protest or withdrawal. He is too solidly immured in the structure of society, and the only escape from the torments of introspection is into the rigorous discipline of his work.

In the end, Gastl discovers an aggressive outlet for his frustrations in identifying himself with Germany's bellicose imperial ambitions. He, like millions of others, grasps eagerly at the myth that war is a means to individual liberation, and endorses the high-sounding idea of self-sacrifice in the national cause:

... der Krieg läßt den Menschen über sich selbst hinauswachsen, jeder hat im Krieg seinen Platz und weiß, wozu er da ist, selbst auf einem verlorenen Posten den Heldentod zu sterben fürs Vaterland ist noch besser, als nie im Leben die Gelegenheit zu haben, mit allem, was man ist, sich einsetzen und aufopfern zu können ... A 414

Revealingly, he glorifies all of this as a dynamic alternative to the "sterbenslangweilig" routine of his bureaucratic existence. But even in the throes of war-fanaticism, Gastl still drifts away in the dream of what might have been if he had placed greater value on the enrichment of the community from which he originated, rather than on his selfish aspirations in urban society:

Er spielte sich weg, weit weg. Er spielte den Landwirt, den er gerne geworden wäre. Während er im Wohnzimmer auf und ab schritt, besah er lächelnd den Teppich: schöne schwarze Erde, und Weinberge grüntem aus den Tapeten ... A 427

The feeling that Gastl's insoluble inner conflict is to be seen as representative of the error of his whole generation - in giving up the values of community life in favour of the temptations of self-advancement and material gain in capitalist society - is reinforced by the pronounced decline of the rest of the Gastl family into eccentricity and moral disarray. Only Hans' mother, who finds an outlet for protest in her support for decadent trends in the spheres of fashion and culture, achieves a degree of liberation, becoming increasingly bolder in her desire to undermine the Gastl edifice, through barbs of irreverent criticism directed against convention and the Kaiser at social gatherings, and through her quiet encouragement of Hans' revolt. His three uncles, however, reflect in gross caricature a range of extreme reactions to a society without moral basis. Onkel Oskar leads a life of affectation and **sycephaney** as a physician in obscure aristocratic surroundings, Onkel Hugo opts out entirely by emigrating to the East Indies and changing his nationality, while the weakest of them all, Onkel Karl, ends up in a lunatic asylum, identifying with Germanic heroes from Barbarossa to Kaiser Wilhelm, and rambling on about world domination in a manner which in effect reveals the real aspirations, beneath the veneer of civilisation, of society at large. Hans soon notices, before he can understand the implications of his uncle's ravings, the unique freedom of the apparent lunatic: "nur ein Verrückter darf eben die Wahrheit sagen. Onkel Karl, in seiner Verrücktheit, war selbständig" (A 86).

Yet, for all the problems of the Gastl family, none of them reach the ultimate anguished conclusion that there is no other way of release from social pressures except through

suicide. But Hans, at every stage of his development, is compelled to come to terms with the reality of sudden, wasteful death. After the shock of seeing his father as society's executioner, he is twice confronted with suicide during his school years. A fellow pupil at the elementary school, Dominikus Hasenbühl, jumps to his death from the Großhesseloher Brücke: the causes are never discovered, mainly because the school authorities do their utmost to suppress the whole affair. The medical verdict - "ein() Fall akuter Geistesverwirrung" (A 89) - is suitably vague, while the newspaper report probes no further than the surface manifestations of a deep-rooted malaise: "... der Schüler, aus einer armen Familie stammend, (sei) durch die gemeinen Quälereien seiner Mitschüler in den Tod getrieben ..." (A 77). Later, it is the neurotic young aristocrat known only as 'die Dusel', who falls prey to the socially ambitious Feck but finds no alleviation of her troubles in the lavish entertainment (financed by Hans' pilfering) he offers her. She too goes, in a mentally deranged state, from the bridge, to seek 'resurrection' and join the angels.

The cumulative effect of these experiences on Hans is to make it quite clear to him that the society which gives rise to such a range of intolerable sufferings and psychological disorders is one from which he must liberate himself. At his grandmother's cremation he makes a firm resolve to move out of the world of his parents and out of the clutches of Feck and Freyschlag:

Nein, nochmals nein. Ich will nicht vor der
Lüge mein Leben lang strammstehen ... Gibt
es denn nur das: Strammstehen, Verrückt-
werden oder die Großhesseloher Brücke ...
Heillosos Durcheinander ... Keine andere

Brücke, die über den Abgrund hinwegführt ...?
Anders werden! Ja, anders werden ... Aber
wie! Aber wie! ... A 232

But the crucial problem remains of discovering a valid alternative in the midst of his adolescent confusion, with the taint of a bourgeois upbringing and its disintegrating effect on personality still strongly imprinted upon him:

Nicht einer bin ich, nicht zwei, gleich ein
ganzer Haufen. Welcher von allen denen soll
ich nun eigentlich werden?

THE QUEST FOR A NEW IDENTITY: "DAS ANDERSWERDEN"

Hans' inner determination to distance himself from his bourgeois environment becomes increasingly manifest during his middle years in the Gymnasium. At first he seeks fulfilment by striving for sporting success, and shows abilities as a swimmer - as part of the 'self' he later describes as both "der Rekordschwimmer" and "der hartnäckige Blödi" - which make him a potential national champion. Through a period which is otherwise passed over quickly in the novel, Hans is totally committed to his ambitions, until, after considerable local success, he loses all interest and becomes painfully aware that sport has had an essentially escapist function for him as part of his "Versuch, mir ein dauerhaftes Vergessen zu sichern". He is gripped by the powerful moral and intellectual urge to examine "die so gefährliche Frage nach dem großen 'Wofür' und 'Warum'" (A 208), which has been stimulated by the cumulative effect of such diverse influences as his grandmother's advice, his experience of a new scale of values both at school, in the figure of Löwenstein, and in the world of the Hartingers and unspoilt country people outside, and a desire to 'know' which

leads him for the first time to literature. He becomes a voracious reader of everything which, like the forbidden work of Haeckel on his father's desk, might offer a solution to "die Weltrütsel", and begins to show - like earlier 'Bildungshelden' - creative abilities which at first reflect only subjective preoccupations, in Hans' case in poems which show his taste for "das Absonderliche und Grauenhafte" (A 215).

But it is through a shattering emotional experience that Hans is forced irresistibly out of the constricting - but nonetheless insulating - world of his parents. In one of the few sections in the later part of Abschied which come profoundly close to Becher's own experience, Hans has a remarkable escape from death. Still unable to escape the tenacious attentions of Feck, Hans allows himself to be cajoled into sexual experimentation before he is emotionally mature. He becomes involved with a shop-assistant, Fanny Fuß, who also works as a part-time dancer and prostitute, and then discovers a remarkable intimacy, far exceeding the physical, through his recognition of their common anguish as helpless captives of society. But because the world they know offers no alternative, they decide to end it all, in misguided imitation of romantic legend, through a joint suicide-pact. In the event, Hans, whether through unconscious design or incredible luck, only wounds himself after fatally shooting her (and ironically, is absolved from guilt in court through his father's bourgeois 'good connections').

Realising how pathetically misguided he has become, in his role as "der traurige Held", he resolves to find a teacher to guide him into purposeful living, since all his errors have taught him nothing constructive:

Ich brauchte einen, der ein standhaftes Leben
mich lehrte. Vor dem Sterben für Großes ein
Leben für Großes mich lehrte. Ich brauchte
einen, der führte ... A 262

His thoughts move in two directions which give every appearance of being complementary: on the one hand, he seeks enlightenment about politics, and learns from Löwenstein - in the symbolical fog of the English Garden - that there is a crucial responsibility resting on his own middle-class generation to join the struggle for the creation of a new socialist society:

Es gibt eine Wahrheit. Ob sie dir nun paßt
oder nicht. Diese geschichtliche Wahrheit
spricht gegen uns. Wir müssen anders werden,
als unsere Väter waren. Das bequeme,
gesicherte Leben hat für uns aufgehört.
Oder wir werden zusammen mit der großen Lüge
untergehen, unsereins. A 277-8

On the other hand, he discovers through his reading a literary mentor in Richard Dehmel, the hero of his whole generation and apparent advocate - in his "Lied an meinen Sohn" - of the rebellion of sons against their fathers (A 216). But when, to Hans' delight, Dehmel responds to the poems he sends him by arranging a meeting at the Pension Internationale, the great "Dichter" turns out to be as cautious as Hans' father, advising a period of study and training for a "solider, anständiger Beruf" before seeking recognition as an artist (A 315), Hans is quick to denounce him as a "Spießler" and rush headlong into bohemian life.

It is in this aimless, spiteful mood that Hans comes into contact with the world of Expressionism in the Café Stefanie in Munich. As has been suggested above, there is little in the scenes that follow to accord with historical fact. The whole radical cultural movement is reduced to a decadent extension of the bourgeois world Hans is attempting to leave behind. Instead of idealistic dedication towards the realisation of

'der neue Mensch', Hans finds in the majority of these 'artists' ruthless self-centred attitudes, a parasitic life-style and a childish desire to 'épater les bourgeois', without any intellectual basis for future social reform. The prevailing ideology seems to be the half-baked distortion of Freudian psycho-analysis embodied in Dr. Hoch, with its obsessional concentration on the treatment of individual 'complexes' rather than on the wider needs of society. Related to this is a whole range of fads and escapist activities, from snuff-taking and séances to serious morphia and cocaine addiction - all of which doubtlessly occurred as part of the general spirit of anti-bourgeois rebellion, but without meaning, as Becher does here, that the whole process was trivial and diversionary.

Hans' poetry is shown to derive essentially from the desire to be incomprehensibly different:

Keinerlei Regel mehr beachtend, gegen jedes
irgendwie Gesetzmäßige kraß und bewußt ver-
stoßend, schrieb ich in einer mir neu
zurechtgemachten unleserlichen Schrift eine
'Stadt der Verdammnis' benannte Dichtung, in
der jeder, auch der sich zufällig einstellende
Reim durch eine knatternde Assonanz ersetzt
wurde, um nur ja nicht an Herkömmliches zu
erinnern ... (A 347)

Amongst the poets generally, the iconoclastic urge is both indiscriminate and directionless: Armageddon is proclaimed hysterically, and sinister pre-Fascist tendencies lurk beneath the surface:

Erdbeben und Explosionen sollten sein, um
die spießige Ruhe der Welt zu erschüttern,
deren Geist in Museen und Klassikerausgaben,
nach Bildung stinkend, verfaulte.

Ekstatisch wurde Weltbrand verkündet und
Massensterben, daraus die Geburt einer neuen
Menschheit erfolgen sollte: des Geschlechtes
der Allbeherrscher. A 351

Only Stefan Sack,⁵⁰ who becomes Hans' trusted poetic and moral

counsellor in place of Dehmel, has direct experience of hunger and deprivation and sees the artist's function in political terms. Together with the attractive Magda,⁵¹ who remains a perceptive fringe-observer, he helps to show Hans that the habitués of the Café Stefanie are nothing more than "verrückt gewordene Spießer" (A 363). Magda goes as far as to suggest that Hans' current poems are nothing compared to his "gut" and "echt" earlier lyrics written in the utterly simple folk-styles of the Romantics, a view hardly credible in this context.

When Hans, together with his newly-established friends Löwenstein and Hartinger, sees how a group of these self-styled artists terrorise the editor of the Münchener Neuesten Nachrichten for writing a condemnatory article, he realises that these 'bohemian' attitudes are no different from those of Feck and Freyschlag at school and that he must again think in terms of a decisive break, in order to find common ground with politically concerned 'decent' people. As Löwenstein - "das Jüdlein" - denounces the whole business as "eine elende Feigheit" ... "Überhaupt Café Stefanie", Hans is in full agreement (A 372). And if further confirmation were needed, it is quickly provided by the widespread acclaim with which these intellectuals greet the imperialist war in 1914. As Dr. Hoch says, war is "der gewaltigste psychische Befreiungsakt der Menschheit, die heilsamste Massenentfesselung aller Komplexe" (A 384).

It is hardly coincidental that the picture of Expressionism which emerges from these scenes reflects almost exactly the views developed by Lukács in "Größe und Verfall des Expressionismus",⁵² which determined Party attitudes to the movement during the years when Becher wrote Abschied, and until the counter-arguments of Ernst Bloch and others in the debate

in Das Wort (1937-38) contributed towards a more differentiated analysis.⁵³ Lukács emphasised the superficiality of the anti-bourgeois aspect of Expressionism and saw it as developing logically towards Fascist elitism:

Als Opposition von einem verworrenen anarchistisch-bohemehaften Standpunkt aus hat der Expressionismus natürlich eine mehr oder weniger energische Tendenz gegen rechts ... So ehrlich aber diese Einstellung bei manchen von ihnen subjektiv gemeint gewesen mag, so ist die abstrakte Verzerrung der Grundfragen, insbesondere die abstrakte 'Antibürgerlichkeit' eine Bestrebung, die, eben weil sie die Kritik der Bürgerlichkeit sowohl von der wirtschaftlichen Erkenntnis des kapitalistischen Systems als auch von dem Anschluß an den Befreiungskampf trennt, leicht ins entgegengesetzte Extrem umschlagen kann: in eine Kritik der 'Bürgerlichkeit' von rechts, in jene demagogische Kritik am Kapitalismus, der später der Faschismus seine Massengrundlage wesentlich mitverdankt. 54

In the same context, Lukács views those who, like Becher, aligned themselves with the proletarian movement as having begun by abandoning the whole ideology and artistic method of Expressionism.⁵⁵ It appears that the only way that Becher could come to terms with this distortion was by ensuring that his fictional 'Ich' remained on the fringe and quickly relinquished his bourgeois artistic ambitions as part of another expendable 'self'. It is not surprising that such an attempt, in the interests of political expediency, to show Gastl jettisoning whole spheres of adult experience in order to take up totally undefined proletarian responsibilities, makes his "Anderswerden" unconvincing and the whole method of depicting character as a succession of mostly separable selves highly questionable.

SOCIALIST UTOPIA : 'DAS STANDHAFTE LEBEN'

The alternative to the bourgeois life-style which Hans experiences at home, in school and in artistic circles is always in evidence through the novel. At first the differences are implicit in the personality and attitudes of the 'plebeian' figures "von unten" with whom the young child comes into contact, despite all the attempts of his parents to protect him, and as he grows more mature, they become increasingly articulated in moral and ideological terms.

It is quickly made obvious that, for the inquisitive and adventurous child Hans, there is something immediately attractive and genuine about Christine his nurse and Xaver, the 'Bursche' of Gastl's friend Major Bonnet. Christine is tender and warm, with a capacity for deep feeling that Hans' parents never reveal; the cradle song he always associates with her is the lament of a generation whose natural way of life is harshly threatened by economic necessity: "Muß i denn, muß i denn zum Städtele hinaus ... und du, mein Schatz, bleibst hier" (A 27). Christine's own hopes of happiness have been destroyed by the death of her beloved in the expansionist Franco-Prussian War. In complete contrast, Xaver stimulates Hans' sense of the illicit through his coarse humour, his squalid surroundings and his utter disrespect for authority - at least in private, whereas in uniform he becomes for Hans the incarnation of the military hero. But he shares with Christine a deep sentimental longing for the "Heimat", which finds expression in his poignant accordian-playing:

Herr Xaver drückte wieder die Ziehharmonika an sich und summte dazu ein Lied, er sang seine Heimat an. Es war solch eine wehmütige, schluchzende Melodie, daß es mir ganz bang ums Herz wurde. A 35

Not only those who still have strong links with their rural origins reveal this warmth and sense of vitality: it is equally present in the domestic life of the craftsmen who make up the urban proletariat, as Hans discovers in the home of his school-friend Franz Hartinger, whose father is an independent master-tailor:

Aber es gab keinen Rohrstock, nichts im Zimmer sah nach Ohrfeigen aus. Nirgends Angst, die Lärmte. Kein Gang, in dem ein Spiegel stand. Keine Bilder an den Wänden, die nachts über einen herfielen. Kein Teppich, der den Schritt des Vaters unhörbar machte. Das Klavier fehlte, zu dem man 'Deutschland, Deutschland über alles' singen mußte. A 49

In the Hartinger household, authority is not dependent on violence and intimidation, and there is no concern for appearances. In place of the stridency of nationalist ambition there is an atmosphere of peace and mutual understanding. Hartinger's work is carried out under the eyes of the family - it is an integral part of the humble domestic situation. It should be noted that this is the only form of proletarian life depicted by Becher in Abschied: there is nothing of the misery of the anonymous factory worker or the inevitability of the dilution of the craftsman's sense of pride through the division of labour, in any society facing the economic realities of the modern industrial world - a problem not faced with any insight, as we shall see, until the 1960's in German socialist literature. Becher, however, stands out in his unwillingness to offer any industrial or urban dimension within his projection of the socialist future, which makes for the insubstantial Utopian nature of so many of the scenes depicting aspects of "das standhafte Leben".

It is, however, through Franz Hartinger that Hans first realises what this steadfastness entails: not only is Franz's

view of "Anderswerden" (they make the same New Year's resolution in 1900) expressed clearly in socialist terms (A 24), but he shows by his courage in school that he has the strength of character to carry it through. It involves the refusal to compromise for the sake of convenience or material gain, the strict adherence to the values of loyalty, truthfulness and self-sacrifice. He offers a quality of friendship which Hans is incapable of appreciating for many years and which is nowhere else evident in the Munich of his childhood. Only later, during a holiday in the Bavarian countryside, is Hans brought into contact again with the same sense of harmonious personal relationships he lost so dismally through his classroom betrayal of Franz - "alle Menschen schienen gut zueinander, lächelten und blickten verständnisvoll" (A 112).

Now it means so much more to Hans, because it is part of the new, intoxicating feeling of 'Heimat', gained through the liberating experience of nature and the sudden awareness of the 'roots' which bind him with the past:

Wenn ich frühmorgens in den Tannenwald eintrat,
der hinter dem Gasthaus 'Zum Alterschrofen'
aufstieg, und, während der Wald wuchs und
wuchs, ich zögernd dahinschritt, wie spurlos
mir entschwindend - war ich da nicht wieder
zurückgekehrt dorthin, wo ich einstmals
gekommen war - ich wußte um mein Woher und
kannte meine Herkunft - daher kam ich, das
war die Heimat. A 114

In this sphere of idyllic peacefulness, simplicity and beauty, Hans falls in love for the first time, in an utterly idealised way, with the servant-girl Klärchen - "die Zauberfee, die mich verwandelte" (A 126) - and hears the bewildering revolutionary news about the mutiny on the Battleship Potemkin, which stimulates his imagination so vividly that he sees Xaver and Franz amongst the jubilant sailors singing "das Lied vom Anderswerden"

(A 123), rather than listen to his father's lectures about the evils of socialism. Through this integration of the theme of revolution - embodied in the novel in Hans' frequent recall of his excited vision of "ein Schiff, ein ganzes Schiff" - with the highly emotional sense of 'Heimat', Becher establishes the idea of continuity between the communal national heritage and the coming socialist revolution. But it almost appears as if the awareness of 'Heimat' which pervades all the rural scenes in Abschied, the longing to feel at one with nature and the past - "daher kam ich" - is the most profound factor in his development. At times this feeling comes close to sentimentality, reflecting more than anything else the desperate loneliness of exile for writers like Becher, which is particularly striking when we remember the venom with which he denounced all things German in war-poems, like "An Deutschland", in his Expressionist days:

Deutschland, Reich der breigestampften Knechte!
 Reich Barbaren, stinkend Blut-Kot-Reich!
 Weh, aus Poren eurer Fluren wimmeln Schlächter.
 Eiterrinnsal gurgelnd Haut beschleicht ... 56

Writing in that vein, Becher's only sense of identity was with "Europas Völkerbund" united against Germany. Not only did he urge its destruction - "O Heimat klaff entzwei!" - but he wanted to play an active part in it:

Deutschland, wie ein tödliches Geschwür
 Ätz der Fluch des Dichters deinen Leib. 57

There is no German basis to the revolutionary task ascribed to the poet in "Vorbereitung", while the "Heimat" envisaged in "Verfall" and "Berlin" is both "fern" and "neu".⁵⁸

Even in the Weimar years, his repeated references to the emerging socialist 'Gemeinschaft' (particularly in "Quo Vadis") exclude this sense of history and continuity. As a Russian

critic has suggested, Becher's "allesverschlingender Haß gegen das Deutschland der Bourgeoisie" had obscured for him "das lebendige Antlitz jener Heimat ... die das Volk durch seine Arbeit geschaffen und zur Größe gebracht hat",⁵⁹ until the shock of exile brought guilt-ridden realisation of his failings, as an intellectual out of touch with the people who make up the 'Heimat', expressed in the poems of Der Glucksucher:

Zu wenig haben wir geliebt, daher
Kam vieles. Habe ich vielleicht gesprochen
Mit jenem Bauern, der den Weinstock spritzte
Dort bei Kreßbronn. Ich hab mich nicht
gekümmert
Um seinen Weinstock. Darum muß ich jetzt
Aus weiter Ferne die Gespräche führen,
Die unterlassenen. Fremd ging ich vorbei
Mit meinem Wissen, und an mir vorüber
Ging wieder einer mit noch besserem Wissen ... 60

Thus the dominating note of these poems is the new feeling, which he also clearly strove after in Abschied, of a specifically German 'Volksverbundenheit', displayed humbly by the poet, who

Kehrt ... dort ein, wo er sich wiederfindet
Und Eingang findet in des Volkes Mitte. 61

This central concept of 'das Volk' is fully developed during Hans' second spell in the countryside, where he gains brief respite in the hills of Franconia from the misery of Fürtsch's 'Erziehungsanstalt' with Mops, his only friend in the institution. Mops' father, Herr Sieger, turns out to be an expert on local history, with a particular interest in the organic process by which the communal values of the past have been preserved and developed by the dedicated minority who make up 'das Volk'.

Sieger's argument, which is close to that of Engels in his study of the Peasants' Revolt,⁶² is that the people involved in the resistance to feudalism in the 16th century formed in

effect the first communistic society, through their opposition to private property and autocratic authority. The suppression of their revolt was a tragic development which led directly to the devastation of the Thirty Years' War and left Germany "verwüdet und verarmt, zerrissen in seinem Innern", fostering the "Kriegsgelüste" and "Herzensroheit" which still afflict the country three hundred years later, ill-contained by "eine heuchlerische Zivilisation". Sieger believes that his generation, standing on the brink of a "Renaissance der Künste und des Lebens", has the capacity to bring about a resurgence of the spirit of "das Volk" under the leadership of the working-class movement: "der neue Mensch" is to be created through "den deutschen Arbeiter" (A 176-8).

For Hans, 'das Volk' takes on meaningful shape as he thinks of Xaver, Hartinger, Christine and Herr Sieger himself. His new insight becomes even more vivid as he remembers that the Gastl 'Familienchronik' dates back (as his father would prefer to forget) to 1546, when an inn-keeping Gastl - "der Gastwirt zum fröhlichen Zecher" - was tortured to death for his revolutionary activity - "in Ansehen seiner Unbotmäßigkeit gegen geistliche und weltliche Herrschaft" (A 109). What previously puzzled the young Hans as "der dunkle Punkt" in his family history now reveals itself as the vital force capable of liberating the "Strammsteher" (A 184). And if the fact needed emphasising, Hans then experiences, in a visionary mood of "Doppelsehen" on Easter Sunday, the resurrection of the inn-keeper, who appears as a new Messiah, the incarnation of "das Anderswerden":

Hochverehrter Erbe und Nachkomme! ... Der Weg
war lang durch die Zeit her! Ich bin
gekommen, die Zeit zu erfüllen. Ich bin das

Anderswerden. Oder wie unser Herr, der Herr
Jesus Christus sagt: 'Kommt alle her zu mir,
die ihr mühselig und beladen seid ...' A 181

Despite the vividness of this encounter, Hans - through lack of further contact with the 'Volk' in his elitist Gymnasium - remains a passive spectator upon life until after his traumatic experience with Fanny Fuß. What little knowledge he gathers about socialism tends to be theoretical: the information he gains from Löwenstein in the English Garden provides him with a range of ideological catchphrases:

Sozialismus. Die menschliche Gesellschaft.
Klassen - Klassenkampf. Eine neue Zeit
bricht an. Internationale. Proletarier
aller Länder, vereinigt euch! A 280-1

The nature of the class-struggle is illustrated for him only through the hackneyed example of the 'Wurstzipfel', given to the anonymous servant-girl while the bourgeois family eats the more nourishing meat. Once again it is a journey into the 'Heimat' - together with his new-found friendship with Hartinger - which induces deeper awareness of the past and encourages moral growth. On a cycling trip round Lake Constance, accompanied by Hartinger and Löwenstein, he visits places associated with Jan Hus and the Peasants' Revolt and is introduced by the others to the best humanistic traditions in literature through the works of Keller and Tolstoy. Since even 'die Einheimischen' here are parochial and spiteful, it is again mainly on the basis of the intoxicating emotional effect of nature and the renewed associations of Easter Sunday that Hans senses the intimate harmony between the spirit of Jan Hus and the 'Potemkin' revolutionaries:

Das alles, alles gehört zusammen. Das alles
gehört zum Anderswerden und ist ein Ganzes,
ein großes Ganzes. Eine ganz andere, neue
Welt ist dies ... A 326

The feeling of 'Ganzheit' described here appears to derive from nothing more substantial than this feeling of exaltation in nature, significantly remote from the mass of mankind, with this very generalised sense of historical continuity, in which revolution seems to mean a kind of magical transformation of life. Like other 'positive' concepts, this idea of wholeness emerges from the assumption that there is always a polar alternative in "das standhafte Leben" to what is found repellent and unnatural in "das strammstehende Leben". Once the latter has been shown to be inherently destructive of inner harmony, through the insecure "Scheinleben" (A 232) it forces upon men with its strangling ethical structure of 'Standesgefühl', 'Pflicht', 'Disziplin', and 'Ordnung', then the alternative, based on the recreation of the organic community disrupted by capitalism, will reflect 'natural' perfection.

This simplistic, dualistic style of argument suggested here is again reflected in the vision of 'der vollendete Mensch' which Hans has soon afterwards, still in the depths of the 'Heimat'. A certain distancing effect is introduced by the fact that it is the newly 'converted' Hans who makes the Utopian proclamations rather than his friends; the phlegmatic Hartinger restricts himself to a cautious assertion that the 'Genossen' will seek each other out when the time is ripe, but should carry on quietly with their work until then, while Löwenstein tends towards sceptical dismissal of Hans' exuberant images as "Träumerei" (A 332). Yet both of them later - at the outbreak of war - clearly assign a special role to Hans as a "Dichter" through his capacity to bring about "eine Art Umwandlung und Neuschöpfung der Welt ... ein Anderswerden" (A 388), and his views here, as elsewhere, do reflect the contrapunctal structure

upon which Becher based the novel:

Ich sah den 'Vollendeten Menschen'.
Er wuchs in einer Umgebung auf, die alle seine
guten Eigenschaften entwickelte und ihm schon
von früh an ein reichhaltiges Wissen zugänglich
machte. Der Vollendete Mensch war körperlich
und geistig gleich vollendet. Lüge und
Heuchelei waren ihm fremd, denn keinerlei Grund
war vorhanden, daß er sich irgendwie hätte
herauslügen und irgendwem hätte etwas vor-
heucheln müssen ... A 332-3

What is immediately striking in these first lines is the extent to which they recall the classical pattern of the 'Entwicklungsroman', with the Goethean sense of "geprägte Form, die lebend sich entwickelt",⁶³ yet without any hint of the problematical aspects of growth - the difficulties of attaining social and moral awareness where 'reality' is elusive, the inevitability of error, the paradox of learning more through 'accidental' experience than through wise advice or aesthetic education based on 'ein reichhaltiges Wissen', and so on. The idea that man is 'good' and indeed is born with a whole range of 'gute Eigenschaften' is one which had been thoroughly questioned by Becher's generation, yet it is presented with incredible blandness here, just like the view that 'perfection' is easily attainable since all the forces threatening personality have been magically eliminated. The whole community is without contradictions and life has no mysteries:

Der vollendete Mensch kannte sich im Leben
aus, das ganze unendliche Leben erschloß sich
ihm, und keine Geheimnistuerei gab es, denn
was wäre zu verbergen gewesen, da alles offen
geschah und die Menschen frei miteinander
lebten. Keiner konnte auf den anderen einen
Zwang ausüben, und zu beherrschen war nur
die Natur. A 333

This is Paradise on earth, derived almost entirely from a Rousseauesque conception of pre-industrial harmony in nature. The important difference between this formulation and others

found in the Expressionist poetry of writers like Wolfenstein, Rubiner and Becher himself, is the extent to which Becher has idealised the remote past before considering the Utopia to come, so that there is almost no sense of dynamic projection towards previously unknown depths of experience and completely new social relationships, such as is found in Becher's "Mensch stehe auf":

Wenn
Dein zerstörerischer Schritt nicht mehr erbarmungs-
los stampft über die friedlichen Lichtgründe
einer kreaturbeseelten Erde.
Und du dich wütend selbst zermalmst vor deinen
glorreichen Opfern am Kreuz.
... Dann dann wirst du mein Bruder sein.
Dann dann wird gekommen sein jener endliche
blendende paradiesische Tag unsrer mensch-
lichen Erfüllung,
Der Alle mit Allen aussöhnt
Da Alle sich in Allen erkennen ... 64

The vision in Abschied, however, suggests a future setting only in the sense that "Hungersnöte" and "Kriegswirren" have been effectively eliminated, and that the beauty and fertility of the earth are a result of man's rational mastering of its resources - "gemeinsame() planvolle() Anstrengungen" - rather than of God-given perfection (A 333). What is glaringly lacking, particularly in view of Becher's narrative standpoint, twenty years removed from events in technologically revolutionised Russia, is any sense of modification of his Expressionist metaphors of transcendence and liberation which might relate them to the industrialised, urban context in which the progress towards the new 'Gemeinschaft' would have to take place.

Becher in fact continues to rely on Christian symbolism throughout, to illustrate the complex psychological and historical changes involved in the transition from capitalism to socialism: from the start it is difficult to see how

metaphors illustrating a dualistic notion of Heaven and Hell can provide much insight into a many-levelled dialectical process. Those who suffer at the hands of a cruel and repressive social system, from the inn-keeper in the 16th century to Hartinger in the 20th, are persecuted and tortured: the former suffers "Folterqualen und Feuertod" (A 180) while Hartinger's attitude "beim Foltern" at the hands of his socially-superior classmates is "mit einem Märtyrer verglichen, mit dem heiligen Sebastian, der, am Marterpfahl stehend, von Pfeilen durchbohrt, seinen Gefährten im Jenseits zulächelte..." (A 104). This recalls Becher's earlier poem on Rosa Luxemburg, in which her murder is seen as a crucifixion:

Den geschundenen Leib
Abnehmend vom Kreuz
In weicheste Linnen ihn hüllend ...

and she is elevated to immaculate sainthood:

Blanke unschuldsvolle
Reine jungfrauweiße
Tauben ... Du Einzige! Du Heilige! 65

Life in the "Großstadt Spinnenungeheuer"⁶⁶ of capitalism remains literally Hell throughout Becher's writing: Hans is "der Höllenwanderer" in the "Inferno des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts", and what men seek is "Erlösung von ihrem Höllendasein" (A 308-10). For the chosen few amongst the bourgeois, "Sendboten" sent from "das standhafte Leben" appear to indicate "den richtigen Weg" (A 405-6): these emissaries may be, like the inn-keeper and Hartinger, "auferstanden" from apparent death and thus take on Messianic qualities (A 104, 180). Easter Sunday is the day when Hans has his illuminating visions of past martyrs and future paradise, and also when he seeks to transcend the miseries of life on earth through his suicide pact with Fanny Fuß (A 178, 329).

This dualistic religious structure is embodied most comprehensively in the final grandiose, symbolical scene of the novel, in which all its characters - and all of Hans' earlier 'selves' - fight for his allegiance (surprisingly perhaps, not his 'Seele') on the steps outside his home. It is, of course, the dedicated minority of "die Gerechten" and "die Standhaften" who win the victory, and help Hans down the long flight of steps - "der Weg ins Freie oder der Glückspfad" (A 430) - so that he can at last become "Anders". We have already referred to the sense of "Überdeutlichkeit" which this pattern imposes on the notion of individual growth,⁶⁷ but its implications are even wider, in the sense that it suggests that Becher, no matter how 'classical' and 'volkstümlich' his prose style had become, had not modified his 'apocalyptic' view of revolution and the 'new man' in any significant way since his Expressionist days, and was even showing, in the 1930's, a greater concern for the emotional aspects of 'Heimat' and 'Erbe' than for the actual potentialities of post-revolutionary society in the modern age.

THE CONTINUATION OF "ABSCHIED" IN THE EAST GERMAN CONTEXT

Near the end of the novel, as Hans extricates himself from the decadent attractions of the Munich bohème, he tells his life-story to his friend Stefan Sack, who responds with great interest and insists that it should form the basis for a novel. As Sack envisages it, the novel should consist of two parts: the first, basically autobiographical and "bekenntnishaft", but containing the essential moral and social conflicts of the period, and the second, in which "Selbstgestaltung"

should give way to a broad panorama of the lives of "die Standhaften" who have assisted his development so far:

Dem Standhaften Leben werden Sie ein Denkmal setzen. Die Standhaften werden fortleben in ihren Taten. Den Standhaften werden Sie das Wort geben, wenn sie einmal nicht mehr zu Wort kommen sollten ... A 410

The basis for this continuation is not to be mere surface reality: Gastl, as a "Dichter", will create "Poesie ... Menschliche Beziehungen, poetisch durchdacht. Poetisch durchdachte Gestalten" - his task is anticipatory and prophetic as well as analytical:

Wir, die Dichter, sind: Schatzgräber, KÜnder einer neuen Menschenlehre, Menschenentdecker, Welteroberer ... A 411

Clearly, this scheme is much closer to Lukács' idea of 'das große proletarische Kunstwerk' than what has been examined in Abschied, and there is no doubt that the central intention here is the depiction in detail of the ordinary people who make up the 'Volk' - "Jeder Mensch, auch der geringste: ein Menschenwunder, eine Vielfalt menschlicher Lebewesen" (A 411).

Abschied, as it exists today, corresponds exactly in its structure to Sack's proposals for the first part of Gastl's novel, indicating the extent to which Becher was using Sack as his mouthpiece in this section of the novel. The full title of the first edition, published in Moscow in 1940,⁶⁸ and of all subsequent editions until 1954, Abschied. Einer deutschen Tragödie erster Teil. 1900-14, leaves little doubt that a continuation along the lines of Sack's suggestions was also intended, and there is considerable evidence to show how deeply concerned Becher was, right up to his death in 1958, with the completion of what was potentially the first broadly based German 'epic' on Socialist Realist lines, by presenting 'das

standhafte Leben' in its post-revolutionary proportions.

Once the Second World War was over, it quickly became obvious how great an importance was placed upon the novel by the emerging 'Kulturpolitiker' in the Soviet Zone. Just two months after the capitulation of the Third Reich, the 'Kultur-bund zur demokratischen Erneuerung Deutschlands' was established, with its own press, the Aufbau Verlag, and Becher as its first President. Amongst the first publications, late in 1945, of the Aufbau Verlag, was Abschied, in a substantial edition of 20,000. In a radio commentary marking the publication of Abschied, Hans Fallada emphasised the breakthrough it implied, as the first novel to appear "unter dem Zeichen der Presse-freiheit, der erneuerten Demokratie", in Germany since 1933:

Wenn der Zufall es zuwege gebracht hat, daß gerade Bechers Roman "Abschied" als Auftakt, als Herold einer neuen deutschen Epik auftrat, so ist hier der Zufall klüger gewesen als alle Weisheit der Erfahrenen. 69

Fallada saw it as of particular value to young people in the chaos of Germany, in that it revealed "einen Weg aus dem Negativen" without suggesting any easy solutions - "der Held des Romans (geht) diesen Weg tastend, unter hundert Rückschlägen, durch viele Irrwege verführt" - and with the virtue of being "wirklich erlebt". Other reviews were generally favourable (with little sign of the ideological polarisation of attitudes to come), although the anonymous reviewer in Der Morgen was more astutely cautious: "man wird (den Roman) in seiner erziehungspolitischen Bedeutung erst ganz zu schätzen wissen, wenn der zweite Band erschienen ist".⁷⁰

For Becher, however, the post-war years were creatively arid. He admitted in a letter to Hans Carossa how corrosive his twelve years of exile had been - "das Fegefeuer, wenn nicht

die Hölle"⁷¹ - in a glaring contradiction of his earlier references to Russia as "unsere() neue() große() Heimat", a creative paradise.⁷² Whereas the writing of Abschied in the first years after 1933 had been a welcome opportunity to come to terms with the past, the War period had produced nothing other than his obligatory drama on the Stalingrad campaign, Winterschlacht (1942), and poems with little inner substance which suggest an uncritical adherence to political demands for 'Volkstümlichkeit'. In 1946, his colleague Stephan Hermlin took him to task for the qualitative decline and cliché-ridden nature of his work:

Becher ist in neo-klassizistischer Glätte
und konventioneller Verseschmiederei gelandet.
Er hat eine politisch richtig gestellte Auf-
gabe mit dichterischen Mitteln falsch gelöst. ¶ 86 73

This was a criticism which Becher took to heart, since, as he said years later, it had come from a fellow-poet rather than from the "Kunstgewerbler()" and "Literarische() Schaufensterdekorateure()" whom he detested (T 86). At the same time, he appears to have become highly disillusioned by the dearth of the spirit of 'Anderswerden' in Germany and by the harsh division of the country as a result of the Cold War, which cut him off from the Bavarian 'Heimat' with which he had his strongest emotional ties.⁷⁴ In the period 1947-48, he gave vent to these profound feelings of melancholy and despair, in the poems which make up the volume Volk im Dunkel wandelnd (1948), like "Ruinen im Mond":

Ruinen, mondbeschienen ...
Es wächst aus dunkler Schicht
Hervor aus den Ruinen
Der Toten Angesicht,
Um in des Mondes Scheinen,
Von Menschen unbeweint,
Dem Licht sich zu vereinen,
Das weinend niederscheint. 75

Only in the 'Goethe-Jahr' 1949 are there signs that Becher was freeing himself from the depths of his depression, and, significantly, through renewed study of the 'Vorbild', whom he had found such a stabilising and inspirational force during the exile years. In his speech at the anniversary celebrations at Weimar, "Der Befreier", Becher showed how Goethe's "geniale() Selbstgestaltung" could become the basis for the solution of mankind's most crucial problems: Goethe was an outstanding "Menschheitserzieher", but through personal example rather than dogmatic assertion of simplified 'truths':

Nicht als Prophet und nicht, indem er eifernd eine Lehrmeinung vortrug, sondern indem er das neue Menschenbild selbst in sich verkörperte und es beispielhaft aus sich heraus gestaltete. 76

On detailed examination, this speech of Becher's reads as a pitiless public self-examination, an attempt to overcome the "Enttäuschung" and "Schrecken" of recent experience,⁷⁷ to recognise that the freedom of the artist consists in bringing himself "in Übereinstimmung ... mit den geschichtlichen Notwendigkeiten (des) Zeitalters",⁷⁸ and to emulate Goethe's heroic "Trotzdem" of overcoming "Angst" through "Gestaltwerdung".⁷⁹ The supreme task of the German poet is to come to terms with present realities - "unsere deutsche Heimat uns zu einer konkreten deutschen Heimat werden zu lassen"⁸⁰ - and in doing so to reject all utopian simplifications: Goethe was "allzusehr Realist, um nicht billige Wunschbilder sich vorgaukeln zu lassen",⁸¹ and his "Ganzheit" was based on a dialectical resolution of strongly conflicting impulses.⁸²

This speech, then, marks a new determination in Becher to overcome his artistic and personal crisis by a concrete depiction of 'das standhafte Leben', as manifested in the new

German socialist state, but, significantly, from a far less exemplary perspective: not that of Hans Gastl, but that of his own experience, with all its "Größe und Grenzen".⁸³ Yet the coincidence that the founding of the German Democratic Republic occurred just before the historical 'turning-point' of the half-century, 1950, must have made thoughts of a parallel situation to the opening of Abschied difficult to resist: if 1900 marked the beginning of the critical era of 'Abschiednehmen', then surely, after all the setbacks, 1950 should usher in the new era of 'Anderswerden'. The method he chose for the realisation of this long-delayed and modified version of the planned continuation of Abschied was quite unorthodox, but one which might allow for spontaneity with the least danger of schematism: the keeping of a diary which would harmonise private and historically significant experience, after the manner of Goethe as defined by Becher in Weimar.

BECHER'S DIARY OF 1950: "AUF ANDERE ART SO GROSSE HOFFNUNG"

In the opening sections of the Diary, the parallels to Abschied are immediately striking: it begins with the "Silvesterfeier", the sense of "Abschied" and the vague "Erwartung, daß noch irgend etwas geschehen müsse", but there is also a new awareness of "Langeweile" and of an unrelentingly harsh political climate (T 11). The goal is still "Anderswerden" (T 21) but the thought of achieving it through the Tagebuch is completely unexpected. The problem of perspective, in writing spontaneously about the immediate present, had obviously been acute for Becher, but in opting for the diary-form and consciously moulding it into a 'Kunstform' for public

consumption, he hoped on the one hand to present "ein 'Werden' ... in seiner ganzen Unmittelbarkeit und Widersprüchlichkeit" (T 21), and on the other to create "ein Denkmal des ersten Jahres der Republik".

It is still as if Becher wanted to achieve the synthesis, which had so impressed Lukács in Abschied, of making "der Subjektivismus, die Verinnerlichung ... immer gesellschaftlich-moralisch",⁸⁴ but he also indicates his complete reluctance to contain himself within a formal epic framework. He reveals that the writing of Abschied took five difficult years, most of which time was occupied with thoughts of abandoning the novel and writing a cycle of poems on the same theme, an admission which is indicative not only of Becher's temperamental problems as a writer, but also of the precarious path to be trodden within Socialist Realism by the novelist in particular, in his efforts to strike an acceptable balance between the 'truths' of ideology and subjective experience.

Wenn ich auch nur im geringsten geahnt hätte,
was für Schwierigkeiten sich während des
Schaffens vor mir auf türmen würden, hätte
ich fluchartig mir einen anderen Beruf aus-
gesucht und vor allem das Prosaschreiben für
immer gelassen. (T 29)

There are, as Hans Mayer pointed out in his perceptive review of the Tagebuch,⁸⁵ fundamental differences between the diary and the novel, which cast a dubious light on Becher's view that the former might represent an adequate vehicle for the continuation of Abschied: in the diary, nothing is "wirklich durchgestaltet", problems are merely "angedeutet", and the novelist changing to the diary-form might easily be led into superficiality - "der Erzähler würde ... Stoffe bloß aphoristisch skizzieren, statt sie auszuführen und gestalten".

While emphasising the real need for the continuation, Mayer makes it clear that the Tagebuch alone will not suffice:

Wollte das Tagebuch 1950 die Fortsetzung bieten? Doch wohl kaum, denn die gewählte Form konnte niemals mehr als Materialien zu einem nach wie vor fälligen Romanbericht geben. 86

Becher's Tagebuch has indeed many highly unsatisfactory aspects: his continual fluctuations of mood and interest in the project take him from the heights of vivid self-analysis and depictions of encounters past and present, to ill-disguised padding with official speeches and didactic generalisations, which he freely admits afterwards to be "unverdauliche() Brocken" (T 514). It is, however, most significant for the light it casts on two of the aspects of Abschied which, as suggested above, were dealt with very inadequately: the depiction of the Expressionist period and of everyday life in the new world of socialism.

Becher's recollections of his Expressionist years in the Tagebuch are sketchy and unrelated, but nonetheless amount to a revision of his earlier ruthless attitude towards his literary beginnings in Munich and Berlin. The first reference shows how exciting and important it all was to him, and gives the sense of rediscovery of a vital part of himself:

Die 'Weißen Blätter' und die 'Aktion' durchblättern, entdeckte ich mich wieder selbst, Beiträge, die geradezu wie verschollen auf mich wirken, wie aus einem anderen Leben. Überall das Motiv des Ringens, des Aufstehens, des Aufstands, des 'Hinauf' und des 'Empor', des Aufgehrens, des Auftriebs, des 'De Profundis', 'aus der Tiefe rufe ich'. T 248

For the first time since the 1920's, Becher suggests the continuity of his development from bourgeois rebellion to committed revolutionary awareness. Whether recalling his feelings of delight at having a poem accepted by Franz Pfemfert

for Aktion (T 265), or admitting his considerable indebtedness - "riesige Schulden" - to Emmy Hemmings (the Magda of Abschied) and her friends, there is no sign of the embarrassment and guilt which had such a distorting effect on his portrayal of the Café Stefanie in the novel. The reason, however, is hardly the one put forward by Weisbach in his study of the Tagebuch, that Becher had depicted "alles Wesentliche und Prinzipielle zum Expressionismus" in Abschied (as well as having revised his early poetry to avoid corrupting East German youth), and could therefore allow himself the luxury of 'uncritical' reminiscence in the Tagebuch.⁸⁷ It is rather, as Wiederanders is to reveal, very much an integral part of his stated purpose in compiling the Tagebuch - that of "Zu-Gericht-Sitzen() Uber sich selbst" (T 21) - that he should begin a critical reappraisal of his Expressionist past at this stage.

If these new 'heretical' insights into the past are not plentiful, it is equally rare to discover evidence in the Tagebuch of what is unique in 'der neue Mensch' in the socialist Germany of 1950. For the most part, Becher's only contact with the 'ordinary' working people is in his official capacity as a State dignitary. He visits schools where the pupils sing the new national anthem composed by Hanns Eisler and himself (T 37), he inspects industrial complexes like the Lauta mines, viewed as a model of efficient reconstruction through collective endeavour, and receives formal letters of thanks from apprentices (T 483ff), he is fascinated by the "Mitspielen der Zuschauer" at football matches (T 447). All of this leaves the feeling that he is satisfied with such remote official exchanges - the "rührende Zuschriften" he receives become his "täglich Brot" and help him to forget his moments of

"Verzweiflung" (T 37). Only occasionally is there indication of a developing friendship outside the ranks of his circle of cultured friends: a young Aktivist dares to inquire - "Und was machst du?" - and thereby initiates a mutually enlightening friendship, which allows Becher to feel that he understands "den neuen Menschen ... in seiner greifbaren, sinnlichen Körperlichkeit" (T 316-7), yet this living incarnation of the ideal is never depicted in any individual detail. The impression inevitably develops that Becher is at his happiest in the tranquillity of his "Traumgehäuse" at Saarow (T 44, 192, etc.) and suffers frequently from boredom and depression in his public duties.

Therefore, as Mayer suggests, the importance of the Tagebuch is much more as a "Lebensdokument" than as a "kulturelles Dokument für unser aller Leben", since "wesentliche Bereiche unseres Lebens kommen zu kurz, sind entweder nur mit wenigen Hinweisen abgetan oder gar nicht erst gestaltet".⁸⁸ He speculates pointedly whether the "Langeweile" which Becher attributed to everyday bureaucratic routine was not more profoundly indicative of an inner "Gefühl der Leere, der Entwirklichung des Lebens", resulting from a lack of meaningful contact with his fellow-men. Mayer's summarising comments here indicate why 'der neue Mensch' remains as much a utopian concept here as in Abschied: integration into the official Party apparatus made it either impossible or intolerable for Becher to face the harsh political realities of 1950:

Recht häufig wird auch die Wirklichkeit in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik nur 'von außen', um nicht zu sagen: 'von oben' gesehen. Das läßt sich an vielen Stellen des Buches konkret nachweisen. Überall dort ist die selbstgestellte Aufgabe der Verbindung von Einzelkurve und gesellschaftlicher Gesamtentwicklung nur unvollkommen bewältigt.

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This criticism clearly had a powerful effect on Becher, because he refers to it in detail in his "Eintragungen" made in 1951 after the publication of the first edition, where - not unexpectedly - he felt unable to accept that all his "menschliche() Begegnungen" had been "ohne tiefere Folge, ohne poetische Folgerung" (T 719). But it had become obvious, as the year progressed, that the Tagebuch was a "Fehlschlag" (T 718) above all as a continuation to Abschied, and by Christmas 1950 he was starting to sketch out the opening scene of a totally distinct 'zweiter Teil' of his novel. He had also decided on a new name for his hero which would emphasise his continuing search for a fulfilling role in life, which he has Hans' friend and advisor Sack suggest to him: "ich würde raten zu 'Wiederanders'. Dann brauchst du den Namen nicht immer wieder zu ändern" (T 570).

THE PRIVATE REASSESSMENT: "WIEDERANDERS"

After the Tagebuch, Becher's main contribution to literary life in East Germany in the 1950's was through the four volumes of his Bemühungen, which represent an extension of the aesthetic deliberations and self-analysis begun in the Diary, in a looser aphoristic form.⁹⁰ Perhaps the most significant theme which emerges here is that of growing disharmony within Becher between his private and public 'self', between the "Dichter" and the "Funktionär".⁹¹ The impression given, with increasing clarity, is that even Becher's previously unshakeable sense of identification with the will of the Party was threatened with disintegration in this harsh period of Cold War confrontation. He was elevated to posts of considerable responsibility, becoming Minister for Culture in 1954, and

produced a steady stream of third-rate poems with a half propagandistic, half emotional basis, in the manner of "Schöne Deutsche Heimat":

... Schön sind die Menschen vor allem dadurch,
Daß sie sich eine menschliche Ordnung geschaffen
haben,
Eine schöne Menschengemeinschaft ...

Darum ist die Heimat auch wahrhaft schön nur dort,
Wo der Mensch sich eine menschliche Ordnung
geschaffen hat,
Eine menschliche Schönheit.
Die wahre Schönheit ist ganz.
Singt das Lied der ganzen Schönheit! 92

At the same time, however, he showed increasing opposition, in the more 'private' Bemühungen, to the degrading role being imposed on writers in East Germany as mere illustrators of the crudest dogma: he noted bitterly that it was only for his most trivial and derivative work that he had gained official praise:

Man wird geehrt nicht dessen wegen, was ehrenwert ist. Dein Name bezieht Glanz von irgendwelchem Nebensächlichen, aber das, was du bist, worin dein eigentlicher Wert besteht, was deine poetische Substanz darstellt - darüber Schweigen oder bestenfalls konventionelle Anerkennung. 93

Inevitably, these feelings created profound identity problems, and led to deliberations on the inescapable pressures which, even under socialism, fragment personality into various 'acceptable' roles - in glaring contrast to his postulations of 'Ganzheit' in works like Abschied. Indeed, he suggests that inner harmony and fulfilment are impossible in any modern society, and expresses unmistakable feelings of alienation:

Die Selbstentfremdung des Menschen zeigt sich vor allem in der Bewußtseinspaltung. Sie ist nicht nur ein schwerer Krankheitsprozeß, der sich in zunehmendem Maße verbreitet und vertieft, sondern muß vor allem als ein gesellschaftliches Phänomen betrachtet werden. Dem modernen Menschen gegenüber erscheinen die Menschen früherer Zeiten als 'ganze' Menschen. Der heutige Mensch ist nicht mehr identisch mit dem Menschen, der er nach außen hin, und mit dem, der er nach innen

her ist. Der Privatmensch ist ein anderer als derjenige im Beruf ... Der Mensch ist nach allen Seiten hin gespalten, aber das Entscheidende dabei ist, daß der eine Mensch vom anderen nichts weiß ... (94)

Despite this, Becher still sees art as having the difficult task of recreating man in his original 'wholeness', and it is clearly in this context that he returns, with trepidation, to his plans for Abschied, at different times through the Bemühungen. On one occasion he feels he has received the "Schöpfungsplan" for the continuation in a vision at Saarow, akin to that of St. Paul on the road to Emmaeus, and dares himself to resist the comfortable routine of "die büromäßige Geschäftigkeit, das billige Sich-Bekanntmachen und Geehrt-Werden", in order to describe his passionate, explosive feelings at the beginnings of his "Bewußtwerdung".⁹⁵ Later, he refers again to it as he laments his "poetische() Selbstverkümmern": by writing poetry he has taken the "Weg des geringsten Widerstandes" and avoided the major work he feels he must write. As a warning to himself, he recalls Engels' remarks on Platen:

Er wußte wohl, daß ein solches großes Werk nötig sei, um seinem Ruhme Dauer zu verleihen; aber er fühlte auch, daß seine Kraft noch nicht dazu ausreiche, und hoffte von der Zukunft und seinen Vorarbeiten; indessen verfloß die Zeit, er kam aus den Vorarbeiten gar nicht heraus und starb endlich. 96

The opportunity and the motivation for this arduous task - the writing of Wiederanders - eventually came under circumstances which recall, in the most ironical manner, Becher's writing of Abschied during the initial relief from public responsibility that exile brought. His role during the 'Tauwetter' of 1955-6 and its repressive aftermath has never been discussed in satisfactory detail, and the prevailing 'Western' view is that he

played a tentative part in the cultural liberalisation but then returned to the Party ranks, with the customary 'Selbstkritik', when events began to get out of hand in Hungary and Poland, and conformed, if in a distinctly mechanical fashion, until he succumbed to his long and fatal illness in 1958.⁹⁷ Both Rühle and Sander note how strongly Becher reacted to the utterly inflexible attitude to 'Kulturpolitik' introduced by the newly-arrived Alfred Kurella after 1954, which included a wide-ranging attack on Becher's Bemühungen.⁹⁸ but suggest that he wrote nothing more of a significant nature after 1956. It appears to have been completely overlooked that he spent a great deal of time during the last two years of his life working at the Wiederanders scheme to which he had attached such importance for several years, and even the publication of revealing fragmentary extracts from the unfinished manuscript, in the Sinn und Form Becher-Sonderheft in 1959,⁹⁹ failed to attract critical attention. From the East German side, Becher's return to autobiographical fiction has been noted, but not seen as particularly significant.¹⁰⁰

Even though these extracts represent only about a third of the Wiederanders manuscript, they tell enough about the structural basis of this 'continuation' of Abschied to show a fundamental shift of perspective and emphasis on Becher's part, one which speaks volumes about the problems of literature in the Socialist Realist mould, when it involves a major 're-interpretation' of the past for ideological reasons.

The first lines of Wiederanders describe the situation and feelings of a 65-year-old narrator, simply referred to as 'Er', sitting down at his desk with the intention "Ordnung in die Dinge zu bringen. Licht muß sein ..." (A 438). A few pages

later comes a scene between Hans and his father from the school-years presumed to have been finished with in Abschied, mainly dialogue, but narrated from a reflective third-person standpoint. There now is, in effect, the precise 'present' perspective which was so strikingly absent in Abschied, thus causing the excessive and unsatisfactory 'symbolical' analysis in the later stages of the novel, where the Abiturient Hans gains sudden insight, through his dreams and visions, into the essential conflicts in his development. Whereas the problems of any writer using a comparably reflective 'present' perspective in the Russian context of the late 1930's have already been alluded to, it appears that Becher, writing in difficult days after 1956, was now determined - perhaps knowing that there would be no question of publication until after his death - not only to present a complete fictional reappraisal of his Expressionist period, but also to record some subjective impressions of the realities of 'das standhafte Leben' at the time of writing.

Most of these 'framework' reflections have just been published for the first time, in the long overdue eleventh volume of Becher's complete works, bringing together the finished sections of Wiederanders and Abschied. This edition clearly demonstrates how the chronological structure of Wiederanders, as it conflicts with Abschied, was obscured by the selection procedure adopted for the first published excerpts. The Wiederanders fragment,¹⁰¹ is divided into three Books: Book I is mainly devoted to the period when the 19-year-old Hans leaves home and enters bohemian circles in Munich, although there are still many references to childhood experiences not included in Abschied; Book II covers his first

experiences in the "GroßstadtSchungel" (A 530) of Berlin, again in a recognisable Expressionist context; and Book III describes events in Munich following the outbreak of the First World War. This structure in itself reveals that Becher's primary interest was to depict his own experiences in the Expressionist era (roughly from 1910-15). It is true, as Becher's friend and publisher at this period, H. F. Bachmair, indicated in an unpublished assessment of Wiederanders,¹⁰² that it is not directly autobiographical, but it is indubitably written in such a way that a far more authentic picture of the moral and intellectual climate and of some of its outstanding personalities emerges than in Abschied.

This is no longer the experience of the Hans Gastl, who, as suggested above, was depicted as some four or five years younger than Becher, in order to reduce his possible contact with this 'bourgeois decadence' to a minimum. The names of most of the other characters have changed, even though some are still clearly recognisable: the Leonhard Frank figure is now Wagemühl, not Sack, Hartinger has become Wedel, and Hans is now mainly referred to as "der Andere" (or occasionally "Wiederanders"). Other historical figures, like van Hoddis and Pfemfert, are depicted, not without irony, but more accurately integrated into their historical setting (A 550-7). There is still indication of a desire on Becher's part to accelerate his political growth: in Berlin, 'der Andere' finds himself quickly, despite public acclaim and the praise of critics like Karl Henckell, "mit der Zeit immer mehr angewidert von dem weltschmerzlichen Geheule, in das auch er eingestimmt hatte" (A 546). He is also seen deeply engrossed in the study of Marx with Wagemühl (A 509-10), but is then unflatteringly

depicted wandering morbidly in the morgue, trying to escape from his former self, "in der Pose eines Hamlets mit der Zigarette im Mund" (A 547). Similarly, in the few glimpses afforded into his life in Munich in wartime, there are details of Hans' morphium sessions with the beautiful Yvonne, as well as of his bold reading of an anti-war poem in the Münchener Kammerspiele, when he modifies Horace's "Dulce et decorum est ..." into

Und darum ist es süß und ehrenvoll,
Als Schlachtvieh auf dem Schlachtfeld zu
verrecken. A 596

Overall, the process of 'Anderswerden' for the middle-class intellectual that Becher was (and continued to be in many respects afterwards) is now depicted, much more plausibly, as gradual, experimental and full of contradictions.

The framework reflections of the '65 Year Old' throw more light on the reasons why Wiederanders was not conceived as the continuation of Abschied which Becher felt he had owed to himself and posterity for so long, but rather as a fresh presentation of the essential outline of his own development up to the First World War, in order to make a convincing continuation possible. In Wiederanders, Hans' crucial break with the family comes at the end of Book I, which, as Bachmair has pointed out, forms 'eine gedrängte Variante des "Abschied"' in itself,¹⁰³ when he embarks on an independent life as a poet and student in Berlin. The narrator, unmistakably Becher, stresses the implications of this important change of emphasis to his wife:

Ich habe meine Jugend noch einmal geschrieben,
umgeschrieben sozusagen. Man wird diese
Beschreibung mit der vor zwanzig Jahren ver-
gleichen und untersuchen, worin die beiden
Beschreibungen sich voneinander unterscheiden.

Man wird daraus Folgerungen ziehen. Das aber ist schon nicht mehr meine Sache ... Jetzt bin ich dort angelangt, wo Anders nach Berlin fährt. Er hat Abschied genommen. Das Anderswerden beginnt ... A 512

The determination to carry through this major re-structuring of Abschied had evidently come for Becher during the disruption following the ending of the 1956 liberalisation: the temptation to think in terms of an 'inner emigration' comparable to his reaction to exile after 1933 is given considerable basis by the narrator's comments on his situation. He has suddenly been shorn of his official responsibilities and duties:

Es tat nur so sehr weh, als Staatsbürger ohne Amt und Würden sein Dasein einrichten zu müssen ... Eine Art Klaviatur schien unter ihm weggezogen zu sein. A 449

He feels forced to make "Wiederbelebungsversuche", with the hope "wieder ins Leben zurückzukehren", and discovers, as he travels in the U-Bahn for the first time in years, a new sense of liberation:

Der Leutegeruch tat ihm wohl, und daß seine Hosen nicht mehr mit ihren Bügelfalten prahlen konnten, ließ ihn schmunzeln und sie tröstend auf die Schenkel klopfen. A 449

He admits that the long years of political responsibility have drained his 'human' sensitivities - "er war kein Mensch mehr, sondern eine Instanz" - and made genuine, fulfilling relationships impossible:

So hatte sich auch die Beziehung zu den Menschen verändert. Die einen bemühten sich, den Umgang mit ihm nach Möglichkeit zu meiden, nachdem er in Amt und Würden geraten war, die anderen spürten ihn auf, wo sie nur konnten. Die einen sparten mit Worten ihm gegenüber und legten bewußt eine Distanz zwischen ihm und sich, die anderen ließen ihn überdeutlich den Respekt fühlen, den er ihnen einflößte ... A 449-50

The writing of Wiederanders is clearly an integral part of his attempt to bring "Ordnung in sein Leben" (A 458), which now

allows him to reveal the real complexity - "Wesensunendlichkeit" - of his personality and his completely unresolved problems of identity - "nicht zwei Seelen wohnten in seiner Brust, sondern ein ganzer Seelenverein" (A 464). Yet by August 1957, he had discovered, through coming to terms with himself and his past, a new inner strength to face the difficulties of the present, and, momentarily perhaps, the sense of 'wholeness':

Nun setzte sich das Leben wieder zusammen,
Stück für Stück, was an Einzelheiten verloren-
ging, wurde durch das Gedächtnis gerettet,
wenn es sich lohnte, der Mensch erfüllte sich
und wurde zu einem Ganzen. A 579

The remarkable thing about Wiederanders in the context of Becher's work generally, and of Abschied in particular, is the absence of visions of 'der vollendete Mensch' or projections of 'das standhafte Leben'. It is as if the process of "Rechenschaft, Rechtfertigung, Anklage und Selbstbeschuldigung", which he sees as the eternal task of 'old men' (A 468), leaves little scope for the dreams of tomorrow. Just for one impressive moment, at the end of Book II, Becher gives expression to an expansive sense of continuity and progress which binds together past, present and future. As he sits with his wife at Saarow on 1st August 1957, captivated by the brightness and tranquillity of the Scharmützelsee, he recalls the same day over forty years previously, when the First World War broke out. Then, as he depicts it in Wiederanders, he heard the fateful news whilst on a day's outing on the Müggelsee in the steamer "Möwe", and saw all its passengers 'drunk' with patriotic excitement at the thought of war (A 557-64, 580-3). This in its turn revives memories of Rimbaud's poem "Le bateau ivre", which became the "Marseillaise" of the Expressionist generation (A 551, 582), and of the Potemkin

mutiny, with the motifs "ein ganzes Schiff" and "das Lied vom Anderswerden" sung by the sailors, which it gave to Abschied. Out of these memories and many-layered associations emerges a new dream of future peace and freedom through the reunification of the 'Heimat', still Becher's fondest hope despite the bleakness of the present:

... ein 'Glückhaftes Schiff' ist es, das jetzt dort unten an uns vorüberfährt, lachend, jubilierend - ein Lied von Freiheit und Frieden ... Es hat sich gelohnt, meinst du auch nicht [.../ Aber man muß an Deutschland, an das ganze Deutschland denken - solche glückhaften Schiffe sollen auch auf dem Rhein, auf dem Bodensee fahren ... A 582

But this is nothing more than a single moment of utopian vision in an otherwise highly reflective work, which shows how tenuous the links had become between the ideals and artistic sensitivities of Becher's generation of middle-class intellectuals and the propagandistic objectives of the Communist Party in the 1950's. In the end, it is for Becher the need to present a more complex and differentiated truth which prevails over the constricting view of Socialist Realism, in support of which he had, in Abschied, distorted fundamental aspects of his experience and anticipated a totally unproblematical socialist Paradise, in which 'identity' and 'community' are utterly unthreatened, for little other reason than that they are harshly denied in the bourgeois Wilhelmine Germany which he depicts in inevitable decline.

Becher, if more privately than Lukács, had thus demonstrated his opposition to the crude schematism of the officially fostered 'Aufbauromane' of the 1950's, which, as Lukács made clear in his important speech at the Fourth Writers' Congress early in 1956, were presenting "programmatische Forderung" as existing reality.¹⁰⁴ Becher's radically changing view of the

'exemplary' nature of his earlier life shows a gradual realignment with Lukács' point that the continuing test of the writer's quality - his "dichterische() Feinfühligkeit"¹⁰⁵ - is his ability to convey that "Schlauheit der Wirklichkeit" in which the truly representative aspects of experience are to be found:

Es ist sehr einfach, die Wirklichkeit darzustellen, wie sie am Schnürchen geht. Sehr kompliziert ist sie in allen (ihren) Umwegen - und fast alle Individuen machen Umwege, wenn sie ihre Ziele verwirklichen wollen. In dieser Schlaueit kommt manchmal weniger und manchmal mehr heraus, als der Mensch will, als die allgemeine Zielsetzung ist, und die dichterische Weisheit besteht gerade darin, in diesen Umwegen das Typische und Individuelle zu finden. 106

The belated publication of the Wiederanders fragment nearly twenty years after it was written should now help to bring about a fresh appreciation of the tortuous continuity in Becher's work in regard to his deepest artistic concern - the struggle to come to grips with his past in its full complexity and to offer an enduring testimony to the transition from capitalism to socialism in Germany in his lifetime. But the very existence of a Wiederanders is a sobering reminder of the consequences, in artistic and human terms, of the endeavour of writers like Becher to fuse the roles of creative writer and Party propagandist under the conditions of exile and in the Stalin era.

CHAPTER 2

THE RHETORIC OF SOCIALIST TRANSFORMATION.
EDUARD CLAUDIUS : MENSCHEN AN UNSRER SEITE

AND

HANS MARCHWITZA : ROHEISEN

'SOCIALIST REPORTAGE' AS THE ANTITHESIS OF REALISM

The onset of the Cold War in 1948 was immediately reflected in the sphere of culture in East Germany by the SED's endeavour to have the dogmatic conception of Socialist Realism inaugurated by Zhdanov at the Soviet Writers' Congress of 1934 adopted as rigidly as it had been in the USSR since then. The rapid centralisation of political power in conformity with the hierarchical Soviet model, accompanied by the intensification of security with a near hysterical rigour, not only signalled the abandonment of the original conception of the SED as a broad anti-fascist coalition:¹ it also brought a severe curtailment of literary autonomy. Just as in the USSR in the period of Stalin's economically crucial Five Year Plan, the enormous industrial difficulties under which the East German Two Year Plan for 1949-50 was conceived were taken as the pretext for forcing through the idea that literature can serve as a vehicle for short-term morale boosting. The Party took on the role of determining commissions - 'Aufträge' - for its authors, in accordance with the themes it regarded as most urgent, which also meant in accordance with its unproblematic conception of the nature of man and society under socialism. Although lip-service was still paid to the ultimate creative freedom of the author, the demand for publications on contemporary industrial themes portraying the immediate emergence of the 'neuer Mensch', could only have seemed less than binding for those with established international reputations.

Alexander Abusch, recently returned from Mexican exile, became a leading spokesman for the new 'Kulturpolitik'. His essay late in 1948, entitled "Über das Schaffen unserer Schriftsteller", presented arguments which the SED saw little

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reason to modify other than marginally for a further two decades. Whereas in the 'Bund proletarisch-revolutionärer Schriftsteller' of the late 1920's, before the arrival of Georg Lukács in Berlin, quality was also being judged primarily in terms of propagandistic effectiveness, and theme and form held to be arbitrarily separable, the sudden consolidation of the SED's power in 1948 gave these attitudes an enduring strength of authority which they never previously enjoyed. The pursuit of conformity was to be much more rigorous than the speculative tone of the essay suggests:

Es wäre sehr gut, wenn wir einige Schriftsteller haben würden, die nach der Methode Upton Sinclairs (ohne seine ideologischen Schwankungen) sehr schnell Romane über die Bodenreform, den Wiederaufbau der zerbombten Betriebe, den heroischen Kampf zur Überwindung des ganzen Hitlererbes in der Wirtschaft unseres Landes schreiben könnten. Wir würden es selbst in Kauf nehmen, daß einige solcher Romane, die eine unmittelbare Wirkung ins Leben ausstrahlen, nach wenigen Jahren wieder vergessen sein und bleibenderen Werken Platz machen würden. 2

Another official document of the period shows how fundamentally unchanged the Party's understanding of identity had remained since it absorbed the language of 'Gemeinschaft' and the 'neuer Mensch' from Expressionism and the 'Jugendbewegung'. Socialism in East Germany was making possible the creation of a totally transformed 'Menschentyp' - 'dieser in seinem innersten Wesen gewandelte Mensch'. The contrast with previous cultures could be formulated in a cut-and-dried manner, in terms of the individual's integration into the socialist community:

Der zersetzenden Kulturauffassung der Vergangenheit, die in der Barbarei des Faschismus ihren grausamsten Ausdruck fand, entsprach der Mensch, der selbstsüchtig und individualistisch seinen egoistischen Zielen nachging und damit in Widerspruch geriet zu den Interessen der Gemeinschaft. Die Kultur der Zukunft verlangt

einen anderen Menschentyp, der sich freiwillig und bewusst als Einzelpersönlichkeit in den Dienst der Gesamtheit stellt. 3

It was, however, one thing to make this simplistic ideological point, and another to persuade the many eminent authors who had returned from exile to the Soviet Zone to illustrate its validity in contradiction to their own experience.

It is easily overlooked that East Germany, in aspiring to become the cultural heir to the Popular Front, had attracted the active support, or, failing that, the goodwill, of a large proportion of the writers and critics who had spent the years of the Third Reich in exile. Continuity with the values of the Weimar classicists had been a keystone in the foundation, under Becher's leadership, of the 'Kulturbund zur demokratischen Erneuerung Deutschlands' in 1945 - in a seemingly complete contrast to the 'Kahlschlag' of cultural traditions being embarked upon by the new generation of writers in the West.⁴ Thomas and Heinrich Mann were both to show broad sympathies with socialist developments in the Soviet Zone, while more committed figures of the rank of Anna Seghers, Arnold Zweig and Bodo Uhse, who had kept their distance in exile from the Soviet Union, made the decisive step of settling in the East after 1945. Georg Lukács, although he had little direct contact with Germany in these years, remained the dominant influence on older and younger intellectuals alike. His was the only coherent, critically penetrating, Marxist theory of literature available, and his essays were remarkably widely read, whether in collections like Fortschritt und Reaktion in der deutschen Literatur (1945) and Essays über Realismus (1948), or individually in periodicals like Aufbau and, after 1949, Sinn und Form.⁵

Although alien contemporary attitudes to existentialism and the work of avant-garde bourgeois writers like Proust and Kafka were also discussed in a depth unknown in the USSR since the codification of Socialist Realism, there was, however, no wavering for most of East Germany's leading creative writers from their basic commitment to socialism.⁶ This remained a highly complex matter, since it quickly became necessary for them to emphasize the inadequacy of the vague humanism expressed by figures such as Elisabeth Langgässer and Ricarda Huch at the First Writers' Congress of 1947 in Berlin, and also to preserve some measure of creative autonomy in the face of mounting ideological pressures from the Soviet side.⁷ Becher indeed argued at the Congress that writers could best demonstrate their continuing social relevance as well as their critical independence by themselves beginning anew the task of politicising literature:

Wir haben es erfahren, daß von der Literatur gefordert wurde, sich den politischen Bedürfnissen zu unterwerfen, um so zu einer Art kunstgewerblich aufgeputzten Fassade der Staatsführung zu werden. Die Politik verschlingt die Literatur, wenn nicht die Literatur auf eine ihr eigentümliche Art politisch wird. 8

The sense of independence from their Soviet counterparts which East Germany's authors sought to preserve is reflected, for example, in accounts of the cultural tour of the USSR undertaken in 1948 by a delegation of the Writers' Union, which included Anna Seghers, Stephan Hermlin, Günter Weisenborn and Eduard Claudius. During their discussions there with well-known authors, such as Alexander Fadejev, the differences between the Russians' reiteration of unmitigated Socialist Realist theory and the resistance shown by the Germans to the central concept of 'revolutionary romanticism' are quite marked. They seemed

very well aware of the dangers - the same dangers recognised by Lukács in the middle 1930's - that fine-sounding words about the depiction of 'das Morgen im Heute' were too likely to mean an unacceptable distortion of today's realities in favour of utopian visions of communism.⁹

It appears very much as if the uncertain future of divided Germany in the immediate post-war years gave East German intellectuals this additional degree of critical freedom, which they showed every sign of using in a politically responsible way. Bodo Uhse's willing acceptance of the need for authors like himself to take on a Party 'Auftrag' did not blind him to the problem that the gulf between "gegenwärtige() Albträume()" and the establishment of a society in which Germans could begin to dream of socialist perfection, was simply not bridgeable in creative terms:

Bevor wir diese Gesellschaft geschaffen haben,
/die den Menschen ... wieder Zukunftsträume
träumen lässt/, müssen wir recht maßvoll sein
in unsern Forderungen an die Künstler. Wir
können von ihnen nicht verlangen, was wir
noch nicht erreicht haben ... 10

Arnold Zweig was rather more explicit in his defence of realism against the clichés of 'revolutionary romanticism', going so far as to suggest that novelists could learn more about their creative task from the psychology of Sigmund Freud. Realism needed to follow Freud's therapeutic principle of "Kanalisation der menschlichen Phantasie auf die Wirklichkeit hin und nicht von der Wirklichkeit weg". It was a central aspect of the novelist's mission to prevent his reader being deluded with "Phantasien oder Allegorien oder Utopien ... die hätten sein können oder vielleicht in zehntausend Jahren einmal sein werden". Consequently, he regarded the Party's expectations of economic benefit from an exclusively affirmative literature as

the path to dilettantism of the most reprehensible kind. Writing was, he stressed, a tentative, exploratory process - "wir sind Diener an einem Werk, von dem wir selbst nicht wissen, wohin es führt". The kind of literature for which Alexander Abusch was appealing could only be produced by "optimistische Schwätzer und Verschönerer eines fürchterlichen Lebensknotens".¹¹

It was therefore little wonder that, despite the intensified ideological pressures of the late 1940's, established novelists like Zweig, Uhse and Anna Seghers concentrated their creative attentions on the differentiated analysis of the little understood recent past, which might in the longer term do more to develop the average reader's socialist consciousness than the two-dimensional depiction of the 'positive heroes' of the hour.¹² That their endeavours were simply not appreciated is demonstrated by the initial reception of Seghers' novel Die Toten bleiben jung (1949), which, although dealing with the historical progress towards socialism in Germany between 1918 and 1945, was criticised by Abusch because its positive figures failed to reach heroic proportions, and the hope for the future was confined to the potential of a child as yet unborn at the end of the novel.¹³ The Party's viewpoint, in contrast, lacked any semblance of creative sophistication: for the fulfilment of the Two Year Plan there was a desperate need for "die Schaffung einer neuen Arbeitsmoral" and "die Erziehung der Massen zum lebensbejahenden Optimismus".¹⁴ Its only short-term hope amidst the economic crisis - made worse in some ways than amidst the ruins of war as a result of the initial Soviet policy of industrial demontage - seemed to be to persuade a largely apathetic workforce to emulate the outstanding physical

feats of the minority of 'activists'. It was therefore up to the writers to get to know these activists in their working environment, and then depict their achievements in the most affirmative light possible. Even though Abusch, in continuing deference to Lukács, reiterated that their literary goal was still "das große Kunstwerk, in dem das Leben und Streben unserer Epoche wirklich gestaltet ist", the only prose form within which the Party's immediate objectives might be met was the 'Pseudokunst' of reportage condemned by Lukács in 1932.¹⁵

In a situation in which East Germany's established authors showed such fundamental lack of agreement with the new 'Kulturpolitik', and which was not appreciably helped by J. R. Becher's attempt to bridge the gulf with his Tagebuch 1950, the main consolation for the cultural politicians came through the efforts of the former 'Arbeiterkorrespondenten' from the days of the Weimar Republic. These veteran loyalists, like Willi Bredel, Hans Marchwitza and Otto Gotsche, were assisted by a new generation of Party members with literary aspirations in trying to mobilise public support through their industrial reportage. The apparent parallel between the KPD's encouragement of proletarian writing in the 1920's and the SED's belief that its urgent propagandistic needs could be best met through the creatively undemanding form of reportage is, on closer examination, quite tenuous. The social function of such writing is transformed at the moment it becomes, in the SED's terminology, 'sozialistische Reportage'. Whereas the many-sided reportage of a writer like Egon Erwin Kisch combined critical depiction of the plight of the underprivileged in the Weimar Republic with close attention to observed detail,¹⁶ the collections of 'socialist reportage' which emerge in the period immediately

after the foundation of the German Democratic Republic in 1949 are all too recognisable through the repetitiveness of their subject-matter and their completely uncritical tenor. They reflect only what the new state wished to emphasise: the exemplary achievements of activists like Adolf Hennecke in boosting productivity, the revitalisation of industry in the face of enormous material hardships, and the gradual success of the land-collectivisation scheme. They appeared in collections with titles like Helden der Arbeit and Bauplatz DDR.¹⁷ It soon became evident that 'socialist reportage' was an extremely flexible genre, in which fact, fiction and authorial comment could be freely intermingled: indeed, with historical hindsight, the few works still remembered in the GDR, such as Willi Bredel's Fünfzig Tage (1950), are more appropriately referred to as 'reportagehafte Erzählungen'.¹⁸ Too often, as in the young Dieter Noll's piece on the collective success of the Franz Franik brigade in Zwickau, the outline of factual information tends to disappear beneath the author's determination to draw the moral:

So wurde der kühne Gedanke Franz Franiks, geboren aus der neuen Wirklichkeit unserer Republik, zur materiellen Gewalt, die an der friedlichen Zukunft baut. Und aus den Massen wachsen neue Gedanken: Die Initiative der Kumpel schuf, unter Obhut und Pflege der Partei, den Zwickauer Plan, das Gesetz des Anderswerdens für das Steinkohlenrevier, für Zwickau, für jeden einzelnen ... (Franz Franik) hat eine große Tat vollbracht: Die Arbeit zum Wohle aller erhob er von der Sache des einzelnen zur Sache der Gemeinschaft. 19

The harmonisation of 'neuer Mensch' and 'Gemeinschaft' under Party leadership is proclaimed as a current reality - something only possible within a narrative form which afforded no scope for adequate depiction of character or the wider social-historical context.

Such heavy-handedness is so typical of this partisan journalism that critical differentiation would scarcely be possible, were it not for the case of Hans Garbe, the only convincingly complex activist to stand out in the gallery of positive heroes. He was one of the few workers permitted to speak for himself, unburdened by the 'professional' narrator's urge to emphasise the significance of his actions, in Hans Garbe erzhlt (1952). This volume has, with the passage of time, taken on further importance since it also throws light upon Bertolt Brecht's main creative involvement with East German subject-matter. It consists mainly of Garbe's life-story as narrated to Brecht in 1951 which was then edited, together with other workmates' views on him, by Brecht's collaborator at the Berliner Ensemble, Kthe Rulicke.²⁰ In a more favourable cultural climate, it could have been the basis for the GDR's first major work of realism, offering an effective illustration of the 'inorganic' view of identity defined by Brecht in exile: in the event, his biographical drama never passed beyond the planning stage.²¹

This was, however, neither the beginning nor the end of the literary interest provoked by Garbe's remarkable achievements at the Siemens-Planina works in Berlin in the winter of 1949-50. His 'Aktivistentat' was as outstanding as any other: he planned and executed the repair of a vitally important blast-furnace, in such a way that production was able to continue while the chambers of the furnace were individually re-lined, at a crucial stage of the Two Year Plan. What made it all the more fascinating were the contradictions in Garbe's personality and the hostile environment in which he performed his feats of skill and endurance. His success had been more in

spite of the local Party leadership, the works management and his fellow-workers, than as part of any harmonious collective effort. He had even been criticised, as he told Brecht, for failing to deliver routine Party circulars at a time when he and his few colleagues were engaged in superhuman tasks at the furnace.²² His earlier resistance to Party discipline and the Soviet policy of demontage had brought him into serious conflict with authority, yet he had been generally proven right in the end. At the same time, his thirst for hard work and scorn for official work-norms had alienated most of his workmates, who suffered more when the norms were raised, and his boorish behaviour in private life scarcely reflected enlightened attitudes.

The possibility which Garbe's case offered of breaking through the cliché of the activist hero was first recognised by Eduard Claudius, perhaps the most single-minded and perceptive of the former 'Arbeiterkorrespondenten'. His meeting with Garbe during a conference in August 1950, which brought together writers and activists, was the confrontation with the raw material of reality which he had sought in vain since his arrival in the Soviet Zone in 1947:

Aus der Niederlagenstimmung, aus der zerfetzten Hoffnung, aus dem kaum noch vorhandenen Selbstvertrauen war eine neue, eine revolutionäre Beziehung zur Arbeit gewachsen. Skeptisch analysierte ich jede Einzelheit des Geschehens, und dieser Keim des Neuen schien mir bemerkenswert. Als ich, während er erzählte, sein Gesicht betrachtete, das verlegene Zucken der Augenlider, glaubte ich etwas gefunden, was allgemein war und doch auch das Besondere ausdrückte. 23

Claudius, who had shown some creative potential in Grüne Oliven und nackte Berge (1944), the novel he had written in Swiss exile about his experiences with the International Brigade

during the Spanish Civil War, quickly drafted an account of the events in the Siemens-Plania works, in the half-factual, half-fictional form which passed for reportage in these years. Helped by his own intimate knowledge of the building trade, in which he had served his apprenticeship, he was able to offer detailed insights into the technical aspects of Garbe's achievement. He concentrated almost exclusively on the 'Aktivistentat' itself, with only general references to Garbe's past and his private life, and made little attempt to characterise either his fellow-workers or the firm's management. More importantly, however, Claudius became convinced that this material could in time be developed into a more extensive novel with biographical depth as well as social breadth. Later, he referred to this sketch "als Übung ..., als Möglichkeit eines Weges zu einem Roman", but in the GDR of 1950 he was no longer master over his own literary material. He was, it appears, obliged to publish this sketch immediately to meet the propagandistic needs of the hour - "sie erschien unter dem Titel Vom schweren Anfang und wurde mir aus der Hand gerissen".²⁴

Claudius was unimpressed by the official acclaim which greeted its appearance, but which was clearly only based on the subject-matter of a disjointed piece of narrative. He was too preoccupied with the infinitely more demanding task of depicting Garbe in all his contradictoriness, as a typical figure within a unified work of fiction, someone who could incorporate "der Arbeiter und sein neues Verhältnis zur Arbeit und Umwelt". Claudius showed some realisation of the enormity of this challenge in comparison to the mediocrity of the bulk of prose writing on life in the newly established GDR, but it was by no means certain that he was himself free from utopian preconceptions:

Der Poesie der Arbeit - wenn es überhaupt
möglich war, sie sichtbar zu machen - hatten
vielerlei Überlegungen gegolten ... War es
ein mögliches Objekt der Kunst? Jagte ich
nicht romantischen Vorstellungen nach? 25

In any case, Claudius prepared his ground more thoroughly this time, working and living with Garbe and his brigade for two months in 1951 - thereby setting an example for 'Bitterfelder Weg' novelists in years to come - and trying to guard against literary illusions about the nature of work and the personality of the worker. It remained to be seen whether such a relatively inexperienced novelist could succeed, given the harsh realities of everyday life in the GDR as well as the Party's ideological control over what was published, in subjecting the idea of the 'neuer Mensch' to plausible critical scrutiny for the first time.

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE 'NEUER MENSCH' - "MENSCHEN AN UNSRER SEITE"

For all Claudius' self-justifying words after the event, the completed novel, Menschen an unsrer Seite (1951) progresses so little away from the clichés of socialist reportage in its depiction of character, that it would scarcely merit critical attention - were it not for the rareness of any degree of differentiation in the rest of the 'Aufbauliteratur' published in the dark years between 1948 and 1955.²⁶ What is qualitatively distinctive about the novel is that Garbe - renamed Hans Aehre for no other reason, it seems, than to permit Claudius a painfully contrived pun²⁷ - is far from being the conventional positive hero. His two remarkable feats, the initial piece of individualism in constructing a furnace-cover in thirteen hours instead of the norm of fifty, and the master-minding of the

complex repair operation on the furnace, carried out with the help of his brigade, are depicted with a great deal of attention to character as well as to technical detail. In the process, however, Hans Aehre is shown to be highly impulsive and self-willed, reacting aggressively against authority of any kind - attitudes seen as the legacy of his traumatic childhood experience of witnessing his father being whipped and humiliated by an autocratic Junker landlord in Pomerania. It is also emphasised, however, that the SED officials with whom he has come into contact since 1945 have done nothing to bring him out of his mistrustful isolation - indeed, he has been expelled from the Party before coming to Siemens-Planitz in 1949. Only then do Party figures with exceptional powers of perception recognise his potential and discover how to develop it to constructive ends. Aehre tends towards excess in his smoking and drinking, and has rigidly reactionary views on the purely domestic role of his wife and on the irrelevance of any kind of further education to workers like himself. Through his almost fanatical love of work, it seems, he has come some way to realising the implications of socialist ownership of industry:

Unsere Arbeit gibt uns erst das Leben, gibt
uns das, was wir für unser Leben brauchen.
Unsere Arbeit ist nicht etwas, was uns knechtet,
sondern was uns befreit, was uns unsere Würde
gibt, was uns stolz und erst zu wahren Menschen
macht. M 63

Yet these words he uses to win over his workmates are the Party's rather than his own, for he still shows little understanding that the goal of personal wholeness in a socialist environment requires the encouragement of individual creativity as well as a sense of social responsibility. Outside the works, he fails to play any kind of positive social role, a fact which is brought home to him at the height of his success in the

works - "Du bleibst hinter der allgemeinen Entwicklung zur ck" (M 236). In marked contrast, it is his wife Katrin, involved only to a minor extent in the publicly f ted events, who reflects the transforming effects of the spirit of socialism in personal terms. By refusing to content herself with the domestic chores of the housewife and mother, by taking on a physically demanding job in the works and starting to educate herself, Katrin shows the sort of striving for "das ganze Leben" (M 218), which is still lacking in Aehre. As she says to him:

Aber richtig verstanden hast du immer noch nicht, um was es geht. Ich bin doch ein Mensch, und ich will doch jetzt, wo uns alles offensteht, auch etwas lernen und etwas tun, was ich sehe und was nicht mehr vergeht. Du mu st verstehen, da  ich nicht zuerst eine Frau bin, sondern ein Mensch. M 219

Aehre's inability to recognise his wife's importance as an individual creates tensions which place considerable strains on their marriage - "das Schweigen stand zwischen ihnen wie eine kalte, nicht zu  bersteigende Mauer" (M 254) - and Aehre is only just beginning at the end of the novel to accept the changes within their relationship which have added so much meaning to Katrin's life.

Even though Claudius resisted the temptation to place a deceptively exemplary gloss on Aehre's personality, and thereby left us with a figure uniquely representative of the chaos and uncertainty of life in the first days of the GDR, he still elevates Becher's concept of sudden self-transformation - 'das Anderswerden' - to central importance in the development of most of his other characters. The sense of an historical turning-point brought about by the creation of the GDR late in 1949, expressed in such vague symbolical terms by Becher in his

Tagebuch 1950, is certainly given a more plausible concrete basis here through the achievements of Aehre and his colleagues, but the dramatic quality of the transformation is still patently exaggerated. The crucial insight is granted to the new Party secretary in the Siemens-Flania works, who is endowed with the all too obviously significant name of Walter Wende:

Und klar sah er ..., daß sich hier, an diesem Ringofen, an diesem Beispiel einer großen Leistung, alles scheiden würde, das Alte und das Neue, und daß es um viel mehr ging als nur um die Erstellung des Ringofens. M 187

The overnight change of personality is seen to be occurring at every level of the new society, inspired by the personal example of individuals like Aehre. His fellow-workers Reichelt, Backhans and Kerbel discover a new wholehearted commitment to their job at his side, to the extent that it becomes the hub of their existence. At the crucial stage of the furnace repair they even sleep in the factory. In the end they discover through their achievements a sense of common identity and purpose which leads them to speak proudly of "unsere Brigade" (M 310).

Even the representative of the pre-war social elite, Dr. Wassermann, the technical director of the factory, is moved through admiration for Aehre to cast aside his sceptical, self-protective attitudes and provide the expertise necessary to design reinforced bricks through which gas is to be piped into each furnace-chamber. The cooperation which develops between these two, each of whom was previously content to fulfil an apparently unrelated role within the industrial complex, is clearly intended to demonstrate the growth of individual commitment to improve the quality of life, which

follows directly upon the foundation of the GDR. As Wassermann remarks to his intransigently bourgeois wife:

Die Menschen sind ganz anders geworden, besser,
und die besten ... sind besser geworden,
besser Gertrud ... M 263

To the FDJ-leader Fahle, Wassermann expresses agreement with Aehre's example in moving off "die alten Geleise" (M 265), while in the general jubilation at the end of the novel, he is quite happy to attribute his personal transformation directly to Aehre in the latter's presence:

Aehre ... nun, so ein Mensch ... noch nie in
meinem Leben ist mir so einer vorgekommen.
Er hat den alten Adam in mir herausgerissen,
ganz, und ich, ich bin ein anderer Mensch
geworden. M 317

Clearly, where such change is possible in the attitudes of the generation who had lived through the Third Reich as adults (Aehre is in his late forties, Wassermann considerably older), it is presented as being quite straightforward for the younger generation. A woman like Suse Rieck, still in her twenties, has already lived through a great deal of bitter experience, including marriage to a ruthless Nazi, to which war has put a merciful end. In the socialist state she discovers a liberating sense of personal importance and pleasure in her work:

Wer war ich denn früher? Ich hatte einen
Haushalt, ich stopfte Strümpfe und wartete,
bis am Abend mein Mann nach Hause kam. Aber
heute, wer bin ich heute? Ich habe gearbeitet
und habe an meiner Arbeit Freude gefunden, und
das hat etwas Neues aus mir gemacht. M 225

This process of change is, however, never depicted in Suse's life, it is simply stated as having occurred. Through this and many similar examples in the novel, Claudius' problems in bringing to life any character other than his hero are made obvious. And yet there is still a distinctive side to some of

his figures, even the stereotypes, in their capacity to combine fulfilment at work with an uninhibited enjoyment of private life. Suse, for example, commits herself promptly to a sexual relationship with the artist and draughtsman Andreas Andrytzki, which is not dependent on the sense of mindless security and respectability held to be associated with marriage in bourgeois society:

Wenn du mir vor drei Jahren gesagt hättest,
du willst mich heiraten, vor Freude wär ich
unter die Decke gesprungen, aber jetzt, nun,
jetzt frag ich erst einmal: Wie stellst du
dir das vor? Und dann noch eins: Ich bleibe
nicht mehr zu Hause. Auf keinen Fall! M 225

Youth organisations like the FDJ also reflect this new sense of liberation and joy in life. The group of twelve young people who provide valuable unskilled assistance for Aehre and his mates, as they concentrate on the more specialised aspects of re-lining the chambers, quickly integrate themselves into the brigade, developing "das Aufeinandergespieltsein wie bei einer guten Fußballmannschaft" (M 269), and generate an atmosphere of laughter and enthusiasm wherever they go. With their open and undogmatic attitude to their contemporaries who are not in the Party, their capacity for good-humoured banter with their workmates, and their enjoyment of smoking and drinking, they offer a rather different image of the FDJ to the usual one of austere dedication, without suggesting any threat to its effectiveness. For them, as for Suse Rieck, the factory becomes "Heimat" (M 290) in a natural, uncomplicated manner.

In his depiction of Party officials, Claudius showed some commendable determination to demonstrate that a period of rapid and fundamental change would scarcely produce uniformly positive personalities, no matter how inspirational some individual contributions might have been. He clearly wished to attribute

some proportion of blame for the low standard of morale in the Siemens-Plania works to a lack of leadership, indeed unforgivable negligence, on the part of the SED. Consequently, he devotes a great deal of attention in the early stages of the novel to the bureaucratic indifference shown by the local Party secretary, Bock, to the interests and needs of the workers - the ideal of collective leadership and widespread participation in decision-making has been replaced by "Direktiventum" (M 70). Bock invariably sits in his office, reading newspapers and claiming to be too busy to confer with workers like Aehre. He appoints as treasurer a rogue called Matschat, who is also Aehre's foreman and clings to power with all the tenacity and viciousness of the "Hauptmannsgesichter" and "Gutsbesitzergesichter" (M 23), against which Aehre has fought all his life. The fact that Matschat has been allowed to become, and remain, a Party member is a fierce indictment, since he is shown to be an opportunist of the lowest kind, does everything possible to destroy Aehre's initiative, and ends up by attempting to sabotage the whole repair operation, before being brought to justice. It is little wonder that cynicism of the kind expressed by Kerbel is widespread:

Ihr tut immer, als seien alle blöd, die nicht in der Partei sind ... wie die Christen die Heiden sehen; sie kommen nicht ins Himmelreich. Halt mich bloß nicht für dumm! Mit deinen Genossen ... Nimm den Matschat! Ich kenn ihn doch schon fünfzehn Jahre. Der und Sozialist! Daß ich nicht lache! Du magst ja ein anständiger Kerl sein und alles glauben, was man dir sagt ... aber mit solchen Figuren wie dem Matschat könnt ihr bei mir keinen Blumentopp gewinnen. M 213-4

This is, of course, only part of the picture, which is then crudely balanced by the utterly positive leadership given by Party members like Carlin, the newly appointed manager of the

works with his solid proletarian background, Fahle, the head of the FDJ group, or Schadow, the visiting inspector who brings about the speedy removal of Bock. These three, together with Walter Wende, Bock's successor as Party secretary, represent the Party in its most admirable light, wise and resourceful, exercising an inspirational effect on the workers. As Aehre says early on of Carlin: "Er war heute nah und wie einer, der weiß, daß in jedes Menschen Herz eine Flamme sprüht, wenn man nur den Schutt wegräumt" (M 40).

This ambivalence, which mars Claudius' endeavours to introduce some differentiation into his portrayal of character, is perhaps most striking in his depiction of Andreas Andrytzki, the artistic temperament in this industrial environment. Andrytzki is certainly no intellectual remote from these decisive social changes: he works as a draughtsman in Siemens-Plania out of a strong sense of social responsibility, but it is also suggested that his deepest interests lie in his painting. There are interesting similarities between Andrytzki and his creator: both have only gained recognition since 1945 for work completed previously, both come from the Ruhr area and are tough and obstinate people to deal with, but have been in the vanguard of artistic developments since the war:

Andrytzki was seit den Tagen des Kriegsendes nicht mehr unbekannt. Durch eine Blattfolge über das Leben unter dem Faschismus hatte er sich einen gewissen Namen gemacht. Er stammte aus dem Ruhrgebiet, und man sagte von ihm: "Ein nicht sehr angenehmer Mensch. Störrisch und eigensinnig wie ein Esel." Aber man achtete ihn, seine heftigen Farben, seine konzentrierten Kompositionen. Durch seinen Blick für das Zerstörende des Faschismus, für seine Unmenschlichkeit, die er in seinen Blättern sichtbar gemacht hatte - war er den meisten seiner Kollegen weit voraus. M 46-7

It is clear, through Andrytzki's close observation of the

post-war ruins of Berlin, and his insistence that individuals can only be portrayed accurately when he has lived close to them and felt deeply with them, that he too seems determined to resist simplified schematic conceptions of the 'neuer Mensch', which exclude reference to the profound hardships, anxieties and conflicts of the time (M 48-53).

The autobiographical pattern is then, however, abruptly interrupted: Andrytzki, like a naive youngster, allows himself to be frightened into fleeing to the West by the unscrupulous Matschat, who removes a plan of the works drawn up by Andrytzki and later claims it has been intercepted by secret police on its way to hostile Western industrialists, so that Andrytzki will be accused of sabotage. For Matschat, the ruse offers a cheap way of disposing of a potential ally of Aehre's, while for Andrytzki (and the reader) it presents an opportunity of direct comparisons between life in East and West. This all seems no more than a mediocre contrivance on Claudius' part to allow him to assert the superior potential of life in the new GDR. The conditions which Andrytzki finds on returning home to the Ruhr are intolerable: ruthless suppression of workers' rights, sinister rearmament by the western Allies, callous demontage of industrial plant (in the post-Marshall Plan era!) and a degrading living environment:

Grau, diesig und feucht lag der Dezemberabend über der Kolonie; mild wohl, aber zugleich auch voller Schwermut. Auf den Birkenbäumchen in den Vorgärten lag der Dunst der Zechen ringsum, und sie glichen halbverfaulten, von Würmern zerfressenen Pilzen ... Aus den Trümmern schimmerten schmutziggelbe Lichter, und obwohl sie stillstanden, war es doch, also geisterten sie über die Trümmer und Bombenlöcher ... Der Weg schlängelte sich an den Trümmern vorbei, und Andreas sah, daß sich Menschen in unversehrten Kellerlöchern eingestet hatten ... M 195-7

The deadening prospect that life will always remain the same for the proletariat in the West - miserable, hopeless and alienating - is emphasised through the ironical reference to the frustration of the hopes of Andrytzki's mother for an 'Anderswerden' there after the war:

Damals, als ich auf dem Güterzug saß, hab ich geglaubt, jetzt, wo der Krieg vorbei ist, wird alles anders werden, aber jetzt? Ach du lieber Gott! Von vorn beginnt's! Das gleiche kommt wohl wieder. M 227

Suse Rieck, who seeks out Andrytzki in the hope of persuading him to return to her - and a more fulfilling existence - in the GDR, makes it clear to him that his idea of earning a tolerable living through honest artistic endeavour in the West is an illusion. As they look at a sketch of the downtrodden Frau Andrytzki, the point is forcefully made:

"Man muß ja nicht so werden," sagte (Andreas).
"Wie kann man anders werden, hier?" M 227

The implication is, of course, that his creative abilities can only be developed in the GDR, and Suse finally overcomes his obstinate resistance by offering him the more stimulating prospect of painting worker-heroes like Aehre instead.

After Andrytzki has taken courage and returned to Berlin to gain reassurance and absolution from Wende, he is placed in the position of providing a final flourish to the novel. His exhibition of paintings, hastily completed in the best representational style of Socialist Realist art, is ready for the celebrations marking the completion of work on the furnace. This panoramic reflection of the novel's principal characters and events in shades of black and white threatens to eliminate the few inner conflicts which have up to then made it readable, in favour of the same tone of didactic simplification which the 'allegorical' summary of Hans Gastl's development introduces

at the decisive moment of Becher's Abschied. Aehre is seen at the peak of his activity - "voller Energie ... kühn und mit klaren, klugen Augen", Dr. Wassermann is shown attentive and inspired, "das stille, kluge Antlitz von einem Lächeln erhellt", while Wende is symbolically placed at the heart of developments: "im Mittelpunkt des Bildes ... ein wenig kleiner als Aehre, doch stämmiger, massiger, das breite Gesicht kraftvoll und zuversichtlich: er hörte äußerst interessiert zu, und es war offenkundig, daß er sich freute" (M 313).

It then comes as a surprise to hear Andrytzki refer to these paintings simply as "Skizzen ... nur Vorstudien für größere, wesentlichere Arbeiten" (M 311), almost in the same terms as those in which Claudius, years later, distanced himself from his initial reportage Vom schweren Anfang. Contradictions of this kind raise more than a suspicion that Claudius was no more able than Becher to decide how decisive his own experience should be in determining the course of fictional events. The result is again the totally unsatisfying one that the development of the semi-autobiographical artist has a disjointed, wildly fluctuating quality which detracts seriously from the novel as a whole. In short, there may be a critical dimension to Menschen an unserer Seite, to the extent that it reveals reactionary traits in the character of an activist, and admits that the Party can be fallible and unimaginative, and suggests that there is more to achieving 'wholeness' than carrying out superhuman tasks of physical labour. The final impression, however, is one of partisan simplification - the desire to encourage immediate confidence in the GDR by emphasising the movement forward towards a community in which individuals are quickly able to find their 'true' selves and

approach self-fulfilment.

It is therefore all the more surprising to learn, through Claudius' reminiscences of the period in his autobiography Ruhelose Jahre (1968), of the major problems he had in having the novel accepted for publication.²⁸ His account of events provides a grim reminder of how totally limited the scope for creative writers was in these years. After submitting Menschen an unsrer Seite to an unnamed leading publishing-house, Claudius had it rejected on several grounds: it failed to reflect the conception of the 'positive hero' as someone extraordinary in every respect, thereby implying (as Claudius had doubtless intended) that many people, endowed with comparable strengths and weaknesses to those of Aehre, could have risen equally to the kind of challenge that the Siemens-Plania works presented. Furthermore, the novel apparently offended the moral sensibilities of the publisher's readers, through its allusions to the sexual aspect of relationships, particularly in the case of unmarried couples like Suse and Andrytzki, which were felt to be too 'naturalistic'.²⁹ It was clearly also alarming that members of the FDJ were seen to be less than pure and wholesome, as Claudius was informed in his interview on the question of the novel's publication:

Du zeichnest da einige FDJler ..., ich verstehe dich einfach nicht. Sie rauchen, und wenn ich mich recht erinnere, trinken sie auch, und moralisch ... /sic/ 30

Thirdly, the fact that people like Bock and Matschat could be presented as members of the Party, regardless of other admirable figures like Wende and Fahle, led them to deem the whole work "partei-feindlich". Luckily, Claudius had a warmer reception when he took his manuscript to old friends in the Volk und Welt publishing house. They showed no signs of temerity in

accepting it, and were evidently justified in their boldness when the publication of Menschen an unsrer Seite late in 1951 was greeted by considerable public acclaim. - It was one of the few works to receive any kind of popular recognition until the more spectacular successes of Bruno Apitz's Nackt unter Wölfen and the first volume of Dieter Noll's Die Abenteuer des Werner Holt several years later.

To his credit, however, Claudius shied away from exploiting his success: he remained suspicious of the Party's attempts to determine the content and uses of literature too narrowly, and refused all inducements to produce the same ingredients in differently coloured packages for mass consumption. He felt that "eine Neuauflage des schon einmal Geschaffenen" would oblige him "sich selbst wieder reproduzieren zu müssen".³¹ It seems fortunate that Claudius was able to complete and publish this work in 1951, since it offers a valuable yardstick with which to assess how much wider the gulf was still to become, in the years before the Fourth Writers' Congress, between everyday realities and the totally idealised situation which the cultural politicians felt literature ought to be depicting.

LITERATURE IN AN IDEOLOGICAL STRAITJACKET

In the GDR itself it has been possible for at least a decade to admit that writers in the early 1950's were in effect presented with an artistically impossible task by the SED. The collectively produced "Skizze zur Geschichte der deutschen Nationalliteratur" of 1964 refers to the constricting effect of the 'Kulturpolitik' of the period in terms of:

... konservative(), einseitig auf bestimmte Traditionen des 19. Jahrhunderts orientierte()

Auffassungen vom Realismus ... eine()
undifferenzierte() oberflächliche() Auffassung
von Dekadenz und ... eine() starre(), das
Epigonentum nicht ausschließende() Behandlung
des Verhältnisses von Tradition und Neuer-
ertum. 32

Eberhard Röhner's study, Arbeiter in der Gegenwartsliteratur (1967), is exceptional to the extent that it moves beyond such unspecific references to discuss the individual weaknesses of named works in which a distorted, inauthentic picture of the period occurs.³³ Röhner's criticisms are still generally qualified by reassurances that these mediocre novels, such as Marianne Langner's Stahl (1952), Karl Mundstock's Helle Nächte (1952) or Harry Thürk's Herren des Salzes (1956) nevertheless formed a foundation of experience upon which writers in the following decade could build. What should be more strongly emphasised is the degree to which these works represent a total contradiction of the complexities of actual events and people in these years.

From 1950 onwards there was a steady increase in the pressures placed on writers to become little more than productive cogs in the ideological machine: admonitory references to 'Tempoverlust' and 'Zurückgebliebenheit' amongst writers led quickly to the full-scale campaign against 'formalism' in 1951, which insisted more stridently than ever upon the primacy of thematic content - "die entscheidende Bedeutung (liegt) im Inhalt, in der Idee, im Gedanken des Werkes" - and saw any deviation from the formal techniques of the 'classical heritage' - as understood by the Party - as leading to "Entwurzelung der Nationalkultur" and "Zersetzung und Zerstörung der Kunst selbst".³⁴ By 1952, Socialist Realism, as defined by Ulbricht, had become completely obligatory,³⁵ and constant emphasis was placed on the need to imitate and emulate Soviet literary models, to be

found in the works of Gorky, Gladkov and Scholokhov. The two supervisory bodies set up by the SED in July 1951 - the 'Amt für Literatur und Verlagswesen' and the 'Staatliche Kommission für Kunstangelegenheiten' - exercised a firm control (the effects of which were already evident in the criticisms directed against Menschen an unserer Seite) over all publications, and intensified the policy of designating 'Aufträge' from industrial and agricultural life for literary treatment. Even though established writers like Claudius, Uhse and Becher did recognise the desirability of overall Party supervision of literature, they increasingly resented the fact that the themes deemed suitable left no scope for creative amplification of the writers' own most deeply felt experiences. As Becher put it in his Poetische Konfession:

Auch unsere Schriftsteller lassen sich treiben. Das heißt, sie leben (dichterisch) von Auftrag zu Auftrag. Wie es sich gerade ergibt, so dichten sie. Aber /die Kulturpolitiker/ vergessen, daß, wenn von gesellschaftlichem Auftrag die Rede ist, zwar dieser gesellschaftliche Auftrag auch den einschließt, der uns erteilt wird, aber auch den, den wir uns selber erteilen. Diesen letzten sollten wir nicht vergessen und nicht zurückstellen hinter die Aufträge, die man uns erteilt, und besonders sollen die Aufträge, die man uns erteilt, nicht solche sein, die uns das Denken abnehmen und uns ein Thema allzu begrenzt vorschreiben, sondern solche, die uns eine gewisse freie Bewegung im Stoff ermöglichen. 36

The report presented to the Fourth Writers' Congress by Claudius on his work as Secretary of the Writers' Union reveals some of the absurdities created by this system of 'Aufträge': there was little scrutiny of whether the well-intentioned aspiring writers who took on these assignments actually had any literary ability, so that the impression grew that the Party's aim was "Literatur auf jeden Fall zustande zu bringen". He highlighted the inherent absurdity of the whole system of 'Aufträge' simply

by mentioning some of the topics suggested by the 'Kunstkommission', most ridiculously the idea that a novel ought to be written on such themes as the treatment of foot-and-mouth disease in the GDR's cattle.³⁷

But these and similar reservations expressed by the writers themselves carried little weight in these years. Their role, as viewed by the Party, remained the purely auxiliary one spelt out by the republic's president, Otto Grotewohl, when announcing the establishment of the 'Kunstkommission' in 1951:

Literatur und bildende Künste sind der Politik untergeordnet, aber es ist klar, daß sie einen starken Einfluß auf die Politik ausüben. Die Idee in der Kunst muß der Marschrichtung des politischen Kampfes folgen. Denn nur auf der Ebene der Politik können die Bedürfnisse der werktätigen Menschen richtig erkannt und erfüllt werden. Was sich in der Politik als richtig erweist, ist es auch unbedingt in der Kunst.

Es ist doch klar, daß ein Werk, selbst wenn es gewisse künstlerische Qualitäten in sich trägt, vom Volk abgelehnt werden muß, wenn seine Grundrichtung reaktionär ist. Ich will damit sagen, daß die politische Kritik bei der Beurteilung unserer Kunst primär ist und daß die künstlerische Kritik sekundär ist. Selbstverständlich will ich damit nicht sagen, daß ein gutes Parteibuch der Gradmesser für künstlerisches Schaffen ist. Wir fordern Übereinstimmung zwischen Politik und Kunst. 38

It seems quite obvious here that Grotewohl's various 'qualifying' phrases are quite incidental, and that he is asking for nothing less than the illustration of ideological theory in literature. There was to be no common ground whatsoever between literature in the two Germanies, since socialism and capitalism were still being defined, in their concrete post-war context, with the same kind of primitive analogies with Heaven and Hell which had permeated Becher's utopian visions of the future in his years of exile.

The capitalistic West is characterised uniformly in terms

of "amerikanische Kulturbarbarei", which is an "Unkultur" because of its underlying "Kosmopolitismus". The unmitigated decadence of its arts, reflecting the imminent collapse of the social system, became established with the art for art's sake movement in the 19th century, and now has many equally reprehensible manifestations - "Verfall", "Zersetzung", "Mystizismus", "Symbolismus", "die Neigung zu einer verzerzten und unrichtigen Darstellung der Wirklichkeit", "flacher und vulgärer Naturalismus". It concentrates on "das Hässliche" and "das Unmoralische", and singles out a whole range of 'negative' character-types, including gangsters, prostitutes, traitors, sadists, the mentally-deranged and cripples, for artistic treatment. It can be summed up as "Hollywood-Kitsch", and its effect on the population is utterly demoralising. All art which portrays the world as "unerkenntlich" or emphasises any of the above aberrations is thus formalistic - "volksfeindlich, nihilistisch, antihuman".³⁹

Almost by definition, none of these characteristics can survive in the new socialist reality of the GDR: culture remains true to the noble aspirations of the ordinary people who make up the "Gemeinschaft", and preserves their sense of national identity. The mood of the people is, according to Becher, one of "Erneuerung", "Verjüngung", "Begeisterung": the difference between past and present is seen not even in terms of optimistic, steady development, but rather as "ein ungeheurer Abgrund". What needs to be depicted is the realm of happiness, freedom and beauty, in which the creation of a new quality of life in spiritual and economic terms can already be described as "erfolgreich". The typical members of this community are all exemplary figures - activists, progressive intellectuals,

engineers, factory managers, farmers, youth leaders - and ought to be presented in their unquestioned "Vorbildlichkeit".⁴⁰ By implication, there is no scope for the more differentiated approach adopted by Claudius in his depiction of Hans Aehre:

Man darf die Arbeiteraktivisten oder die Menschen, die von der Arbeiterklasse und dem Volk zur Führung des neuen demokratischen Staates berufen worden sind, nicht als mißgestaltet und primitiv darstellen. 41

In the sense that Socialist Realism is viewed as an 'anticipatory' art, there appears to be little scope for the depiction of the period of transition before the ideal approaches realisation, so that a conveniently simplified division of Germans into 'good' and 'evil' on ideological grounds becomes possible:

Die Kunst ist eine große und edle Sache. Sie antizipiert ... das Bild des Menschen von morgen und wirkt auf diese Weise bei seinem Durchbruch in die Wirklichkeit aktiv mit. Irgend etwas von der Macht echter Kunst ahnen also selbst die Initiatoren des Kosmopolitismus, wenn sie sich ihrer zu bemächtigen versuchen. Und weil sie für ihre teuflischen Eroberungspläne den schlechten Deutschen brauchen, so versuchen sie, das Bild des guten Deutschen im Herz unseres Volkes zu ersticken, das unsere Dichter und Künstler ihm in die Brust legten. 42

The first writers to undertake to produce novels reflecting this totally idealised view of society in the GDR were not so much unknown youngsters as trustworthy Party veterans: generally, they had no previous literary experience, and their novels have faded into obscurity just as inevitably as Abusch had expected they would, when he first defined this 'Kulturpolitik' in 1948. The novel Stahl by Marianne Langner is full of the kind of weaknesses which will almost inevitably follow the attempt to create reality to prescription.⁴³ Frau Langner's 'Auftrag' was to use the building of the Brandenburg steelworks between February and December 1950 as the framework for her fiction,

but she included so much factual information about the industrial processes, which was crudely introduced in the form of newspaper excerpts, speeches by Ministers, notes made by visiting reporters and so on, that the possibilities for characterisation were completely negligible. As Röhner has pointed out, there is a simplistic mechanical relationship between industry and the individual in works like Stahl:

Die "Neugeburt" des Menschen in der sozialistischen Produktion wird zum technischen Vorgang: Je rascher das Werk wächst, desto schneller reifen die Menschen in diesem Werk. Auf diese einfache Formel werden die komplizierten und widerspruchsvollen Vorgänge gebracht, die sich in Menschen vollziehen, wenn sie sich ihrer neuen Rolle im Produktionsprozeß bewußt werden. 44

The characters are never seen outside their work-sphere, with the result that community and self-fulfilment are only understood in this restricted sense: "mit dem Bau soll diese Gemeinschaft wachsen, einmal mit dem Werk ein Ganzes bilden".⁴⁵ The characters are never seen to develop, they are completely transformed overnight with a stroke of the author's pen: Willi Prinz, a notorious rebel when the steelworks was still part of the capitalist Flick organisation, sees his visionary dream become reality when he is appointed "Oberschmelzer im volkseigenen Werk": "sein Ruf schallt durch die breite, von Licht und Glut durchflutete Halle des größten und modernsten Stahlwerks Deutschlands". Whereas his earlier life was "krank" and "elend", now with his newly-acquired activist-pin, he is "stärker ... wichtiger ... seine Arbeit ist vom tiefen Sinn erfüllt".⁴⁶

When an intellectual like Wolfgang Wenzel discovers through hard physical work the error of his ways in having reported critically for the American-licensed press on the

miserable conditions on farms in the Soviet Zone, he comes close to being deified in the eyes of the novel's industrious heroine,

Hanna:

Wolfgang ist zärtlich und nachgiebig, er ist klug und gemessen und in der Liebe ein wenig romantisch. Hanna liebt sein helles, offenes Gesicht, das sie an der Erzengel Gabriel erinnert, dessen Bild bei einer Dienstherrschaft hing. Sie liebt seine klaren, grauen Augen, die klug und kühl und auch warm und schwärmerisch schauen können. Seit sie auf dem Bau arbeitet, fühlt sie sich seiner würdiger als zuvor. 47

At the top of this pyramid of perfection stand the political leaders of the day, like Wilhelm Pieck:

Güte, Klugheit und Kampferfahrung zur Weisheit verschmolzen, haben das Antlitz des höchsten Arbeiterfunktionärs seines Landes geformt und veredelt. Die achtunggebietende Persönlichkeit Wilhelm Piecks, sein bescheidenes, glückliches Lächeln, seine gütigen Augen, schenken allen, die in seiner Nähe sein dürfen, das Bewußtsein, daß ein Vater zu ihnen gekommen ist, ein guter Vater, der die Dinge ordnet. 48

Similarly, the perceptive and energetic Walter Ulbricht is carried on the shoulders of jubilant workers through the singing crowds when he comes to make a speech. The ending is blissfully harmonious, as the five furnaces completed in ten months of intensive, fulfilling labour face the New Year, creating a "Sinfonie aus Licht und Stahl, das Lied vom Segen der friedlichen Arbeit". 49

Even though a critic like Alfred Antkowiak, sympathetic to the didactic principles behind the 'Kulturpolitik', felt strong enough in 1953 to point out many of the basic absurdities inherent in the 'schematische Gestaltungsweise' of novels like Stahl,⁵⁰ their structural pattern was preserved, apparently unaffected by indications of a less idyllic reality in the dissent shown by workers on 17 June, and in the growing neglect of the officially fostered literature by the reading

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public. The disaffection of respected figures in cultural life, like Becher and Brecht, was articulated with increasing insistence. As Brecht pointed out, the 'Kulturpolitik' had erred seriously in making Socialist Realism synonymous with totally uncritical, adulatory art, an insult to the writers constricted within its limitations and to the working-masses it was purporting to educate. He still held to his fundamental conviction from the years of the realism-debate in exile about the intellectual maturity of the socialist worker. "Schönfärberei und Beschönigung" were, he argued, "nicht nur die ärgsten Feinde der Schönheit, sondern auch der politischen Vernunft".⁵¹ In advocating the introduction of a critical dimension and qualitative criteria for art, in the interests of "eine hochqualifizierte, hochdifferenzierte Kunst",⁵² Brecht was emphasising the need for a radical alternative to the false unanimity of the 'Aufbauliteratur', but met with no apparent success. The writers whom Claudius later referred to scathingly as the "Rasse der Wiederkehrer" and "Wortaktivisten" retained almost exclusive access to the organs of publication and continued to produce unreadable novels within the ideological straitjacket. It was all too predictable:

... ein Teil positiver Held in strahlend heller Sonne, zur notwendigen Kontrastierung ein wenig Gewölk, ein Teilchen wohl-dosierte Liebe, wie sie halt üblich ist, natürlich ein Gegenspieler, dieser aber schwach, schlecht und zuletzt unterliegend. 53

As the Party's stock of willing authors of any literary ability whatsoever began to run out, another of the former 'Arbeiterkorrespondenten' - or 'Renommierproletarier', to use Reich-Ranicki's disparaging term⁵⁴ - Hans Marchwitza, finally agreed to add his talents to the cause. The chosen theme was the establishment of the Eisenhüttenkombinat-Ost (EKO) near the

Oder-Neiße border with Poland in the period between 1950 and 1952, a project felt to be particularly significant since it involved international socialist cooperation on a broad scale: Russian iron-ore and Polish coal were to be used in the production of German steel.⁵⁵

In an attempt to generate public interest in the novel, the famous 'Offener Brief' had been despatched by workers at the lignite plant at Nachterstedt to the Writers' Union in January 1955, exhorting them to produce a lot more novels on 'Aufbau' themes, depicting exemplary 'neue Menschen' and inspirational Party leadership, which they claimed to be "außerordentlich beliebt ... bei uns".⁵⁶ They were especially hopeful that Roheisen, the forthcoming novel by their old friend Hans Marchwitza, would add substantially to the list of their favourite works. Marchwitza had established his reputation as a proletarian writer with 'reportage-novels' like Sturm auf Essen (1930), based on the political strikes and their repression in the Ruhr in 1920,⁵⁷ and with his semi-autobiographical cyclical novel on the Kumiak family, still an interesting presentation of the broad sociological process of the movement in the early twentieth century from the country to centres of heavy industry like the Ruhr.⁵⁸ In a response to the 'Nachterstedter Brief', Marchwitza suggested that he, with his long years of hard physical work in the mines and his extensive experience as a proletarian writer, would be uniquely able to close the gulf between life and art, which he felt to have been created both by the superficialities of intellectuals with little knowledge of industrial conditions and by the literary immaturity of the writers being groomed by the SED. He expressed the hope that Roheisen might be received with the

sort of praise recently given by a miner to a Polish novel:
"Es packt durch seine nackte Wahrheit und weil es einen schönen
und optimistischen Ausklang hat".⁵⁹ When it was published in
the middle of 1955, Roheisen was hailed as "ein Epos auf die
Arbeit, auf den schaffenden Menschen ... das Hohelied der
Arbeit".⁶⁰ It has subsequently been consigned to complete
literary oblivion. The reasons for such a crass contradiction
need some elucidation.

INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION IN AN ORGANIC COMMUNITY : "ROHEISEN"

Marchwitza's choice of the Eisenhüttenkombinat-Ost project
for his novel is in itself revealing. Unlike Menschen an unsrer
Seite, in which the problems of transition from capitalist to
socialist structures in an urban industrial context are con-
fronted, Roheisen depicts a development suggesting the idea of
starting from scratch: EKO was set up on virgin territory,
remote from the front line of ideological conflict in Berlin
and from the ruins of pre-1945 civilisation. While there is no
doubt that Marchwitza appreciated the primary importance of
heavy industry in a modern socialist economy - unlike Becher in
his projections of the socialist future in Abschied - he
endeavours to demonstrate in Roheisen that a complex new indus-
trial scheme can be neatly integrated into a rural community,
and even become the catalyst bringing about the revitalisation
of that community. He depicts his new settlement as having the
(unspecified) advantages of a modern urban existence without
its disintegrating, demoralising effect on the individual,
simultaneously alive with constructive, harmonious activity,
yet liberated from the parochial frictions of the village

backwater. All of this is suggested in the opening scene of the Second Part of the novel, in which Marchwitza uses fragments of conversation to develop a composite image of life in and around the emergent blast-furnaces:

'Das mit den Brigaden ist doch gut. Es ist wie in einer Familie, keiner kann zu kurz kommen' ... 'Ja, jetzt hab' ich etwas Ruhe vor den Sorgen. Man kann es gar nicht fassen!' ... 'Es wird hier allmählich wie in einer großen Stadt ... Zuerst glaubte man sich hier wie in einer Falle, das Nest ist so weit von aller Welt abgelegen gewesen'. R 233 61

There are no visible remnants of the capitalist past, indeed few wider references to significant 'historical' events outside the EKO complex in the period from 18 August 1950 to 1 May 1952 covered by the novel, except where there is a very obvious relationship, as in the parallelism of the May Day parade on the site with the internationally publicised 'Weltfestspiele der Jugend' in East Berlin in 1951. Political leaders like Walter Ulbricht appear periodically to give speeches which are intended to underline the typical quality of the transformations occurring at EKO for East Germany as a whole. Western society, as in Menschen an unsrer Seite, is only briefly and implausibly depicted through the temporary flight of Stefan Hoff, one of the main group of characters, to the Ruhr.

To a very considerable extent, therefore, EKO is isolated from the rest of the world and provides no real point of reference to the Nazi past or the tensions inherent in the division of Germany. Only within the characters themselves, who are almost exclusively proletarian, is there evidence of the effects of decades of misery and repression and of the fact that there is a struggle being waged between "das Alte" and "das Neue" (R 422). The basic structural principle of the 'Aufbauroman' is rigidly adhered to: the growth of the scheme from

wasteland to economic efficiency, following the building of the two main blast-furnaces, is reflected in the transformation of the central characters from insecurity and fear to conscious integration into the socialist community. As in his Kumiak trilogy, Marchwitza places his main focus on a family group which reflects the fortunes of the proletarian majority through the twentieth century. Christian Hoff, his wife, and children Martin, Margret and Stefan, are the incarnation of the previously poor and underprivileged:

... es war der immer mit Enttäuschungen und
Angstzuständen und immer neu nagenden Sorgen
um das bißchen Sein ringende kleine Mensch
Hoff ... wie tausend Haie war die Zeit; wo
sich der arme Mensch Hoff auch hinwandte,
Überall war so ein aufgerissener Rachen, der
ihn verschlingen wollte. R 19

Although they are difficult people to deal with - Christian is "eigensinnig und eigenbrütlerisch" (R 20), his eldest son Martin is "ein Hoff, voll Unberechenbarkeit und Leidenschaft ... eigensinnig und ein Dickschädel" (R 450) - they are basically decent, hard-working people, who will respond wholeheartedly to others who, like Wellbach, the area secretary of the SED, speak "aus dem Herzen" (R 50). For Christian, the main task is to rediscover the craftsman's pride in work and the sense of purpose in life which bitter experience has forced him to abandon. During the first days of the project, he is content to be one of the many, felling trees as a means of earning a living, but as he becomes more committed to the success of EKO and finds himself scorning the sceptics, his self-respect is restored - "als hätte er sich ... mühsam aus einem lastenden Schlacken-berg herausgraben müssen" (R 217). In answering the call for trained craftsmen to take on more responsible tasks, Christian returns to his old 'Handwerk' as a bricklayer, finds himself

leading and inspiring his fellow-workers, and is quickly elevated to the ranks of the activists.

For two of the Hoff children, Martin and Margret, the EKO shows the way from idealism to self-fulfilment. Martin realises the need to develop badly-needed specialist skills and goes to learn from the experts at the universally admired heavy-engineering works, the Maxhütte in Thuringia, before returning as "ein fester Mensch" (R 403) to play a major role in the construction of the main furnace. Margret takes a positive delight in discovering independence through her involvement in EKO - "(sie) nahm dieses Neue mit wahren Hunger hin" (R 35) - and is "gewandelt" (R 227) through her participation in the FDJ and her fulfilment of her ambition to be a crane-driver. As the works become established, she is one of those specially selected from the ranks of the workers to study at university.

Stefan, the youngest, follows a more meandering, if none the less certain, path to virtue. He finds his first employment outside EKO with an unscrupulous kulack, Hahnbauer, in one of the last pockets of bourgeois resistance in the area, and is soon in the wrong sort of company - "widerspruchsvoll und der schlechten Gesellschaft verfallen" (R 44). His weaknesses include a love of drinking and gambling, which is related to his inability to believe in the aspirations of the new socialist state. After his brother has failed to knock sense into him in a fight, Stefan - "der 'geteilte' Mensch" (R 421) - disappears to the West, but, ironically, finds a socialist friend there in Fritz Lepucha, who persuades him to take up steady employment and finally to return to the GDR, where he is reconciled with his family and joins the EKO workers.

There is a lot in common between Stefan and other young

people portrayed in the novel, in the way in which their development towards maturity is seen as requiring an absolute break with all kinds of self-indulgence. There is no scope in Roheisen for private interests - drinking, gambling, laziness, promiscuity are all viewed as corrupting elements from the past. Hein Leder, the most sympathetic young figure in the novel outside the Hoff family, has already suffered at the end of the war by being led astray to join the SS. Now, he finds his good intentions of little avail against the dark demonic forces which tempt him into the bar - "aber es zog, es zog ihn doch mit verteufelter Gewalt hinein" (R 118). He only succeeds in gaining control over himself - "den in sich zerrissenen Menschen" (R 143) - by leaving his companions at EKO and training at the Maxhütte, which gives him the strength to begin "ein anständiges Leben" back at the works later. He then takes on real responsibilities by becoming a brigade-leader and shows exceptional courage in saving Martin Hoff's life, after the latter has attempted in foolhardy fashion to free a blockage in the iron-ore supply to one of the furnaces. Marchwitza appears to suggest in his characterisation of Leder that it is possible to wipe the slate of the unacceptable past clean at a stroke, and take on a new untainted innocence and virtue. So it seems certainly, as the widely experienced Hein shyly wonders how to start up a romance with a model FDJ-girl, Lotte Meisel, as if he were a naive teenager.

The whole sphere of personal relationships, in fact, is treated in a peculiarly unproblematical manner in Roheisen. Where Claudius was able to give some depth and variety to his characters, suggesting for example serious contradictions between public distinction and private immaturity in the case

of Hans Aehre, Marchwitza concentrates his attentions almost exclusively on the work-sphere and assesses the attainment of 'wholeness' on performance at work. As Jürgen Bonk suggests, in the only detailed study of Marchwitza's work ever published:

Das Werk Marchwitzas (ist) eine künstlerische Bestätigung dafür, daß die Arbeit die erste und grundlegende Bedingung eines wahrhaften menschlichen Daseins ist, daß Mühsiggang in seinem tiefsten Wesen als etwas Unmenschliches und Gesellschaftsfeindliches anzusehen ist. Ein Mensch, der die Beziehung zur Arbeit verloren hat, ist selbst verloren ... (Marchwitzas) proletarische Gestalten ... bedürfen der Arbeit wie der Luft zum Atmen. 62

Almost each of the workers depicted here undergoes the transforming experience which makes him feel fulfilled and integrated into the working-force as a whole - "ein wichtiger Teil des Ganzen" (R 394), "die gemeinsame Kraft" (R 371), "diese große Gemeinschaft" (R 520), "unser Roheisen" (R 394). For Marchwitza, work becomes even more than a fulfilling activity - it is a kind of transcendental force harmonising human contradictions and surging forward relentlessly:

Während die Menschen, in ihre Widersprüche verwickelt und noch immer zweifelnd und ratend, in lauten Wortgefechten miteinander stritten und kämpften, schien die Arbeit, von allem unberührt, vorwärtszuschreiten; das war kein Wunder, denn während die Köpfe im Widerstreite der Meinungen und Gegenmeinungen glühten, eilten die Hände wie von einem anderen Willen bewegt, vom Gestein zum Hammer und vom eifrigen Scharren zum Gestein; und es klirrte und pochte und klang und tönte, und wieder war der helle Straßenstreifen eine neue Strecke weitergerückt. R 152

There is an almost mystical unity between man and the machine, as Margret discovers when she becomes a crane-driver: "Du muß ... dich mit dem Kran eins fühlen ... So wie du den Kran behandelst, so behandelt er dich" (R 508). For outstanding workers like Schindel, everything else, including marriage, is utterly subordinated to the job - "Man muß sich tatsächlich

mit Gewalt daran erinnern, daß man verheiratet ist ... Das Werk saugt einem alle Nerven und alle Liebe aus" (R 196). In the end, Walter Ulbricht has to intervene personally to ensure that Schindel takes a holiday!

There are two apparently conflicting aspects to the notion of 'Gemeinschaft' which emerges in Roheisen through the images used by Marchwitza: firstly, a sense of self-limitation and stabilisation, and secondly, a dynamic expression of harmonious progression towards a better future. For the younger generation, an awareness of the transitory nature of their life of 'Abenteuer' has to be developed - "Es wird langsam Zeit, daß wir irgendwo Anker werfen" (R 70). In some cases however, where characters like Hein Leder are involved, some greater degree of guidance seems called for, and, in the eyes of his friend Hermann, can be found in a stable personal relationship:

"Ja, dem (Hein) fehlt eine, die ihm einmal Zügel anlegt und ihm den Standpunkt klarmacht. Eine wie die Lotte", murmelte Hermann in Verzweiflung. "Die fehlt ihm, die würde ihm den Leichtsinns austreiben." R 122

Hein, of course, at this stage of immature rebelliousness, criticises Hermann for being "darauf versessen ... Wurzeln zu schlagen" (R 138). As the novel progresses, this pattern is however consistently developed: characters like Martin Hoff and Hein find girlfriends with complementary qualities and move towards marriage, and amongst the older generation, starting afresh from the sufferings of wartime, like Marthe Karge and Willner, there is a similar longing for shared stability. Sexual promiscuity, on the other hand, is seen as a threat to the smooth running of the EKO, and there are no emotional complications for exemplary female figures like Lotte and Margret. When Hein makes his decision to train at the Maxhütte, and

moves to a Thuringian village, he is forced to revise his whole image of village life: he sees it as an "Ufer", providing relief from the "Flut" of his earlier existence; it is no longer "erstickend eng" but has become "diesen sichtbaren und spürbaren Halt" (R 172).

Ironically, this sense of protected stability represents an almost complete reversal of an image used just previously, to convey the sense of unified strength developing within the main body of workers, as their work surges forward:

Wie ein weißer, ruhiger Flußstreifen mit schnurgeraden Ufern streckte sich die Werkstraße jeden Tag weiter in das Waldgelände hinein. (R 152)

The images of 'streaming' and 'blending' which are used so often here - "dieser Arbeitsstrom war bereits so mächtig angewachsen" (R 200) ... "alles wurde von einem sichtbaren Willen bewegt, der aus tausend Händen und Einfällen, Seufzern und Rufen und erlösten Schreien zu einer Kraft zusammenströmte" (R 197) - are of course intended to reflect the central theme of the novel, the transformation of iron-ore into 'Roheisen' before it becomes true steel, at every level: "nach dem Schmelzprozeß würden glühende Ströme von Roheisen herausfließen" (R 337). Their **validity** is indeed extended to the new socialist society as a whole, with the exhortation given to young workers - "Die ganze Heimat einig schmieden" (R 170).

The inter-relatedness of these ideas of stabilisation, fusion and movement forward, which is suggested by Marchwitza's use of his favourite images, permeates the novel and is clearly intended to create an overall sense of coherence within a developing socialist universe. Conflict can be completely eliminated at the individual level, according to the fundamental view expressed by Kachan, a local Party veteran, that human

personality can be fully determined by environmental influences:

Der Mensch ist stets das, was man aus ihm macht.
Wird er von schlechten Lehrern beeinflusst, dann
kann man selten Gutes von ihm erwarten, führen
ihn aber Menschlichkeit und Verstand, dann zer-
stört er nicht, sondern achtet die Mühe des
anderen und übertrifft sich selbst in seiner
Meisterschaft, im Guten! R 125

It follows easily from this simplistic assumption that once any individual has come into contact with the right kind of positive influences and become aware of his potential for good, he will undergo the "Wandlung" which will make him "zu einem anderen Menschen", as in the case of Martin Hoff (R 162-4). This sense of inevitable, uncomplicated change is further emphasised by a conversation between Lotte Meisel and Martha Karge, in which they assume that Hein Leder will soon become a new man through the combined effect of his promotion to brigade-leader and his move into clean and well-organised works-barracks:

"Nun, wird er endlich anders?" fragte (Martha).
"Er muß anders werden," antwortete Lotte
Meisel lachend, und sie ballte ihre kräftigen
kleinen Hände. "Er hat sein Quartier in der
neuen Baracke bekommen und hat mehr Sauber-
keit um sich. Und sie haben ihn zum
Brigadeleiter gewählt, das wird ihn auch von
den dummen Gedanken abbringen." R 228

While developing individuals like Hein both live and work in stable communal units, the Hoffs experience the strength of the family as a central integrating force, irresistible even for someone like Stefan, who has succeeded in coming to terms with himself in a sympathetic environment in the West, in a way that proved impossible previously:

Mit seiner Arbeit war er zufrieden - ach, nie
wieder an die alte Zeit denken! Nie mehr
tauschen! In seinen zurückgedrängten Gedanken
und Träumen jedoch mahnte es: Nach Hause! R 424

Generally, as has been indicated, the establishment of a

lasting relationship with a carefully chosen member of the opposite sex is indicative of approaching maturity: for the unattached there is still the constant confirmation of their corporate identity and the importance of their individual contribution through the brigade:

Es gab alle möglichen Charaktere under diesen Maurern ... Doch die Brigadearbeit hielt sie alle zusammen; hier ging es um ihr Maurerwerk und um ihre Maurerehre, hier wurde gemeinsam beraten, gedacht, gerechnet und gemeinsam der Stolz einer neuen Auszeichnung genossen. Hier kämpfte stumm das Neue mit dem Alten. R 422

The strength of the emotional appeal of the 'Heimat' is also evident throughout, but with the important distinction - which Becher found difficult to make - that it must be a new socialist 'Heimat', created by the efforts of those dedicated to the idea of a better future, rather than one based primarily upon traditions and natural surroundings:

Ja, wir haben doch endlich unsere eigene Heimat ... Weißt du, was das heißt, immer darum betrogen zu werden, immer nur davon zu hören: Heimat! Und es gehörte dir nicht mal das Stroh, auf das du dich nach dem Tages-schinden hinwarfst? Heute bauen wir uns diese Heimat selber ... R 151

On a more expansive level, the socialist community is shown to transcend national differences, since the success of EKO is dependent upon Russian and Polish economic co-operation. At the crucial moment it is further assisted by the technical guidance of Russian engineers and the additional work-force supplied from Poland. In keeping with the unrelenting Stalinist pressures which dominated the period in which Roheisen was written, the Russians are portrayed as the saviours of the German people - "Die Russen haben uns von der gänzlichen Vernichtung gerettet" (R 147) - whereas the Western allies are the morally poisonous "Kriegshetzer" condemned for the merciless

destruction of German cities like Berlin and Dresden (R 191-2). The Russian experts who come to help at EKO are experienced and "gute Menschenkenner" (R 466), and steeped in classical culture.

The sense of moral maturity and exemplary dedication emanating from these Russians is found equally in the many SED officials portrayed in Roheisen, who make up the core of the social superstructure. The Party and its attitudes are typified perfectly in Preißler and Wellbach, former workers of unshakeable loyalty and enthusiasm, persecuted by the Nazis, and vastly experienced in the task of inspiring others to outstanding endeavours. They are ably assisted by technical experts like Schindel and Hellweg, transferred to EKO from other concerns, and by simple local activists like Kachan, full of good humour and pragmatism, and untainted by any dogmatic distortions of reality. Together, they demonstrate that the Party is "eine Partei der Arbeit ... mit unserem Leben verbunden" (R 210), based on human understanding and sincerity - Schindel is "ein Herz auf Beinen" (R 168). It is certainly not the "Beamteninstitution" which it is assumed to be by the lazy, egotistical bureaucrat Grube, who like Claudius' Bock, exercises power for a brief, but disastrous, period on the site before opting for West German 'decadence'.⁶³

Despite the assertion, in keeping with the novel's title, that the Party is "noch zum guten Teil Roheisen" (R 273), Marchwitza clearly wishes to portray the SED as a God-like guiding force determining the course of development in the new GDR. It is the "unsichtbare(r) Wille()" (R 197) which blends human and natural raw material to a powerful entity, and even though "Schwächen und Mängel" are occasionally evident, its powers of leadership serve to bring about changes of which

working-men in their previous helpless isolation could never have conceived:

... ohne die Partei, ohne ihr Wissen und ihren Einfluß auf die Gedanken der Arbeitenden im Werk hätte der ehemalige stille Winkel noch unberührt von diesen großen Ereignissen dagelegen. R 522

The neatly-ordered hierarchy which is made up from each of these elements in the 'Gemeinschaft' is further reinforced by various narrative devices used by Marchwitza. In Roheisen, we find an extreme case of authorial omniscience and self-assurance: there is nothing to contradict, or even qualify, the implication in the novel's structure that individuals can be transformed and fulfilled as quickly and as easily as furnaces can be designed and constructed. So many of the characters speak with the same confident voice that it must be taken to be that of the author as well. In fact, Marchwitza misses no opportunity to add to the sense of unified progress in his fictional world. Not only does he portray the world of human beings in harmony, but he also goes to considerable lengths to indicate that this harmony is universal, reflected even in elements outside human control - nature, the weather and the seasons.

The thesis developed by F. C. Delius in Der Held und sein Wetter, that 19th century novelists like Ludwig, Raabe and Fontane relate their fictional weather conditions to the situation of their heroes, for the ideological purpose of satisfying the reader's need for a unity of experience which the real world lacked, can be interestingly extended here.⁶⁴ Socialist Realists like Marchwitza set their sights much higher: their fictional unity had to be considerably more comprehensive, not to provide aesthetic compensation, but in order to overwhelm

even the most sceptical of readers into accepting that it must be based upon reality. Thus nature becomes the ubiquitous ally of socialism. In Roheisen, the frequent references to the weather and the changing seasons always draw attention in some significant way to the progress of events on the human plane. As the first trees are felled on the EKO site, the sun appears, uniting the symbols of socialism with man and nature:

Der Himmel hatte sich aufgeheilt. Das Rot und Blau der Fahnen leuchtete in der durchbrechenden Sonne stärker auf. Es vereinigte sich mit dem Kieferngrün, mit den eifrigen Gesichtern der arbeitenden Jungen zu einem anziehenden Bilde, das die Zuschauer festhielt. Mancher, der vorher durch Ängstliche Vorstellungen erschreckt worden war, ließ allmählich seine Bedenken fallen und Überlegte ... R 10-11

The changeable weather conditions of the first autumn reflect the initial problems with materials and morale on the site, while observations on the migrating birds are juxtaposed with comments on the rootlessness of youths like Hein Leder with unbelievable frequency. Autumn is frequently personified as mature and benevolent:

Der Herbst ist wie ein alt gewordener, den Lebensberg langsam wieder hinabsteigender Mensch, der unterwegs noch öfters stehenbleibt und nachdenklich sein zurückgelassenes Werk überschaut, wie der Meister, der von seinem fertigen Bilde zurücktritt, um es nochmals zu betrachten ... R 173

The works represent a welcome "neues Gesicht" on the "Gemälde", with no reference to the simultaneous destruction being inflicted on existing nature: it is a scene of busy, constructive activity, with the "emsige() Bewegungen" of humans viewed from afar, and a feeling of homely naturalness created by a succession of diminutives - "Dampfwölkchen", "Flußchen", "d(ie) kleine() altertümliche() Stadt" (R 173-4). There is of course one essential difference between natural time-cycles and

human activity - "Der Herbst ... sagt: 'es geht langsam zu Ende'. Doch die tausend Menschen ... sprachen: 'Es ist der Anfang!'" (R 174). Whereas nature is basically repetitive through the years, for socialist man there is steady progress to be made through the hardships of winter towards the construction of new industry. In effect, the two winters in Roheisen are passed over quickly, except for the traditional association of Christmas with snow and birth in the Hoff household:

Schnee begann in leichten Flöckchen herabzufallen. Morgen war ja Weihnachtsabend. Eine neue Welt wurde wahrhaft geboren, unter harten Wehen, aus hoffnungslosen Elend und Trümmern ... Unser Werk wächst. R 427

The main emphasis is placed on the impressive developments occurring in the seasons of growth and fruition, Spring and Summer: the birds return and 'discuss' the changes which have taken place in their absence (R 297); in the height of summer, all is music and beauty, in fact the inexhaustible Schindel claims to prefer "die Musik der Schaufeln, Diesel-Loks und Niethammer" to the songs of the birds (R 340); as the grain flourishes and the works expand, they reflect comparable forms of activity - "Überall Arbeit, Arbeit" (R 343) - showing again the extent to which Marchwitza is intent on poeticising hard physical labour. Naturally, as the climax of the novel is reached at the beginning of May 1952, with the completion of the second furnace, nature is at its most idyllic: Margret Hoff, having just been selected for a coveted university place, walks in a "hohe und weit gewordene Welt" (R 516), at one with the woods, lakes, ~~mountains~~ and fresh air. In the midst of the fanfares and celebrations with which the novel ends, the triumph of the working-classes is still emphatically inter-related with nature and its resources:

Die Landschaft hatte ein neues Gepräge erhalten. Ein Antlitz der Kraft und eines unerschütterlichen Willens. Eine mächtige, beherrliche Meisterhand hatte es geschaffen aus Bergen von Eisen und Ziegelsteinen, mit Sorgen und zahllosen Schweißtropfen. Der Meister hieß Arbeiterklasse. R 531

All of this may be rhetorically satisfying, but it makes a mockery of literary realism. Roheisen has never since been republished.

"ROHEISEN" AND THE FOURTH WRITERS' CONGRESS

Despite the tendency amongst writers in the GDR not to name names when criticising their colleagues, it seems quite obvious that the definitive rejection of the 'Aufbauliteratur' in the liberating build-up to the Fourth Writers' Congress occurred not least because of the Roheisen fiasco. The 'model' industrial novel, which reflected all the main demands made by the SED for positive heroes, community harmony and an unwaveringly optimistic perspective, and which had been publicised in advance with all the means at the Party's disposal, was greeted by the writers themselves with attitudes ranging from pained embarrassment to indignant fury. Roheisen was seen both as a disaster in literary terms and as a complete white-wash of the fundamental problems still facing the GDR at the time. Its publication could well have been a crucial factor in encouraging East German writers to usher the 'Thaw', which followed Stalin's death in Soviet literature, somewhat belatedly into their own cultural life.⁶⁵

Johannes R. Becher had already noted in his Bemühungen late in 1955 that everything should be done to prevent a work like Roheisen ever being set up as a literary model for

prospective writers. He criticised its structural inadequacies, describing it as an unacceptable 'Mischform', with elements of novel, chronicle and reportage, and deplored the absence of plot, of credible characters and of genuine conflicts in it:

Wer meint auf eine Fabel verzichten zu können, oder wer gar die Figur eines Helden zu umgehen trachtet, indem er Helden en masse auftreten läßt und auf diese Weise den Helden eliminiert, der verzichtet darauf, in seinem Werk Menschen zu entwickeln, menschliche Konflikte darzustellen und dadurch auf Menschen zu wirken. 66

Interestingly, in terms of Becher's own inner urge to correct the distorted autobiographical picture given in Abschied, in what was to be his last piece of creative writing, he here emphasises the need to provide characters in important economic and Party roles with convincing private lives, in order to achieve the ideal of 'Ganzheit' in portrayal:

Es gilt, das Private gesellschaftsfähig zu machen und die Schlupfwinkel des Privaten mit gesellschaftlichem Leben anzufüllen. Man kann einen ganzen Menschen nicht darstellen, indem man ihn nur in seiner Betriebsarbeit oder Parteiarbeit uns vorführt. 67

At the Congress itself, however, Becher kept his attentions directed mainly on more general historical problems in his address "Von der Größe unserer Literatur". He left it to Anna Seghers to spell out the consequences of the absence of conflicts and character-development in recent East German literature, in terms of the alienation of the reading public, and to suggest respectfully to Marchwitza that he might be better off continuing his work on the Kumiaks.⁶⁸ In emphasising the alarming gulf between "Schematismus" and "Wirklichkeit", she implied the complete bankruptcy of the 'Aufbauroman':

Die scholastische Schreibart ist Gift, wie marxistisch sie sich auch gebärdet. Sie ist unserer Idee feindlich. Denn sie bewirkt Erstarrung, statt Bewegung, sie bewirkt Faulheit, statt Initiative. Keine Erregung

erschüttert den Leser solcher Bücher. Mit Nachdenken braucht er sich erst gar nicht anzustrengen. Er kennt das Schema, nach dem das Buch montiert ist, so gut wie der Autor. Scheinbar nur ist eine Entwicklung da, aber es ist eine Scheinentwicklung. Der in Wirklichkeit schwer zu erkennende, so oft furchtbar gefährdete Weg, ist in dem Buch so einfach zu finden, daß sich ein Kind im Dunkeln nicht verirrt. Die Konflikte sind Scheinkonflikte, denn die Leser sind ihrer Lösung von vornherein sicher. 69

Later, in a highly significant section on the need for a modest perspective on reality - "Grundstoff Wirklichkeit" - which will allow the reader to concentrate on insights and experiences which are vivid and immediate, she questions the notion - dear to Socialist Realism generally - that lengthy novels somehow possess a virtue of their own:

Typisch ist nicht nur das Mächtige, zahlenmäßig Gewaltige, das sich nach Menge mißt, sondern was dauert und wächst. Wie ein kräftiger Keim mehr Gewähr für die Zukunft in sich trägt als ein riesiger, aber morscher Baum. 70

In a far less reverent tone, Stefan Heym criticised the patronising attitude of Party authorities to 'Arbeiterschritsteller' like Marchwitza, in offering them access to literary media because of the sincerity of their intentions rather than their abilities as writers. Heym, who had spoken out aggressively in rather different circumstances when denouncing McCarthyism and renouncing his American citizenship in 1952, was now insisting - like Brecht - upon literary quality and respect for the intelligence of the East German reader, but in a more provocative manner. He warned against the encouragement of literary 'sculptors' who could only create "plumpe(), schlecht bearbeitete(), halb fertige() Steinklütze der Literatur, die dekoriert und in hohen Auflagen verbreitet wurden, nur weil das lebendige Modell und die Absicht des

autors so schön waren".⁷¹ His particular fear was obviously that prospective readers would be put off literature completely because of the indigestibility of such 'Klötze'. Only Marchwiza's old comrade Willi Bredel was prepared to recognise Roheisen as a 'Pioniertat' and criticise Heym for stifling the hopes of younger writers.⁷²

Even though the 'Thaw' in cultural life in the GDR was to be short-lived, it does mark the end of the industrial novel 'produced' with an assembly-line uniformity, although this was anything but the last word on the genre as such, as the 'Bitterfelder Weg' was soon to demonstrate. In the meantime, many young authors were given a vital opportunity to explore the literary possibilities of other themes which were closer to their own most formative experience. The problem which had been singularly ignored in the conception of the 'Aufbauroman' was that of personal continuity in the desperately complicated period between the War and the establishment of the new socialist state in 1949. Since this vital historical perspective had hitherto been so completely lacking, it is scarcely surprising that the new generation of writers, including Franz Fühmann, Erwin Strittmatter, Günter de Bruyn and Dieter Noll, should now return to the fundamental issue of their own past life, and attempt to answer the question of how the idealistic young soldiers of Hitler's armies had become the pioneers of the German Democratic Republic.

CHAPTER 3

THE IDENTITY PROBLEMS OF THE WAR GENERATION.

HERBERT OTTO : DIE LÜGE,

DIETER NOLL : DIE ABENTEUER DES WERNER HOLT,

MAX WALTER SCHULZ : WIR SIND NICHT STAUB IM WIND,

FRANZ FÜHMANN : DAS JUDENAUTO,

GÜNTER DE BRUYN : DER HOHLWEG

THE AMBIGUITY OF COMMUNITY : FRANZ FÜHMANN'S "KAMERADEN"

Although the overwhelming emphasis in the SED's 'Kulturpolitik' after 1948 was placed upon illuminating the successes in the programme of socialist reconstruction, the depiction of the Third Reich and its aftermath had not been completely taboo. Such fiction as was published, however, lacked authenticity in its descriptions of life in Hitler's Germany, and showed no awareness in its formal structures of the 'Ideologieverdacht' which led West German authors like Heinrich Böll and Wolfgang Borchert to abandon the conventional novel as part of their post-war 'Kahlschlag'.¹ On the contrary, Western fiction about the period around 1945 continued to be criticised for substituting "monologische() Selbstverständigung" for the portrayal of the relationship between bourgeois values, the rise of fascism and the war.²

East Germany's first war-novels suffered badly from the fact that their authors had spent the years in question in exile. Willi Bredel's Die Enkel (1953) provides a weak ending to the trilogy which began, in Die Väter (1941), with a highly readable account of the class-struggle in proletarian Hamburg in the late nineteenth century. It concentrates so much upon the heroic activities of idealised anti-fascists and the nobility of the Russian forces, that the experience of the majority who saw no alternative to fearful conformity is largely passed over.³ Bodo Uhse's Die Patrioten (1954) was actually designed as a warning against West German rearmament within NATO, showing that the true patriots are the minority courageous enough to take up arms against their fatherland, when it reveals blatantly anti-socialist aggressions.⁴ It depicts the work of resistance groups in many parts of the Reich, but almost

nothing emerges of everyday life, since too much detail is of an abstract documentary nature and conforms too obviously to ideological preconceptions.

This distorted emphasis on heroes acting decisively against a Germany seen as irredeemably evil is the main shortcoming of such novels. The 'Vaterland' they depicted simply had to be destroyed before the moral rebirth could begin from its ashes. There is no explanation as to how, for example, the Third Reich won the allegiance of so many of the idealistic, morally sensitive members of the younger generation. Such a patently inadequate view of Nazi Germany was, of course, the only one which would reflect the Party line that capitalism and socialism were total opposites, in moral as well as in political terms, and that questions of character and environment within each ideology should thus remain undifferentiated.

The process of loosening the hold of this rigid ideological dualism upon East German literature, in order to allow some room for manoeuvre between the extremes of 'Gesellschaft' and 'Gemeinschaft', alienation and self-fulfilment, depravity and humanity, is usually seen to have begun with the war-literature of 1956. The crucial problem of the dubious reliability of value-concepts per se was, however, raised in a modest story published the previous year, Franz Fühmann's Kameraden.⁵ In depicting the crisis of a young soldier confronted with the corrupt reality behind the moral clichés upon which his affirmation of National Socialism had been based, Fühmann's 'Novelle' implicitly places many of the absolutes accorded special 'socialist' significance in the GDR in an uncomfortably ambiguous light.

It is certainly important that this is one of the first

East German prose-works about the war written by an ex-soldier who had only been converted to socialism years later. Fühmann had demonstrated his ideological dependability in the rhetorically inflated verse-epic, Die Fahrt nach Stalingrad, with which he made his literary debut in 1953, and which had also been praised for its literary qualities by Anna Seghers.⁶ This may explain why he was able to publish Kameraden before the writers' campaign against schematism was fully under way. As a prose-writer, Fühmann showed a welcome awareness of the virtues of self-containment, and avoided the errors made by colleagues endeavouring to write monumental epics on narrow 'Aufbau' themes. He seems to have anticipated the widespread move towards shorter narrative forms in 1956. Admittedly, he depends heavily upon formal contrivances typical of the 'Novelle' as a genre, making excessive use of fateful coincidence and oppressive symbolism, but the historical setting is well chosen: the eve of the German invasion of Russia in 1941, when the ruthless, world-conquering ambitions of the fascists are unmistakably revealed.

Fühmann's three protagonists represent broad types - Thomas, the naively idealistic 18 year-old, Karl, the First World War veteran whose moral sensibilities have been eroded by decades of harsh experience, and Josef, a repressed, cowardly individual viewed as a 'natural' fascist. They are brought together on the superficial basis that they have shown themselves to be the outstanding marksmen in their batallion, now granted a day's leave of absence in recognition of their prowess. The crisis descends abruptly upon them when their frivolous attempts to shoot a mysteriously attractive bird amongst the marshes of the Russian-Lithuanian border end in

tragedy. They unwittingly kill the daughter of their commanding officer who had been sitting alone on a reed-covered bank nearby. This fateful incident puts the soldiers' unreflected sense of common purpose to the test, since the threat of court-martial and summary execution now looms behind the façade of 'Kameradschaft'. As they panic and bury the girl, intending to keep the whole thing secret, the instinctively honest and straightforward Thomas finds himself faced with a terrifying moral crisis for the first time in an otherwise sheltered life. He is in fact technically innocent, since it was the bullets of Karl and Josef which simultaneously killed the girl and the heron-like bird. This only serves, however, to make the dilemma more acute, as it threatens the notion of solidarity and joint responsibility so central to the military ethic. The events of the following two days, however, viewed mainly from Thomas' anguished perspective, reveal just how hollow the values inculcated into German youth in the Third Reich were.

Thomas' incoherent review of his years in the Hitler-Youth is dominated by the slogans which have made unquestioning obedience, self-sacrifice, nationalism and honour into facets of a doctrine learnt by rote rather than understood:

Unsere Ehre heißt Treue! Weh dem, der je
seine Kameraden verrät! Der wird ausgestoßen
sein aus seinem Volke! Deutsch sein heißt
zusammenhalten auf Gedeih und Verderb! Das
hat uns groß gemacht in der Geschichte!
Darum sind wir das auserlesene Volk, wir,
Hüter der Nibelungentreue! 7

The uniformity of the 'Volksgemeinschaft' is raised to such an absolute level that any attempt to dissent is greeted with accusations of weakness or treachery, since manifestations of individual distinctiveness, whatever their moral basis, can only derive from 'der innere Schweinehund'.⁸ The point that

Fühmann registers indelibly in the course of Kameraden is that those for whom values, ideals and oaths of loyalty have a deep significance are at the mercy of their unscrupulous colleagues and leaders. Josef and Karl, concerned only with saving their own skin, exploit Thomas' integrity for their own ends. Through a combination of physical violence, verbal abuse and emotional blackmail, they force him to swear anew an oath of loyalty which places 'Kameradschaft' above all considerations of morality and reason:

"Merk dir," sagte Karl, "wenn du uns verpfeifen willst, dann bist du erledigt. Jetzt kommt's nicht mehr drauf an. Alles oder nichts!"

"Ich bin doch kein Verräter, Kameraden!" sagte Thomas.

"Nein," sagte Josef, "das genügt nicht, was er uns da sagt! Sprich nach, Thomas: 'Wenn ich euch verpfeife, dann habe ich den Tod verdient!' Sag's nach!"

"Wenn ich euch verpfeife, dann habe ich den Tod verdient!" sagte Thomas ohne Zaudern. 9

Just how meaningless this notion of common loyalty is to the others is revealed graphically soon after, as Thomas, about to get rid of a bullet in the latrine so that he will also be one short, is stopped by Josef, who has already saved him the trouble. Josef's idea is of course not that of shared responsibility, but that of casting blame upon Thomas and Karl - the cynical action of a Nietzsche-fanatic, whose world is "kalt ... eisig und leer, bevölkert nur von dem Einen, das war er".¹⁰

At the level of leaders like the Major, the gulf between high-sounding phrases and the dictates of 'Realpolitik' is even more pronounced: in a highly ironical scene, the Major disturbs Karl and Josef at the moment when they have decided to dispose of their conscience-stricken comrade, whom they have already knocked unconscious. Thinking that Thomas is merely drunk, the Major takes the opportunity to praise the three for being

exemplary "gute Kameraden", describing this kind of comradeship as "der eherne Fels des Soldatentums",¹¹ sentiments which he repeats in front of the assembled battalion the following day. Not only is the Major correct here in terms of his own fascist attitudes - the 'Kameraden' he patronises being viewed as 'Viecher' a moment earlier - but his references also make it clear how typical the 'Kameradschaft' of these three soldiers is for the Third Reich as a whole. They are basically incompatible personalities forced together for militaristic ends, without any of the enduring personal bonds upon which 'Gemeinschaft' traditionally depends. The Nazi war-machine is described as "der große rasselnde Mechanismus", which conveniently does away with the need for individuals to develop any sense of responsibility for its actions. Those who control it, like the Major, are an incongruous ensemble of public and private 'selves' - "Vorgesetzter, Vater, Feind und Freund".¹²

Even when the girl's death is discovered, the retribution feared by the three 'Kameraden' never follows, since the overall commander of the troops - poised for invasion (who turns out to be Josef's father) sees the virtue of transforming a potentially morale-shaking incident into racial propaganda against the Russians. A Russian bayonet 'discovered' beside the corpse paves the way for what Josef sees as "eine nationalsozialistische Lösung" to the problem, as he explains his father's rationale:

(Der General) löst alles im Sinne des Nationalsozialismus; so wird aus Unsinn Sinn und aus Plage noch eine Wohltat. Das ist unsere Politik. 13

For Josef, the doctrine of racial supremacy means insulation from all questions of moral concern and guilt: quite simply "ein Deutscher ist kein Mörder", whereas "Bolschewiken sind

immer schuldig".¹⁴ The image of the enemy and his vices, reflected through Karl's talk about murder, sadism and moral depravity in Soviet Russia, is based on a simplistic reversal of what are held to be the specifically German virtues. In the weakest section of the story, however, Fühmann succumbs to an equally facile contrast: Thomas gazes in wonder at the innocent peasant girls, with their "menschliches Gesicht, bauerisch schön und rein"¹⁵ who are executed in an act of public retaliation by soldiers. The latter then take on the appearance of animals - wolves, hyenas and pigs - as if the brutality of the deed needed underlining. His pathetic attempt to prevent this injustice by claiming to be the murderer himself is swept aside, again not just by physical force but by Josef's cynically effective suggestion that Thomas should swear "bei seiner Ehre" that he is speaking the truth. In a final night of despair, Thomas comes to the harsh realisation (for which East German readers had already been well-prepared in the novels of Bredel and Uhse) that the only way to oppose this corrupt ideology is to defect to the Russian side. There is, however, no happy ending. Thomas is shot while deserting and found the next day by Lithuanian peasants - it seems unlikely that he is still alive.

The fact that there is no omniscient narrator in Kameraden to modify this open-ended conclusion, or to emphasise that the demoralising gulf between ideology and expediency was limited to the Third Reich, has left an uncomfortable ambiguity about Fühmann's story which continues to concern critics in the GDR. In a review of his war-stories following the publication of the volume Stürzende Schatten in 1959, Rosemarie Heise regretted the fact that there is nothing to reassure readers that the alienation experienced under fascism had been overcome in the

new socialist Germany:

Es fehlt den Erzählungen Fühmanns etwas für den Leser der Gegenwart schlechthin Unentbehrliches: Die Orientierung im Jetzt und Hier, die Anleitung zum Handeln, durch das allein die faschistische Vergangenheit wirklich überwunden werden könnte. Dazu aber bedurfte es eben mehr als nur der bloßen Entlarvung: Nur durch die Gestaltung ihrer tätigen Überwindung in unserer sozialistischen Gegenwart wird die faschistische Vergangenheit für den Leser als Überwindbar erkannt ... 16

Similarly, in a more recent assessment of Fühmann's work, the chief editor of Neue Deutsche Literatur. went to considerable lengths to emphasise that readers of Kameraden should not be led into an attitude of general scepticism towards value-concepts, such as those which socialist society regards most highly:

Der Begriff "Kamerad" soll aber vom progressiven Standpunkt aus nicht generell in Frage gestellt, die Möglichkeit von solidarischer Freundschaft - denn dies ist seine ethische Werts substanz - nicht angezweifelt werden. Auch hier ging es, nachdem die Zerstörung des mystischen Klischees geleistet war, letzten Endes um Rehabilitierung, Reinigung, Erneuerung mit progressiven, realen Inhalten. Ist denn die sozialistische Gesellschaft denkbar ohne Kameradschaftlichkeit in den Beziehungen zwischen den Menschen, ist denn der Kampf der Arbeiterklasse zu gewinnen ohne die Treue zur Sache, ist denn die höchstmögliche Qualität des Produktes aus der Hand des Arbeiters unter unseren Verhältnissen gesichert ohne das Empfinden von Arbeiter- und Klassen-Ehre? 17

It is simply a matter of whether these emotive concepts are serving 'progressiv' or 'menschenfeindlich' objectives. Fühmann, however, has restricted himself to pointing out that his main objective in his war-stories was to depict the intellectual and emotional climate of the Third Reich as precisely as possible, and thus avoid the "recht wenig kontrollierten Überschwang" which had resulted from his ambitious attempt to contrast Nazi past and socialist present in Die

new socialist Germany:

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Fahrt nach Stalingrad.¹⁸

The sense of disquiet which Kameraden still evidently arouses almost two decades after its publication, when novels like Die Enkel and Die Patrioten are forgotten behind a few charitable phrases in historical surveys, is indicative of Fühmann's success in achieving something more profound than the 'illustrative literature' so roundly condemned in 1956 at the Fourth Writers' Congress. His more differentiated depiction of the Third Reich exposed the need for a comparable re-assessment of life in the GDR, based on personal experience and showing an awareness of the ambiguities inherent in values like 'Gemeinschaft' and 'Kameradschaft'. But the primary interest in the period of the 'Thaw' was to continue the critical task begun by Fühmann and put an end to the 'Vergangenheitslosigkeit' which Stalinist 'Kulturpolitik' had hitherto imposed upon literature in the GDR.¹⁹

THE FALLIBLE HERO AND THE REVIVAL OF THE 'ENTWICKLUNGSROMAN'

Ludwig Renn, the respected author of the anti-war novel Krieg (1928) and a veteran socialist, appealed on the eve of the Fourth Writers' Congress for a new war-literature from the perspective of those "die (den Krieg) auf der falschen Seite führten und für die er Anlaß zu innerer Auseinandersetzung, zur Erkenntnis und Umkehr wurde".²⁰ He was seeking the restoration of an historical dimension to the portrayal of character in East German literature, not an unhealthy pre-occupation with an arbitrarily chosen theme, and yet the pursuit of this essential objective was to be fraught with difficulties arising from the simplified view of the war years

propagated by the Party. The interest in the experience of war was already widespread in the West, with a new wave of writers, including Hans Hellmut Kirst, Gerd Ledig and Wolfgang Ott, capitalising upon the critical achievement of post-war pioneers like Heinrich Böll and Hans Werner Richter. For the rising generation of East German writers, however, it had only just become possible to approach the most complex period in their lives in a spirit of creative exploration, casting aside the didacticism so fatal to the 'Aufbauliteratur'.

The potential popularity of this new subject-matter was in itself problematic, since it was evident in the West that some authors, and a great many readers, were attracted to it in the search for vicarious excitement or the sentimentalisation of past exploits, rather than through the desire to come to terms morally with their involvement in the Third Reich. This factor alone was bound to arouse the suspicions of the Party's cultural politicians, as the fluctuating fortunes of the first examples of 'war literature' after 1956 have since demonstrated. Works such as Karl Mundstock's Bis zum letzten Mann (1956), Harry Thürk's Die Stunde der toten Augen (1957) and the first part of Erwin Strittmatter's Der Wundertäter (1957) enjoyed a previously unknown popularity in the GDR, but official attitudes to them have been subject to unpredictable variations. The fact that they were published during an unprecedented period of cultural dialogue between East and West has meant that their treatment of the war has been seen as excessively dependent upon 'Western influences', whereas the anti-heroic view of the individual which they reflect is the first step towards the critical revision of the 'Menschenbild' in the Stalinist industrial novels.²¹

Superficially, there is a 'naturalistic' emphasis upon death and human degradation in the work of Mundstock and Thürk, and an indulgence of picaresque fantasy in Strittmatter's novel. In terms of composition, however, there is a new variety of style and perspective, experiments with terse factual narrative and flashback techniques, and an obvious resistance to the concept of dramatic change in the protagonist's development. Much of this is uneven and unsophisticated, and a great deal still remains of the schematic approach to character and conflict found in their earlier work, such as Strittmatter's contribution to the work of the Berliner Ensemble, Katzgraben (1953), or the 'Betriebsromane' of Mundstock and Thürk. Yet something of the radical reappraisal of Socialist Realism called for in Hans Mayer's courageous essay of 1956, "Zur Gegenwartslage unserer Literatur", is already there: the avoidance of obsolescent literary forms and the devalued concepts which Mayer termed "Begriffe ohne Wirklichkeitsgehalt", and some awareness of the view that "moderne Literatur ist nicht möglich ohne Kenntnis der modernen Literatur".²²

Their debt to previously published war-literature is considerable. Mundstock introduced something of the flavour of Böll and Hemingway into short stories like Bis zum letzten Mann, in which he depicts the life-and-death struggle between two 'Gebirgsjäger' amidst the desolate wastes of the Scandinavian Tundra.²³ Thürk borrowed heavily from Norman Mailer's The Naked and the Dead for his Die Stunde der toten Augen, but ended up with a bizarre compromise between a war-thriller and the conventional didacticism of Socialist Realism.²⁴ Strittmatter's Der Wundertäter was conceived, like the many Western picaresque novels of the period, from the standpoint that the

scale of inhumanity and horror was too implausible by normal standards of realism to be conveyed by psychological analysis and a unified 'plot'.²⁵ What they have in common is the bleak picture they present of the plight of young soldiers fortunate enough to survive the carnage of war. Thürk's paratroopers confront death with something dangerously close to nihilistic acceptance:

Das sind wir. Eine Generation, der sie das Rückgrat gebrochen haben. Wir haben es erst bemerkt, als wir uns aufrichten wollten. Wir können uns nicht allein aufrichten. Wir sind zerbrochen. Ich glaube, es ist nie zuvor eine Generation so zerbrochen gewesen wie wir. 26

Strittmatter's semi-autobiographical hero, Stanislaus Büdner, is left in depressed isolation on the Greek island to which he has fled in escaping the hell of the battlefield:

Einmal war sein Leben von Wünschen getrieben worden. Nicht selten hatte sich auch die Liebe, jene geheimnisvolle Kraft, seiner bemächtigt, seine Wünsche verwirrt, und seinen Lebensfaden zersaust. Alles das gab es jetzt nicht mehr. Er war wohl nur noch eine leere Kiste, die hin und her geschickt wurde, ein Kadaver, den man auf Umwegen zu Grabe fuhr. 27

The obvious implication is that there was no easy transition from this situation to post-war commitment to socialism. The central figures in these stories have qualities worthy of admiration, but remain highly limited in their capacity for independent reflection or political initiative. Even though they undergo some experiences which, from the perspective of the middle 1950's, may well later bear ideological fruit, no illusions are fostered about the length of time any fundamental reorientation of personality was going to require.

Such a complex concept of continuity was more than political leaders in the GDR, anxious to **establish** rigid demarcation lines between the present and the past, as much as

between East and West Germany, were prepared to accept. Although some degree of differentiation had still been tolerated in the months after the suppression of the Hungarian uprising, the infamous SED 'Kulturkonferenz' of October 1957 seemed to mark a mindless return to practices totally rejected at the Fourth Writers' Congress. Alexander Abusch again headed the ideological offensive against independently minded writers, which sought exclusive concentration upon "unsere brennenden Gegenwartsprobleme" and an end to war-literature written from "(die) politische() Froschperspektive des deutschen Schützengrabens".²⁸ The course was set for the Bitterfeld Conference in April 1959, at which the main trend back to socialist reportage seemed, ironically, to be confirmed by the author of Der Wunderhüter, who reported, in his new capacity as chairman of the Writers' union, that less than ten per cent of GDR authors were now writing on war-themes, while a good two-thirds were already working on contemporary subjects.²⁹ Anna Seghers, too, concluded her main address to the Fifth Writers' Congress in May 1961 with the earnest hope that the war had by then finally been treated in sufficient range and depth:

Wir wünschen uns, daß dieses Kollektivgedächtnis für die kommende Generation zum letzten Mal Zeugnis abgelegt hat, nicht nur über den zweiten Weltkrieg, sondern über die Zeit der Kriege, die barbarische Vorgeschichte.

With no apparent concern for continuity, she felt able to refer to the peaceful socialist present, in terms which evoke the pseudo-biblical notion of a Paradise established "auf den anderen Ufer der Zeit ... eine Gesellschaft ohne die alten Leiden und Seuchen der Kriege".³⁰

Fortunately for the breadth of East German literature after 1957, this was not the only line of response to the

political awkwardness of the 'Menschenbild' created by the war-literature. Alfred Kurella took the less sweeping view, at another conference during that year, that the subject could be eminently useful, provided the anti-socialist impulse behind the war was more strongly emphasised:

Wenn Sie den Krieg als Hitlerkrieg, als abscheulichen Krieg, als Raubkrieg verstehen und negieren, dann kommen Sie nicht weiter als bis zu einer bürgerlichen Position, zu der Position eines leider verlorengegangenen anständigen deutschen Heeres oder einer anständigen deutschen Ehrlichkeit, oder der humanen deutschen Gesinnung, die hier in den Schmutz getreten worden ist ... Erst wenn Sie ihn als anti-sozialistischen Krieg negieren und damit den Sozialismus zur Position machen, erst dann kommen Sie hinter das Geheimnis des Krieges, erst dann sind Sie fähig, Ihr eigenes Erleben über das unmittelbar Erlebte hinaus zu einer Fabel zu machen, die in dem gewählten Ausschnitt eine Totalität erfaßt. 31

At the same conference, Hermann Kant and Frank Wagner began a process of differentiation between the growing 'Entpolitisierung' in the Western war-literature of Kirst, Ledig and Ott, and the achievements of GDR writers like Fühmann and Mundstock in showing up the perverted ideals of the Third Reich. Although they conceded the desirability of satisfying the 'Abenteuerbedürfnis' of their readership, Kant and Wagner ended by stressing the necessity of having positive heroes who survive the war and work to establish socialism in Germany afterwards.³²

The misleading effect of the term 'Kriegsbuch' applied to this literature was recognised by another young critic, Christa Wolf, who saw the ultimate objective for her generation as that of reflecting the totality of German society in the years after 1939, in emulating Arnold Zweig's cycle of novels on the First World War:

Ist nicht der Ruf nach dem Kriegsbuch eigentlich die Forderung nach einem von subjektiven

Zufallsergebnissen gereinigten, auf Materialstudien gestützten großen historischen Roman, der - wie Zweigs Grisca-Zyklus - Front und Hinterland, den Generalstab und den Schützengraben, den einfachen Soldaten und den Offizier, kurz: die Totalität der Gesellschaft darstellt? 33

Since such a massive project was still clearly beyond the capabilities of relatively inexperienced authors, Kant and Wagner were closer to the realms of the possible in placing the character-development of exemplary individuals in the forefront of their plans:

Welch eine verlockende Vorstellung ist es für uns, ein Buch in unserer Hand halten zu können, das das Schicksal unserer Nation im Bereich und vom Standpunkt des Proletariats beleuchtet, das vor allem den Wurzeln der zeitweiligen faschistischen Erfolge nachspürt, dem Wirken der Demagogie und des Terrors, dann aber auch der einsetzenden Krise, dem langsamen Sichlösen, dem Wieder-aufleben verschütteten Klassenbewußtseins, also dem Entstehen jener Menschen, die heute den sozialistischen Weg in Deutschland gehen. 34

There was a grim irony in the fact that this kind of enthusiastic recognition of the value of 'Entwicklungsroman' structures was emerging from a conference whose participants were equally associated with the campaign against the 'revisionists' of 1956. For while many of the intellectual leaders in the 'Thaw', like Hans Mayer, had sinned in relating the failures of GDR literature to ignorance of the perceptions and techniques of modern authors like Joyce and Kafka, the chief victim, Georg Lukács, had been attacked for more exclusively political reasons. It was ironical that, for all Lukács' involvement in the provisional Hungarian government of 1956 and his exposure of the 'subjectivism' of Stalinist dogma, those denouncing him were still heavily dependent upon his views on socialist literature. Indeed, his most recent essay, "Der kritische Realismus in der sozialistischen Gesellschaft", contained the

central argument upon which the reorientation of war-literature in the GDR was being based in 1957.³⁵

Lukács had emphasised the qualitative superiority of fiction on the theme of war written from a Socialist Realist perspective - as exemplified by Arnold Zweig - over the admirable but ideologically deficient anti-war novels of E. M. Remarque or Norman Mailer:

Von Im Westen nichts Neues bis zu Die Nackten und die Toten sind nicht wenige in den Details wahre, in der schöpferischen Gesinnung höchst anständige Werke entstanden. Es gehört aber die konkrete Perspektive der Entwicklung, die konkrete und adäquate Erkenntnis der treibenden Kräfte dazu, um dieses Thema in der Totalität der Bestimmungen zu erfassen, wie dies in Arnold Zweigs Erziehung vor Verdun oder A. Becks Die Wolokamsker Chaussee geschieht. Dazu muß noch ... bemerkt werden, daß gerade die letztgenannten Werke am weitesten von einem monographischen Abbilden der Totalität stehen, sie erheben am energischsten die persönlichen Schicksale durch eine individuelle Handlung ins Typische und bauen ihre Totalität durch eine Wechselbeziehung konkret typischer Gestalten auf. 36

The situation of dynamic change which European society had been undergoing since the war was fully comparable to the major social upheavals which had provided the backcloth for all the great autobiographical novels since Goethe's Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre. Around 1945 the receptive individual had again been faced with the historically decisive struggle to work out the means of identifying himself with the community preparing the way for a better future - and that could now only be a community based upon socialist principles. The superiority of the socialist 'Entwicklungsroman' lay in its capacity to transcend the resignation and the indeterminate open-endedness of its bourgeois counterpart. It alone could convey the insight that in socialist society "der bürgerliche Individualismus ... vom Leben selbst zu einer bewußten Gesellschaftlichkeit

umerzogen wird".³⁷ At the same time, Lukács had deliberately stressed the gradualness - "ungleichmäßige Allmählichkeit" - of any individual's acquisition of socialist consciousness, and rejected the use of a narrative standpoint which suggests that the communist ideal has been well-nigh achieved already - "die Perspektive des rapid nahenden Kommunismus".³⁸

Lukács had endeavoured to create an ideological climate in which writers would feel able to trust the "dynamische Unerschöpflichkeit der Welt" and their own concrete experience. The cultural politicians of 1957 still hoped, like their predecessors in the Soviet Union in the 1930's, that the structure of the 'Entwicklungsroman' could be exploited for narrower didactic purposes, if it were used to depict a less complicated transition to ideological maturity. However ambiguous this situation may have been for the GDR's young authors, it certainly had unmistakable literary consequences. On the one hand, there was an almost total cessation of the stylistically unconventional war-fiction of 1956-57.³⁹ On the other, a series of 'Entwicklungsromane' on a remarkably similar pattern began to be published. They all depicted the central character's involvement in the armed forces, his end-of-war identity crisis, and the endeavour to resolve it through commitment to the new socialist Germany.

The distinctiveness of these novels, written by previously little-known figures like Max Walter Schulz, Günter de Bruyn and Dieter Noll, is perhaps less attributable to their literary skills than to the uniqueness of their generation's experience. They had all been exposed as children and youths to the pressures and values of a totalitarian state, with little opportunity to gain any awareness of alternatives to

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aggressive nationalism. They had undergone the successive influence of Nazi youth organisations, labour service or civil defence duty, and then full military activity. According to age, their front-line experience varied from five hard years, as in Schulz's case, to a few months along the rapidly shrinking boundaries of the defeated Reich for Noll and de Bruyn. However different their social backgrounds might have been, little of the conventional range of environmentally influenced attitudes survived the 'Gleichschaltung' of behaviour and opinion. And whatever their age and experience, they had an exceptionally difficult task after the national 'Zusammenbruch' to chart out their future.

One writer of this generation, Herbert Otto, had attempted an 'Entwicklungsroman' as early as 1956 with Die Lüge, but had left his proletarian hero Alfred Haferkorn with a relatively superficial crisis after his capture by the Russians in 1944, so that his rehabilitation involved little more than giving them a truthful account of a Nazi massacre of partisans. Although Otto's good intentions were recognised, even critics like Kant and Wagner had to point out - as they advocated the return of the positive hero - that Otto's protagonist was not sufficiently "schuldbeladen" to offer a typical example of character-transformation.⁴⁰

Dieter Noll was first to publish after the ideological preferability of the 'Entwicklungsroman' to the 'Kriegsbuch' had been made abundantly clear. But the emphasis he placed in his Roman einer Jugend, the first part of Die Abenteuer des Werner Holt, published in 1960, upon graphic depiction of adolescent adventures, bombing raids, battle-action and description of Nazi atrocities, suggested that he had substantial

affinities with writers such as Thürk and Mundstock. Moreover, by opting for a straightforward chronological approach, Noll restricted himself in the first volume to the 'negative' side of Werner Holt's progress, from his last days in school as a rebellious sixteen-year-old to his breakdown as war ends two years later. There was nothing more than a vague indication of the moral growth to come in the second volume. The Roman einer Jugend was, and continues to be, outstandingly popular in the GDR, a fact attributable to the gripping documentary quality of Holt's war-time adventures at least as much as to his exemplary status as a product of the Third Reich.

The works which followed, Max Walter Schulz's Wir sind nicht Staub im Wind (1962) and Günter de Bruyn's Der Hohlweg (1963), have a structure which contrasts much more strikingly with earlier war-literature and reflects the rather schematic distinction made by Lukács between the 'Entwicklungsroman' in Critical and Socialist Realism. Lukács had argued that the socialist 'Entwicklungsroman' transcends the limitations of its bourgeois counterpart, which tends to restrict itself to the period between childhood and the "Krise() der Mannbarkeit". In Socialist Realism, the main focus should be placed upon "jene Krise von erwachsenen Menschen ... die die Entstehung des Sozialismus in der bürgerlichen Intelligenz hervorruft", and the subsequent process of integration into the socialist community.⁴¹ Both Schulz and de Bruyn commence their narrative in the last months of the war, with the incident which provokes the fundamental identity-crisis in their central figures, Rudi Hagedorn and Wolfgang Weichmantel. In consequence, they are obliged to motivate the crisis indirectly, through the economic use of flashbacks, introspective analysis, meetings with

earlier friends, and similar devices. The description of war-experience itself is thus reduced to a minimum, and the emphasis is clearly laid upon the future course of development for the hero.

It is also significant that the characterisation of Hagedorn and Weichmantel reflects each author's ponderous awareness of the literary traditions within which he was working. Schulz in particular has Hagedorn, as a naive adolescent, adopt the pseudonym 'Hyperion' and give expression to much of his most intimate emotional and intellectual turmoil, both before and after his years as a 'Frontschwein', in letters to the decidedly ethereal Lea, a figure modelled closely on Hölderlin's Diotima in Hyperion.⁴² Furthermore, the post-war clash of bourgeois and socialist mentalities is embodied in representative figures who, in laboured imitation of Thomas Mann's Zauberberg, engage in long 'Weltanschauungsgespräche' remote from everyday realities. De Bruyn is equally mindful of Hölderlin and the anguished references in Hyperion to the "Zerrissenheit der Deutschen".⁴³ He has Weichmantel discover the novel as he recuperates from wounds received in the last-ditch defence of the ravine which gives the novel its title, and then identify with Hyperion for much of the novel. De Bruyn also involves Weichmantel in the nascent world of the theatre in post-war Berlin, in an atmosphere broadly reminiscent of the earlier sections of Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre. But, as if to remind the reader that history also brings about changes in experience, de Bruyn also provides a harsh caricature of the enlightened aristocrats dear to Goethe and Keller, through his depiction of the Oyst-Winterfeld family, whose fortunes are linked with Weichmantel's from the end of the war. Even Noll,

when he came to write the second volume of Werner Holt's adventures, the Roman einer Heimkehr, published in 1964, made a comparable gesture to suggest an element of continuity within the tradition: at a crucial moment, Holt is given Becher's Abschied and finds a parallel to his ideological predicament.

References of this kind run the risk of obscuring the historically distinctive aspects of growing up in the Third Reich, as does the practice of giving the hero a name which emphasises a general aspect of personality. There are suggestions of prickly individualism in Schulz's 'Hagedorn' or of the romantic dreamer shielding himself from reality in de Bruyn's 'Weichmantel', just as Herbert Otto's earlier figure, Alfred 'Haferkorn', had carried the promise of fruition from the outset. Only Dieter Noll drew obvious attention to the subjective origins of his fictional counterpart by giving him the similar-sounding name of Werner Holt.

The only work of these years in which the autobiographical dimension seems to predominate distinctly over the 'exemplary' is the one which marks Franz Fühmann's return to the theme of the Third Reich, Das Judenauto (1962), with a first-person narrator who is directly referred to as 'Fjumann' by his Russian interrogators at one stage.⁴⁴ This cycle of stories, subtitled 'Vierzehn Tage aus zwei Jahrzehnten', provides an invaluable yardstick for assessing the schematic consequences of the adoption of well-known literary models for the work of Noll, Schulz and de Bruyn. Fühmann's stories are at first sight very episodic, but are in fact strongly unified through the consistency of the narrative 'Ich', who reflects upon each station in his development. Although the Sudeten German context is clearly Fühmann's own, he has made it clear that he

shared the endeavours of his contemporaries to concentrate upon the historically significant aspects of their experience, and not to offer irrelevant subjective detail.

In the brief afterword to the subsequent Western edition of Das Judenauto, Fühmann stated that the work was "keine Selbstbiographie";⁴⁵ he had in any case indicated the historical quality of each episode by referring in its title to an important contemporaneous event. This framework of progression - at times rather contrived - from the Wall Street collapse of 1929 through events like the Munich Agreement, the Battle for Stalingrad, the Nazi capitulation and the formation of the SED, places the fortunes of the narrator very deliberately in the context of an inexorable movement towards the achievement of socialism in Germany after the war. He moves from vivid evocation of each isolated incident to ironical self-analysis, emphasising the contrasts between youthful naiveté and mature ideological insights through a kind of 'Verfremdung' of the catch-words of each period, rather as he had done in Kameraden. As his interest is mainly psychological, to show how the values and prejudices of National Socialism were absorbed naturally within a homogeneous environment, Fühmann has not the same need to objectivise the 'reactionary' and 'progressive' tendencies of each period within character-types, as the authors of the overt 'Entwicklungsromane' do in their quest for social totality.

What is most striking is the extent of the similarities within these broadly autobiographical novels - despite the 'premature' appearance of Otto's Die Lüge before the time had been judged ripe for the 'Entwicklungsroman', or the slow-moving chronological approach adopted by Noll in Die Abenteuer

des Werner Holt, or the more personal tone of Das Judenauto. Their focus is concentrated upon the three main aspects of experience in a uniquely turbulent epoch. Firstly, they seek to analyse the values and motives of their generation in contributing to the destructive power of the Third Reich, weighing up the relative importance of such factors as misguided idealism, aggressive self-assertion and fearful compliance. Secondly, they depict the process of disillusionment, which follows the realisation that war is meaninglessly wasteful of human life and that they are on the side of the criminal aggressor. This is seen to result in a major crisis of identity and allegiance. Finally, they endeavour to show how demoralised and sceptical young adults came to discover a new sense of purpose and commitment in aligning themselves with the socialist regime established in East Germany after 1945.

Within this clearly defined tripartite structure, each of these writers was still faced with the problem of maintaining a psychological consistency in the development of his central character. By offering a fairly complex analysis of the factors encouraging identification with Hitler's Germany, and describing just how profound the end-of-war alienation from authority and ideology was, he would leave himself a task which was at once politically hazardous and crucial to the credibility of literature in the GDR: that of portraying the growth towards socialism as a lengthy process, plagued with doubts and suspicions, amidst the historically undeniable miseries of the post-war years.⁴⁶

'BOURGEOIS INDIVIDUALISM' IN THE CENTRAL FIGURES

It almost goes without saying that the notion of 'character' as something clearly divisible into categories of relative good and evil is fundamental to these 'Entwicklungsromane'. Schulz expresses this at its crudest in the passage marking the end of the review of Rudi Hagedorn's past in Wir sind nicht Staub im Wind. Picking up a remark of one of Hagedorn's comrades that he is a 'realist', Schulz indicates his own acceptance of this designation by adding that realists can be divided into those "mit und ohne Charakter". Hagedorn, following the best traditions of the genre, is at present only potentially good, revealing "zwar ein leidlich guter ... aber kein starker Charakter". The paragraph goes on to make it clear that what is required to fulfil such potential is a combination of such factors as "Erkenntnis", the capacity for "Entweder-oder-Entscheidungen", "Geist", "Leben", the realisation of "den schönen Reichtum menschlichen Wesens" and "praktische, humane, charaktervolle Vernünftigkeit". (S 123-4) It is hardly surprising that a sympathetic fellow-author had to point out in a review of Schulz's novel that "die didaktische Absicht (wird) zu direkt spürbar" and that art generally relies on rather less direct ways of depicting the processes of personality development.⁴⁷

While the other authors are less abstract in their projections of virtue, there are many common features in their depictions of the youthful weaknesses of their heroes. All of these figures are basically disorientated as they grow up in the Third Reich, and much of the initial blame can be placed at the feet of parents who have failed to offer any effective alternative to the prevailing ideology. In two cases, those of

Alfred Haferkorn and Werner Holt, the hero's progress is made more difficult by the break-up of his parents' marriage, with a dissolute father and a selfishly materialistic mother respectively at fault. Haferkorn's mother has done her best to make him "hellhörig ... für die einfachste menschliche Anständigkeit" (LU 31) with a fair measure of success. (One of the weaknesses of Otto's book is Haferkorn's prolonged unwillingness to admit the 'lie' of his involvement in the German army, when he has been such a reluctant soldier throughout.) Holt's father, formerly a Professor of Medicine in Hamburg, bravely refuses to research into biological warfare, but is cut off from his son for most of Werner's adolescence. The fathers of Hagedorn and Weichmantel belong to the millions of Social Democrats who refused to continue the struggle against Fascism after 1933, placing the retention of a lowly job and family welfare first, but opting out of the task of giving their sons moral and political guidance as a result. So even where social background should have helped to create a sense of class-consciousness with which to resist the call for a unified 'Volksgemeinschaft', Hagedorn and Weichmantel find themselves adopting many of the nebulous values exploited by the National Socialists. Only the parents of Fühmann's narrator, part of the Sudeten German middle-class longing for the security which integration into the Reich is expected to bring, support Hitler enthusiastically, but only until it becomes clear that killing and destruction are inevitable consequences of his expansionist policies.

Deprived of an effective parental example as to what constitutes socially constructive behaviour, these figures tend to direct their energies into a world of fantasy, which never

relates in more than a superficial way to the threatened environment in which they live. Noll adopts the convenient, if unilluminating, shorthand technique of indicating the various elements which stimulate Holt's youthful imagination, through a list of his favourite books. The heroic Germanic legends contained in the Nibelungenlied, the exotic exploits of Karl May's heroes, the anarchic individualism of Schiller's RHüber, the sentimentality and the idealisation of love in the Romantic 'Märchen', and a soupçon of Nietzsche, are all interwoven with the recent myth of war as the highest test of character, derived from Ernst Jünger and Werner Beumelburg. From this hotchpotch of disparate stimuli - "das Unvereinbare", as Noll emphasises - Holt and, by implication, many of his equally ill-guided contemporaries, have created their heroic ideal, their "Heldentypus" (WH 21). The values especially revered are those seen to be the determinants of personal distinction: the capacity for limitless loyalty and integrity in support of the supreme cause, which is fatally undefined, and the proof of warrior-like toughness, courage and disregard for self whenever the 'Bewährungsprobe' is called for. Holt and Fühmann's narrator are seen to be most idealistically susceptible to such challenges, Holt endeavouring to assert himself amongst his new school-friends and fellow-recruits by proving his aggressive superiority, while his Sudeten counterpart needs to show his right to inclusion amongst the 'true' Germans by a fanatical dedication to the nationalist cause. Fühmann evokes this feeling by his vivid description of a huge gymnastic display in Breslau in 1938, which gave him his first glimpse of the hallowed Führer (J 37-8). The reference here to Hitler as "ein Gott der Geschichte", as he salutes each regional group during

the march-past and enlists their unwavering devotion, illustrates the concept of 'Schicksal' with which Noll is centrally concerned in Book I of his novel.⁴⁸ The dimension of moral choice and responsibility appears dispensable, whether one is in the hands of a visible deity or the inscrutable destructive powers which Holt imagines:

Schicksal ... das ist jenes Große, Dunkle, Unbekannte, dem wir Menschen ausgeliefert sind ... (I)st denn nicht auch unser Leben wie ein endloser, zielloser Weg, über dem die Vorsehung unser Schicksal wie ein Gewitter zusammenbraut? WH 203

Figures whose upbringing is more humble, like Weichmantel and Hagedorn, are less exposed to such broad sweeps of imaginative fancy, which so usefully serve militaristic ends. They tend to sustain themselves upon the more romantic and escapist aspects of the available models of behaviour, perhaps as a reaction to the suppressed disaffection of their parents with the regime. From the scanty information provided about Weichmantel's past, it appears that he accepted something of the mythology of "Vaterland" and "Fahneneid" (H 13), but tried to escape whenever possible from the harsh world of the Hitler Youth into sentimental daydreams allowing "den Genuß des Schönen". He awaits his induction into the ranks of the "Flakhelfer" with distressed feelings ranging from "Angst" to "Trauer" and "Verzweiflung" (H 130). Hagedorn reflects in greater detail upon his years as a charity pupil at the Goethe-Schule in Reiffenberg. He was evidently so plagued by feelings of inferiority amongst his middle-class companions that he found his chief consolation in identifying with the ideals and passions of the Romantic hero in the Hyperion mould, led on by the fact that his headmaster was "jünglingshaft verschwärmt" when it came to Hölderlin (S 18).

The greatest relief from such an oppressive environment comes in the isolation of nature. 'Weich'-mantel is of course particularly sensitive to the elements:

Wolfgang Weichmantel hatte Stille immer geliebt, draußen besonders, fern der Stadt. Er hatte auch die Nacht geliebt, die Sterne, flimmernd, weiß und rötlich, und die Erde hatte er geliebt, die schwarze, nasse Frühlingserde ... H 11

Hagedorn has an equally powerful awareness of nature and the traditions developed over centuries in the small mountain town in the Erzgebirge which he recognises as his "Heimat" (S 35). But neither of these more passive figures has the pioneer's urge to reject civilisation and survive in nature, which impels Holt and his more intrepid classmates to live out their dream of primitive heroism for days in a mountain cave (even if their sustenance comes at the expense of a poor farmer whose pig they steal).

The development of genuine friendship in situations where the dictates of fantasy far outweigh those of morality is fraught with hazards. Both Hagedorn and Holt find themselves strongly influenced for the worse by older lads who reveal reprehensible attitudes regarded as typical for Hitler's Germany. Hagedorn's act of spontaneous courage in saving Armin Saliger from drowning marks the start of a relationship which for Saliger derives both from a guilty sense of gratitude and a desire to dominate, whatever the oath of blood-brotherhood which they swear may suggest to the idealistic Hagedorn. The class difference between "Apothekersohn" and "Straßenkehrersohn" is emphasised from the outset, so that it comes as no surprise when Saliger betrays the pledge of loyalty on the two occasions when some moral courage or self-abnegation would be required to uphold it. The sense of conflict follows the arrival of Lea,

the niece of their humanistic headmaster Fußler, since her half-Jewish origins make her persona non grata to respectable society, and yet both lads are captivated by her charms. Saliger, as one of the 'Scharführer' of the local Hitler Youth group, far from dissuading its members from taking punitive action against Hagedorn when one of his 'Hyperion' love-letters to Lea is discovered, plays a leading role in the humiliation ritual conducted by the 'Geistergericht' in the cellars under the school. Later, after Hagedorn has resentfully accepted the school's consilium abeundi and taken up an apprenticeship, Saliger compounds the betrayal by seducing Lea and then abandoning her as soon as the relationship becomes a threat to his incipient career as an army officer.

Although Saliger reveals all the opportunism and cowardice of the petit-bourgeois, spending the war-years comfortably remote from the battlefield training recruits, Holt's friend Wolzow provides ample evidence that the military ethic is an equally strong driving-force in other quarters of the middle-class. Wolzow, the latest offspring of a long-established family of Prussian officers, directs Holt's unspecific urge for 'Abenteuer' towards his own monomaniac obsession with war as the only true adventure. While it seems rather overdramatic to see Wolzow as the devil incarnate⁴⁹, he certainly leads Holt throughout their two years of rivalry into excesses of inhumanity which distort the basically **moral** response to life he shows elsewhere in taking up Karl Moor's struggle for 'Gerechtigkeit'. Thus, while Holt sets out to inflict retribution upon the SS-officer Meißner, who drove a peasant girl to suicide, Wolzow coldly administers a vicious beating which goes beyond anything Holt envisaged and leaves him bemused by "diese

Mörderkaltblütigkeit mit gutem Gewissen" (H 76). What makes Wolzow a more sinister figure than the fanatical Nazis encountered by Holt elsewhere is the calculated ruthlessness with which he dominates and destroys, whether it is a matter of taking over control of a barracks from socially inferior recruits, or attacking Russian troops and tanks along the Eastern front. Holt finally recognises, as the war is undeniably lost, the perverted logic behind Wolzow's exhortation to fight to the heroic end, and realises that 'fate' is not a mysterious force but an empty word used to delude the unwitting majority:

Schicksal, dachte er, mein Schicksal heißt
Wolzow ... ein Mensch, der sich Macht anmaßt
Über Leben und Tod ... Und er sah nun: Das
Anonyme, das System, wohlgeordnet, mit Rang-
abzeichen und Uniformen, eine Hierarchie der
Gewalt ist unser aller Schicksal! Lüge,
Betrug war alles, Verdummung war Gott und
die Vorsehung nichts als Berechnung! H 529-30

And yet, after he has made the decisive break with Wolzow, Holt still risks his life in a vain attempt to save him from the clutches of a marauding SS-group under the leadership of Meißner, as if in a final attempt to assert the validity of friendship and humanity across all the ideological and moral barriers.

The fact that Fühmann and de Bruyn refrain from personalising the corrupt and ruthless aspects of the Third Reich, in the form in which they might have influenced unsuspecting youth, may spring from the commendable desire not to simplify the depiction of the period by presenting evil and potential virtue as separate entities. For similar reasons, the concrete representation of the hope (inherent in the notion of bourgeois individualism) of salvation through the attainment of true love, regardless of the state of society, is found not in Der Hohlweg

or Das Judenauto, but in the novels of Schulz and Noll.

The first mention of Lea in Wir sind nicht Staub im Wind brings with it a string of abstract epithets - "die Schöne, Reine, Kluge, Unerreichbare, die Göttin" (S 10) - reminiscent of the aesthetics of the 'Bildungsroman'. Her mysterious origins - illegitimacy, an unknown but obviously distinguished father, a theatrical mother, hints of Italian artistic ability in earlier generations (S 13-14) - reinforce the sense of convenient recourse to literary tradition. This is further emphasised by Hagedorn's adoption of the Hyperion pseudonym and communication with Lea largely by means of letters, as if she were a modern counterpart of Hölderlin's Diotima. Through her Jewishness she is destined to a life of suffering and isolation in the Third Reich: she is driven away from the Goethe-Schule as her humanistic uncle is replaced as headmaster by the thick-headed Nazi gym-teacher in 1938, and is forced to carry out the most menial of hospital jobs in the hope of avoiding persecution. She finally falls into the hands of the Gestapo and is scarcely alive when rescued by the Allies from a concentration-camp. Although Hagedorn has no contact with her, between the time Saliger deserts her in 1939 and his return to Reiffenberg at the end of the war, he still nourishes the dream of serving and protecting her in any way possible.

During these years, Hagedorn's only other experience of women has been at the level of fleeting sexual gratification, which is symptomatic of the brutalisation of his whole experience, as his reflections after meeting Hilde Panitzsch show:

Wir haben alle schmutzige Hände. Wäre ich doch über sie hergefallen wie ein Stier. Wir sind doch alle Tiere. Das Menschliche ist nur noch eine raffinierte Tour. S 51

Werner Holt's development is marked by a similar dichotomy

between romantic idealisation and the fulfilment of basic sensual urges. He also discovers a "Göttin" (WH 69) in the daughter of a Prussian officer, Uta Barnim, whom he compares to Kriemhild and regards as the "Anblick lebendiger Schönheit" (WH 104). They actually achieve a night of almost mystical love-making, and Uta strives hard from the outset to disabuse Holt of many of his illusions. But soon after they are separated through Holt's transfer to a training camp in the Ruhr area, he falls willingly into the clutches of Frau Ziesche, the wife of a Nazi criminal involved in anti-Semitic atrocities. She tries to 'educate' Holt into accepting that sensual pleasure is the only thing of value in life and that the all-powerful "Lustgewinnungstrieb" is part of man's inescapable "Schicksal" - a cynical attitude that a leading East German critic regards as representing a much greater threat to Holt's personality than the omnipresent "nationalistische Agitation", since it tempts him to reject all consideration of ideology and sink into utter decadence.⁵⁰

Fortunately, Holt soon recognises the barrenness of Frau Ziesche's egotism and abandons her. Uta has, however, by this time disappeared following her father's murder, and is being hunted by the Gestapo (a situation only explained in Book II). Holt, undeterred, soon finds himself attracted to the young orphan Gundel, whom he meets during a brief holiday (in a painfully symbolical episode when the sun suddenly shines out of a cloud-covered sky). This more platonic relationship with an 'elfin' proletarian figure (WH 335), whose parents have been executed for communist activity, marks a fresh swing of the emotional pendulum, which moves back and forward throughout the novel in increasingly tedious fashion, as a sign of Holt's

continuing uncertainty about his identity.

Love alone is, however, no adequate solace, and some of these authors were anxious to show that there were other liberating forces within the Third Reich, of which their disorientated protagonists were insufficiently aware. It may be more than coincidental that the two youngest authors, Noll and de Bruyn, go beyond the presentation of the problems of their autobiographical central figure by following the fortunes of the group of their peers with whom they are thrown together at the beginning of the novel - Holt's classmates in his new school, and Weichmantel's comrades in the impossible defence of the 'Hohlweg'. This provides an opportunity to depict characters who are more positive counterparts to their heroes than aggressive leaders in the Wolzow mould, such as Sepp Gomulka and Peter Wiese in Werner Holt, and Gert Eckert and Hans Springs in Der Hohlweg. The perceptive intellectual, the gifted musician and the straightforward country-lad all reject the German cause sooner and more decisively than is possible for the representative 'hero' rendered immobile by his delusions and bewilderment. Through their discussions, however, some of the post-war debate on ideologies and commitment is anticipated, and a thin line of socialist continuity is preserved, despite the efforts of National Socialism to destroy it completely. The older writers, like Fühmann and Schulz, paint a much bleaker picture of their heroes at a comparable age. With several years of fighting and conflict in front of them, they are seen in the peculiar state of isolation that a tightly-knit community founded upon intolerance of individual deviation from the prevailing norm can induce. Schulz describes very effectively, in one of the last recollections of Hagedorn's

development before it is engulfed in the dark anonymity of his years at the battlefront, the process by which fear and a deep longing for integration lead his hero to emerge from a period of solitary confinement as an enthusiastic devotee of Hitler (S 522-27). Fühmann shows how intelligent awareness of the distortions and sheer untruthfulness of propaganda is no barrier to passionate acceptance of it for patriotic reasons (J 49).⁵¹ It is only in the aftermath of the Stalingrad campaign in 1943 that the façade of absolute uniformity begins to crumble. Both figures start groping their way to a reconsideration of their loyalties, helped by older soldiers with recollections of the pre-Hitler days, like Hagedorn's friend Otto, or supposed 'Untermenschen' with alternative views of the world, like the Ukrainian prisoners encountered by Fühmann's narrator.

To summarise, it seems that two variants of what Lukács calls 'bourgeois individualism' emerge in this series of 'Entwicklungsromane': the middle-class figure who willingly accepts the language of 'Selbstbewußtsein', honour, and struggle for victory as a logical extension of his cultural experience, and the proletarian figure who finds in romantic dreams his main compensation for an environment in which vitality and identity have been suppressed. The latter is involved reluctantly in the build-up to war because he too is susceptible to appeals to higher values. The vital importance for these 'Entwicklungsromane' of the differentiated presentation of the Third Reich achieved in the 'Tauwetter' fiction is illustrated by the superficiality of Herbert Otto's Die Lüge in this respect. He gives no other reason for Haferkorn's induction into the Wehrmacht than the unavailability of compliance. The

undoubted authenticity of much of the depiction of life in Hitler's Germany in the other novels is, however, also threatened where the desire to encompass the spirit of the epoch within fictional characters of the 'corrupt older friend' and 'perfect woman' variety becomes over-evident, and an epigonal echo of literary models or political doctrines results. On the whole, a convincing sense of delusion and disorientation, and the unavailability of an identity-crisis as the Third Reich collapses, is established through these relatively detailed portrayals of childhood and adolescence.

THE EXPERIENCE OF WAR

These novels generally avoid direct description of their heroes' exploits in war or any consideration of the nature of war which might distract attention from the broader analysis of personality-development. Apart from Dieter Noll's tendency to combine detailed accounts of air-raids and battles with his pedagogic concern for Werner Holt, it is regarded as sufficient to record reactions of disillusionment or horror in a phrase, like Hagedorn's "stechendes Entsetzen vor der Sinnlosigkeit des Sterbens" (S 8) or Weichmantel's "Angst vor dem Tod, der dort dröhnend heranrollte" (H 18). It is a dehumanising nightmare which can do nothing to test character and arrests the whole process of growth. The words of Weichmantel's later friend Claudia sum up this recognition:

Der Krieg macht keinen reifer, glaube ich.
Vielleicht primitiv oder zynisch. Aber er
entwickelt einen nicht, er hält nur auf. H 206

Such universal feelings are, it seems, taken to be as profoundly valid for these ordinary German soldiers as for any other group

of fighting men, but the authors wish to go beyond this and emphasise those factors seen as uniquely significant in the German experience of the Second World War, from a subsequent socialist perspective.

The main point to be registered is that Nazi Germany was responsible for unprecedented atrocities, both in the conduct of hostilities and in its treatment of supposedly inferior races in captivity. The plight of the Jews is brought home to Hagedorn personally by the ostracisation of Lea from respectable society before the war, and her subsequent incarceration, while Holt gains a chilling insight into the horrors of mass extermination in gas-chambers through Frau Ziesche's accounts of her husband's activities (WH 190-1). In some scenes, however, and particularly in Die Abenteuer des Werner Holt, the heroes are allowed first-hand experience of the consequences of such criminal disregard for 'non-Aryan' life. The gruesome episode in which Holt discovers the dismembered remains of Slovakian partisans, murdered by the SS in a sawmill, has been referred to elsewhere as an example of baroque exaggeration, intended to appal the hero into seeing the evil of his ways.⁵² Alfred Haferkorn is forced to be part of an execution squad detailed to murder other Slav partisans, for whom he has begun to feel "Mitleid statt Feindseligkeit" (LU 12). Fühmann's narrator is equally shattered by the pointless murder of the Ukrainian 'Hiwis' (Hilfswillige) whose friendship has served to convince him of the untenability of the notion of 'Untermenschen'. Nearer to home Holt, Weichmantel and Hagedorn learn from those close to them of the torture and murder of Communist Party activists, like the parents of Gundel and Hella Hoff, and friends of the Hagedorns in Reiffenberg. Since the bulk of the

war-action in these novels takes place on the Eastern front, the main emphasis is placed upon atrocities committed against Slavic nationalities and individuals who are more often than not communists. This would appear to reflect acceptance of Kurella's exhortation of 1957 to depict the war as essentially 'anti-sozialistisch' rather than in its fuller international complexity.

Another crucial insight afforded to these typical ordinary soldiers in the course of their active service is that the unity of the 'Volksgemeinschaft' is a myth when officers and the SS-elite are under pressure. A clear desire for simplification makes Otto bestow the name of Wolfram Krebs upon Haferkorn's commanding officer, who orders the needless execution of the partisans, and takes sadistic pleasure in punishing and humiliating his own men. Krebs' later attempt in Russian captivity to deny his fascist self and hide behind the innocuous name 'Wachholder' is fully in keeping with the moral cowardice seen as the other distinctive feature of the officer-class. Weichmantel's commandant in Der Hohlweg is a miserable off-shoot of the Prussian tradition called Major von Brietzow, who flees for his life from the battle-front, exhorting his men to stick to their posts "bis zum letzten Mann" for the sake of the "Heimat" (H 9-10). He then turns up after the war in Berlin, attempting to establish a network of newspapers for expropriated fugitives like himself from the Eastern provinces of the Reich and seeking to restore "die schicksalhaften Bande des Volkstums" and "die Dorf- und Stadtgemeinschaften" (H 386). This kind of calculated exploitation of the naive idealism of inferiors is accompanied by a grossly self-indulgent life-style which contrasts harshly with the material hardships of their troops.

Occasionally, of course, a junior officer appears who is courageous, honest, and enjoys the respect of his men, like Unteroffizier Krell in Der Hohlweg: he is one of von Brietzow's former serfs who quickly realises where his true loyalties lie, after he has been captured by the Russians and finds in them "ein Volk von Pädagogen" (H 76).

The SS is seen to consist of brutes and fanatics who blindly believe everything that Hitler and Rosenberg ever wrote and are merciless towards all who waver from total commitment to the Nazi cause. In their almost uniformly blond-haired, blue-eyed purity, they appear as a race apart, diabolical but on the periphery of the fictional action. Even an enthusiastic fighter like Werner Holt knows himself to be incapable of such "glühigen Fanatismus" (WH 324), no matter how much he may yearn for it at times as a way of escaping his moral dilemmas. But he, like most of his fellow-recruits, is bored stiff by Leutnant Wehnert's lectures on the mysteries of race and blood (WH 427-32). In the last days of the war, however, where the focus of these novels lies, members of the SS are always threateningly evident, forcing the wounded and disheartened into suicidal defence of the devastated fatherland and executing anyone showing any sign of deserting or betraying it. There is no attempt at psychological analysis: the SS is a manifestation of evil incapable of transformation under any more humane political system, and this must be understood in relation to all the appalling atrocities and evidence of corrupt leadership. The reader's reaction should clearly be one of utter abhorrence for Nazism and an angry realisation of the futility of anything other than a radical transformation of society once Hitler's Germany has been defeated.

There is, of course, a more positive side to the education of potential socialists than this form of aversion therapy. One of the first stages in the process of extending isolated doubts about aspects of the war and its conduct into broad disillusion with the whole nationalist cause, is the realisation that there is an organised German opposition to Hitler. Information about its existence tends to come through broadsheets and radio broadcasts prepared by 'deserters' who have joined the Russians. Although soldiers like Haferkorn and Fühmann's narrator are initially unconvinced, they find it a powerfully unsettling experience:

Es war ein Wirbel, ein Sog, jede Antwort floß fort: ich fühlte plötzlich, daß ich überhaupt nichts wußte, ich wußte ja nicht einmal, warum ich hier in Rußland lag und warum die Kameraden vor Stalingrad fielen und warum Deutsche auf der anderen Seite waren und was das für Deutsche waren ... (I)ch wußte in dieser einen schweigenden Minute, da jeder den Atem anhielt, daß eine Frage wie ein Keim in mein Hirn gesenkt war, die nicht mehr herauszureißen war. J 127-8

Such doubts are further accentuated by the news of the attempted assassination of Hitler on 20th July 1944 planned by the group of high-ranking officers led by Oberst Graf Stauffenberg. Noll interweaves extracts from Hitler's radio broadcast announcing his providential escape from injury with Holt's incredulous reactions, before having him hauled off for interrogation by the SS about his association with Uta and her father Oberst Barnim. The latter, it emerges, has just been executed for capitulating to the Russians (WH 278-291). Fühmann devotes a full episode to the event, describing how the narrator, working as a telegrapher in Athens, reacts to the stream of obsequious messages of devotion forwarded to the 'Führer' by fear-stricken Generals afterwards (J 129-46), and Schulz hints that Lea's

uncle, Fupler, has links with the plotters.

The more decisive insights, however, come through direct experience of the dissenting views and actions of trusted friends. In the climate of fear and regimentation of opinion which stifles discussion, even in the most private spheres, it is usually only in desperate situations that any frankness occurs. The younger figures, Holt and Weichmantel, are guardedly warned before they depart on active service of the need for some "Elastizität" and scepticism to avoid the "Überbewertung des starren Prinzips" (WH 325) and the uncritical acceptance of military clichés (H 13). The important discussions, however, take place at the front-line after some awareness of the atrocities and double standards referred to above has been gained. With Hagedorn and Otto Siebelt, a gentle auto-didact who has fought beside him for two years against the Russians, it is essentially a question of remembering the inherent goodness of man in the midst of senseless death. One phrase stands out in Hagedorn's mind - "Es steckt etwas im Menschen, das will reden" (S 315) - and helps him to survive, with attitudes of "Stumpfsinn" and "Wurstigkeit" (S 140), after Siebelt's death in 1943.

The more typical situation is one which goes beyond considerations of self-preservation and raises the question of the morality of desertion. In Werner Holt and Der Hohlweg, it is the trusted friend of earlier years - Sepp Gomulka and Gert Eckert respectively - who reaches the point of total rejection of Nazi Germany and tries to persuade the hero to defect with him to the Russians. The evidence of SS butchery in the saw-mill has finally persuaded Gomulka that further involvement with the German army will inevitably implicate all of them with

the "Verbrecher" and "Mörder", since "ganz Deutschland (ist) wie die Sägemühle" (WH 459-60). Yet no matter how much Holt knows now about the evils of the Third Reich, he cannot relinquish his German identity and place himself at the mercy of a ruthless enemy:

... Verbrecher, mag sein, es ist alles gleich.
Nur eins darf nicht sein: daß ich vielleicht
doch einmal aufwach und sehen muß ... ich hab
Deutschland verraten in seiner schwersten
Stunde. WH 463

His only instinctive action is to prevent Wolzow from shooting down Gomulka as he deserts, in a scene intended to be neatly reflective of the three predominant responses of German youth to this final crisis of the Third Reich. In Der Hohlweg, the coldly rational Eckert is primarily determined not to throw away his life in the impossible defence of a meaningless position, and sets out on the perilous journey across no-man's-land with Weichmantel in pitch darkness. While Eckert succeeds, the terrified Weichmantel is only too relieved to be disturbed by a patrol of his comrades and find his way back, against all reason, to the ravine:

Ihm war, als ob er mit dem ersten Schritt
abwärts sein eigenes Todesurteil besiegelte,
aber er konnte nicht anders; unsichtbare
Fäden zogen ihn zu den anderen Verurteilten
... Und obwohl er sich nach dem Freund sehnte,
war er doch froh, daß ihm die Entscheidung
abgenommen worden war. H 26

Similarly, in Die Lüge, Alfred Haferkorn is far too perplexed and frightened to join his newly-acquired comrade Wilhelm Weiss (an unlikely figure, arriving as a dedicated communist from Berlin late in 1944) in deserting from the massacre of partisans at Remanowka.

The effect, therefore, of such disillusioning experiences and the realisation that there is a - highly dangerous - way of

escaping from the nightmare, is the limited one of leaving the central figures anxious for survival but still desperately confused, as the war enters its last weeks. In Fühmann's case, the hope is cherished almost until the end that some miracle, like the involvement of the Americans and Russians in a bloody confrontation or the launching of the long-anticipated 'Wunderwaffe', will yet allow the Germans to win. Holt inclines towards fatalistic acceptance of the need for suffering, before people like himself can discover their true selves:

Ich weiß alles. Kommunisten werden hingerichtet, Juden mit Giftgas erstickt, Kriegsgefangene geschlagen und zu Tode gehungert, Polenkinder ins Reich verschleppt, Ukrainer ins Ruhrgebiet deportiert, junge Mädchen erschossen, Partisanen zu Tode gefoltert ... Jetzt gibt es kein Ausweichen mehr. Ich kann nicht mehr zurück. Ich muß durch die sieben Hüllen ... Vielleicht muß das so sein, damit wir endlich wir selbst werden. WH 395-6

Weichmantel, who is extremely lucky to escape from the ravine with a head-wound from a grenade, is only interested, like Hagedorn, in avoiding further fighting. As both of them see the end in sight, they formulate vague aspirations as to their future conduct: Weichmantel, full of hope that an era of love and brotherhood will follow, sees it the duty of all who survive to become "das Gewissen der Welt" (H 80), while Hagedorn, with a powerful sense of collective guilt and the need to forget the past, also wants to look forward to a better future - "nach vorn denken" (S 75).

But mere survival is fraught with hazards and is seen to involve both good luck and a willingness to show some of the decisiveness missing earlier. Weichmantel has to knock out the SS-man Koch, who has forced him out of convalescence in hospital to guard a bridge, in order to escape into the anonymous mass

of refugees. Hagedorn is compelled to flee for his life from Saliger after being charged with dereliction of duty. Holt and Fühmann's narrator both watch their immediate companions in the final turmoil being lynched by fellow-Germans, and are fortunate enough to fall into enemy hands just afterwards. These tense days marking the end of the war contain moments of truth for all of these figures, which tend to be couched in clichés all too familiar from earlier Socialist Realist sources.⁵³ Holt at last sees through the folly of his blind adherence to 'Schicksal':

Es war, als zerbreche etwas in Holts Brust ...
die Binde fiel von seinen Augen, das dunkle
Zimmer wurde hell ... wie Schuppen fiel es
ihm von den Augen. WH 529-31

Hagedorn has the sensation of distancing himself from the false 'self' that the Third Reich has brought into existence and re-discovering the real identity rooted in his earlier life:

Es war ihm, als wäre er aus der eigenen Haut
geschlüpft, als ginge da ein fremdes, seelen-
loses Wesen durch den Nebel, ein Schatten
von ihm, als flüge der wirkliche Rudi Hagedorn
wie ein Schuhu darüber hin ... Es war ihm,
als könne sich der Schuhu dort oben wieder in
einen Menschen verwandeln, in den wirklichen
Rudi Hagedorn mit kurzen Hosen und ewig ver-
schrammten Knien ... S 141

Fühmann too realises in an escapist mood that his real affinities lie outside Germany in his Czech homeland (J 167), and Weichmantel anticipates, as part of a general process of "Anderswerden", the rejection of a dissonant past (H 167).

These are as yet convincingly insubstantial feelings, not overloaded with ideological significance out of keeping with the experience of the main characters at this stage. The basic points about the criminality of aggressive nationalism, the exploitation of idealism to preserve the hegemony of bourgeois and capitalist interests, the burden of guilt for atrocities resting upon the SS and the officers, have of course been made

emphatically, and not without a great deal of unsubtle characterisation and premature revelation of information about war-crimes. There is, however, a clear recognition - most striking in Das Judenauto, where there is no 'positive' German figure to suggest a political alternative to the recording 'Ich' before his capture in May 1945 - that the process of education into socialism could not realistically have got under way until the confused nightmare of war had relented, and would then hardly be other than slow and complex for individuals whose recent life had been so full of fear and disillusionment.

PATTERNS OF POST-WAR DEVELOPMENT

The depiction of the progress of typical individuals in the aftermath of German capitulation in May 1945 clearly presented major problems to the authors of these 'Entwicklungsromane'. The broadly similar pattern of experience up until the end of the war was threatened by the sheer variety of fortunes thereafter. Otto and Fühmann were completely remote from Germany in Russian captivity until 1949, while those who lived through the political turmoil and material hardships of the intervening years had problems of a different order. Some reference clearly needed to be made to the gulf between the Socialist ideal and the failings of the system introduced by the Soviets in their zone of occupation. Even a sceptical reading of accounts of the years preceding the foundation of the GDR, by émigré German communists who had formed part of the new administration and then left the state in disillusionment, shows just how difficult wholehearted affirmation must have been.⁵⁴ Yet these novelists were committed, within the framework

of the socialist 'Entwicklungsroman', to bring their central figures at least to the brink of willing integration into German socialist society. Even in the works which had presented the protagonist's development through the Third Reich from the perspective of the end-of-war crisis, like Der Hohlweg and Wir sind nicht Staub im Wind, post-war progress now had to be depicted in a strictly chronological manner. Except under the rather loose episodic structure of Das Judenauto, there was little scope for the authors to pass over periods in which the ideological growth was negligible. The tension between following the logic of characteristics emphasised in the pre-1945 'self' and avoiding an unedifying portrayal of Soviet authority must have been considerable.

The solution which appears to have presented itself comes as little surprise to students of a literature in which complaints have always been voiced about the inadequacies of prevailing social reality as a setting for great ideas and noble personalities. The "itinerant theatre-rabble and miserable landed gentry" inappropriate for Goethe in his plans for Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre,⁵⁵ and the sceptical ex-soldiers and hard-pressed bureaucrats amongst the ruins of post-1945 Germany may have a great deal more in common than first strikes the eye, in their inability to inspire confidence in man's potential. Indeed, just as the liveliness and realistic detail in the earlier stages of the classic 'Bildungsromane' of Goethe and Keller are threatened by the temptations of allegorical abstraction as their heroes approach maturity, so the educationally decisive scenes set nominally in the Soviet Zone tend to occur remote from recognisable historical reality. This situation develops almost inevitably in the novels of Otto and Fühmann,

where the backcloth is the featureless and timeless one of a labour-camp in Russia. Even where the central figure is apparently brought face to face with the diversity of life in each sector of occupied Germany, as in Die Abenteuer des Werner Holt, or in divided Berlin, in Der Hohlweg, the impression of authenticity is soon disturbed. It is evident that the untenable aspects of life outside the Soviet Zone are being starkly highlighted, while the ideological problems of the age are considered behind closed doors within the new world of socialism. The tendency towards this kind of abstraction is greatest in Wir sind nicht Staub im Wind, in which external action is reduced to negligible proportions and rounded off with an incredible melodrama, while representatives of broadly existentialist, humanist, and socialist viewpoints discuss their differences at length in rural tranquillity.

Historical time is also in danger of being telescoped as a means of reducing to acceptable proportions the hero's meanderings between the ideological alternatives. The foundations for successful integration into the Soviet Zone are thus laid within a few months of the end of the war for Hagedorn or during the following year for Weichmantel. Ironically, Dieter Noll's determination both to make things difficult for his hero and to refuse any modification to his chronological flow of narration left him with the task - unmanageable in literary terms and unwelcome to his colleagues in the cultural-political world - of writing a third volume to take Werner Holt through the years after 1946 to more mature stability. Only Fühmann extends the path of post-war development as far as the establishment of the GDR in 1949, and then with results that he was later to regard as a regrettable "Stilbruch".⁵⁶

Working under pressures of this kind, the authors tend almost invariably to make use of character-types to define the boundaries of their hero's future development as conveniently as possible within an easily recognisable set of alternatives. They also avoid involving them in the painful historical realities of demontage, forced collectivisation, labour squads and the like. The first and obvious stage of this process is to give the now confused 'bourgeois individualist' a clear idea of the logical consequences of his youthful attitudes in adult behaviour. Although none of the heroes was ever seriously tempted by bourgeois materialism, Noll provides Werner Holt with an extended, cautionary look into his mother's wealthy surroundings in the second part of the Roman einer Heimkehr. There is, one suspects, a deliberate attempt to present a modernised Buddenbrooks in this portrayal of the world of Hamburg industrialists, but it is so undifferentiated in suggesting that the Rennbachs and their business friends all profited handsomely from the Third Reich, and are now happily exploiting the post-war chaos, that it rarely rises above caricature. Holt's sense of complete alienation from this side of his family and his status-conscious peers, with their various hues of neuroticism, aestheticism and sexual deviance, is only alleviated - as in other comparable situations - by his emotional involvement with an equally isolated kindred spirit. (On this occasion it is Ingrid Tredeborn, the daughter of a wealthy coffee-merchant.) Holt's three months of drifting are predictably unproductive, and necessary to his development only to the extent that they allow him to break irrevocably with his mother and her world, and join his father in the Soviet Zone, even though the people there are, as yet, "nicht weniger fremd"

(WH 2, 249).

The restoration of bourgeois business practice is more of a background phenomenon in Der Hohlweg and Wir sind nicht Staub im Wind, but an accusing finger is pointed at the American forces of occupation for placing ex-Nazi officers in key jobs without making any serious effort to re-educate them. Von Brietzow's rise to the editorship of the Jugend-Rundblick in Berlin, with his callous abuse of authority at the 'Hohlweg' suppressed by the assassination of his chauffeur Krause in the internment camp, is an obvious case in point.

The real temptation placed by the Western world before sensitive young adults is that of neglecting social and political responsibilities in favour of the cultivation of the self. Those who would defend the general interests of morality and culture, from the humanitarian viewpoint established in the Enlightenment, are now faced with an absolute choice between two ideologies, which requires a much more precise definition of priorities. The dilemma is seen to apply equally to the generation of middle-class parents who have helplessly watched the rise of Nazism and its barbarities, and to their children, dreaming of Hyperion and Karl Moor but awakening to the harsh reality of war.

The obsolescence of the ideal of "Bildungshumanismus" is spelt out most plainly by the Czech Marxist Hladek in Schulz's novel, who emphasises its "praktische Wehrlosigkeit" and sees it as something peculiarly German - "die ohnmachtgeschützte Innerlichkeit deutscher Art" (S 417). This insight is of course readily confirmed by the vagueness of his partner in discussion, the recent religious convert, van Bouden, who wants to devote his intellectual energies to explaining the doctrine

of original sin, or by de Bruyn's declining aristocrat, Oyst-Winterfeld, who talks about "freie Entwicklung von Persönlichkeit" for the intellectual elite (H 196, 260), but has no interest in seeking justice for the people as a whole. It requires a more incisive dialectical grasp of historical progress to recognise the necessity for establishing new links with the Communist Party and the working class, whatever the initial difficulties may be, as academics like Hagedorn's mentor Fußler and Holt's father, or enlightened officers like Major Hochreither in Das Judenauto demonstrate.

For the younger figures, however, it takes somewhat longer to realise the ultimate sterility of the Romantic dream of self-fulfilment through the perfect relationship. The heavily idealised girls from younger days, Holt's Uta Barnim and Hagedorn's Lea, re-appear, after periods when all contact has been lost and their death seemed unavoidable, to expose the "Trieb zur Selbstzerstörung" which Hladek saw as the danger to sensitive young people nourished on "Bildungshumanismus" before 1945 (S 417). Both have lost all hope for humanity, and are wasting away in a life without happiness, cut off from society and nourished on a diet of those writers like Rilke and Trakl who appear to reflect their sense of existential despair. Uta, in her Schwarzwald retreat, finds her only purpose in life in tracking down her father's murderer, while Lea - less bleakly - helps to disabuse Hagedorn of his illusions as he reviews his past in letters to her. The fact that she is still amenable to the counsels of Hladek and Fußler may yet allow her to revise her belief that man is nothing more than "Staub im Wind" (S 121, 359), towards the affirmation contained in Schulz's title. Weichmantel's dreams also take on more substantial form

in his love for the two daughters of the Oyst-Winterfeld family, Claudia and Thea, who he meets on the confused trek away from the front as the war ends. The delicate Thea turns up months later in Berlin as an actress with a theatrical troupe which is hopelessly tainted with bourgeois decadence, described by de Bruyn in crassly partisan terms:

... irgendwie paßte (Thea) in dieses Sammel-
surium konturloser Gestalten (hinein), die
eigene Substanzlosigkeit für Voraussetzung
des Schauspielerberufes zu halten schienen ...
Da ihnen die Energie zu gründlicher Arbeit
fehlte, sie aber über alles reden konnten,
hielten sie sich für Genies, die bekanntlich
dumm sein und auf Inspiration warten können.
Sie alle waren irgendwann gescheitert oder
zu schwach, sich im normalen Leben durch-
zusetzen, und griffen dankbar nach jeder
Philosophie, die das Leben als schlecht und
ausweglos bezeichnete ... H 492-3

This "Asyl() für geistig Obdachlose" obsessed with the works of Nietzsche and Dostoevsky, makes its inmates incapable of any genuine exchange of feeling, as Weichmantel discovers when he makes love with Thea and feels they are both merely playing roles in a delightful, but utterly fragile, dream (H 470-1). His efforts to bring her back into the real world are doomed to failure, since he is up against the theatre company and Thea's increasingly reactionary family, so she ends the novel remote from Weichmantel and in a state of suicidal despair.

While bourgeois illusions are in the course of being inexorably deflated for the three heroes who enjoy the freedom to live out their romantic illusions, the figures who represent important aspects of the emerging socialist society take on clearer contours, and a more explicit didactic tone is introduced. Schulz, Noll and, to a lesser extent, de Bruyn strive to foster the notion of a community made up of disparate personalities, but unified in its efforts to persuade individuals

with potential to accept its values - recalling the purposeful interventions of the 'Gesellschaft des Turms' in Goethe's Wilhelm Meister. The height of contrivance is reached in Wir sind nicht Staub im Wind, on the day when Hagedorn decides to take courage in his hands and visit Lea, and thus submit his Hyperion fantasies to the test of reality. Instead of finding her alone as he hoped, he breaks into Dr. Fußler's birthday celebrations where the guests include not only Lea's father van Bouden and the shrewd Hladek, but a delegation from the new communist administration in Reiffenberg, made up of Ernst Rottluff and Else Pohl, KPD stalwarts and old friends of the Hagedorns, together with the local Russian cultural attaché Grischin. The purpose of the delegation's visit is to present Fußler - appropriately - with a Cotta edition of Goethe's works and inform him of his re-appointment to the headmastership of the Goethe-Schule. There is, however, more than a hint of benevolent destiny in a situation where the confused ex-soldier suddenly finds himself in the company of those who represented the highest aspirations of his home environment before the disaster of Nazism, and now stand united in working for a better future.

It is equally unmistakable that Hagedorn enjoys their special esteem as an exceptionally promising individual who has already demonstrated his integrity. Fußler spares him no embarrassment in making this rhetorically clear:

"Sehen Sie: Das ist er, der Rudi Hagedorn, einer meiner Schüler, einer, der aus armen Verhältnissen kam, einer der ganz wenigen, von denen ich sagen kann, das Korn, das aufzuwerfen mir vergönnt war, fiel nicht auf steinigen Acker. Es gehören schon Mut und klare Besinnung und Gewissenstreue dazu, meine Freunde, meine lieben Gäste, wenn sich einer als junger Mensch in scheinbar

glänzenden Zeiten einer gesicherten Laufbahn
entschlägt, freiwillig abgeht von der Schule,
in die der Ungeist eingezogen ist ..." S 336

After praising Hagedorn's desertion from the army as further evidence of his humanity - "sich bewähren wollen als Mensch, sich Überwinden wollen als Kreatur" - and calling Goethe to his aid to describe the liberating effect of overcoming past failings, F^ußler expresses his hope that Hagedorn will strive onwards into the "Morgenlicht des neuen Sittentags" (S 337). The plebeian Rottluff, less concerned with fine phrases, is gently reproachful that Hagedorn has not yet renewed contact with "alte gute Bekannte" like himself, and has neglected his parents, failings noted with disappointment by "ganz Reiffenberg" (S 339). As the company later breaks up into small groups, either departing or strolling in the garden, Hagedorn is left in the room to reflect on his progress and seek inspiration from Goethe, with the latter's 'Prometheus' coming conveniently to hand.

This occasion marks the turning-point in Hagedorn's development, leading to his initiation into the philosophical discussions between F^ußler, Hladek and van Bouden, and to Rottluff's confidence-inspiring gesture of recommending him for a crash-course in teacher-training. It is not yet the end of his confusion, since Schulz acknowledges that the effects of such guidance will be gradual and even sometimes counter-productive. But it does clearly encourage the view that the forces in control of the new socialist state have the insight and patience to develop to the full the potential of its younger citizens. The second book of Die Abenteuer des Werner Holt also gives this impression, but without allowing the network of guiding spirits to be as tightly organised or as

exemplary as Schulz has it. Links with the past are preserved through Professor Holt and Sepp Gomulka's father, who is in close contact with Holt's two loves, Uta and the young orphan Gundel, as legal advisor and guardian respectively. Holt's father is however rather cold and pedantic, while Dr. Gomulka has remained in the West in Nürnberg, happy to let Gundel move to the Soviet Zone once the war is over. Coincidence plays its part in bringing Holt together again as an 'Abiturient' with his favourite teacher from the military training school in the Ruhr, Gottesknecht, who had once tried in vain to dampen his ardour and preach the virtues of survival through the "sieben H8llen" of war into a better future - "damit wir endlich uns selbst werden" (WH 307). But the task of leading Holt towards his true self needs the proletarian orientation provided by new figures like the stalwart Müller, close to death after years in concentration-camps, yet managing a chemical works and tireless in his efforts to win over sceptical youths. Müller is equally decisive in combatting pendency and intolerance from the ranks of the Party, pointing out to young activists like Horst Schneiderei how Holt's resentment of authority is typical - "ganz nach dem nationalen Standard" - and must be overcome by persuasion rather than ultimata if the new state is to survive (WH 2, 52).

Müller's outstanding personal example of purposeful hard work is well supplemented by the theoretical instruction Holt receives from Zernick, the secretary of the local Kulturbund. Although Holt meets him by chance, it turns out that the argumentative and impetuous Zernick is a close friend of Müller's and wastes no time becoming acquainted with Holt's father, Gundel and Schneiderei, so that the circle of helping figures

around Holt is neatly closed. The book that Zernick first places in Holt's hands is Becher's Abschied, with its obvious similarities in pointing the way forward for the previous generation, which Holt is quick to bring to Gottesknecht's attention as "das Thema unseres Lebens" (WH 2, 293). Although Müller dies before his efforts to help Holt have borne fruit, he leaves instructions that Holt should be given a copy of the Communist Manifesto. The description of Holt's communion with Marx, Engels and the spirit of Müller in the isolation of a country boarding-house, as he reads feverishly through the night, aspires to pseudo-mystical ecstasy:

Die Gedanken dieses Buches stürzten ihn in eine Erregung, deren er in dieser Nacht nicht mehr Herr wurde. Jeder Satz traf ihn mit der Wucht der Wahrheit, der man nach langer Suche unversehens begegnet. WH 2, 322

No matter how climactic such scenes may appear within a carefully nurtured development, the fortunes of Holt and Hagedorn seem to depend more in the end on the fluctuations of their relationships with the opposite sex. The only external action in Schulz's novel is brought about by Hagedorn's two attempts to escape the emotional dilemma brought about by his continuing obsession with Lea during the pregnancy of his devoted, but homely, Hilde. Each time he suffers at the hands of the marauding ex-soldiers who are seen to represent the real threat to the stability of the Soviet Zone, and is lucky to survive the assault which knocks him out of a moving train on the second occasion. It appears that this severe blow to the head is the only way to bring Hagedorn to his senses, as an on-looker colourfully observes:

Manchmal geht's kunterbunt zu ... manchmal muß einer erst vom Zug fallen und sich den Schädel aufschlagen wie ein Hühnerei, damit sich's wieder zusammenlebt und zusammenklebt.

S 514

Although Hilde adds to the melodrama soon afterwards with an attempted suicide resulting from her misunderstanding of an old letter of Hagedorn's to Lea, their stability and Hagedorn's willing integration into socialist society are assured from this point on. Holt, on the other hand, is still drifting at the end of Part 2 of his 'adventures' because he has failed to win the love of Gundel, who has fluctuated between the ideologically sound, but unimaginative, Schneidereit and the obstinate Holt throughout. The insoluble conflict which gives the book its static and repetitive quality arises because Holt's jealousy of Schneidereit's apparent success with Gundel alienates him from support for state institutions like the FDJ, while Gundel waits for Holt to prove his political maturity as well as his affections by co-operating with the FDJ. As the novel proceeds, Gundel becomes so wooden in her symbolical role of incorporating "die moralische Integrität der Volksmassen",⁵⁷ that Holt's prolonged refusal to regard his other girl-friend Angelika as more than a pale substitute for her becomes rather incredible.

In both these novels then, there is a major weakness resulting from the author's inability to find a plausible way forward for a hero who has already received sound practical and ideological assistance from a range of outstanding individuals. It is as if Noll and Schulz accepted the need to emphasise only the positive aspects of post-1945 society in the interests of 'Parteilichkeit', yet were unable to work out a pattern of development for their typical figure which lay between the dramatic 'conversions' experienced by the heroes of the 'Betriebsromane' and despair at the initial Russian disregard for the future of their Occupation Zone, which must have

affected even dedicated communists during the years of harsh reparations.

Where this experience falls outside the personal recollection of authors like Fühmann and Otto, they can present the transformation of their characters as more gradual and abstract. The anti-fascist instruction initiated by German defectors, like Haferkorn's comrade Weiß, and the example of the Russians, working harder than their prisoners on reconstruction projects, showing themselves as "nette Kerle", arousing new interest in literature and music, set the process of change in motion through "dieses ... tote Stück Zeit im Menschenleben, das so eintönig war wie ein russisches Schneefeld" (J 205). The general sense of scepticism about the socialist reconstruction in Germany prevails beyond the creation of the SED in 1946, with Fühmann suggesting a widespread antipathy to "Vermassung" (J 191). The possibility of romantic escape into the Russian wilderness with a local girl even suggests itself to Haferkorn, until she makes it clear that this would be a meaningless freedom, "Ersatz für die Wahrheit" (LU 247).

Even here, there is a sense of drama about the moment of truth: Haferkorn only succeeds in liberating himself from the guilt of denying his involvement in the Remanowka massacre after he discovers Major Krebs disguised as an ordinary soldier. Once he has denounced the villain, he is able to remove the whole burden of the past in a confession to Weiß:

Ich habe euch alle belogen ... ich kann nicht
mehr lügen ... und ich will auch nicht! LU 340

Fühmann's narrator has a profound experience of intellectual discovery after being transferred almost by accident to an anti-fascist school in Latvia, when his reading of Marx washes away the illusions of the past "wie Schuppen von den Augen" (J 206).

of Wolfgang Weichmantel after May 1945, that it is more difficult to harmonise personal needs with social objectives than novels like Wir sind nicht Staub im Wind would allow.

RESISTANCE TO 'GROSSE WORTE' AS A BASIS FOR IDENTITY

Where Schulz and Noll endeavour to insulate their hero from the evils of the outside world within a community of individuals concerned with his welfare at every level, they also tend to feather the nest with an emotionally reassuring sense of undisputed values, which helps to keep the harshness of material conditions within tolerable proportions. Even when the extent of post-war misery is hinted at, as in Gottesknecht's discussion with Holt about "unser elendes, zerrissenes Deutschland ... bettelarm nach den Demontagen ... diese furchtbare Zeit" (WH 2, 420), or in **one of** Hagedorn's letters to Lea, it is accompanied by an exhortation against despair and towards a kind of spiritual renewal nurtured on suffering and self-conquest:

Der Traum ist aus. Wir haben den Krieg verloren und haben die Sieger im Lande. Und alle schröpfen uns nach Herzenslust. Überall, auch in der Fabrik, wo mein Vater arbeitet, werden die modernen Maschinen mit einem Kreuz aus Ölfarbe versehen. Sie sollen demontiert und fortgeschafft werden. In der Werkstatt, wo ich arbeite, wird fast nur für die Besatzungsmacht gearbeitet ... Aber wenn wir uns auch jetzt die Seele von Robotern einsetzen, um nur am Leben zu bleiben, so wären wir auch unsere eigenen Totengräber ... Ich bin fest überzeugt, daß wir nur dann als Menschen und als menschliches deutsches Volk fortleben, wenn wir uns aus dem WELTGEIST erneuern. S 321-2

Hagedorn is in any case the least seriously threatened of these figures. Not only is he endowed with "die plebeische Gesundheit" (S 417), but he has also been able to return to his 'Heimat' and

re-establish the comforting sense of harmony and continuity between nature and civilisation, lost temporarily during the Third Reich. The clouds above the Reiffenberg float past "wie die unablässige, stumme Heerfahrt der Zeit aus einer unendlichen Ferne in andere unendliche Fernen", and he re-discovers his youth "in einem mächtigen Gefühl der Urvertrautheit mit diesem Stück Erde, mit diesem Stück Himmel" (S 265-6). The new, dynamic feature on the landscape, teeming with activity as Hagedorn enjoys the sheer relief of having survived the war, is the Russian camp. Past and future are fused in an organic process of development.

When political allegiance means that links with the natural 'Heimat' must be sundered, as Holt's alienation from middle-class Hamburg and the emigration of the Sudeten German colony depicted in Das Judenauto make inevitable, there is a powerful need to compensate by embracing the new homeland in equally emotional terms. Fühmann actually succeeds in feeling "heimgekehrt" before he arrives, while Holt - like Hans Gastl in Abschied - finds it relatively easy to turn his back on his origins, sensing "daß es gut war, lachend Abschied zu nehmen" (WH 2, 260), but less simple to give his oft-asserted sense of 'Anderswerden' concrete form. Holt's powerful yearnings for a sense of 'wholeness' and 'home' in his new life are, it seems, inextricably bound up with the success of his relationship with Gundel. He regards her as his only "Halt und Hilfe" in life, describing himself in a revealing juxtaposition of phrases as "krank nach Gundel, krank vor Heimweh" (WH 2, 455). With Angelika, he never has the feeling of being "ausgefüllt" (WH 2, 347).

The contrast to these vague absolute aspirations in Der

Hohlweg is quite striking. Weichmantel's recollection of the years before 1945, while rarely as vivid as that of Fühmann's narrator, is dominated by his sense of having been led astray through the abuse of concepts like 'Heimat' and 'Gemeinschaft' by those in power. In the first section of the novel, von Brietzow abandons his men with an exhortation to defend the homeland (H 10), and as the war ends Weichmantel has little sympathy for the aristocrat Oyst-Winterfeld's vision of liberated individuals fulfilling their potential, because his earlier experience is that of having been continually "(gepreßt) in Gemeinschaften" (H 196). It is therefore hardly surprising when he reacts strongly against the efforts of Hella Hoff, the enthusiastic young activist protected by Weichmantel's mother during the last months of the war, to enlist his support in working for the "friedliche und demokratische Zukunft des deutschen Volkes". Weichmantel is instantly sceptical of any appeal based upon the rhetoric of "große Worte":

Ein Satz, in dem deutsch und Volk und Zukunft vorkamen, hatte er ernsthaft nie über die Lippen gebracht; denn bei Deutschland klang das "Über alles in der Welt" mit, und bei Volk hörte er "Reich und Führer" dazu. Und er verstand nicht, wie ausgerechnet dieses Mädchen so etwas sagen konnte. Ihre Ungehemmtheit beim Aussprechen großer Worte, deren mangelnde Konkretheit durch Begeisterung überkleistert wurde, erinnerte ihn unangenehm an das jugendlich-stolze Pathos edel blickender Hitlerjungen, an ihre bemüht harten, von strengem Optimismus besonnenen Gesichter und an ihre Lieblingsworte wie: Volk, Nation und Vaterland, Ehre, Ruhm und Treue, Blut und Boden. H 287

Although he recognises the unfairness of this word-association, he has to emphasise that "(diese Gedankenverbindung) war da, und ließ sich ebensowenig verdrängen wie die Erinnerungen an die Nacht im Hohlweg oder die Angst um die Mutter". He refers further to "nebulöse Begriffe" and "unklare, begeistert

hervorgestofene Abstrakta" which undermine the process of rational perception. The fundamental insight which the years of Nazi domination have given him and which he regards as crucial to the "Überwindung der Vergangenheit", is that the way forward is through "eine gesunde Skepsis gegen große Worte ... und die Schärfung und der Gebrauch des Verstandes" (H 287-8).

Weichmantel's return to Berlin and the Mark Brandenburg that he knew so well as a youth does not mark a sense of continuity restored, but rather a new alertness against the misleading dreams of the past, "die verführerische Luft vergangener Tage" from which he must now "endgültig Abschied ... nehmen" regardless of which regime now prevails (H 272). His mother emerges as a perceptive and sympathetic woman who provides an emotional anchor through the difficult post-war months, but without being idealised. She acts as a further foil against the naive enthusiasm of Hella and her friends in the FDJ, suggesting even that if people like Weichmantel support the new regime, it will be in spite of, and not because of, its insistence on regimentation and rhetoric:

Warum vergißt du immer wieder, daß Wolfgang schon einmal Begeisterung erlebt hat, auch begeisterte Massen und begeisterte Mädchen? In dieser Stadt, in denselben Straßen! Ich will dich nicht mutlos machen, aber in eure FDJ, glaub mir, will er nicht mehr 'reins wachsen'! Ihr werdet wieder gleichfarbige Hemden tragen und Fahnen und Trommeln, für eine gute Sache diesmal, ich weiß, aber Menschen wie ihn werdet ihr damit nicht gewinnen. Ich hoffe von Herzen, daß er nicht ein Gegner wird, daß er einsieht, wo das Gute zu Hause ist, aber wenn, dann trotz der Hemden, trotz der Trommeln und Fanfaren und trotz der Begeisterung. H 516

That there are good grounds for scepticism is admitted clearly by Karl Blaskow, who, although playing the role of guiding father-figure towards Weichmantel, is far more sensitive to the

inadequacies of the new regime. Blaskow stresses the disparity between the Marxist ideal and the Party's tendency to elevate superficial conformity to higher status than honest doubt:

Auch ich bin manche Stunde verzweifelt, wenn sich vieles Neue in Formen entwickelt, die mich anwidern, wenn ich eilige Busfertigkeit sehe, Kriecherei und Unduldsamkeit, wenn die Karrieristen mit Parteibuch sich nach oben drängen, wenn Lippenbekenntnisse und gespielte Begeisterung mehr gelten als ehrliches Suchen. H 451

While Blaskow has the faith to overcome such doubts through self-criticism, without losing his sense of purpose and progress, his comments do help to expose the artificiality of the sense of harmonious community, upon which so much emphasis is placed in novels like Wir sind nicht Staub im Wind, and create a more differentiated image of the early days of the Soviet Zone.

Overall, Der Hohlweg moves cautiously towards an assertion of the need for intellectuals like Weichmantel to enjoy some freedom of movement beyond the confines of ideological wishful thinking, since the process of establishing a fresh identity within the socialist state depends on the inevitably gradual development of confidence that its desire for conformity and loyalty does not conflict fundamentally with individual expression of reasoned criticism. Once Weichmantel has outgrown the passive attitudes which lead him to spend the early post-war months just as "verträumt" (H 311) as he had been earlier, steeped in the elitist spheres of writers like Hölderlin, he proves his basic integrity by opting out of the Jugend-Rundblick. He still maintains an independent position between "der dumme Hochmut der Antikommunisten" and the "gläubige Marxisten" from a perspective "im Lager der Pessimisten" (H 469). There is a convincing logic about Weichmantel's development from the moment at the end of the war

when he is gripped with a powerful sense of moral responsibility that he, with his fellow-survivors, must become "das Gewissen der Welt" (H 80). It is clear that his natural affinities lie with the intellectuals and artists, like Eckert and Thea, rather than with Hella and her evangelically inclined friends in the FDJ, and that his chief concern is to counteract the formers' indifference to the fate of Germany.⁵⁸ His sense of mission and his awareness of being especially gifted have nothing in common with the egotism and elitism of Schulze-Fjedorowitsch and his theatre-troupe:

"Verantwortungen lasten auf jedem," sagte Weichmantel. "Ich habe oft das Gefühl, vom Schicksal oder, wie man es nennen will, unverdienterweise bevorzugt zu sein. Und das verpflichtet, verstehst du? Ich lebe, habe überstanden. Mit welchem Recht? frage ich mich manchmal und sage mir, daß ich das noch nachträglich erwerben mußte. Rächen können wir die Toten nicht, aber die Aufgabe, die sie uns übertragen haben, müssen wir zu erfüllen versuchen." H 496

Yet where Hella endeavours to rush him into making a political choice, which would place a barrier between him and people like Eckert and Thea, by reminding him of the 'Hohlweg' and the necessity which it symbolises of deciding between the two alternatives, he is struck by her disregard for the individual dimension in the acquisition of truth (H 528-30):

"Vielleicht sind deine Wahrheiten nicht meine. Ich glaube, daß man sie sich selbst erwerben muß und nicht servieren lassen kann. Ich mag keine Speisen, die in einer Zentrale gekocht und von begeisterten Mädchen weitergereicht werden." H 528

This last encounter with Hella still leaves Weichmantel a long way from overcoming his mistrust of the regime's dependence on cliché and regimentation. But the novel is brought to an end only after his hopes of influencing his cultural peers for the better have suffered a crucial blow. Thea and Eckert

betray him by starting a relationship behind his back, and then implicate themselves unforgivably in the reactionary plans of her father and von Brietzow for a 'Vertriebenenzeitung'. Unfortunately, in confronting Weichmantel with this major disillusionment just a year after his escape from the ravine, de Bruyn seems to have allowed himself to disregard the sources of conflict within the socialist state to which he had drawn specific attention in the novel. For as Weichmantel tries to come to terms with his personal disappointments, he seeks - and finds - the restful tranquillity of a 'natural' country community, and a protective web is wound around him. He leaves Berlin for the now liberated village of Brietzow, although he has previously preferred the variety and stimulation of city-life. He is thus reunited with other wartime friends, Hans Springs, the 'decent' officer Krell, and Lena, his nurse and confidante, in the atmosphere of "wohltuende() Sachlichkeit und einfache() Güte" which he sensed on an earlier visit there (H 357). The wholesome benefits of 'Heimat' and 'Gemeinschaft' may not be proclaimed or demonstrated in the novel's brief epilogue, but there is an inference that Weichmantel is now safe in an island of harmony and stability, remote from whatever difficulties the state as a whole may be undergoing.

The idyll is briefly threatened when it seems that Weichmantel will have difficulties with the unimaginative local school-inspector. He applies for a teaching job, but refuses to disguise his feelings about the regime:

... er (hat) in seinem Lebenslauf geschrieben, daß er nicht von Kindesbeinen an hat Lehrer werden wollen und daß durchaus nicht Begeisterung für unsere Politik ihn zu seinem Entschluß getrieben hat, sondern einzig und allein die Erfahrung, daß hier am besten und ehrlichsten gegen einen Rückfall in die

braune oder graue Krankheit der Deutschen was
getan wird. H 552

But here Karl Blaskow intervenes to ensure that Weichmantel is treated as a special case and given the job. Even though his mother remains sure that there is still a hard time ahead for him, as she summarises his progress in her closing letter to the equally concerned Hella, the impression remains that his difficulties have been resolved quite successfully since his departure from Eckert and Thea, as he is now on the "richtige(n) Weg" (H 551).

Although this conciliatory ending tends to undermine de Bruyn's endeavour to present a view of character-development affected as much by the alienating aspects of the socialist take-over as by the realisation of individual error, he still succeeds in going further than his fellow-novelists in showing that identity is not synonymous with integration into a superficially uniform community. He seems deliberately to play down the 'organic' aspect of identity, in terms of the right family and class background, although Weichmantel's deep friendship with his mother, who fully understands his scepticism and respects his sensitivities from her perspective of uncomplicated support for the state, shows that heredity can be a significant factor. De Bruyn also avoids the 'leap of faith' into the new world, which, as Becher and Fühmann have shown, frequently only stores up difficulties of allegiance until a later stage. The convenient device of signifying the achievement of maturity by building up a stable relationship, on the Hagedorn-Hilde Panitzsch model, is no solution for Weichmantel, not only because he insists upon working out his attitudes independently, but also because his affection for Hella is kept within bounds by his resistance to her naive conformity.

The inadequacy of the parochial notion of 'Gemeinschaft' for an intellectually gifted figure like Weichmantel is also exposed. The metropolis may produce feelings of "Fremdheit und Beengtheit ... Verlorenheit und Einsamkeit" for a country lad like Hans Springs (H 441), but Weichmantel says of Berlin that he is "an diese Stadt (ge)fesselt", enjoying the pace and variety of life and finding it "irgendwie abenteuerlich" (H 458-9). De Bruyn has no evident need for the superlatives of 'wholeness' or self-fulfilment in presenting his sober and accurate reflection of the limitations of the post-war years. He does admittedly refer at times to changes in his hero's disposition and in his environment in terms of the meaninglessly vague 'Anderswerden', but without raising it to major thematic proportions as Becher did in Abschied.

These may all seem relatively modest points, when it is seen how Der Hohlweg depends elsewhere on caricature and simplified contrast in its overall structure and then concludes with the conflict-eliminating idea of the protective community. But in presenting the identity conflict of an intellectual as a continuing process, with no comforting resolution of the scepticism nurtured by excessive exposure to propaganda, de Bruyn was introducing a greater degree of differentiation into his depiction of individual growth and of the new socialist society than his contemporaries had wished or dared to acknowledge.

'ERPRESSTE VERSÖHNUNG' AND ITS LITERARY CONSEQUENCES

T. W. Adorno's well-known response to Lukács' Die Gegenwartsbedeutung des kritischen Realismus⁵⁹ ends with a firm

rejection of the latter's 'qualitative' distinction between Critical and Socialist Realism. The 'genuine' reconciliation of the hero with his socialist environment, which Lukács contrasts with the resignation, escapism and forced conformity found in the bourgeois 'Entwicklungsroman', is seen by Adorno as dangerous utopian thinking, which makes no allowance for the alienation experienced even by dedicated socialists in post-war Eastern Europe. It appeared to weaken Lukács' courageous criticism of Stalinist 'subjectivism', that he was avoiding the fundamental problems which the removal of the bureaucratic apparatus would cause, before the transition towards a mature communist society could take place. Adorno conceded that Lukács would have viewed this contradiction as "zwar noch widerspruchsvoll, aber nicht antagonistisch",⁶⁰ but still summarised the problem of Lukács' inflexible categorisation of the 'Entwicklungsroman' in Socialist Realism as follows:

Das Postulat einer ohne Bruch zwischen Subjekt und Objekt darzustellenden und um solcher Bruchlosigkeit willen ... "widerzuspiegelnden" Wirklichkeit jedoch, das oberste Kriterium seiner Ästhetik, impliziert, daß jene Versöhnung geleistet, daß die Gesellschaft richtig ist; daß das Subjekt ... zu dem Seinen komme und in seiner Welt zu Hause sei. ⁶¹

By the time the East German novels conforming to this aesthetic had been published, Lukács was no longer in a position of cultural-political authority to deal with Adorno's point that his image of socialist society was "bloße Lüge".⁶² It was clear, however, that these novelists had been under pressure to convey their hero's social integration as more imminent and securely founded than Lukács would ever have wished.

Although Lukács never subsequently commented on literature in the GDR, he revealed in his essay of 1964 on Solzhenitsyn's One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich that he had modified his

position on the appropriateness of the 'Entwicklungsroman'.⁶³ He accepts that it was premature to call for Socialist Realist novels containing the totality of the post-war epoch, as reflected in the concrete experience of representative individuals, before its realities had been explored more modestly and incisively in shorter prose works like Ivan Denisovich. He is quick to point out that this emphasis on the value of the 'Novelle' as a precursor to the conquest of reality by the broadly-based epic does not amount to a retreat from his consistent elevation of the latter: he describes it merely as "ein erstes Abtasten der Wirklichkeit auf der Suche nach den ihr angemessenen großen Formen".⁶⁴ It is however an undoubted - if belated - recognition of the validity of a central element in the counter-arguments on realism in literature expressed by dissenting Marxist critics like Benjamin and Brecht since the 1930's.

The difficulties and compromises into which the East German 'Entwicklungsroman' authors had been led, by accelerating the development of their central characters or depicting the progressive forces in the GDR as uniformly benign, became increasingly evident in the following decade. In a situation all too reminiscent of Becher's problems with Wiederandern in the 1950's, these younger writers had to face the overwhelming problem of how they could take their characters in further volumes beyond the threshold of commitment, into active involvement in the GDR.

Dieter Noll was the first to have his dilemma considered publicly, not least because even the second volume of Die Abenteuer des Werner Holt had left his hero further from integration than the first volumes of his colleagues. In a

round-table discussion instigated by Neue Deutsche Literatur,⁶⁵ it became evident that the novel had enjoyed much greater popularity than the other 'Entwicklungsromane', though now because it stressed "Unzulänglichkeiten unseres Lebens" still seen to exist in the 1960's rather than the excitement of combat found in the Roman einer Jugend. It received some praise for Noll's refusal to simplify Holt's development in conformity with the schematic attainment of a quasi-religious 'salvation' found elsewhere:

(U)nsere Entwicklungsromane der Nachkriegszeit tendieren ein wenig zu sehr zu ... sozialistischen Heilsgeschichten, in denen der Weg "per aspera ad astra" allzu geradlinig verläuft. Ich meine, Nolls Bestreben, solche triviale Konzeption zu vermeiden, ist deutlich und sehr positiv zu werten, denn ich halte es für durchaus legitim, einen Helden nicht unbedingt "vorwärts"zubringen. 66

Since this remark was, however, not related to any structural criticism of the socialist 'Entwicklungsroman' as such, it remained on the level of subjective opinion, to be countered with the conventional pre-conceived notion of what this kind of novel should achieve:

Ja, ich war am Ende des zweiten Bandes etwas ratlos: Was nun, wozu? ... am Ende des Buches steht dieser Holt als ein genauso verworrener Bursche da wie zu Beginn. Es fehlte mir etwas ... So scheint mir das Wesentliche nicht geschafft zu sein in diesem zweiten Band, nämlich daß Holt, wenn er natürlich nicht gleich Sozialist zu werden braucht, doch wenigstens ein Stückchen weitergekommen ist. 67

The number of featureless protagonists and 'Scheindialoge', the lack of concrete detail in the depiction of life in the Soviet Zone and its seeming irrelevance to Holt's progress, the circular trend in the plot - all of this is mentioned here, but without consideration of whether such weaknesses might be attributed to something more than Noll's failings as a writer.

The outstanding third volume would, it was agreed, be the real test of his ability.

Noll was not present at this discussion and could only be quoted indirectly - not in any sense an unusual situation: what is striking, however, is the fact that nothing has subsequently been heard of the third volume and very little of Noll the author, even though the two volumes of Die Abenteuer des Werner Holt have continued to enjoy almost unparalleled popularity. A novel entitled Kippenbergs was announced for publication in the early 1970's, but never appeared, and appears to have been forgotten.⁶⁸ The difficulties facing Noll after 1964 in continuing his Werner Holt cycle, from literary and political viewpoints, are evident, but the unexplained silence is unusual in a state which offers such considerable publicity to its successful writers (except of course when they are in official disfavour). This peculiar situation inevitably invites speculation as to whether ideological resistance to further indecision on Holt's part or Noll's creative limitations played the more significant role here.

Max Walter Schulz, on the other hand, confirmed his success in writing the 'Entwicklungsroman' which most fully reflected the image of rapid integration propagated by the SED, by becoming one of its leading 'Kulturpolitiker' through the 1960's.⁶⁹ His unimaginative defence in 1964-65 of the static conception of Socialist Realism against the 'decadent' attractions of Kafka and the "Perspektivgläubigkeit" of politically sympathetic writers in the West was, he claimed, in the interests of keeping East German literature politically effective - "gerichtet gegen den unverantwortlichen Wirkungsverlust der Literatur durch elitäre Kunstauffassung".⁷⁰ This

rise to ideological eminence culminated in his being selected to give the main address to the Sixth Writers' Congress in 1969, which, as will be seen, marks the bleakest point in recent 'Kulturpolitik'.⁷¹

During these years there was little indication as to how he was fulfilling the promise made in 1962 to show that Wir sind nicht Staub im Wind only contained the "epische Exposition der Charaktere und der Verhältnisse" upon which he wanted to concentrate his main attention in a second volume described as "einen Gesellschaftsroman, der die Nachkriegsentwicklung einiger heute vierzigjähriger deutscher Menschen in den Mittelpunkt stellt",⁷² But when Triptychon mit sieben Brücken finally appeared, to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the GDR in 1974, the narrative present had shifted from 1945 to the days following the ending of the 'Prague Spring' in August 1968, with Rudi Hagedorn patiently explaining to Lea, now his second wife, the necessity of Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia, the problems and the realities of the Stalinist years after 1945 had been consigned to the distant past. A similar degree of creative sterility is evident in the further progress of Herbert Otto, who was content to write travelogues and attempt to make Die Lüge even more acceptable politically for publication in a revised edition in 1965, rather than confront Haferkorn with the imperfections of the GDR after his political education in Russia.⁷³

With Franz Fühmann, however, there is an unmistakable tendency to avoid compromising himself as a writer, after the harmonious resolution of his narrator's development in Das Judenauto and his unhappy involvement in the 'Bitterfelder Weg', by concentrating his attentions upon the reprehensible past rather than the imperfect present.⁷⁴ In subsequent war-stories

like König Ödipus and Die Schöpfung he returned to the themes of disillusionment and guilt, in the former case within a rather ponderous narrative framework, and avoided any consideration of the transitional development of his characters towards post-war socialist Germany.⁷⁵ Fühmann's embarrassed feelings about the final episode of Das Judenauto came to light in the brief afterword which he wrote for the Western edition of 1968. He admits how strikingly it deviates from the principle of self-irony he adopted for the rest of the book, in favour of "eine Haltung absoluter Übereinstimmung zwischen dem Individuum und der von ihm als Lebenssphäre gewählten Gesellschaft". Although he makes it clear that he did enjoy this sense of exaltation and harmony in returning to socialist Germany, he suggests, with a hint of disillusionment, that such moments are rare and "nicht auf den Alltag übertragbar" (J 221).

The most illuminating insight into the situation of conflict under which these 'Entwicklungsromane' were written has come from Günter de Bruyn. In a short essay in the anthology of writers' comments on their first book, encouragingly entitled Eröffnungen, de Bruyn confirms just how serious the distortion of personal experience within an inflexible ideological framework actually was.⁷⁶ He describes the feelings which he shared at the end of the war with his youthful contemporaries who had known nothing other than the Third Reich, as those of liberation from all authority and of intense relief at having survived, as "das Glück der Anarchie". It took years before these sensations were finally dissipated, years in which consciousness was determined by "Abwesenheit von Ideologie" and alienation from newly-imposed authority was complete - "Natürlich sind Mächte da, denen man ausweichen muß, aber fremde, die einen innerlich

nichts angehen". The subsequent commitment to the socialist cause is seen not as a movement towards self-fulfilment, but - initially at least - as a betrayal of this "Urerlebnis innerer Freiheit", since it involved compromising high-minded personal vows taken during these days of elation (akin presumably to Weichmantel's aspiration to become part of 'das Gewissen der Welt').⁷⁷

De Bruyn points out, in a powerfully self-critical vein, how little of this has survived in Der Hohlweg. Alluding to the tight contractual obligations imposed on writers by their publishers in the GDR to complete projects punctually, and admitting his own ambitions to achieve literary success, he makes it clear how dependent he became upon the currently approved conception of 'representative' experience. The "vorgegebenes Schema" is, of course, the one which is all too evident in these novels as a whole:

Der Krieg als entwicklungsfördernde Katastrophe,
die zwei deutschen Freunde, die zu Ost-West-
Feinden werden, die guten Mädchen und die guten
Altgenossen als Leitersprossen der Helden-
entwicklung, das gewaltsame Erfassenwollen
sozialer Totalität. 78

According to the same scheme, the period of anarchic happiness and resistance to authority which was so vivid and unique for de Bruyn had to become one of "Verzweiflung" and frantic "Suchen", with a positive resolution firmly in prospect. As an inexperienced writer, de Bruyn had far too little confidence in the validity and representative quality of his own experience to resist the wisdom of his ideological advisers and accept "das Wunder ... daß Eigenstes, genau dargestellt, sich als Allgemeines erweist". As a consequence, the literary product is seriously lacking in authenticity: in a nice phrase, he describes how he "(mogelte) mich dann auf 552 Seiten herum" in

distorting his state of consciousness after the war. Understandably, anxiety about stepping out of line politically made him even less inclined to trust his own memories, and he ended by avoiding the issue through devoting more attention to secondary figures who might superficially create an impression of 'totality':

Hemmung, sich selbst zu offenbaren, und Angst,
Falsches, Unerwünschtes oder Mißverständliches
zu sagen, lassen Tiefe nicht zu, fördern
Flucht in die Breite. 79

He seeks no credit for his efforts to by-pass some of the schematic clichés, referring to them disparagingly as "rührende Versuche" which reveal even more clearly his dependence upon the given framework.

De Bruyn concludes firmly that it was unforgivable, even for a literary beginner like himself, to complete a novel after realising that he had "sein Thema ans Schema verraten".⁸⁰ But his predicament points equally to the falsity of the premise upon which writers like him were driven to overreach themselves, in attempting to emulate the novels viewed as the foundations of the German cultural heritage. Instead of standing as monuments to the coming of age of East German literature and demonstrating the continuity of the tradition of the 'Entwicklungsroman' from Goethe to the socialist present, works like Der Hohlweg appear over-ambitious and inauthentic. With so much predictability in their structures, especially where 'typical' experience is most obviously at odds with historical realities, they reveal just how stifling the cultural-political annexation of traditional genres for primarily didactic purposes can be to creative perception. De Bruyn recognised too late that he was on the wrong track - his 'Hohlweg' having proven to be a 'Holzweg', as the title of his essay indicates -

in aspiring to produce a work of epic proportions. The completed novel became a hollow edifice, a betrayal of the original literary stimulus and of his own past:

Damals trieben pädagogischer Eifer, literaturtheoretische Desorientierung und falsch gewählte Vorbilder mich dazu, den Roman größer machen zu wollen, als der Autor war. Ich schrieb über meine Verhältnisse. Noch fehlte mir die Erfahrung, daß gut nur werden kann, was man, sich selbst gehorchend, schreiben muß, nicht, was man will oder soll. 81

Although he was awarded the prestigious Heinrich-Mann-Preis for Der Hohlweg in 1964, the novel had long since ceased to exist for him: "Als das Buch gedruckt war, war es für mich tot. Nie habe ich es wieder ansehen mögen"⁸² - a severe judgment from the author who had succeeded best in breathing life into constricting 'Entwicklungsroman' structures.

The wish expressed with hindsight by de Bruyn, that he should have limited himself to the fragments of post-war memories most vividly embedded in his consciousness, as the means of escaping the tyranny of a pre-determined formal framework - "Heute wünschte ich mir, aus diesem Bruchteil ein Ganzes gemacht zu haben"⁸³ - has been largely fulfilled in the intervening years by one East German author, Günter Kunert. Although best known as a gifted lyricist and exponent of short parable prose, Kunert also wrote, in the mid 1960's, an impressionistic novel set in the ruins of Berlin in the months after May 1945, Im Namen der Mütter. Seen through the eyes of its sixteen-year-old central figure Harry, who obviously draws extensively upon Kunert's own experience, this is the world of the black market, rotting corpses, sexual initiation and picaresque disorder. De Bruyn's recollection of the sense of liberation, the primacy of survival and the indifference to ideological pressures is brought to life here with a grim humour in vivid episodes. As

in novels like Grass's Die Blechtrommel and the early sections of Strittmatter's Der Wandertäter, the hero's exceptional powers of creativity and perception are raised on to a surrealist level: Harry's disorientation is alleviated by the acquisition of a succession of hats, which help him to find his way through the "Gedankenlabyrinth". His basic need is for "eine schlaue Mütze, ein Denkdeckel, eine kluge Kappe"⁸⁴ to allow him insight into the past and - increasingly - protection from the hollow ideals of the present, as represented in the bourgeois 'hominist' movement. The necessary relationship between the enlightenment the orphan Harry gains about his half-Jewish origins, and his determination to defend his fragile sense of identity, is emphasised by the range of references associating thinking-caps and self-protection, starting from the philological kinship of 'Hut' and 'Hütten'. But the extent to which the need to survive predominates over the concerns of morality, socialist or otherwise, is clearly demonstrated in the scenes where Harry openly abuses his 'gift' as a means of exploiting a public hungry for information about missing friends and relatives, and prepared to hand over treasured possessions and black-market commodities to an itinerant 'Hellseher' for his dubious insights.

There is no comforting recourse here to the image of a socialist community to guide the path of disorientated youth: Harry's prime concern, travelling through the external labyrinth of the Berlin U-Bahn and confronted with a bewildering succession of mirror-images of his own self, is to prove himself equal to his newly-acquired responsibilities of providing for a wife and young son, and thus safeguard their future in a hostile world. It is at this decidedly non-conciliatory point

that the novel ends:

Es ist mein Sproß. Ich bin ganz sicher. Bis zum nächsten Zweifel bin ich ganz sicher. Bis zur nächsten Frage: Wo werden wir hingefahren sein, Papa? Da muß man sich als Erziehungsberechtigter schon heute die Antwort überlegen, damit man nicht versehentlich sagt: Das, wenn man gewußt haben würde!

Bis dahin jedoch geht die Fahrt durch eckige Erddörme, durch rasch entstehende und genauso vergehende Generationen von Gedröhn, durch Stationen, die man kennt, und wo man keinen anderen trifft als sich selber, vor dem man flüchtig den Hut zieht ... Guten Tag, wie geht's, ohne sich näher für seine näheren Umstände zu interessieren. Mag er sich doch selber vor sich oder sonstwem hüten. Wir haben keine Zeit mehr für ihn, wir müssen nach Hause. 85

Kunert's novel, published in West Germany in 1967, has still not appeared in the GDR:⁸⁶ when it does, it will offer a valuable literary corrective to the distorted view of an inescapably complicated period of transition, which the officially sanctioned 'Entwicklungsromane' of the years 1956-64 had endeavoured to reflect. The fundamental inadequacy of the 'Entwicklungsromane', despite their many pioneering achievements, lies in their perpetuation of the illusion, which had also proved costly in creative terms for Johannes R. Becher, that a major identity-crisis can be completely resolved through a decisive move towards political commitment. And yet the warnings given since by the authors of the two relatively successful works, Der Hohlweg and Das Judenauto, about the perils of denying the validity of their subjective experience, show how quickly some East German writers were to overcome this deep-rooted weakness of Socialist Realism. There was to be a significant line of progress from these derivative 'Entwicklungsromane' to the establishment of new standards of originality and authenticity in the second half of the 1960's.

CHAPTER 4

CONTINUITY AND CONFLICT IN THE GDR'S DEVELOPMENT.

BRIGITTE REIMANN : DIE GESCHWISTER.

CHRISTA WOLF : DER GETEILTE HIMMEL.

ERWIN STRITTMATTER : OLE BIENKOPP.

ERIK NEUTSCH : SPUR DER STEINE.

HERMANN KANT : DIE AULA

THE TWO FACES OF THE 'CULTURAL REVOLUTION'

To read the main cultural-political speeches of the period between the SED's rigid reassertion of authority in 1957 and the proclamation of the 'Bitterfelder Weg' in April 1959, it would appear that a major re-definition of the writer's status and social role was taking place. The key phrase at the Fifth Parteitag in July 1958 was 'die sozialistische Kulturrevolution', and it had a decidedly Maoist ring. There was a new emphasis upon the ending of the division of labour between intellectuals and workers, and upon literary creation as a collective process, serving as a vehicle for mass indoctrination.¹ The widespread encouragement of 'schreibende Arbeiter' frequently carried the implication that their efforts would be every bit as good as those of the 'Berufsschriftsteller' in the Writers' Union, and thus show full-time literary activity to be an expendable luxury. Such rhetoric of permanent revolution from the lips of the cultural politicians can however be seen, in the light of the literary products of the following years, to have been little more than "einen rein verbalen Radikalismus".² On the one hand, the workers were not encouraged to speak their mind, in the way in which, for example, the 'Werkkreis' movement of the 1970's in the Federal Republic has allowed them to do.³ On the other, the professional authors themselves came to recognise, through their fortunes on the 'Bitterfelder Weg', that the justification for literature is the pursuit of authenticity and that it cannot be reduced to a subsidiary branch of the 'Ideologische Kommission' established in 1957 by the Politbüro.

It seems clear that the 'Kulturpolitiker' were primarily concerned, behind all the talk of cultural revolution, to prevent the re-emergence of an articulate critical voice within

the Party ranks, such as that represented by the intellectual leadership in 1956. This endeavour was greatly facilitated by the absence from cultural spheres from 1957 onwards of the three dominant figures in the debate on socialist culture since the formation of the 'Bund proletarisch-revolutionärer Schriftsteller': Bert Brecht, who had died in August 1956, J. R. Becher, effectively deposed as Minister for Culture around the same time, as implied in Wiederanders, and Georg Lukács, politically disgraced - and therefore culturally taboo - since the fall of the provisional Nagy government in Budapest.⁴ Each of them had, at the crucial moment, set aside temperamental differences and longstanding personal and literary antagonisms, in defending the interests of the writer and of literary quality over short-term political expediency. Brecht had of course consistently criticised the Party's unproductive predilection for 'Schönfärberei', and it seemed significant that his insistence, during the crisis of 1953, on formal subtlety as an integral part of good socialist art - "Die Kunst hat ihre eigenen Ordnungen ... Die Frage der Qualität wird für eine echte sozialistische Kunst entscheidend"⁵ - was echoed in Lukács' references to the 'Schlauheit der Kunst' at the Fourth Writers' Congress and in Die Gegenwartsbedeutung des kritischen Realismus. And at the same congress, Becher had reasserted, in an otherwise conciliatory main speech, the belief in the unique identity of the artist as "ein vates, ein Seher, ein Prophet",⁶ to which he had invariably returned since his Expressionist days, and which took him another step towards his renewal of autobiographical experience in Wiederanders.

These are the **attitudes**, far more threatening than external Western decadence, which Abusch, Kurella and Ulbricht

had directly in mind in their condemnation of "sektiererische Tendenzen", of "geistiger Aristokratismus" and of the aspirations towards "Weltniveau" rather than "Volkstümlichkeit".⁷ Such attacks were intended to reinforce the cliché of the intellectual, out of touch with reality in his **ivory** tower, and place the new committee of the Writers' Union under great pressure to revert to the discredited 'illustrative literature' of the period up to 1955. Ironically, the Party's ideologues were endeavouring to prove that the critical perceptions of intellectuals like Becher, Brecht and Lukács had themselves originated in a theory-clouded remoteness from the everyday world.

They found an author willing to give substance to their distorted conception of the life of the 'freischaffender Schriftsteller' in Regina Hastedt, whose reportage-novel Die Tage mit Sepp Zach (1959) was to be praised fulsomely as the model for those embarking upon the 'Bitterfelder Weg'. Hastedt's account of her encounter with the activist Zach during her spell in the mines at Oelsnitz is normally regarded as the first significant depiction after 1956 of industrial life, but her views on the identity of the writer, as exemplified by her first-person narrator, are equally programmatic. Before the decisive meeting with Zach occurs, her life in the utterly bourgeois cultural world, within the 'Opium' of routine, is devoted to the biography of an abstract artist. Like her fellow-writers, she is "verfangen in der Kunst, immer kunstvoller werdend, um der Kunst willen".⁸ They are all bored by the prospect of writing about the mines, as part of the initiative under the banner 'Kunst hilft Kohle', and are patronising and superficial in their attitudes to workers like Sepp Zach,

even when warmly invited into their modest homes. After the visit to Oelsnitz, the narrator alone is unable to accept the tranquillity of her comfortable study and the cherry tree in her garden, fixated by the challenge to find out how the miners really live. She is suddenly aware that there is something fundamentally unhealthy about her own existence:

... jäh aus den ästhetischen Betrachtungen
herausgerissen ... erdrückte mich die Frage:
was ist denn krank in dir - die Weltanschauung
oder das Talent? Wohl beides. 9

She returns, of course, to experience in depth the collective power of the working-class and gain a revolutionary new sense of her purpose in life. The liberation she achieves from the egocentric identity of the writer, in becoming part of the uniformly self-denying working community, is once again presented with the emotional force of a religious conversion:

Von den Tagen unterm Kirschbaum an bis jetzt
war ich ein einzelnes Glied gewesen, das im
Bereich dieses Magneten lag und das stetig
angezogen wurde, langsam, solange die Entfernung
weit war, dann schneller und schneller - nun
waren wir vereint. Ich war nicht mehr trotzig
wie damals ... ich wollte Sepp auch nichts
'zeigen'. Mit einem unbeschreiblichen Gefühl
löste sich der letzte Rest des Egozentrums in
mir auf. Nun floß ich endgültig in diesen
Kraftstrom ein. 10

The kind of contradiction into which Hastedt is led by her use of metaphors of self-dissolution, culminating in her image of toiling mankind fused with the anthropomorphised mountain of coal,¹¹ is exemplified by her concluding reference to "die Entdeckung unseres Ichs" as the greatest adventure of socialist man.¹² But the self-belittlement of the writer in the face of the well-nigh deified Sepp Zach is almost absolute, relieved only by the afterthought that the writer, too, might have a modest social role to fulfil:

... ich will werden wie Du. So fundiert in
der Weltanschauung, so praktisch in ihrer
Nutzanwendung. Ich will bald so siegessicher
und zukunftsfröhlich sein wie Du. Und Dich muß
ich lehren, Bücher zu lesen. 13

This crass distortion of the nature of literary activity and the life of the intellectual was evidently intended to have the effect of denying Hastedt's fellow-writers the right to act as anything other than enthusiastic minions of the 'Kulturpolitiker'. It mattered little to Walter Ulbricht and other speakers at the Bitterfeld Conference that Hastedt's previous work had been almost entirely of a non-literary kind, and that the conflicts of 1956 had had little to do with the intellectuals' alleged bourgeois complacency or esoteric remoteness.

A revealing perspective on Hastedt's depiction of cultural life is provided by her brief autobiographical sketch of 1965, which describes her beginnings as a provincial reporter. At that stage, she was desperately eager to give her fictional efforts the dimension of 'Kunst' and was resentful of the criticisms of established writers:

Ich schwamm in der Kunst umher wie ein Papierschiff auf dem Meer ... Man kommt als Lokalreporterin nicht ungestraft zur Literatur. Ich mußte schweren Einstand bezahlen. Von den Lesern bekam ich Lob und Anerkennung. Aber Schriftsteller und Lyriker [sic] legten an das Büchlein Maßstäbe wie etwa an Goethe. 14

This serves as a forceful reminder that there was still a wide gulf, filled with prejudice and hostility, between the journalist-authors prepared to place Party loyalty above all else and the 'freischaffende' authors aware of responsibilities to literature as well as to the Party. It cannot of course be overlooked that the background to Die Tage mit Sepp Zach was as much that of the manpower crisis in East German industry after 1956, with emigration to the West still at an intolerably high

rate,¹⁵ as the debate on the function of socialist literature. Nonetheless, it is difficult to see how the moral and emotional exhortations, the devalued 'große Worte', to which the Party again turned in documents like the 'Zehn Gebote der sozialistischen Moral', approved by the Fifth Parteitag,¹⁶ could have enjoyed any credibility in a literary guise. The other examples of the reportage which dominated the barren literary scene of 1958-59 seem to have been written in the main by Party bureaucrats and journalists rather than established writers, and are no more plausible than Hastedt's fiction to today's reader.¹⁷

What is perhaps more surprising, however, is that the work of the 'schreibende Arbeiter' was also predominantly of the same kind. Although the original Bitterfeld slogan coined by Werner Bräunig, 'Greif zur Feder, Kumpel, die sozialistische Nationalkultur braucht dich!', conjures up the image of the manual worker enthusiastically describing his experiences during his leisure hours, the realities - in terms of published work - were rather different. An examination of one of the representative volumes in the series Ich schreibe,¹⁸ suggests little basic difference in the authors' origins from those of the 'white collar' journalists and Party officials writing the conventional affirmative reportage.¹⁹ Their style is also highly predictable, since the volume consists largely of short prose pieces on industrial themes and exhortatory poems - hardly surprising in view of the government's unwillingness to make the 'Zirkel schreibender Arbeiter' a focal point for constructive political criticism, or for literary innovation outside the guidelines of the official Handbuch für schreibende Arbeiter.²⁰ The collective contributions, excerpts from a brigade diary and a village chronicle, are quite the most contrived of all, with a communal

'Wir' perspective suggesting total harmony and untroubled progress in line with Party planning. The members of the LPG at Deuben, having just boosted their productivity by 14%, end their report in eager anticipation of the Party's next challenge:

Die Partei der Arbeiterklasse weist uns das Ziel. Die Beschlüsse des VII. Deutschen Bauernkongresses werden uns helfen, die nächste Wegstrecke zu meistern. Breite Straße, die wir gehen ... 21

Whether Gerlach's hopes for a radical 'Arbeiterliteratur', articulating the problems of the working-man and breaking the control of the Party bureaucracy, had much actual foundation in the GDR of the late 1950's, is open to question. But it seems clear that the Party never seriously intended to dissolve the differences between 'Überbau' and 'Basis' in the cultural sphere, let alone any other. As Gerlach says, "das kultur-revolutionäre Postulat (wurde) niemals realisiert".²² It remained essentially a debate within the 'Überbau' about the full-time writer's role in relation to the ideological leadership.

The first indication of resistance, both to the reduction of literature to ideologically subservient status and to the threat to the future of the professional writer suggested by the encouragement of the 'schreibende Arbeiter', came from Erwin Strittmatter. However much his 'Selbstkritik' of 1957 had meant to Walter Ulbricht,²³ Strittmatter was the only main speaker at the Bitterfeld Conference who still represented, through his earlier friendship with Brecht, some degree of continuity with the intellectual leadership of 1956. As newly appointed First Secretary of the Writers' Union, Strittmatter was able to provide reassurance that many of his colleagues were volunteering for extended involvement in industrial and

agricultural life, with a view to broadening the thematic range of their work. Despite his own close links with the farming community and his oft-expressed disdain for 'elitist' intellectuals, he was careful to emphasise that such ventures ought not to be a matter of compulsion. Some degree of plurality in the choice of subject-matter needed to be maintained, although the active 'Erfahrungsaustausch' with workers ought now to be in the forefront:

Ich wünsche mir sehr, es käme dahin, daß man das als eine Lücke empfindet und der Auffassung ist, daß man nicht mitdiskutieren kann, wenn man nicht irgendwo in einem Werk oder auf einem volkseigenen Gut oder in einer LPG seine zweite Heimat hat. 24

He even complained about the intimidation to which writers wishing to depict current conflicts within industry were constantly subjected, only to have Ulbricht dismiss his remarks as a joke.²⁵

Nevertheless, such exchanges marked the beginning of a new process of self-assertion which, fuelled by the lack of success of the 'schreibende Arbeiter', at least in terms of published literature, had reached a more forceful level by the Fifth Writers' Congress of May 1961. It was clear by this stage that the success of the 'Bitterfelder Weg' would depend on the abilities of the full-time writers to make creative use of their industrial experience, rather than on the efforts of the 'schreibende Arbeiter'. Anna Seghers, with her position of authority amongst the older generation of writers unchallenged after 1956, and confirmed since the publication of Die Entscheidung in 1959,²⁶ referred in the main address to the dangers of patronising the 'schreibende Arbeiter'. They were still far too inexperienced to develop new literary forms appropriate to their social perspective, or to avoid the pitfalls of

substituting cliché for authenticity:

Um ... wirklich Zeugenschaft abzulegen von dem spezifisch Neuen in unserer Wirklichkeit, müssen die literarischen Arbeiten klar und aufrichtig sein. Von scharfer Aufmerksamkeit. Dann erst werden sie eine Fundgrube von Besonderheiten, auch in ihr gleichsam noch ungeformten Form ... Wichtig ist, daß sie frei sind von Künstelei, von Sonntagsdeutsch, von Scheinpathetik. ... Unechte Pathetik und gegenstandlose Gefühle sind der wirklichen Kunst genauso fremd wie jeder wirklichen Arbeit. 27

Her central theme, the need to create a literature reconciling 'Tiefe' and 'Breite' in the best traditions of the 'literarisches Erbe', suggested an attempt to tilt the balance decisively back in the direction of critical differentiation after the constraints of the years since 1957. Strittmatter supported this effectively, by presenting himself as a 'schreibender Arbeiter' who had had to go through a long process of trial and error before gaining the satisfaction of having something worthwhile published. His plea for the protection of the "lesender Arbeiter" from "die Selbstverständigungen und das gut gemeinte Gestammel seiner Arbeitskollegen aus der anderen Abteilung"²⁸ was reminiscent of Brecht's earlier rebukes to cultural politicians whose conception of 'Volkstümlichkeit' was an insult to the intelligence of the thinking worker.²⁹ Strittmatter also offered a description of the writers' responsible and disciplined existence which might have been intended to correct the wilful distortions employed by people like Regina Hastedt.³⁰ In this Congress generally, the defence of literary autonomy was conducted with greater circumspection than in 1956, but still revolved around similar issues. It was perhaps surprising, then, to hear Alfred Kurella concluding the proceedings by asserting the Party's confidence in the capacity of the "Künstler" to fulfil "seine hohe gesellschaftliche Mission,

Bildner und Gestalter, Seher und KÜnder, Mahner und Warner zu sein", albeit with a firm grasp of Marxist-Leninist principles and indissolubly allied with the "Volk".³¹

This kind of rhetoric, with its praise for "schöpferisches Genie" and "künstlerische Phantasie", had of course been as dangerously nebulous in the past as talk of cultural revolutions. It could scarcely be taken on trust by the relatively untried writers about to publish the first wave of 'Bitterfeld' prose since the exodus in 1958-59 to the factories and farms. 1961 was the year when the 'Bitterfelder Weg' made its literary impact but it was hardly unexpected under the circumstances that the prose works themselves were full of contradictions. They were written by authors from very different backgrounds: Franz Fühmann and Brigitte Reimann had moved from comparative cultural isolation to discover industrial life, the one in the Warnow shipyard, the other in the lignite combine at Hoyerswerda known as 'Schwarze Pumpe'. In contrast, Erik Neutsch and Karl-Heinz Jakobs were renewing contact with a previously familiar world, in writing about chemical, engineering and oil-refining projects in places like Halle, Bitterfeld, Wartha and Schwedt. The titles of these works range from the predictably programmatic, such as Reimann's Ankunft im Alltag and Neutsch's Bitterfelder Geschichten, to the factual Beschreibung eines Sommers of Jakobs and the more evocative Kabelkran und blauer Peter of Fühmann. While the reportage element is still predominant in Neutsch's collection of stories and Fühmann's first-person narrative, Reimann and Jakobs moved towards a more distanced fictional situation, reflecting the orientation towards the anti-heroic and the situation of the younger generation previously evident in the revival of the short novel

form, the povest, in the USSR.³²

Neutsch's stories now only attract literary interest to the extent that they contain most of the central motifs in Spur der Steine in a much less problematic formulation. A very appropriate analogy has been drawn between the unthreatened structure of his socialist community and that of Gottfried Keller's Seldwyla in his cycle of 'Novellen'.³³ A simple conflict is established - between a resourceful worker and an unimaginative bureaucracy (Ein Ding gedreht), or between an exemplary Party official and a self-centred brigade (Der Neue), or between a veteran worker and his new manager, who has little more than theoretical training (Die Regengeschichte). The ensuing difficulties are depicted, but their productive resolution is never in doubt.³⁴ The narrator, usually in Neutsch's own journalistic capacity, has no detectable identity outside this industrial world: he is close to events, has no difficulty understanding character or motivation, and always adopts a forward-looking perspective. He would readily endorse the view of his most positive figure, Horst Stahmer (the unblemished prototype for Werner Horrath in Neutsch's later novel), that the GDR is unified by "die große Gemeinschaft, die Überall in der Republik für ein menschenwürdigeres Leben schafft()",³⁵ whose example will steadily succeed in overcoming the remaining pockets of resistance to the Party's wise leadership.

Fühmann, on the other hand, appears to have adopted a reportage structure because it would commit him to an authentic representation of the gulf separating writers like himself from the industrial world, instead of glossing over the problem through some fictional contrivance. Kabelkran und blauer Peter raises the central question of how a writer might transform

such experience into literature, when he lacked any basic knowledge of machine technology, industrial planning and the lifestyle of ordinary working-people. Although this world is "fremd und fern",³⁶ full of terrors for the physically maladroit intellectual, with neither a manual skill to offer nor any other point of communication with the workers, the first-person narrator is determined to come to terms with it to the best of his ability. He is utterly frank about his failures, and looks to the reader to accept his anthropomorphic descriptions of the functioning of machines, referring for example to "ein langgestrecktes brusthohes Ding, unter dessen flachlippigem Schnabel ein starrer grüner Lappen mit zwei Fühlhörnern hing ...".³⁷ Through time, however, he does develop an emotional sense of identity within this environment and establishes some mutually rewarding friendships. This, it might be felt, represents significant progress within a short period, helping to reduce the compartmentalisation of activity and the social privileges separating writers, as much as the Party elite, from the workers. Regrettably, Fühmann then chooses to sweep aside the logic of his own searching analysis of a world which has few of the qualities of 'Gemeinschaft', by ending on a conventionally climactic note with the launching of a ship. By transforming the shipyard from the subject for a forthright reportage to the "Gegenstand für eine Hymne", viewed in total affirmation as comparable to a "Kunstwerk, das mich erschüttert" or a "Mensch(), der mich entflammt",³⁸ Fühmann was succumbing - as in Das Judenauto - to the temptations of premature harmonisation, as a gesture of loyalty to the state.

Brigitte Reimann's Ankunft im Alltag,³⁹ the title of which is frequently quoted in describing the significance of the

'Bitterfelder Weg', is somehow the most impersonal of the 1961 stories. It is tempting to speculate, in the light of her impressive later fiction, whether she would have shared the feelings of regret expressed by contemporaries like Christa Wolf and Günter de Bruyn that their work of the same period was ever published, because of its basic "Hang zu Realitätsverleugnung".⁴⁰ There may be some attempt to let youth speak for itself here, in the style of the povest, but the three central figures and the amorous web entangling them are so stereotypical that almost nothing is revealed about the situation of teenagers in the GDR at this period. The attractive orphan of Jewish origins, Recha Heine, the self-assertive, wealthy son of a works-manager, Curt Schelle, and the shy, artistically gifted Nikolaus Sparschuh meet while gaining a year's practical experience at Schwarze Pumpe, and the novel is intended to offer an account of how their environment affects their personality development. Yet the industrial surroundings are never more than a backcloth, from which other wooden characters occasionally emerge, and the working community is as securely in order as in Neutsch's Bitterfelder Geschichten, with the young people under the paternalistic tutelage of their brigadier, Meister Hamann. The most striking failure, given the reassertion of the writers' special responsibilities at the Fifth Congress, is the anonymity of the narrator, who does nothing to place events in any historical perspective of change or conflict, so that there is no direct point of reference to the context of the 'Bitterfelder Weg'.⁴¹

The real breakthrough in this literature, in terms of the independent identity of the narrator as well as of the critical depiction of East German society, came with Karl-Heinz Jakobs'

Beschreibung eines Sommers. The first-person standpoint here is that of the central fictional figure, the formidable non-conformist Tom Breitsprecher, who is too complex to be fitted into the conventional categories of the 'positive' hero or his adversaries. Seen in the eyes of a rather unsubtle Party functionary as "einer der kompliziertesten ... Du bist unser bester Ingenieur. Moralisch aber bist du ein Dreck",⁴² the thirty-year-old sceptic recounts how he becomes involved in an adulterous relationship with a young worker, in the course of demonstrating his exemplary commitment to the 'Bau der Jugend' scheme at Wartha.⁴³ The world in which Breitsprecher moves is neither integrated nor free of serious conflicts: it seems closer, as Jakobs subsequently suggested, to the perilous existence of the frontiersman in the Wild West,⁴⁴ however much the camp-fire harmony of the FDJ volunteers on the site and their "sozialistische() Romantik" may promise better times to come.⁴⁵ Breitsprecher's independence in the hard summer of 1959 is not seen as reprehensible, since his leadership qualities are undisputed. It is rather an indication of the restrictiveness of the Party's morality, and the inadequacy of its emotional appeals to an abstract sense of virtue and common effort. His passing comments on the tendency in literature and the mass media to substitute 'Schönfärberei' for factual description are particularly apt in this context, with nothing to suggest that the author is in anything other than full agreement. Breitsprecher is left in the perfect position to contrast the reality of the building site with an 'official' portrayal, after the achievements of his group are noted in higher quarters:

Von Anfang an machten die Zeitungen viel Wind um uns. Überall erschienen Artikel und Reportagen, die von den Perspektiven berichteten, die wir dem Arbeiter-und-Bauern-

Staat eröffneten, und davon, was für prächtige Burschen wir allesamt waren. Es wurden auch überall Bilder abgedruckt mit lachenden Gesichtern drauf, und die Bagger und Dumper und Großraumfahrzeuge machten sich sehr imposant auf den Bildern, und es war eine fabelhafte Landschaft ringsum. 46

He goes on to list the kind of blunders and sufferings which the reporters overlooked, making it clear why reportage and fiction based on selected surface impressions will never convince the workers at whom they are apparently directed:

Man kann allerdings auch nicht sagen, daß die Reporter gelogen hätten mit ihren Berichten und Bildern. Nur wird jeder zugeben, daß es fast unmöglich ist, flimmernde Luft bei acht- und zwanzig Grad im Schatten auf den Film zu bekommen, die verheerende Dürre jenes Sommers, die zerschundenen Hände, die vertrockneten Lippen, wenn wir kein Wasser mehr auf der Baustelle hatten, die Milliarden Mücken und Stechfliegen, die der Wald unerschöpflich uns entgegenatmete. Die unbestechliche Kamera ist nicht imstande, keuchende Lungen, versagende Muskeln und fiebrige Augen für die Umwelt festzuhalten, und die Reporter kamen in den Pausen zu uns auf die Baustelle, oder sie gingen abends ins Wohnlager, wenn sie die lachenden Gesichter fotografierten. 47

The only exception to this is a female reporter who, following the principles of the 'Bitterfelder Weg', lives and works with the group before publishing "etwas Wesentliches über uns".⁴⁸

Critical points of this kind, allied with the colloquial vitality of the narrative and its challenging open-endedness, make Beschreibung eines Sommers the first work of real literary and historical significance within the 'Bitterfelder Weg'. It is gratifying to note that it received timely critical support later in 1961 from Neue Deutsche Literatur, through the review written by Christa Wolf, which praised its "Lebenswirklichkeit" in the portrayal of contemporary society and in its fruitful application of an eternal literary theme to the GDR situation - the conflict created when "eine große Leidenschaft" contravenes

"Normen der Gesellschaft".⁴⁹

Between the publication of Jakobs' novel and this critical recognition, however, political necessity had intervened, in the form of the erection of the Berlin Wall. Much else had occurred over the previous two years to disturb the sense of a new beginning, marked as much by the Bitterfeld Conference as by the Seven Year Plan for industry in 1959: the repressive industrial legislation of 1960 in the form of the 'Arbeitsgesetzbuch', the forced completion of the programme of land-collectivisation, and, as a barometer of instability, the intolerable increase in the numbers of 'Republikflüchtige'.⁵⁰ The first wave of Bitterfeld literature, mainly set in the encouraging days of 1959, could ignore all of this, but for those writers still evolving a fictional response to their industrial experience after August 1961, the inadequacy of the ahistorical affirmative tone of a work like Ankunft im Alltag was self-evident. It was fortuitous that the cultural climate in Eastern Europe became more favourable for the next few years: the 22nd Soviet Communist Party Conference in October 1961 encouraged literary experimentation, precisely at the time when the SED might have preferred to revert to Socialist Realist stereotypes. But while 1962 saw a remarkable flowering of critical lyric poetry, and the performance of dramas like Peter Hacks' Die Sorgen und die Macht - an antidote to the idealisation of industrial life elsewhere - there was almost nothing in prose to show the future course of the 'Bitterfelder Weg'.⁵¹ It was only after the SED's Sixth Parteitag in January 1963 had proclaimed its own thorough-going reform of political and economic practice, in introducing the 'Neues ^{II}Ökonomisches System der Planung und Leitung' (NÖS), that the second, and decisive, wave of

'Bitterfeld' prose began to appear.

The five novels which represent its most noteworthy achievements included two by authors who had risked little in 1961, but were now intent upon presenting a more complex view of GDR society, Brigitte Reimann's Die Geschwister (1963) and Erik Neutsch's Spur der Steine (1964). It is only at this stage that Erwin Strittmatter, the central figure in the writers' redefinition of the 'cultural revolution', had his Ole Bienkopp (1963) published. They were accompanied by novels by two other young writers associated independently with some of the important discussions on the nature of East German literature since the 'Thaw', and with limited reputations as creative writers, Christa Wolf's Der geteilte Himmel (1963) and Hermann Kant's Die Aula (1965).⁵² Their work appeared within a year or so of the setting up of the NÖS, although in the case of Die Aula there was a further gap of a year between its serialisation in the youth magazine Forum and the book edition. Their contemporaneous publication is hardly coincidental - all are in different ways products of the 'Bitterfelder Weg', but also reflect the writers' new self-assertiveness following their Fifth Congress, and offer critical **viewpoints** which the economic reforms first made acceptable. Most importantly, however, they introduce an historical dimension into the literary depiction of East German society, by offering a series of retrospective accounts of the fluctuations in the progress made since 1949 towards the creation of a genuine socialist community.⁵³

THE NARRATOR AS MEDIATOR

The sheer stylistic diversity of these novels is almost in itself an indication of the writers' greatly extended sense of creative independence since 1961. It is far less easy in this context to think in terms of common structural patterns for treating an officially approved theme than it was in the case of the same generation's 'Entwicklungsromane' or the earlier 'Betriebsromane'. The 'Bitterfelder Weg' is no longer to be seen as synonymous with well-informed reportage based on the industrial growth of the late 1950's - much more crucial is the articulation of a differentiated view of the course of socialism in the GDR since its inception. The pursuit of 'Lebenswirklichkeit', signalled by Christa Wolf's review of Beschreibung eines Sommers late in 1961, implied a thorough overhaul of the narrative techniques employed in earlier Socialist Realist writing to reflect an uncomplicated organic development towards self-fulfilment, within a harmonious community. The omniscient narrator as the voice of the Party, and the ponderous chronological narrative were obvious targets, since they had been so widely abused to convey misleading notions of social reality and personality growth. They had always suggested that paradise was just around the corner, but without locating the narrative present in any recognisable East German context.

Only Erik Neutsch, in Spur der Steine, retains anything like this structure, while the other authors extend the new subjective vein introduced in 1961 by Jakobs and Fühmann, based upon the close relationship, if not total identity, between the narrator and the central character. In one case, Die Geschwister, the main figure, Elisabeth, is unambiguously the first-person

narrator, although in Die Aula the third-person perspective scarcely disguises the fact that the narrator is almost indistinguishable from Robert Iswall. In Ole Bienkopp and Der geteilte Himmel, a deep emotional involvement in the progress and sufferings of the protagonists, Bienkopp and Rita, is unmistakable, but the narrators are largely reticent about their own identity. In these four novels, the narrator becomes a mediating, relativising figure rather than acting as a mouth-piece for state authority. He stands between the experience of representative GDR citizens and the Party's ideological understanding of events, between the past and the present. He is quite open-minded about the competence and the morality of socialist authority and allows a wide range of attitudes to be presented in relatively objective terms. Above all, he goes beyond the simple moral categorisation of individuals into 'socialist' and 'bourgeois', identifying a spectrum of often incompatible attitudes within the socialist camp, and presenting in detail problem-cases like those of Manfred Herrfurth (Der geteilte Himmel), 'Quasi' Riek (Die Aula) and Uli Arendt (Die Geschwister). Furthermore, the fact that appearances of narrative conventionality can be deceptive is suggested by the central importance of the disconcerting crisis of a Party secretary, Werner Horrath, in Spur der Steine.

The thematic emphasis in these 'Bitterfeld' novels is also highly revealing - indeed, if the sole criterion were the portrayal of the resurgence of East German industry in the wake of the Seven Year Plan of 1958, then not only Die Aula, in which Robert Iswall has little contact with contemporary working-life, but also Ole Bienkopp, which concludes on a bleak note at the end of the previous era of Stalinist management, would be

dubious candidates for inclusion. The reportage element cannot, however, be isolated, since the novels have a common interest in individual fortunes and the overall progress of the GDR through the 1950's, as well as in the dilemmas of contemporary society. They are therefore in some respects also 'Entwicklungsromane', except that a categorisation of this kind would obscure the breadth of the authors' concerns and their inevitably less systematic study of personality, compared to novels like de Bruyn's Der Hohlweg. In effect, they strive for a fusion of the two main elements in German socialist writing since the 1930's, the semi-autobiographical accounts of individual paths to commitment, and the portrayal of the working-class community in its industrial environment.

The fact that the narrative perspective is both retrospective and rooted in a recognisable present means that an opportunity is at last provided to take stock of the ideals and aspirations of those willing to participate in the construction of a new socialist world after the nightmare of the Third Reich. The amount of direct comment upon the GDR of the fictional present is still very limited, but the reader is left in no historical doubt, especially in Die Geschwister and Der geteilte Himmel, as to the critical stage just reached in the state's existence. The former is set shortly before the erection of the Berlin Wall, the other shortly after, and both reflect all the associated anxieties and uncertainties of the period. And yet, to judge from Die Aula and Robert Iswall's frame of mind during his travels through both Germanies in the spring of 1962, it would appear that none of his acquaintances were affected by the Wall, and that the unshaken commitment of most of Iswall's generation of graduates from the 'Arbeiter- und Bauernfakultäten'

can be taken as representative. Strittmatter's narrator does nothing to take the reader beyond Ole Bienkopp's pathetic death in the spring of 1959, which gives the impression that he, like Kant, is ultimately more concerned with a critical, historical record of the GDR's pioneering years than with the turmoil of the immediate past. The contrasts between Ole Bienkopp and Die Aula are more striking, however. Kant's adoption of 'cinematic' flashback techniques, his experiments with montage and stream-of-consciousness recollections, together with his satirical wit, appear to place him at the forefront of the literary avant-garde,⁵⁴ and yet his view of the present is affirmative in the conventionally uncritical manner. Strittmatter, with an old-fashioned 'volkstümlich' narrator and two chronological blocks of 'plot', separated with apparent arbitrariness by six years, ends on a distinctly grim note.

Despite the differences in perspective, Erik Neutsch is comparable to Christa Wolf and Brigitte Reimann through his concentration of interest upon the two-year span between the initiation of the 'Bitterfelder Weg' and the 'Republikflucht' crisis of 1961, and in the striking variation in the fortunes of his basically sympathetic central figures. But the background in Spur der Steine is so solidly filled by the expanding chemical works at Schkona that the vexed question of leaving the GDR, as faced by Manfred and Rita in Der geteilte Himmel and Uli in Die Geschwister, never clouds the horizon. Neutsch's novel, over 900 pages long, is so vast that he has scope to deal with the past life and personal conflicts of his main figures, in addition to providing a uniquely detailed picture of industrial life. Christa Wolf reduces her factory to "ein kreischendes, schmutziges Durcheinander, ein Gewinkel von Hallen

und Schuppen und Häusern, kreuz und quer von Gleisen durchzogen" (GH 40), in order, it seems, to allow more scope for characterisation, but Neutsch alone seems to understand something as complicated as the functioning of a chemical works in reasonable depth. He cannot be faulted for comprehensiveness in fulfilling the original Bitterfeld mandate, but the problem is rather that the credibility of the development of his two main characters, Balla and Horrath, is sacrificed in the striving for panoramic breadth.

Amidst this stimulating diversity of narrative structure and emphasis, the expression of 'Parteilichkeit' becomes a matter of considerable delicacy. The writers were clearly under no illusions as to the subtle gradations in the dialectics of literary progress within the framework of Socialist Realism, but had, it seems, recognised the necessity of establishing independent ground as constructive mediators between their large readership and the regime. One of the revealing nuances in this shifting of ground is the use which the writers make of the collective first-person statement, through the 'Wir' perspective, in endeavouring to create a sense of community with the reader and his experience, while demonstrating a basic self-identification with the GDR.

In Die Geschwister, Elisabeth, the gifted artist in her mid-twenties, frequently reveals her eagerness as narrator to speak for her generation as a whole. The tone is one of pride that East German youth has played such a major part in the state's growth:

... obgleich ich selbst keine besonders tüchtige Person bin, erfüllt es mich immer wieder mit Stolz, zu sehen, wie die tüchtigen jungen Männer und Mädchen meiner Generation in der Wirtschaft und in der Kunst nach vorn

drängen und ihre Stellungen zu behaupten
wissen. G 41

There is almost a note of complacency here, which might well be considered misguided in a situation where she is desperately endeavouring to dissuade her younger brother Uli from defecting to the West. Uli's feelings of constriction - "wie ein Gefangener, hinter einem Gitter von Dummheit und Bürokratie" (G 116) - and resultant disaffection, are met with a response which seems dangerously naive:

Warum, dachte ich, scheuen sich die jungen Leute meiner Generation vor großen Worten und dem Ausdruck großer Gefühle? Waren wir damals, in den ersten Jahren nach dem Krieg und nach der Gründung der Republik nicht mit mehr Ernst und Leidenschaft bei der Sache? Wir hatten Augen zu sehen, wie die neue Ordnung feierlich und rot heraufstieg, und die zornigen jungen Männer waren noch nicht erfunden und nicht die saloppen Anbeter ihres mißverstandenen saloppen Idols, die mit einer attraktiven Tut-mir-leid-Fisch-Bewegung unsere schöne Glut zertreten hätten. G 119

Soon afterwards, however, impressed perhaps by the weight of her brother's grievances, Elisabeth redefines her generation's identity in opposition to the state's insensitive authority:

Wir wollen nicht Vertrauensseligkeit. Wir fordern Vertrauen. Die Männer und Mädchen meiner Generation haben neue Maschinen konstruiert und Wälder gerodet und Kraftwerke gebaut ... Wir haben ein Recht auf Vertrauen. Wir haben ein Recht, Fragen zu stellen, wenn uns eine Ursache dunkel, ein Satz anfechtbar, eine Autorität zweifelhaft erscheint. G 141

This endeavour of a young adult to mediate between the 'younger generation' and the rhetoric of 'authority', and to identify successively with each, prevails in the context of the novel, since Uli's conflicts are resolved through his decision to remain in the GDR, but the possible contradictions are scarcely exposed. Although Elisabeth argues that her commitment to socialism has resulted from concrete experience on the factory

floor of the system's vitality, Uli suspects, with good cause, that emotional and utopian factors are just as important:

Betsy hat Gemüt ... Betsy denkt mit der Seele.
Für sie bedeutet Sozialismus hienieden Brot
genug für alle Menschenskinder und Rosen und
Myrten zugleich. G 245

The preponderance of Elisabeth's instinctive optimism in her adoption of 'große Worte' is comprehensible here, in relation to the deep scepticism of those like Uli at this crucial hour for the GDR's survival, and the more acceptable as it marks a distinct contrast to some of the grim battles she has had with authority in the recent past.

The effusiveness of her affirmation becomes evident, however, in contrast to the more distant third-person perspective of novels like Der geteilte Himmel and Die Aula, in which statements of a personal nature are used economically and to greater effect. In Christa Wolf's novel, the narrator occasionally slips over, almost imperceptibly, to the 'Wir' form, when she wishes to underline feelings she shared with her readers in the depressing weeks after the erection of the Wall. At the beginning and again at the end of the novel, she refers in the present tense to the difficulties of returning to everyday reality and stability, as if to provide confidence that it is a continuing process:

Wir gewöhnen uns wieder, ruhig zu schlafen.
Wir leben aus dem vollen, als gäbe es Über-
genug von diesem seltsamen Stoff Leben, als
könnte er nie zu Ende gehen. GH 7-8

The narrator's obvious closeness to Rita appears to be given some foundation in external reality early on, when Manfred's name is first mentioned. The implication is that they both come from the same village, or that the narrator is able to fuse her identity with Rita's:

Als er damals vor zwei Jahren in unser Dorf kam, fiel er mir sofort auf ... Da wußte ich bald so gut wie jeder andere, daß der junge Mann ein studierter Chemiker war ... GH 11

The ambiguity here is not resolved later in the novel, but it provides one of many indications that Rita merits sympathetic support and is part of a tightly-knit community. The other few occasions when the narrative 'Wir' is heard reveal, in contrast, its usefulness as a device for placing the main action in a sober historical perspective and underlining the narrator's identity with her readership. It first occurs, and most effectively, at the moment when the progress of Rita and Manfred seems to promise a conventional happy ending:

Sie liebten sich und waren voll neuer Erwartung auf ihren zweiten Winter ... Einen dritten gemeinsamen Winter gab es nicht ... Wir wußten damals nicht - keiner wußte es - was für ein Jahr vor uns lag. Ein Jahr unerbittlichster Prüfung, nicht leicht zu bestehen. Ein historisches Jahr, wie man später sagen wird. GH 116

It is only after Rita has been through the depths of conflict and despair, bringing her close to death and necessitating a long recuperation, that the narrator again links herself with the reader, on the basis of their inherent, but vital, capacity to find the spiritual(!) resources to overcome even the bleakest of crises:

(Rita) hat schlimme Tage durchgemacht, und das ist nicht zuviel gesagt. Sie ist gesund. Sie weiß nicht - wie viele von uns nicht wissen - welche seelische Kühnheit sie nötig hatte, diesem Leben Tag für Tag neu ins Gesicht zu sehen, ohne sich täuschen zu lassen. Vielleicht wird man später begreifen, daß von dieser seelischen Kühnheit ungezählter gewöhnlicher Menschen das Schicksal der Nachgeborenen abhing - für einen langen, schweren, drohenden und hoffnungsvollen geschichtlichen Augenblick. GH 256

This feeling of solidarity scarcely needs further reinforcement, and the narrator is able elsewhere to give at least the

impression of maintaining a more impersonal standpoint. Such limited 'Parteilichkeit' cannot be understood as a specific endorsement of the state leadership: the communal 'Wir' is not expressed in terms of generations, or of activists against sceptics, or in any other limited sense. At a critical hour like this, it appears, the simple need for emotional unity throughout the population is paramount.

In Die Aula, Hermann Kant creates a much stronger impression that his narrator has been fully involved in events and sees himself as an integral part of the GDR, but is still endeavouring to preserve a degree of distance. All the biographical and circumstantial evidence suggests, of course, that there is little difference between Robert Iswall and his creator, in their progress from the Greifswald ABF in 1949 to a position of respectability in the cultural world of 1962.⁵⁵ The narrator seems to suppress his natural inclination to use the first-person plural to describe the achievements of the graduates of a unique institution, realising the need for some more precise means of differentiation. He knows there are significant areas of contradiction in the fortunes of his ABF colleagues and in his identification with the state. The ideologically inexplicable case of 'Quasi' Riek, the most politically active of Iswall's fellow-students, who then defected to the West and became a publican, illustrates the value of the more neutral third-person perspective. For propaganda reasons the state would rather forget that Riek ever existed, or blacken his character in order to explain his defection, but this is unacceptable to the intelligent and well-informed citizen that Iswall is:

Möglich, daß es einigen alles sagte, wahrscheinlich, daß viele genug wußten: Klarer

Fall - bei uns gelernt, auf unsere Kosten, abgehauen, Kneipier geworden ... ist ein Schuft und war immer schon ein Schuft ... War er aber nicht, war ein Kerl wie keiner sonst. Hatte mal kranke Lunge, aber ein Herz hatte er wie das von Trullesands Tante, ein Herz aus Vollkornbrot. Und hatte einem sogar einmal das Leben gerettet. Au 124

At the same time, a unique success story, such as the rise of the forester Jakob Filter to executive status in a government department, seems the right topic for the climax for a speech intended to celebrate the redundancy of the ABF in the education system of 1962. This is judged the right moment for an unqualified hymn of praise, modified only slightly by Iswall's witty presentation: the narrator stands back, and Iswall reveals the full extent of his partisan pride, making full use of the 'Wir' form to present the ABF's success as symbolical of that of the GDR as a whole:

Die anderen haben gesagt, wir könnten das alles nicht, und wir haben ihnen gesagt, was wir können. Ihnen ist das Grinsen gegangen, und wir lächeln. Wir können alles, was sie können und allein zu können meinten. Das ist bewiesen. Au 247

Thus the delicate balance between 'Parteilichkeit' and the objective presentation of a more catholic range of viewpoints is sought in Die Aula, as deliberately as in Der geteilte Himmel and Die Geschwister. This is reflected equally in the blend of considered loyalty to the state, and active endeavour to improve its deficiencies, found in each of the central figures, Iswall, Rita and Elisabeth, which makes them **rela-**
tively credible in their exemplary status.

In Ole Bienkopp, the narrator is more sovereign in the traditional role of the story-teller, developing a lengthy yarn without revealing any point of contact between himself and his fictional world of Blumenau and Maiberg, except that they lie

somewhere in the Niederlausitz area native to Strittmatter. The story is presented in a lively vein, laced with rhetorical questions and answers, which both provoke and anticipate the reader's reactions. Strittmatter is less interested in the communal 'Wir' of shared experience than in offering moral and political guidance from a standpoint of mature wisdom. His close links with the Party are never in doubt, in fact it is abundantly clear that his chief concern is with the soul of the Party in the post-Stalin era. Most of his persuasive, probing asides are directed towards pettiness and dogmatism within the ranks. An undeserving peasant gets a share of the farming-land distributed after the war, and the narrator warns: "Seid nicht kleinlich, Genossen! Er war ein Opfer der Verhältnisse, in die man uns hinein gebar" (OB 102). In the middle of winter the village is snowed in and the task of increasing productivity is laid aside - he anticipates the reproaches about peasant laziness and asserts the validity of fostering communication and an awareness of tradition through story-telling:

Nicht so hastig, Genossen, keine Faulenzerei, natürlich, aber Wintermuße ist nötig. Die Dorfgeschichten müssen erzählt und überliefert werden. Schlechte Zeiten, wenn sie versiegen und der Mensch dem Menschen gleichgültig wird wie ein Stein! OB 228

The narrator's sympathies are scarcely disguised, as he singles out those Party activists, like Anton Dürr, Karl Krüger and Ole Bienkopp, whose achievements are based on their ability to inspire their less gifted and sceptical friends rather than on their theoretical expertise. Bienkopp, the most awkwardly self-willed of them, sometimes resorts to questionable methods to further his long-sighted objectives, even to operating a black market for eggs in one difficult period when the Party disowns him. The narrator warns against simplistically partisan

judgments:

Bienkopp betrog also den Staat? Soweit war er gesunken ohne Parteibuch? Seid nicht so streng, ihr Selbstgerechten! Bienkopp brauchte Geld für die NEUE BAUERNGEMEINSCHAFT ... Ole brauchte jeden Pfennig. Für sich nicht; ihr wißt es. OB 232-3

A few pages later, an imagined dialogue involving a 'Genosse' and a 'Kleinmensch', who is also likely to be a member of the Party, makes it clear that someone like Ole Bienkopp "muß zu den Wegsuchern und Spurmachern gehören" (OB 240). The narrator's unequivocal partisan commitment may thus, ironically, have been more discomfiting to Party authority than the broadening of the base implied, for example, by Christa Wolf's references to community feelings. By emphasising the degree of disharmony within the Party and its need for internal reform, Strittmatter seemed to be challenging its leadership more directly than his colleagues.

Erik Neutsch is the exception, in Spur der Steine, in having no narrator persona, surprisingly perhaps, since the reportage-length stories in his earlier Bitterfeld Geschichten had been introduced by journalists or workers directly involved in events, who were thus able to place a personal stamp of authenticity on the neatly resolved conflicts they described. Spur der Steine is on the surface an objective third-person narrative, apparently closer to the tradition of Flaubert and Henry James than that of Socialist Realist partisanship. This appearance is, however, belied at all levels - the narrative flows steadily forward towards an ever-rosier future, with the strength of continuity inherent in the title reflected in the simultaneous growth of industry and individuals, and several different characters acting as the author's mouthpiece at significant stages of the novel. The partisan 'Wir' is thus used

extensively, with something of the same differentiation between 'the state' and 'the people' evident elsewhere, but becoming much more harmonious towards the end. The narrative standpoint is, as with Strittmatter, clearly within the ranks of the Party, but also explicitly loyal to the leadership. This is, after all, the only novel to allow the hierarchy to speak for itself, not once, but on three occasions, as representing the people as a whole. The Minister-President, Otto Grotewohl, sets the tone in the opening section:

Von unserer Republik geht der Friede für Deutschland aus. Wir bauen bereits die Straße, die in eine lichte Zukunft führt und die früher oder später die gesamte Nation beschreiten wird. Jeder muß Aufbauhelfer sein, mit seiner Arbeit, an seinem Platz. Die Verantwortung, die wir tragen, ist von wahrhaft geschichtlicher Größe ... S 15

Herman Jansen, First Secretary of the Party for the Halle region, about to become a founder-member of the Council of Ministers, provides the guiding voice of central authority at the Schkona site, and gives a major public speech in the middle of the novel (S 500-4). To round matters off, Walter Ulbricht presides over a celebratory dinner in the final pages, marking the success of the project in its first two years. Individual members of the Party, like Werner Horrath and Katrin Klee, are seen from the outset by the uninitiated to have special qualities and a unique strength deriving from their sense of belonging to a collective force, and enjoying "das schwere Glück" of communist commitment (S 793). As the rebellious Balla recognises, in a typical instance of the author's analysis intruding upon the perceptions of a more limited character:

Es schien, als wirke etwas in ihrem Wesen, was sie stets stärker und glücklicher machte als ihre Gegner. Mit einer aufreizenden Gelassenheit, mit einem Überheblichen Stolz ertrugen sie jede Schikane ... S 112

Workers like Balla are seen to have a firm identity within their brigades, but to suffer from isolation and purposelessness because they do not feel otherwise involved in the state. Those in positions of higher responsibility who lack this wider involvement are even worse off, like the young engineer Hesselbart. Both of these 'typical' figures take the decisive step outside this isolation, viewed as a process of "Über sich selbst hinaus(wachsen)" (S 734), in the course of the novel. For Balla, however, this is no straightforward integration, but rather a matter of broadening the Party's base, by representing the interests of the workers more satisfactorily than has previously been the case. He - and with him, it seems, Neutsch - expresses their criticisms of the inflexibility of work-norms and of the stifling of initiative (S 584), or of inefficiencies in planning, to the extent of considering the taboo of strike action: "Wollen wir betonieren, kommt das Holz, wollen wir schalen, kriegen wir Kies. Engpaß auf der ganzen Linie ... Ich sag Ihnen ... es ist zum Verzweifeln" (S 677-8). Similarly, the engineers at Schkona become aware of their collective interests and publish their grievances in the works newspaper:

Wir jungen Ingenieure fühlen uns fehl am Platze, wir werden mit Aufgaben betraut, die uns nichts abverlangen und sind an jedem Monatsende überbezahlt; gebt uns größere Verantwortung! ... Auf der Baustelle herrscht eine sonderbare Art von Gleichmacherei, die Gemeinschaft wird zum Götzen erklärt und als Vorwand benutzt, die Ideen einzelner zu unterdrücken ... S 707

The Party itself, as will be seen, is far from faultless, and some of its detrimental tendencies are personified in characters like the works-manager Trutmann and the bureaucrat Bleibtreu. But once a character like Balla joins the ranks, his 'Wir' becomes a powerful force unifying the interests of the Party

and the working-class. His transformation really begins when he acts as envoy to Hesselbart with an offer of new managerial responsibilities following Trutmann's fall. Balla almost surprises himself by announcing "Mich schickt die Partei" and then continuing "Wir bitten Sie, ihren Urlaub abzuberechnen. Wir brauchen Sie an der Krackanlage" (S 732). Thereafter, his identity is unshakably firm, and he finds himself upbraiding the sceptical, even of the stature of the artist Voss, with 'natural' confidence:

Man kann nicht das Dumme mit noch Dümmerem
ausrotten wollen. Glaub mir, wir werden mit
echten Schwierigkeiten fertig, mit Wider-
sprüchen, die wir nicht überbrücken können,
durch die wir hindurch müssen. Warum sollten
wir es nicht auch mit den Fehlern, die nicht
zu sein brauchen? ... Wir, du und ich und wir
alle, wir schaffen es ... S 747

In the end it is Balla again who represents the voice of collective unity against the despair of his former mentor, Horrath, in a complete reversal of their earlier roles (S 797-8).

What disrupts the surge forward towards total harmony in the novel is precisely this issue of Horrath's decline. It is striking that the single break in the narrator's apparent objectivity occurs at the point where Horrath's crisis begins, when he proffers an extended general observation, highlighting a vital flaw in the state's centralised organisation. Firstly, he presents the ideal conception of the authority-hierarchy as a living organism, responding to signals received from every individual cell which forms part of the whole (in line, in other words, with the sense of community which Balla expresses towards the end of the novel):

Ein Ministerium ist ein Kopf für einen großen,
weitverzweigten, höchst kompliziert einge-
richteten Organismus. Wie ein Kopf Augen und
Ohren, Sinne für den Geruch und den Geschmack

hat, so verfügt auch das Ministerium über eine Anzahl von Nervensträngen, die sein ganzes Ressort durchziehen und es überwachen ... juckt es im kleinen Zeh, erfährt es der Kopf. S 169-70

The thoroughness of the network of modern electronic communications is explained, and the assertion made that errors in planning and decision-making occur only where the contact between the nerve cells and the brain has temporarily broken down. The concrete problem of the dispute between Horrath, as innovating Party secretary, and the unimaginative Trutmann is then alluded to, and seen as a genuine contradiction between "Plandisziplin" and "(Steigerung) der Arbeitsproduktivität" (S 171). The genius of bureaucratic compromise decrees that the protection of state office-bearers - "die Kompetenz seiner Mitarbeiter und Untergebenen" - is just as important as productive modification of the economic plan, with the result that Horrath's proposals are adopted, while he receives a formal reprimand which sullies an otherwise exemplary record.

This bureaucratically neat resolution of a serious conflict becomes an important factor in upsetting the stability and identity of a dedicated socialist. There may be other significant factors as well, but the point here is that the nature of Party authority is questioned just enough to disturb the overall sense of unity which the novel gives and to create reservations as to the representativeness of Balla's 'Wir'. This shows Neutsch to have something of the critical distance of the other Bitterfeld authors, even though the problematic side of authority is scarcely evident in his portrayal of individuals within the Party leadership.

Narrative structure is thus in itself of considerable significance in this fiction, reflecting for the first time

since the unorthodox prose works of 1956-57 an awareness of the problematic nature of objective reality and of the author's identity. The commitment to the communal 'Wir' of the GDR is never at issue, although there is considerable subtlety in the definition of a position of 'Parteilichkeit' which also embraces the feelings of a readership still unsure about its support for the state. The tone of mediation comes over as something genuine and emphatically new, vital to the health of literature in East Germany as well as to the authors' individual sense of creative independence. The artificial separation of 'form' and 'content' in the earlier 'Kulturpolitik' is here successfully challenged and seen to be untenable - there ought to have been no further grounds for arguing that certain narrative techniques were per se decadent. And there was every indication that the breakthrough on this level was to be confirmed by an historically differentiated depiction of the society previously claimed to be an unthreatened 'Gemeinschaft'.

THE RECKONING WITH THE STALIN ERA

The way may have seemed open since 1956 for a critical portrayal of life in the Stalin era in the GDR, and particularly of the nature of the Party's authority, yet the largely unchanged 'Kulturpolitiker' had still been able to maintain the view that the state's problems were essentially due to the subversive antagonism of the Western world.⁵⁶ But there were many significant indications within the scrutiny of past mistakes initiated as part of the NÖS, to suggest that a closer literary analysis of internal factors affecting the GDR's troubled development could now take place. The novelists completing

their work in 1963-4 certainly seemed to accept that there was inherent in their broader understanding of the 'Bitterfelder Weg' a sense of beginning anew the process of winning the allegiance of their readership for the state. To do this effectively they needed to depict some of the ways in which the regime had earlier alienated so many of its workers and intellectuals.

The location of turning-points between past aberrations and the more hopeful present, and the determining of periods of conflict and moral growth in relation to wider historical developments, was not as attractively uncomplicated as in the 'Entwicklungsromane' describing the period around 1945. Even a more independent conception of 'Parteilichkeit' presupposed that the personal and the historical would not be allowed to coincide with moments which augured poorly for the GDR, in the manner that an émigré like Uwe Johnson had done, in making the autumn of 1956 the setting for his Mutmaßungen über Jakob (1959). The crisis of 1961 was, of course, the exception, since, for Christa Wolf and Brigitte Reimann at least, it was simply too recent to be ignored. The historical detail is thus generally imprecise, but still clearly comprehensible in terms of broader conflicts and changes. There is no doubt that the phenomenon of Stalinism is being considered through character and incident, and that the elements of continuity and conflict in the GDR's existence are being weighed against one another. For the first time, culpable mismanagement of economic planning and unpardonable treatment of individuals by representatives of Party authority are described, alongside the exemplary actions of psychologically more complex leaders and workers, in a spirit of debate about the future course of socialist society. Each of the novelists, acutely aware of treading new ground, had to work out independently a

balance of critical detail and the sense of overall progress. At worst, there are still cases of glaring contradiction between the presentation of comparable situations in one work and another, but certain basic impressions of the legacy of Stalinism emerge from the welter of perspectives and characters offered.

The point has often been made that these novels are particularly interesting for the contrasting images they provide of life in both parts of Germany. Die Aula and Der geteilte Himmel certainly owed much of their initial popularity outside the GDR to the notion that they compared the two Germanies in previously unknown detail from an East German perspective.⁵⁷ This argument runs the risk of overlooking the absence in the portrayal of Western society of this newly established sense of internal historical differentiation. There is of course an unmistakable improvement in the credibility of character and motivation, compared to the stereotype Darwinian impressions of bourgeois life, both in Iswall's account of his return visit to his native Hamburg area, and in Rita's attempts to adjust to West Berlin in order to remain with her fiancé. In the last analysis, however, the authors' deep-rooted emotional antipathy to Western society tends to reduce the overall picture to the predictable dimensions of alienation and the loss of self-unity. For Rita, it may take time before she acknowledges "die Fremde ist mir fremd geblieben, und dies alles hier heiß und nah" (GH 246); Iswall's case is complicated because he is separated from the rest of his family - "es war die absurde Fremde ... fremd und doch seine Heimat" (Au 80) - but their final loyalties are never in doubt. The West and its material temptations are peripheral to the search for a more fulfilling realisation of

socialism within the GDR, and there is no dabbling with notions of a 'third way' rapprochement of the kind that cost Wolfgang Harich and his colleagues dear in 1956. It is in this internal, and historically rooted, differentiation of character and morality within the GDR that the primary significance of these novels lies.

In the GDR, the 'Stalin era' effectively began in 1948, with the SED's abandonment of its initial conception of a broad anti-fascist base, which could have allowed an independent German version of socialism to develop. The disastrous consequences for literature have been analysed in Chapter 2: the entire population felt its impact in most aspects of their everyday life. The Party's endeavours to plan economic growth in a disciplined manner seem to have been overshadowed by its ruthless persecution of anyone suspected of subversion, not least long-standing socialists with dissenting views. With the network of Party functionaries from village and factory-floor level upwards assuming an exclusive right to decision-making, justified in terms of the emergency situation, the cultural-political image of full community participation was at its furthest remove from actuality.⁵⁸

These years must have put those in Party office to the ultimate test of demonstrating whether they could inspire understanding and trust, in a situation which allowed little scope for extended debate or reasoned dissent. The period obviously also offered unique opportunities for the 'Radfahrer' mentality to flourish, since unquestioning obedience to superior authority and mindless implementation of official policy at lower levels could easily become virtues in their own right.⁵⁹ The existence of such amoral careerism had been acknowledged in the 1950's

'Betriebsromane', but through nothing more than the kind of caricatured portrayal with which Eduard Claudius presents Bock, the short-lived Party secretary in Menschen an unsrer Seite. The underlying reassurance then was that such characters were no more than a regrettable and ineffectual minority. The 'Entwicklungsromane' tended to stop short of any depiction of Stalinist aberrations, with little more than the concerned comments of idealised personalities like de Bruyn's Blaskow in Der Hohlweg to show that the problem existed at all. The Bitterfeld novels, especially the more explicitly historical Ole Bienkopp and Die Aula, go much further, providing psychological analysis of the bureaucratic mentality and giving a more credible impression of its prevalence in the state's early years - with the result that they inevitably raise the highly pertinent question of the extent to which its worst features have been eradicated by the 1960's.

Strittmatter's approach is the more polemic, challenging the hitherto basic assumptions about continuity and consistency in the Party leadership. He depicts a significant transfer of power in the early 1950's, from the proletarian pioneers, whose socialist convictions dated from the pre-Hitler days, to the rank-obsessed functionaries fresh from the Cold War 'Partei-schule'. His skills as a writer have been widely questioned in the West because the 'volkstümlich' narrative flow and apparently simplistic approach to characterisation and plot contravene established literary criteria.⁶⁰ There are, however, good reasons for viewing this technique as one adopted consciously to afford the author a degree of critical freedom, amidst this parochial remoteness from authority, which he would not otherwise enjoy. It may be the bottom of the pyramid of power with

which Strittmatter is concerned in Ole Bienkopp, the small agricultural collective and the structure of Party authority at 'Kreis' and village level. The question of whether his chosen sphere is intended to be a microcosmic reflection of the state as a whole is, however, left provocatively unanswered. The novel's leitmotif seems to imply that the provincial hero's downfall augurs badly for the GDR as a whole:

Was ist ein Dorf auf dieser Erde? Es kann
eine Spore auf der Schale einer faulenden
Kartoffel oder ein Pünktchen Rot an der
besonnten Seite eines reifenden Apfels sein. OB 7

Even if such sweeping connotations were not intended by the author, the fictional events certainly test the validity of Neutsch's image of the state as an organic structure with the sensitivities of the human nervous system.

Strittmatter's pioneers in the village of Blumenau after 1945 are unified in their efforts to create a new socialist Germany through their simple belief that hard work and co-operation will enable them to make the best use of the small tracts of land which the new regime has given them. The Party secretary, Anton Dürr, who becomes the inspirational force in the life of many like Ole Bienkopp, is a simple forester whose lack of formal education has not hindered the development of his remarkable powers of perception: "Klein von Wuchs und groß im Verstehen. Ein heller Kopf, eine Fackel für Blumenau, ein Mann an allen Schatten des Dorflebens" (OB 12). Dürr is exceptional in having recognised the need for proletarian revolution during the Third Reich and thus suffered in Nazi prisons for his political activities. But those whom he gathers around him to transform the previously feudal Blumenau after 1945 are only vaguely committed to ideological goals. They are "Genossen mit

und ohne Parteibuch" (OB 204), like Bienkopp, who becomes chairman of the 'Gegenseitige Bauernhilfe', the simple old Bürgermeister Adam Nietnagel, and the cattle-breeder Jan Bullert, who receive some loyal support from women like Dürr's wife Emma. They provide the leadership in a community which includes too much parochial pettiness to be in any way idyllic, and yet offers a solid collective basis for Blumenau's agricultural development. Dürr's outstanding value to the Party is quickly recognised at the next level of the hierarchy by the admirable 'Kreis' secretary, Karl Krüger, a man of similar peasant origins, who persuades him to begin formal ideological training despite his sixty-odd years. This very positive start is however jeopardised in the early 1950's by factors over which the Party has no control: Dürr's death under a falling tree is plotted by the forces of reaction in the village, while Krüger's poor health and loss of contact with improvements in agricultural technology combine to bring about his retirement. Krüger's graveside acknowledgement of Dürr's achievement is still on a completely unideological level, suggesting that the latter would have been a worthy disciple of Jesus Christ, spreading the seed of "edle Unruhe" and giving a splendid example to those around him for the continuation of his work (OB 25).

The Party's responsibility for the changed circumstances of 1951-52 begins with the appointment of a new generation of officials who have the right theoretical training behind them, but almost nothing of the crucial ability to relate naturally to those around them. The new area secretary is Herbert Wunschgetreu, one of many bewildered survivors of battlefield horrors who were all too eager, amidst the post-war confusion, to embrace a new ideology bearing the promise of heaven on

earth (OB 325-6). At local level, the well-meaning, but limited, Bullert is made Party secretary as a result of petty manoeuvring to keep out Bienkopp, and Nietnagel's assistant in the village administration, Frieda Simson, assumes the dominating dogmatic role which Dürr wisely never allowed her to have. Simson is potentially the most destructive, since Party authority gives her the opportunity to compensate for the frustrations and jealousies in her private life, and her 're-education' has failed to liberate her from attitudes and language learnt in the Third Reich. She becomes a "Meisterin im Auswendiglernen von Lehr- und Leitsätzen", with all the passion of the evangelical fanatic for condemning the uninitiated majority. The dangers of this exclusively theoretical grounding were evident to a 'natural' socialist like Dürr earlier, who tried to prevent his efficient secretary becoming one of the "dressierte Menschen" who represent "eine traurige Unzierde des Höchsten, was die Erde hervorbrachte" (OB 143). The problem is now precisely that there is no longer anyone with similar insights to prevent mediocrities like Bullert and Simson from rising to positions above their capabilities.

The first victim of this sub-standard regime, with its one-dimensional view of authority, is of course Bienkopp, who proposes a modification to their co-operative scheme which actually anticipates measures included in the LPG statute of 1952.⁶¹ A matter of months before the Party leadership announces the introduction of the LPG's, Bienkopp is held to be guilty of "parteischdige Abweichungen" (OB 152) and pilloried for contravening the supreme virtue of "Parteidisziplin" (OB 189). Significantly, this culpable inability to support initiatives which will benefit productivity is not merely a local failing:

Strittmatter's narrator suggests that the whole state hierarchy tends to operate increasingly, as economic pressures mount, on the basis of impossible demands and threats transmitted downwards, according to the principle "Druck pflanzt sich fort" (OB 320). There are no representatives of the highest authority in constant touch with local developments. Orders come from anonymous sources 'oben' and there are no effective procedures for modifying them along the line, despite the fact that there are glaring discrepancies, as for example in the insistence that beef-production should be vastly increased, at a time when fodder supplies are insufficient even for existing cattle-herds. Those who, like Bienkopp, endeavour to rectify such absurdities, are faced with impenetrable "Bürolabyrinth" in which no official seems to exercise independent authority and a Kafkaesque sense of alienation threatens to ensue: "Ermächtigt, ermächtigt, niemand ermächtigt. Wer, zum Teufel, hat denn die Macht?" (OB 396-7).

There is nobody in the Party bureaucracy in the Maiberg area with the courage and self-confidence to resist the imposition of such an uncoordinated agricultural policy. The Wunschgetreus and the Simsons are too guiltily conscious of their errors in the Third Reich, and too enamoured of the privileges of power, to prevent higher authority from panicking them into blind implementation of its decisions. Their techniques are those of intimidation and coercion, the symbol of their authority the 'Schwarzes Diarium', which each fills with rumours and quotations taken out of context, to incriminate those who dare to oppose them. This is little short of a reversion to the suppression of dissent and the brutalisation of language - the "Raubersprache" (OB 143) - which typified German officialdom in the Third Reich, and contradicts the spirit of the cause they

are intended to further. If the Party has become, as Bienkopp angrily asserts, "ein selbstgefälliger Gott" (OB 195), rather than the sum of the higher aspirations of the GDR's citizens, then the achievements of Anton Dürr and his like will be quickly obliterated.

Strittmatter allows six years to elapse between the nadir of Bienkopp's humiliation at the hands of the new Party leadership in 1952 and the second part of his novel, as if to permit an assessment of what progress has been made by the time of the Fifth Parteitag, with its new-found optimism. The intervening years are gradually sketched in, to indicate that Blumenau has experienced no more than the odd ripple of the intervening crises of 1953 and 1956. Bienkopp has been speedily reinstated with his plans for a local LPG, recognised from above as an activist, and the Party apparatus has gone through the motions of an embarrassing 'Selbstkritik', so that the quality of life seems to have improved. The implications of the de-throning of Stalin in 1956 seem to be grasped by Wunschgetreu, even though they require the replacement of dogmatic obedience by critical analysis of every situation on its merits. But as the narrator ominously notes - "die Einsicht war das eine, und die Praxis das andere" (OB 331). Wunschgetreu may have cast aside his black diary and gained a new understanding of Bienkopp as "ein unbequemer Dickschädel, doch ein Pionier" (OB 332), but he lacks the ability and the will to revitalise the area for which he is politically responsible. Simson carries on in Blumenau as if nothing had changed, and gains a new ally in the 'Kreis' administration in Willi Kraushaar, the technical adviser on agricultural matters. Kraushaar's case seems to confirm that power continues to corrupt the less gifted as much after 1956 as

before: an able tractor-driver turned bureaucrat proves incompetent to deal with his new responsibilities, compromises himself in various ways, and ends up acquiescing in patent injustices to protect his career interests. Again it is Bienkopp who suffers, despite the succession of unorthodox schemes he has initiated to improve the productivity of his collective. Only the elderly Karl Krüger uses his limited authority to intercede on Bienkopp's behalf, but Wunschgetreu vacillates too long, and fails to countermand Simson's decision to dismiss Bienkopp from chairmanship of the LPG. Thus the hero is abandoned to his pathetic end, attempting single-handed to prove the validity of his plans for using lake-marl as fertiliser, at the time when it was most urgently needed.

Ole Bienkopp ends bleakly, with no indication of a way out of the Stalinist web of bureaucratic inefficiency and malice, except perhaps through the determination of the members of the younger generation closest to Bienkopp, Märtke Mattusch and Wilm Holten, to emulate his example. It is not clear how people like Frieda Simson can be dislodged from their positions of power, especially since the whole chain of authority seems to prefer her breed of conformism to the small man's creative vision, which means so much more to the narrator of Strittmatter's novel.

The picture which Hermann Kant presents of Party authority in Die Aula is at once more complex and more hopeful. The conflict between the dogmatists and the men of perception seems to have continued since the foundation of the ABF in 1949 up to the narrative present, with little indication of the historically verifiable fluctuations in the ideological climate depicted by Strittmatter. Robert Iswall's self-assured dealings with authority-figures certainly suggest that the GDR is now

sufficiently established to view its past errors in critical depth and consign its bureaucrats to positions of insignificance, but he tends not to explain when or how the change for the better occurred.

The composition of the selection committee which accepts Iswall into the Greifswald ABF in 1949 certainly suggests that the hard-liners are in the ascendancy, with the head of the faculty, Völschow, and the classicist Angelhoff as local Party secretary both seeking Iswall's approval of Stalin's view that "die Kader entscheiden alles" (Au 22). Only the historian Riebenlamm takes time to offer the private reassurance which finally ensures Iswall's commitment to the ranks of the mature students. Völschow and Angelhoff tend to act in tandem whenever an ideological issue has to be resolved. They reveal the near hysterical suspicions of the era in their interrogation of Iswall after his sister's defection to the West (Au 68-70); they are obsessed with the threat from abstract entities labelled "der Feind", "der Gegner" or "der Kleinbürger", in a situation where a group of students has undertaken to care for a colleague with a minor tubercular illness, on the grounds that such a distraction from their "volle() Hingabe an ihre Hauptaufgaben" would weaken the working-class cause (Au 109-11). Then they force their students to spend three days formulating a 'Selbstkritik' because an article in Neues Deutschland has omitted the word 'demokratisch' in its publication of a purely rhetorical telegram from Stalin which should have read - "es lebe und gedeihe das einheitliche, unabhängige, demokratische, friedliebende Deutschland" (Au 192). Kant appears to crystallise his views on the retrogressive effect of such leadership, in the scene depicting a march organised by the students to agitate for the

re-naming of Griefswald's main square as 'Platz der Befreiung'. Although nominally at the head of the parade, Völschow and Angelhoff spend most of the time walking backwards, abusing a student for showing 'kleinbürgerlich' and 'revanchistisch' tendencies in daring to question the value of the marathon 'Selbstkritik', instead of leading the way forward constructively.

The balance is however restored towards more ideal leadership with the students' discovery that the 'Kreis' secretary Haiduck has rather more admirable qualities. At every point, this knowledgeable veteran of the Spanish Civil War presents an encouraging alternative to the dogmatic restrictiveness revealed by the Party in the ABF. Haiduck's attitude to the ideologically suspect doctor, and to the students concerned for their tubercular colleague Quasi Riek, fully reflects his basic trust in the individual's judgment and sense of responsibility, whether or not he is a 'Kader':

Liebe Genossen, Mißtrauen vergiftet die Atmosphäre, Wachsamkeit reinigt sie. Ein wachsamere Mensch beobachtet genau, rechnet scharf, denkt, denkt, denkt, fragt immer nach den möglichen Folgen seiner Schritte, aber er geht - manchmal rückwärts, manchmal seitwärts, aber im ganzen immer vorwärts. Wachsamkeit hat mit Mut zu tun. Mißtrauen hat mit Angst zu tun. Mißtrauen schießt auf Gespenster. Das ist Munitionsvergeudung, und die ist strafbar. Au 113

Haiduck is consequently furious when the strictures of Völschow and Angelhoff lead to the defection to the West of Fiebach, the student brave enough to question their methods, on the basis that the loss of a single potential leader far outweighs the emotional satisfaction provided by any symbolical change of name. In general, his socialism is far more flexible than the prevalent Party line, leading him to discuss openly the significance of a taboo-figure like Einstein (Au 223), or to modify

his views rationally in the light of historical and political change. The last the reader of Die Aula hears of him is that he is publicly attacked around 1953, when it becomes known through a West German publication that he at one stage favoured the idea of the "besonderen deutschen Weg zum Sozialismus" - regardless of whether he continues to hold such views and of the fact that they formed part of the general SED programme until 1948 (Au 243).

The outcome of this 'Getrommel' of criticism is not known, no more than the fortunes of Völschow and Angelhoff after Iswall's 'Jahrgang' graduates in 1952, as if it were possible to draw a veil over the intervening decade, until Iswall, in preparing his speech, begins his reckoning with the ABF. Haiduck's difficulties are compared by Iswall to those of his mother and step-father, Nußbank, who are tormented by unfounded accusations that Nußbank is an agent of the bourgeoisie, from a bureaucracy deaf to all reasoned pleading. They eventually leave for the West shortly before the upheavals of June 1953, to escape from what Iswall himself calls "die Kafkatour" (Au 243). This is also the period when Quasi Riek, one of the central figures in the account of the ABF's pioneering activities, as chief organiser and spokesman, also disappears to the West, thus creating the unsolved mystery amongst the otherwise consistent development of the students' potential. There seem no good grounds for linking Riek's defection with the Stalinist excesses of the period, the most plausible reason being an inability to find a basis for the strong sense of identity established in the ABF in the wider context of GDR society (Au 241).

The portrayal in detail of a case like that of Quasi Riek, defying ideological categorisation, is a further proof of the

Bitterfeld authors' determination to present a convincingly complex view of the socialist past. But one of the weaknesses of Kant's novel is that he does not go on to reveal what progress the GDR has made beyond this Stalinist inflexibility, in terms of his characters' development. Even Iswall's years of academic study in Berlin after 1952 and his beginnings as a journalist are summarised in a paragraph which mentions decisive moments like "Chruschtschows große() Rede" without showing how they affected his subsequent thinking (Au 274-5). It may be that the conception of a struggle within the Party between dogmatists and humane dialecticians is ultimately too simple, and that suggestions of any broad tendency towards a neat resolution would misrepresent the extent of their necessary co-existence under the Soviet system. And yet Kant shows the continuity of each basic type over the 1949-62 period, through the figures of Meibaum, who begins as the pedantically efficient warden of the student hostel and rises to the post of principal of the ABF, and Riebenlamm, Iswall's most inspiring teacher, who later succeeds Angelhoff as Party secretary, and now occupies the elevated position of 'Bezirksschulrat'. Iswall's comments on the Meibaum of 1962, especially as regards the latter's instinctive desire to excise unflattering details from any account of the past, certainly imply that the bureaucrats can now be resisted in a fairly cavalier fashion, and that times have changed for the better:

Den Film spielen wir nicht mehr, Meibaum.
Entweder du willst eine Rede von Iswall, oder
du willst keine Rede von Iswall, so liegen
die Dinge, und eine von Meiwall oder Isbaum
kriegst du nicht! ... Sich über Meibaum
ärgern - dazu gehört schon etwas! Der Mann
ist komisch, ist er von Anfang an gewesen,
und wenn einer Witze über ihn gerissen hat,
dann warst du das. Au 163

The historical vagueness in Die Aula may also be partially explained by the fact that Kant, unlike Strittmatter, but in common with other Bitterfeld authors like Christa Wolf and Brigitte Reimann, was more concerned to register the general improvement in the cultural climate. In aspiring towards new standards of artistic integrity, the primary interest of the Bitterfeld authors might understandably have been less in the ideological struggle within the Party administration, than in the state of literary and academic life - the spheres with which they were most immediately concerned. An obvious target was the would-be 'Künstler', who supplied the synthetic image of reality approved by the cultural politicians, and was showered with material advantages and public praise in return. The qualitative difference between the Bitterfeld generation and the purveyors of 'illustrative art' is thus asserted most fully in the novels with an 'artist' figure as protagonist, Die Geschwister as well as Die Aula.

Reimann clearly used her experience at the 'Schwarze Pumpe' fairly extensively in presenting Elisabeth's fortunes as one of the youngest artists committed to the 'Bitterfelder Weg', leading a 'Zirkel malender Arbeiter' at a lignite-combine. After the initial encouragement of finding workers like Lukas, a brigadier discriminating and enthusiastic in his appreciation of art, Elisabeth is confronted with an archetypal Socialist Realist of the old school, Ohm Heiners, who is also on the site seeking inspiration. Heiners is an unimaginative exponent of what Elisabeth calls the "Romantik der schwielen Faust", reducing each worker he paints in his dull greys and browns to a "hirnlosen Produktioner" or a "finsteren Roboter" (G 161-3). He has no conception of the changing nature of work since the

1930's, which has made the skilled technician far more of a contemporary 'Vorbild' than the muscle-bound labourer. Heiners, however, forbids criticism of his work, on the grounds of his proletarian pedigree, and is bitterly intent upon preserving his position of privilege and power, Lukas makes the point, through an apt adaptation of the title of Leonhard Frank's autobiographical novel of 1952, Links, wo das Herz ist: "Der Mann hat 'ne kitzlige Stelle unterm Jackett, links, wo die Briefftasche sitzt" (G 181). From his spiteful and artistically primitive perspective, Heiners attacks Elisabeth for the 'subjective' and 'formalistic' tendencies in her work, only to be met with a courageously expressed personal credo, appropriate to the Bitterfeld generation as a whole:

... deine Sorte von Realismus könnte ich auch mit einem guten Farbfilm 'runterknipsen. Mein Auge ist aber keine Kameralinse, und ich bin kein Photoapparat, ich bin ein Mensch mit Empfindungen und mit einem bestimmten Verhältnis zu dem Menschen, den ich male, und der gemalte Mensch hat auch seine Empfindungen und seine eigene Einstellung zum Leben, zu seiner Arbeit, zu seiner Familie, und das alles muß man in einem Porträt festhalten - viele Schichten statt einer glatten Fläche. G 172-3

Heiners' resentment of Elisabeth's obvious success with her art-group, and his jealousy of her superior skills as an artist, finally make him resort to character-defamation - the culmination of Reimann's bleak depiction of art and the artist as fostered under Stalinist principles. But the climate is seen to have changed sufficiently to allow the Party secretary, Bergemann, to ensure that justice is done to Elisabeth, with Heiners sent off to the backwoods out of harm's way.

The situation is even more reassuring in Die Aula, through the confident and satirical manner with which Iswall handles authority-figures like Meibaum and his newspaper editor Kuhlmann,

and evades their attempts to censor his work. Kant has a counterpart to Heiners, a Frau Tuschmann, who writes 'Novellen' as if life could be organised with mathematical precision on a fictional billiard-table, with characters as polished and predictable as billiard-balls. Thus Iswall is able to plead for the complexity of life in tones which closely echo Elisabeth's:

Mathematik war eine großartige Sache ... sie war nützlich beim Billard und bei anderen Dingen, aber eine Geschichte schreiben konnte man damit auf keinen Fall, denn die hatte es mit dem Leben, und das hatte Buckel und Risse, und die Menschen hatten sie auch. Au 25

Although Iswall seems to live up to this rejection of simplified reality through his criticism of Stalinism and his analysis of the Quasi Riek 'mystery', something vital is lacking in his portrayal of the cultural world of the early 1960's. He is never directly confronted with figures like Frau Tuschmann, and when he is present at a meeting organised by the Writers' Union to allow an 'exchange of experience' between older and younger writers, he substitutes caricature for an exposition of the inherent tensions (Au 230-38). The predilection of authors with names like Gertrude Buchhacker for long-winded historical novels, 'poetic' studies of heroic figures in the GDR's cooking-oil industry, rambling gossip packaged as 'Volkstümlichkeit', pedantic theorising and so on, is patently intended to expose them to the reader's ridicule. It also serves to suggest that the up-and-coming Iswalls enjoy a kind of anarchic independence from their authority - something directly contradicted by most of the other fictional and documentary evidence relating to the period.

Satire of this kind is - perhaps even to insiders in East German literary circles - too far removed from actuality to be taken seriously. The identifiable jibes elsewhere at Erik

Neutsch and Max Walter Schulz for the thickness and programmatic deliberateness of their works are scarcely more than mildly provocative: the ambitions of the "junger Autor" to write a 900 page novel "Doch ewig bleiben die Steine" suggest to Iswall an ideological reversal of Margaret Mitchell's Gone with the Wind, while Schulz's 'Entwicklungsroman' is innocuously disguised as a 'Lehrlingsromanze' entitled "Das bläst der Wind nicht fort" (Au 183). Strittmatter also takes issue lightly with the emptiness of laudatory reportage and the ignorance of the established 'Dichter', who claims - in front of the knowledgable villagers of Blumenau - to be a nature-poet, but these are not intended to be other than minor facets of Ole Bienkopp, and do not disappoint in the way that Kant's apparently significant satire does.

Christa Wolf probes much more deeply into the legacy of the past, shifting the emphasis slightly from the literary to the academic world, through Manfred's situation as a research chemist at Halle university and Rita's experience at her college of education. Here the threat to progress comes as much from the attitudes of a reactionary academic hierarchy as from the Party's attempts to restrict the subject-matter and its interpretation, and both sides are implicitly condemned. On the one hand, products of the early years of the FDJ and the 'Partei-schule', like Rudi Schwabe and Mangold, reduce all intellectual matters to simple ideological terms. Schwabe is appointed as the Party's representative in the university registry and is suspected by Manfred of being an "Allroundfunktionär" who has never pursued "einen anständigen Beruf" (GH 90). Mangold has been given leave from his previous unspecified bureaucratic activity to train as a teacher, and intimidates fellow-students

like Rita with the sheer weight of doctrine he has learnt by heart. Schwabe may have sympathetic traits, yet is the "ausführendes Organ" for disciplinary sanctions which can threaten the career of outstanding students like Manfred's colleague Martin Jung (GH 182-3). Mangold is a mindless machine who, in the same way as Strittmatter's functionaries, has avoided the post-war indecision of his generation by total immersion in ideological abstraction, which he worships as infallible truth:

Alle mußten jetzt sprechen... Aber immer noch redete nur Mangold, dem man guten Glauben wohl zubilligen mußte. Er sprach über die Parteilinie, wie Katholiken über die unbefleckte Empfängnis reden. GH 174

The only saving feature in the college is that the students have, in Erwin Schwarzenbach, a tutor who is able to expose the dangers of such inflexibility in a subtle and educationally constructive manner.

Those in academic authority in the elite world of the university's science faculty are no less a detrimental force than the Party's uncritical servants. The hierarchy here is composed of arrogant bourgeois materialists, with a distinctly questionable past in the Third Reich, who exploit the situation in the GDR, where experts in the field of chemical research are desperately needed, to their selfish advantage. The Professor and his elderly subordinates, Dr. Seiffert and Dr. Müller, operate a semi-feudal system, demanding "Götzendienst" from their students and researchers as a prerequisite for academic success (GH 144). Manfred has become entangled in this struggle for patronage, but only through desperation, since he found to his cost earlier that public criticism of the system - "Über Fehler im Studienbetrieb. Über den tollen Ballast, der uns belastete.

"Über Heuchelei, die mit guten Noten belohnt wurde" (GH 176) - exposed him to vicious counter-attack. None the less, when Rita first sees him in this environment, at a Christmas party, it is a distressing experience for her which marks the end of the "Verzauberung" in their relationship. She is now able to see him at a distance - "in einen Abstand, der erlaubt, zu mustern, zu messen, zu beurteilen" (GH 150).

The academic world shows all the intransigence of Strittmatter's provincial bureaucracy, and threatens to become as disillusioning for Rita as it has been for Manfred in the 1950's. It is only through the example of Schwarzenbach, the man who first recognised her potential in the rural obscurity where she spent her adolescent years, that its new vitality is finally affirmed. As Rita prepares to face the world again, late in 1961, after her recuperation, Schwarzenbach visits her and tells her about an article he has just had published on the theme of dogmatism in the classroom. It has culminated in a plea for educationalists to become "Sozialisten" rather than "Nachplapperer", on a basis of open discussion rather than by dictating 'truths' to their students. Schwarzenbach has already been criticised from Party sources, on the grounds that the time is not yet ripe - least of all just after August 1961 - for the expression of internal conflicts. His answer, as challenging as those of Elisabeth in Die Geschwister and Iswall in Die Aula, is rather more rhetorical, is that the breakthrough into 'Vielschichtigkeit', and the revelation of the 'Buckel und Risse', must occur now, precisely after the moment of deepest crisis:

Zum erstenmal sind wir reif, der Wahrheit ins Gesicht zu sehen. Das Schwere nicht in Leicht umdeuten, das Dunkle nicht in Hell. Vertrauen nicht mißbrauchen. Es ist das Kostbarste, was wir uns erworben haben ... Sozialismus, das

ist doch keine magische Zauberformel. Manchmal glauben wir, etwas zu verändern, indem wir es neu benennen ... Die reine nackte Wahrheit, und nur sie ist auf die Dauer der Schlüssel zum Menschen. GH 252

The one really discordant note in this fairly uniform expression of the need for a radical break with the methods and the typical personalities of the 1950's is struck by Erik Neutsch in Spur der Steine. Neutsch was evidently much less inclined to emphasise insights arrived at by intellectuals from their protected perspective on everyday life, or indeed to jeopardise the message of continuity and progress which his title conveys. He does include an artist within the broad panorama of the novel, but in a more distanced, ambivalent light. The forty-year-old Eberhard Voss has not had a smooth career, pilloried as a 'formalist' years before he takes on the task of depicting industrial life at Schkona, but still determined to use the collage techniques he favoured then. At one point, he looks like becoming the author's mouthpiece, communicating as effectively with the culturally ignorant Balla as with the intelligent young graduate Katrin Klee. He offers the central interpretation of the novel's title, in clarifying to Katrin what Balla meant by a reference to the "Spur der Steine" linking together the many building projects he has worked on:

Dieser Balla hat mir vor kurzem gestanden ... er habe so etwas wie die Spur der Steine erblickt, des Aufbaus, seiner Hände Arbeit, und damit den Aufbau seines eigenen Ichs. Es ist sicherlich richtig, aber es ist noch mehr. Die Steine ziehen eine Spur, die nicht nur durch das Land geht, Häfen, Talsperren, Fabrikhallen ... Sie quält sich mitten durch uns hindurch, und sie ist mit keiner vor ihr vergleichbar. Wie auch sollte es anders sein, wenn man sich selber aufbaut. S 671

And yet later, the vital sense of identity with the GDR is seen to be lacking in Voss. His experience of Stalinist 'Kulturpolitik'

at its most philistine is not questioned, but the scepticism and feeling of intellectual superiority it has induced are, in Neutsch's eyes, unjustifiable. Voss' discussions with the government minister directly responsible for Schkona, Herman Jansen, suggest that the artist needs to change more than the state's attitude to culture. Jansen may be old-fashioned in his ideas about art, but his criticisms are always seen to be constructive:

Ich habe dir dein erstes Atelier eingerichtet.
Ich ahne auch, wie du über die Partei denkst:
Alle zwei Jahre eine Welle gegen mich ... Aber
du wärst nicht unser Genosse, wenn wir dich
nicht ganz für uns gewinnen wollten, dich mit
deiner Kunst. S 609

Despite such reassurance, Voss is confronted with a further crass injustice when his portrait of Katrin Klee, universally held to be the best exhibit in a state exhibition, is only given third prize. Some unnamed figure of ministerial status has overruled the jury's judgment on the grounds that Voss' previous work contained undesired "spätbürgerliche Rudimente", even though the actual portrait bore no sign of his collage methods. But when Voss becomes cynical in Balla's presence, his lack of toleration for this kind of malevolent interference at the highest Party level is seen as being as reprehensible as the interference itself:

(Balla) verwarf die Entscheidung des Ministeriums, die Art, mit Menschen umzuspringen, aber ebenso sehr mißfiel ihm der böse Zynismus des Malers. S 747

This is where, as noted above, Balla demonstrates his self-identification with the East German community in rejecting Voss' attitudes, revealing Neutsch's readiness to isolate the artist who had just earlier filled a significant didactic role. Such a reversal of sympathies and underlying inconsistency of

characterisation can only be explained by the author's determination to emphasise factors making for continuity, after satisfying himself that he has not glossed over the writer's problematic relationship with authority - a distinctly unhappy compromise that can be sensed in the characterisation of Horrath as well. Thus the injustice suffered by Voss becomes a regrettable fall from established standards, rather than a typical example of the Party's methods of ensuring superficial conformity.

Neutsch does provide a caricatured incarnation of the aberrations of the recent past in Bleibtreu, the dullard who finds himself entrusted with the responsibilities of Party secretary on the Schkona as Horrath loses his grip. The medals which adorn Bleibtreu's jacket have been awarded for "Dienstleister ... die exakte Ausführung von Befehlen", but he is a disaster in situations where subtlety and psychological sensitivity are called for - most notably on the day when Balla leads a spontaneous strike and Katrin Klee criticises the local Party leadership in the press (S 709-10). Bleibtreu's significance is however negligible in comparison to that of the vastly experienced Herman Jansen, whose whole career since the 1920's has been exemplary - "sein Leben ist die Geschichte der revolutionären Arbeiterbewegung Deutschlands" (S 230) - and who, is dedicated to establishing the "Vertrauensverhältnis" at Schkona, through tireless personal involvement (S 232). Jansen may be overly intolerant of failure and out of touch with cultural developments, but is an inspirational force, whether in private discussion or on an open-air platform, capable of making even Balla in his most sceptical phase feel "wie frisch gewaschen" (S 504). Furthermore, Jansen's abilities are seen to be shared

by both Otto Grotewohl and Walter Ulbricht at significant points of the novel. Ulbricht, in his conversation with Balla, is a model of understanding and interest, well aware of the ordinary worker's hardships and doubts. He is also, unmistakably, put in the position of vindicating the Party leadership and their methods since 1945, without fear of qualification or contradiction:

Der Vorsitzende durchschaute (Balla), erriet die Bedenken und Zweifel, die ihn, Balla, lange bewegt hatten. Doch er schien sie ihm nicht zu verübeln.
"Aber glauben Sie mir. Niemandem von uns ist es leichtgefallen, sich neuen Aufgaben zuzuwenden, zum Beispiel einen Staat zu leiten. Und trotzdem sind wir vor der Verantwortung nicht zurückgeschreckt. Wenn nicht wir, wenn nicht Sie, wenn nicht die gesamte Arbeiterklasse, wer sonst?" S 924-5

Such explicit and unreserved support for the state leadership is clearly the exception amongst this Bitterfeld fiction, and places in doubt Neutsch's determination to present the Stalinist era in credible dialectical terms, since the overall achievement, the 'Spur der Steine', dwarfs the individual problems of a Voss or a Horrath, however significant they may prove when regarded in isolation. The malaise of intellectual life in the 1950's is not here seen to be symptomatic of more deeply rooted disorders in the Party organisation, in the way that Reimann, Wolf and Kant tend to suggest, and Strittmatter's discouraging analysis of the situation at the grass-roots conflicts directly with Neutsch's laudatory treatment of the most powerful figures in the SED.

Overall, the untenability of the propagandistic assertion that East German society could have become an integrated community from the outset is demonstrated, and a new - if highly incomplete - sense of internal historical change emerges. The

relationship between Party officials and the intelligent, creative individual is seen to be crucial to progress towards the communal ideal, since the Party's insistence on discipline and uniformity has been excessive and misguided, especially **where** it allowed a bureaucratic mentality little changed from the Third Reich to flourish. It has also been directly counter-productive where it has prevented people with a basic socialist commitment from fulfilling their potential, to the detriment of the state's **economy**, as well as of individual morale. With the establishment of this historical dimension, a more penetrating view of GDR society at the threshold of the 1960's would inevitably follow.

THE LIMITS OF COMMUNITY

This new perspective on the tortuous road to socialism in the GDR ought finally to have rendered the conceptual framework of harmonious 'Gemeinschaft' redundant. It comes therefore as something of a disappointment to find some of the compositional simplifications, upon which the less gifted authors of the 1950's 'Betriebsromane' depended so heavily, recurring even in the most impressive of the Bitterfeld novels.

The 'pathetic fallacy' of using nature-analogies to reflect the situation of the main characters plays a significant part in Spur der Steine and Der geteilte Himmel, especially in relation to Hannes Balla and Rita Seidel. Balla's twelve years of post-war 'Wanderschaft', before he arrives with his brigade at the massive Schmona site in 1959, are presented as frustratingly aimless and rootless. His dominant and unreflected goal is a happiness consisting in "Frauen, Geld und ein Herrscher

zu sein auf dem Bau", which he only gradually recognises as being an unattainable "Wunderblume" (S 114-5). Although Balla has been involved in major building projects all over the GDR, they are seen as "Station(en) in der Fremde", perhaps in reflection of Balla's essentially selfish motives for working there (S 118). This surprisingly negative first reference to the 'Spur der Steine' can also be explained by the convenient fact that Schkona is close to Balla's birthplace, the village of Angersfurt, where his parents still live, so that 'Heimat' is initially only meaningful for him in this private sense. Ironically, of course, Balla achieves his fondest material ambition, the purchase of a Wartburg car - his "blaue Blume"(!) - at the moment when the example of selfless dedication to communal goals, which Werner Horrath offers, has led him to see himself as an "Auswanderer im eigenen Land", and starts him longing for the stability of "ein() warme(s) Nest" (S 350-2). The 'natural' process of Balla's moral growth is soon evident to those around him, like Katrin Klee, who views him as "gewandelt, als sei er aus der rauhen Schale seiner Verderbtheit gesprungen wie eine Kastanie aus ihrer Kapsel" (S 382). The narrator extends the image in describing Balla's new social insights as "überreife Früchte, denen der leiseste Windzug genügte, manchmal sogar nur die eigene Last, um von den Zweigen zu brechen" (S 424). As the spring of 1960 begins, full of hope and fresh life, the swallows return from their winter migration to remind Balla that human life is also a cyclical process of "Wanderschaft" and "Heimkehr" (S 472-5). From this point on, he never looks back, inspiring his colleagues and weathering - in winter - the death of his father, who vainly resists the culpably mismanaged land-collectivisation in Angersfurt. Before

long, he is setting off to inspect Soviet industrial innovations as a representative of his country, to cap an implausibly meteoric rise to fame. The image of the 'Wandervogel' dominates the climax of the novel in the spring of 1961: the Russian trip, in the company of Katrin, brings about a major extension of his horizons as a "Wanderschaft um die Welt" (S 843). At the same time, his "Heimat" is suddenly "weit geworden" and then to be found "Überall" (S 939, 945), even though the hope that a deepening of his friendship with Kati would satisfy his longing for domestic roots seems to have been thwarted.

Neutsch, however, leaves little room for the idyllic, escapist view of nature as a contrast to the industrialised modern world, in the way that Christa Wolf does. He almost seems to warn against the liberation of human feelings in nature during the course of the affair between Kati and Werner Horrath, which gains its first intensity in a park in Schkona and goes into decline during their brief winter retreat in the chilling country air of Lohenstein. The inability of Horrath to reconcile this experience with his public life as a dedicated Party secretary and his apparently stable marriage, is central to his moral disintegration; for Kati, it is bitterly disillusioning, but not quite as disastrous. Neutsch's unproblematical exemplary figures like Balla and Jansen seem to find fulfilment within the rapidly expanding industrial landscape described in the novel's opening scene, where the atmosphere is "geschwängert vom fauligen Geruch der Schwefelgase" (S 10), and through an exhausting working-day. For them, the only prospects of respite are in the works dormitory or on the road to the next assignment.

The paradox of Neutsch's often hackneyed use of nature-metaphors, in conjunction with his lack of interest in the world

of nature and the private life of many of his characters, is reminiscent of older socialist writers like Marchwitza. It seems to point to a poverty of literary imagination as well as a restrictive view of what constitutes personal wholeness in a modern industrial context. Christa Wolf, on the other hand, seems to overdo the description of Rita's harmonious one-ness with nature and her origins so much, that her 'Heimat' becomes totally divorced from the industrial and academic spheres she subsequently enters. The introduction to her earlier existence, from the novel's distinctly unidyllic perspective of late 1961, has all the qualities of a fairy-tale:

Rita (lebte) mit Mutter und Tante in einem winzigen Häuschen am Waldrand ... Sie war zufrieden mit ihrem Dorf: Rotdächerige Häuser in kleinen Gruppen, dazu Wald und Wiese und Feld und Himmel in dem richtigen Gleichgewicht, wie man sich's kaum ausdenken könnte. GH 11

As a later reference shows, everything in this world has been "einfach" and "Überschaubar" for Rita, with something of the purity and completeness of the last day of Creation(!), allowing her to grow up with an almost inconceivable "Unberührtheit der Seele" (GH 77). Nothing in the rapid expansion of her experience - through her relationship with Manfred, her work in the factory or her studies - serves to place this perfection in the kind of parochial light which would offer any possibility of comparison with Strittmatter's Blumenau or Neutsch's Angersfurt. In fact, the inhabitants of the village, even Rita's mother and aunt, who brought her there as a child in the trek westwards of 1945, are never characterised. During a brief stay there, Rita gains great consolation from the colours of the fields, the birds and the sky, and feels she has "alles ... was ein Mensch braucht" (GH 169), but it is all curiously static and insubstantial.

The weather and the seasons change in keeping with Rita's mood. The autumn of 1960, when she first realises there is something lacking in the existence she shares with Manfred and his academic abstractions, is "trüb" and "dumpf", shrouded in acrid fog: relief comes only when she seeks out her mentor Schwarzenbach and finds in his home a domestic vitality lacking in the "dumpfe Wärme" of the Herrfurth household (GH 123-30). May 1961 is chillingly cold, with the deeply overcast sky giving forth "eine unbestimmte Drohung", stirring up "underirdisch ... eine trübe Flut von Lüge, Dummheit, Verrat" which threatens "durch Häuseritzen und Kellerfenster auf die Straße (zu) sickern" (GH 201) - a passage which reveals all the dangers of attributing an undeniably man-made crisis to mysterious metaphysical sources. Rita's recovery in the sanatorium in the autumn of 1961 is described in rather more plausible psychological terms, and yet the day which marks the decisive turning-point is "der erste, klare, kalte Herbsttag nach einer stürmischen Nacht" (GH 130): the list of comparable examples is almost inexhaustible. The birds again play their obvious symbolical role, with the accent now on the freedom and grace of the swallow striving for the heavens (GH 217, 236), in contrast to the tortoise which Manfred sees fit to bring Rita as a present from Bulgaria: "der stumpf-traurige Blick der uralten Augen" becomes repellent to her after Manfred goes to the West (GH 212).

Interestingly, Neutsch and Wolf also seek to use the same historical event, the first manned space-flight, carried out by Yuri Gagarin in April 1961, to demonstrate the universal scale of the growth of socialism which they present as a 'natural' development in individuals like Balla and Rita. The small-scale

achievements to which they have contributed are thus seen as being organically related to this major, and dramatic, technological breakthrough. The point is made with ponderous contrivance in Der geteilte Himmel, with "die Nachricht", as it is mysteriously termed in the lengthy build-up, coinciding with the test-run of the latest light-weight railway carriages produced in Rita's factory. The three central, representative characters - Rita, Manfred and the young works-director Wendland - are on board, travelling "quer durch das Land" through "das Gewebe des Alltags" (GH 188), and arguing whether socialism can succeed in an industrial state like the GDR. The perfection of the space flight is not fully shared at the microcosmic level, for the brakes are not as effective as they should be, and the debate about socialist morality and problems of commitment in the GDR becomes more heated. For the more emotional Rita, however, the general feeling of identification - "Ich gehöre dazu, dachte sie" (GH 196) - with 'her' carriages and thus with the sputnik, is fundamental and sufficient at this stage.

In Spur der Steine, the achievement in space becomes the climax of Balla's four-week encounter with the efficiency of Russian technology, which has already given him a new vision of the "Spur der Steine ... die noch vor mir liegt" (S 879). As Balla happens to be on the point of flying back to the GDR when he hears the news, Neutsch is able to reveal the same inter-relationship in the socialist world between individual growth, the technology of everyday life, and mankind's cosmic potential:

Die Erde sank tiefer und tiefer. Irgendwo in
der schattenlosen Bläue mußte ein silberner
Pfeil kreisen. Und irgendwie war es Balla,
also flügte er ihm entgegen. S 891

The 'sozialistische Menschengemeinschaft' under Russian leadership is thus seen as working, with nature's benevolent support,

towards the perfection of the hero's world.

And yet it should be noted that this harmonisation in Der geteilte Himmel and Spur der Steine is particularly associated with the figure intended as the main 'Vorbild', Rita and Balla respectively, and in whose characterisation the author's personal experience is no more than distantly reflected. Although there is a close emotional relationship between the narrator and the heroine in Der geteilte Himmel, with Rita's origins similar to those of Christa Wolf herself, time is curiously telescoped for the ten-year-younger Rita. She gains her practical knowledge of industrial life at the threshold of adulthood, and her idyllic 'Heimat' represents a total contrast to the Stalinist 1950's, which were the real formative years for Wolf's own generation. It is as if Wolf wanted to demonstrate how life could have been for those born around 1930, if the starting point for socialism had been the spirit of the 'Bitterfelder Weg' rather than the Cold War, while including much of the disheartening quality of intellectual life in the 1950's in her characterisation of Manfred. Neutsch would appear to have put different aspects of himself in figures as diverse as the artist Voss, the Party secretary Horrath and the proletarian activist Balla, each of whom seems to take over the burden of the positive hero for parts of the novel. But while the stars of Voss and Horrath wane with psychologically disturbing alacrity, the transformation of the self-centred Balla in the opposite direction is even less credible. The idea of Balla, within a matter of months, giving articulate guidance to Voss and Horrath, and reaching a profound level of understanding with the SED leadership, not to mention his conversion to Mozart, places him in the realms of the ideal. He still has much in common with Becher's utopian

figures, whatever the documentary basis for Spur der Steine might suggest to the contrary.

Both Rita and Balla form interesting exceptions to what could be regarded as an autobiographically determined norm for the central figures in these novels. Balla is the only manual worker of the Bitterfeld era to be studied in depth: other figures may have proletarian or peasant origins, like Jakob Filter in Die Aula or Joachim Steinbrink in Die Geschwister, but have risen to positions of executive responsibility well before the narrative present. Rita represents the younger generation maturing into the 1960's, in the same way as Neutsch's graduates Katrin Klee and Kurt Hesselbart, or Strittmatter's Märtke Mattusch, for whom social integration will be far less problematical. By far the major group of characters, however, is made up of those aged roughly between 25 and 35, with a good education and some intellectually demanding experience behind them - Elisabeth and Joachim in Die Geschwister, Manfred, Ernst Wendland and Erwin Schwarzenbach in Der geteilte Himmel, Werner Horrath in Spur der Steine, and ABF graduates like Robert and Vera Iswall, Gerd Trullesand, Jakob Filter and Quasi Riek in Die Aula.⁶² They are thus slightly younger than the heroes of the 'Entwicklungsromane' dealt with in the previous chapter, and just able, with the exception of some of Kant's figures, to avoid active war-service. They are fortunate then, in Iswall's eyes, still to have both "ein heiles Fell" and "ein reines Gewissen" as peace was established (Au 169). As Manfred recalls in Der geteilte Himmel:

Lässig beendeten wir die Schule. Damals waren wir Fünfzehnjährigen die Älteste Klasse, in der keine Gefallenenliste hing. GH 59

This small age-difference might have been quite crucial to their

survival and meant an easier transition into the post-war world, but has certainly not meant any rapid or 'natural' integration into an embryonic socialist society. They are much more isolated, both from any apparently benevolent influence of nature and from many of the social groupings that make for a sense of community. The feeling of continuity based on close family ties and an unchanging 'Heimat' is rarely present for those who, in Manfred's words, make up "die politische Generation" (GH 90).

The point is frequently made that they have special identity problems. Neutsch emphasises, in relation to both Horrath and Balla in fact, that "die Dreißigjährigen suchen täglich nach dem Neubeginn" with an insecurity which goes back to the war years (S 261, 796, 900). Horrath believes that his generation has had exceptional difficulties in overcoming the indoctrination to which it was exposed in the Third Reich:

Die vor uns haben es einfacher, sie wußten
stets von der Konsequenz der Widersprüche,
die nach uns leichter, ihnen wird nichts mehr
verschleiert. S 797

Manfred sees the problem differently, in terms of a self-protective moral indifference developed against the ideology of the Hitler Youth, and never overcome, which places a real barrier between himself and Rita's generation:

Wozu erzähle ich dir das alles? dachte er.
Versteht sie überhaupt, was damals los war?
Sie war ja noch nicht mal geboren ... Komisch:
Irgendwo zwischen ihr und mir fängt die neue
Generation an. Wo soll sie begreifen, daß
man uns alle frühzeitig mit dieser tödlichen
Gleichgültigkeit infiziert hat, die man so
schwer wieder los wird? GH 56

Many of them, like Horrath, Trullesand and Riek, have grown up as orphans as a direct result of war-destruction; others become alienated from the prevailing petit-bourgeois attitudes they see at home, usually in the form of career-

opportunism and materialism, as in the Herrfurth household, which is reduced for Manfred to a "Lebenssarg" (GH 29), or in the homes which Iswall's mother and sister set up with their husbands in Hamburg, which leave him feeling "das ist doch keine Familie mehr" (Au 86). Some parents come to terms with their prejudices through the influence of their children, like Elisabeth's family in Die Geschwister; in other cases the family background is not seen as significant enough to be considered as a factor (Wendland and Schwarzenbach). Only the relatively minor Joachim Steinbrink comes from an exemplary background, with his parents described as pre-war KPD activists. Generally speaking, the parents' generation is seen as fixed in its ways, tending towards careerism rather than genuine socialism. This is seen in Trutmann or the LPG leaders Windisch and Zollenzoll in Spur der Steine, Christa Wolf's academic establishment, and Strittmatter's farmers, such as the dairy-specialist Theo Timpe. Only in the cases of Ole Bienkopp or Rolf Meternagel is a significant conflict involving an older activist and insensitive authority portrayed.

In keeping with this reduction in the significance of family background and social origins, these novels have little need for the emotionally charged vocabulary of 'Heimat', apart from the characterisation of Rita and Balla. The political re-division of Central Europe after 1945 means that some of this generation were born outside the GDR's boundaries, Iswall to the West, Horrath and Trullesand to the East, and have thus no geographical base in the state. Most of them are town-dwellers, if not from birth, then after establishing themselves in the GDR - Christa Wolf's figures in Halle, Elisabeth Arendt's brothers and Werner Horrath in Rostock, Robert Iswall and some

of his colleagues in Berlin - while cultural centres like Weimar, Leipzig and Dresden appear regularly on the fictional itinerary. There is however little attempt to define the nature of city life in a socialist context: Iswall, for example, is at the centre of intellectual life in Berlin, but offers almost no idea of what happens outside his working day as a journalist or the more exclusive world of writers' conferences. On a few occasions, he shows a fascination with the place-names and contrasts of Berlin before August 1961, distantly reminiscent of works like Döblin's Berlin Alexanderplatz, but with little real impact (Au 274-77). Christa Wolf raises questions of urban alienation - "wie leicht kann einer hier verlorengelassen" (GH 32) - and the destructive side-effects of industrialisation, through Rita's initial impressions of Halle:

(Der Fluss) war, seit Manfred ihn als Kind verlassen hatte, nützlicher und unfreundlicher geworden: er führte watteweissen Schaum mit sich, der Uebel roch und vom Chemiewerk bis weit hinter die Stadt den Fisch vergiftete. Die Kinder von heute konnten nicht daran denken, hier schwimmen zu lernen, obwohl die Ufer flach und von Gras und Weiden gesäumt waren. GH 35

Particularly in Wolf's case, it is clear that the acceptance of the need for industrial growth is reluctant, and tends to interfere with her overall schematic contrast of socialist and capitalist society on the familiar 'Gemeinschaft' - 'Gesellschaft' basis. This is most evident during Rita's brief and unsuccessful reunion with Manfred in West Berlin, where the city is utterly infertile and colourless.

The one marked difference between city-life in East and West is that the figures in the GDR tend to enjoy steady emotional relationships, which reduce the risk of urban isolation - Iswall has a stable marriage and a child, Elisabeth has the

strength of her love for Joachim, and Rita, initially, lives with Manfred. Problems seem to grow, however, when a commitment to a new industrial project leads characters, in novels like Spur der Steine or Die Geschwister, to unfamiliar small towns dwarfed by the scale of technological progress, where there seems no escape from the working environment. The workers tend to live in primitive barracks, while the planners and administrators are billeted in down-at-heel rooms in the town. For those compelled to move without their spouse, like Horrath, the problem of stability and integration becomes acute, since there are few natural means of recovering from the tensions of a desperately hard working-day.⁶³ Even where there is new housing available, in the exceptional case of the unmarried Katrin Klee and her young son, the lack of contact between neighbours in a multi-storey block of flats is seen to be as grim in the GDR as anywhere else. Despite age similarities, there is no "Mietergemeinschaft" in the building: in fact, as Katrin bitterly notes, "die GerMusche in diesem Haus waren einander schon vertrauter als die Menschen" (S 755).

In a further modification of the conventional image, the village community is - apart from Rita's insubstantial environment - anything but integrated. It is, of course, the era of accelerated land-collectivisation, compelling the demise of the independent small farmer to allow the creation of large units subject, in theory at least, to more rational utilisation. Strittmatter's Blumenau reflects badly enough on the mismanagement of collectivisation through the 1950's, while Neutsch provides a scarcely less encouraging impression of the rushed completion of the process in 1960, in the sub-plot involving Balla's father. The methods adopted by the newcomer Windisch

to establish the LPG are those of crude compulsion, totally counter-productive as far as mistrustful locals like old Balla are concerned. To make matters worse, there follows a struggle for power between Windisch and the wealthier locals, led by the crafty Zollenzoll, who support the introduction of a Type I collective, which would leave them some autonomy, as opposed to Windisch's fully centralised Type III colchos. Old Balla, opposed equally to the doctrinaire outsiders and the calculating locals, effectively sacrifices his life in his pathetic last-ditch defence of his meagre property, against the intimidatory action of Windisch's men:

Er schritt in die Mitte des Feldes, breitete die Decke aus und wickelte sich darin ein. Er würde auf dem Felde schlafen, er würde es nicht verlassen, und sollte er unter den Rädern zermalmt werden. Hier war seine Welt, hier waren sein Leben und sein Tod ... Er fror, die Kiefer schlugen gegeneinander. Er glaubte, daß es von innen her käme. S 704

The fatal illness which follows brings a loss to the GDR which may be insignificant compared to that of an Ole Bienkopp, and yet could have been avoided if the quality of the local leadership had corresponded to the magnitude of the political and economic upheaval it was endeavouring to bring about.

In such a distinctly uncomfortable environment, the incessant pressures to increase productivity, and thus ensure the GDR's economic survival, are seen as a threat to the quality of life implied by concepts like 'Gemeinschaft'. The variety of reactions to the issue of Party membership amongst the characters who make up the young managerial and creative elite in these novels reflects the extent of such tensions between ideals and expedients. Those who joined the SED in its Stalinist days have clearly grown in stature above the Mangolds and the Bleibtrens, but their initial motivation seems to have been rather similar.

Werner Horrath, in the depths of his crisis, refers to his espousal of Marxism as a liberation from his fascist beliefs - "Gehorsam vor dem Aberglauben" - which failed however to bring about a decisive break from the methods of National Socialism, particularly "der Kult um einen Heiligen und die Mißachtung der Schöpferkraft". In 1961, he is still seeking the means of shaking off "~~diese~~ innere Gefangenschaft von, sagen wir, mindestens fünfundzwanzig Jahren" (S 796). Other characters, like Schwarzenbach and Wendland in Der geteilte Himmel or Iswall and Jakob Filter in Die Aula, have obviously made this transition more successfully and at less cost to their personal stability. But a fair proportion of these potential leaders are not members of the SED at the fictional outset, and for well-founded reasons, even though there seems every likelihood that they will take the decisive step in the near future (with the obvious exception of the 'Republikflüchtiger' Manfred).

Manfred's cynicism is clearly regarded as reprehensible, and yet also shown to be the self-protective façade of an idealist who has been made to suffer for justifiable criticisms of the Party's leadership in the past. He is, like Rita, one of "die Empfindlichen", who the Party needs more than dogmatic loyalists of Mangold's ilk, at least in the eyes of Schwarzenbach: and it seems that the basic reason why even an exemplary younger figure like Rita is not yet a member is because of its insensitivity to individual needs (GH 128-9). Elisabeth, in Die Geschwister, plays an interesting mediating role between the Party and the disillusioned, represented by her younger brother Uli, who has been prevented from obtaining employment simply because he studied under a professor who later left the GDR. She recognises the validity of his complaints, but criticises

him for his lack of patience and understanding, mindful of the endless "zermürende Nachtarbeit" which most Party members willingly undertake (G 144). Elisabeth's experience, as a non Party member, of full support from the Party secretary at Schwarze Pumpe against the activities of an establishment figure like Heiners, together with her successful relationship with the dedicated Joachim, is encouraging, but does not yet allow any presuppositions that it is representative. It is interesting also that Martin Jung in Der geteilte Himmel, who has been exmatriculated from university as a result of his criticisms of the state's economic leadership, is the one to regret the fact that Manfred left the GDR just before the erection of the Berlin Wall, in words which might well be felt to represent the mixed feelings of the authors themselves:

In unserem Betrieb ist gerade eine Kommission der Partei. Sie interessiert sich für unsere Maschine. Hätte Manfred nicht die acht Monate durchhalten können? Das macht mir am meisten zu schaffen, wenn ich an ihn denke: Wenn er hiergeblieben wäre, und sei es durch Zwang: Heute mußte er versuchen, mit allem fertig zu werden. Heute könnte er ja nicht mehr ausweichen ... GH 180

Generally speaking, the Bitterfeld authors, while seeing socialist progress dialectically, in terms of the interaction of productive personalities like Manfred with a more flexible and individualised Party structure, still accepted this short-term inevitability of some degree of coercion, to ensure the state's economic stability. This is scarcely the depth of commitment to the SED leadership that the 'Kulturpolitiker' were expecting from this literature, and yet any presentation of the Party's leadership in the early 1960's as unproblematical would have undermined the authors' well-founded criticism of its exercise of power in the past.

The nucleus of a new communal self-consciousness for the economically sophisticated Bitterfeld era is seen rather to be developing from below, within the industrial brigades. The brigade is seen as a democratic microcosm, capable of creating a purposeful unity out of a heterogeneous group of individuals - "ein kleiner Staat für sich" (GH 49). Its functioning is described in detail only in Der geteilte Himmel and Spur der Steine,⁶⁴ but with noticeably less of the harmonisation which detracts so much from the individual characterisation of Rita and Balla. The starting-point for the portrayal of the brigade tends to be a working-class feeling of alienation from authority, apparently little changed since capitalist days. The workers are capable of outstanding feats of endurance and productivity, but essentially for material reward; some may derive satisfaction of a private kind from their achievements, others are sloppy and indifferent. They represent a cross-section of generational experience: both these novels include a father-figure (Büchner, Karßweit), an ex-Nazi officer (Elbers, Kuhl), a young and timid Party member (Jochmann, Liebentraut), and a likeable apprentice (Nick, Hünschen) within groups of eight and twelve men respectively. Neutsch, however, makes matters less complicated by including a pair of incorrigibly evil elements (Galonski and Bolbig) to retard the brigade's corporate development. The brigadier looks after his men's interests first and foremost, which can mean tricking the management into keeping work-norms ridiculously low and wages correspondingly high, or obtaining materials illicitly in times of shortage. The group's identity is an old-style 'Zunftgeist',⁶⁵ based on their common skill and on pride in their leader: they are pleased to be known as 'die Ermischleute' or 'die Ballas'.

The economic reforms of 1959 have, however, a significant influence upon this situation. On the one hand, the new competitive element is introduced, challenging brigades to designate themselves 'socialist' and campaign for the title 'Brigade der sozialistischen Arbeit'; on the other, there is the potentially contradictory move to establish a sophisticated shift-system for new projects - 'die komplexe und industrielle Bauweise' - with a system of larger brigades representing various complementary skills rather than a single specialism.

Christa Wolf restricts herself to the homogeneous brigade, making window-frames for railway-carriages, which can thus gain the satisfaction of seeing its work integrated into the finished product under the same factory roof with an organic coherence. Thus Rita is proud to bring Manfred along to see where "die Geburt des Wagens begann" (GH 186). The new spirit of socialism in the GDR is exemplified by a change of leadership in the works management (Wendland's promotion having been accelerated through his predecessor's flight to the West), and by the efforts within the brigade, stimulated by Rolf Meternagel, to increase productivity. Meternagel's refusal to abandon his commitment to the state and to comrades who have earlier treated him cruelly, despite his "rückläufige Kaderentwicklung" (GH 74) and demotion from his position as 'Meister', make him a leader of greater stature than Ermisch, who is merely "ein guter Brigadier für gute Zeiten" (GH 70). For Meternagel, it is essentially a matter of overcoming his comrades' instinctive hostility to change, and of liberating them from the lowly assessment of their individual worth, which they have been unable to shake off since the Third Reich, not least the ex-lieutenant Kuhl, whom he finally persuades to find his 'true' self:

Komm zu dir. Du widersprichst dir ja selber.
Nun wolltest du dir sechzehn Jahre lang
beweisen, daß du ein Schwein bist, und auf
einmal machst du einen Strich durch die
Rechnung ... GH 264

Wolf indicates, however, that the task of persuading such people to change deeply ingrained habits can only be gradual and is not simply based upon the example of an individual like Meternagel, whose frailty is clearly demonstrated as he lies in his sick-bed at the end of the novel. But the brigade has come a long way towards developing a sense of common identity, extending to their leisure activities, as in the works party where they feel "bei sich selbst zu Gast" (GH 110), a process which augurs well for the GDR as a whole.

Erik Neutsch places his brigade in an infinitely more complex industrial setting, and yet offers a more conclusive impression of change than Wolf does over the same two-year period, Balla's eight-man team of carpenters, most of whom have worked together for years on building-sites throughout the GDR, is so united under his powerful leadership that he can count on their unpaid support to build a byre at weekends on his father's farm. It appears almost as if none of them has a relationship outside the work-sphere strong enough to provide an alternative sense of 'Heimat' to that which they feel within their group. Nevertheless it is Balla who, for confused psychological reasons, actually takes the lead in splitting them up into the larger mixed brigades of about twenty men, to allow the introduction of the sophisticated shift-system at Schkona. The carpenters continue to live together in their barracks and develop their socialist consciousness as a group, following Balla's transformation without demur, with the exception of the malevolent newcomers Galonski and Bolbig. The only threat to

Balla's authority comes when he calls a strike in protest against the incompetent management of Trutmann and Bleibtreu, and thus forces the few Party members in his enlarged brigade, including his long-standing follower Jochmann, into courageous resistance. But this brief drama, followed by the murder of another member of the original brigade, the ex-Nazi officer Elbers, only serves to accelerate his decision to become a Party member rather than creating lasting conflicts.

Balla's attainment of ideological maturity, together with the achievements of his now committed socialist brigade on the burgeoning Schkona site, is only the beginning for Neutsch. By the end of the novel, the original brigade is faced with total dissolution, since each of the survivors, except the elderly Büchner, is about to take on new responsibilities elsewhere - studying at college, entering the army or the 'Parteischule', and with Balla himself becoming a kind of roving ambassador for the new GDR. Old Büchner's contented feeling - "Überall ist einer aus der Brigade, Überall" (S 939) - suggests a continuing process of growth and multiplication of socialist cells on this model through the country.

This confidence in the brigade structure within industry is not contradicted elsewhere in the Bitterfeld novels, not least perhaps since involvement at brigade level was the point of departure for the 'Bitterfelder Weg' generally and had a special significance for the authors, although Neutsch is again exceptional in the degree of his affirmation. There is certainly a feeling that the sense of personal involvement in the state's technological development is more easily achieved here than in the rural context of land-collectivisation around 1960. This contrast may of course be exaggerated by the fact that the

brigade members who figure in the work of Wolf and Neutsch are not generally seen in a private context, and tend not to be exposed to conflicts outside their working environment during the crucial period of collective endeavour - a compartmentalisation of experience less easy in a rural setting.

The majority of the central characters, however, in their positions of economic, political and intellectual responsibility, are unable to work and develop within a tangible collective unit of this kind. Their fortunes compel a more profound consideration of the extent to which it is possible to regard success in working life as the key to wholeness of personality. They also work against the understanding of 'Gemeinschaft' in purely external, environmental terms, in the way they reflect the interdependence of private fulfilment and public achievement.

THE PRIVATE DIMENSION TO SELF-FULFILMENT

The existence of friends and mentors incorporating much of what is best in socialist morality is seen to be insufficient in itself to ensure the progress of the central figures towards stability and happiness. Major additional importance is attached to the question of whether each figure has succeeded in establishing an enduring relationship with a member of the opposite sex, making this almost into a touchstone for their personal maturity. There are, however, no illusions about marriage as an institution, whether as regards the choice of a partner or the permanence of legally sanctioned unions. Equally, there are no taboos about sex before or outside marriage, of the kind demonstrated by authors of the previous generation like Marchwitza: physical involvement is rather viewed as a natural progression

within a relationship and a scarcely dispensable test of its potential strength. The painful break-up of a long-standing liaison is an experience which few of these main figures are spared, and while the authors endeavour to explain situations of emotional conflict and alienation in psychological terms, they sometimes feel bound to admit to some degree of irrationality in human behaviour in intimate spheres. This, in turn, threatens to place the whole question of personal relationships outside the control of an otherwise planned socialist society. Indeed, the attempts made by the Party to resolve sexual issues are portrayed, in Spur der Steine as earlier in Karl-Heinz Jakobs' Beschreibung eines Sommers, as distinctly counter-productive.

There is nothing remarkable in the fictional first romances which promise much but prove to be insubstantial, except that the loved one here invariably reveals bourgeois tendencies or moral insensitivities, which help to show the protagonists that their future involvements should be closer to the spirit of socialism. Robert Iswall soon regrets giving up weekends of political agitation with his ABF colleagues for the pastor's daughter Inga; Elisabeth quickly tires of her apolitical friendship with a student called Gregory at West Berlin's 'Freie Universität'; Katrin Klee makes the painful realisation that the handsome artist Schmidt, a fellow-student, is incapable of an emotional response to her. It is clear that some progress towards understanding emotional needs has been made since the period before the establishment of the GDR, Ole Bienkopp goes through a lot of unnecessary anguish at the hands of the materialistic and dominating Anngret, including her jealous mocking of his devotion to post-war socialist reconstruction, before she finally disappears to the West with the villain of

Blumenau, Julian Ramsch. Bienkopp's reaction is always to forget his domestic miseries through total absorption in his work, thus suppressing a vital aspect of his personality, which he only discovers years after Anngret's departure through his love for young Märtke. His long suffering and isolation would be far less likely in the more socially mobile and enlightened GDR of 1960.

The relationship between Rita and Manfred also falls, at least superficially, into the category of 'unsuccessful first love', but is treated in far greater depth. Rita reveals the aspirations of the younger generation, seen also in Katrin and Elisabeth, to involve itself tirelessly in building a new society, and to reach the heights of personal fulfilment in return, by living "aus dem vollen" (GH 8, 99):

Sie erwartete Außerordentliches, außerordentliche Freuden und Leiden, außerordentliche Geschehnisse und Erkenntnisse. GH 16

Manfred, the academic from the city, seems to offer access to the mainstream of life, and Rita sees her role in turn as one of helping him to cast aside his self-protective mask of scepticism. For a time, their hopes approach realisation, and Manfred makes it clear that the intensity of their shared love is for him the way to a previously unknown sense of stability and identity within the GDR:

Das Unvergängliche in ihrer Liebe trat immer schärfer hervor, frei von Täuschung, Wunsch und Irrtum, durch Wissen und Entschluß gesichert. Das ist kein schwankender Boden mehr, auf dem ich gehe, dachte Manfred. Sie schafft es, sie macht mich im Leben fest. GH 84

This feeling precedes Manfred's most productive and satisfying period of research work - a causal link being more than implicit - and also comes at the time when his sense of belonging

to an academic community is strongest:

(Manfred) lebte in dem glücklichen, entspannten Nachgefühl einer gut und ehrlich vollbrachten Arbeit, die Mühe gekostet hat und die Mühe nun lohnte ... Er sah, man brauchte ihn, und das tat ihm genauso wohl wie die Anerkennung und Achtung, die ihm von allen Seiten entgegenkam. GH 103-4

It is this same assurance that he is needed that makes Elisabeth's brother finally convinced that he should stay in the GDR, at the height of his personal crisis in Die Geschwister (G 249), and sends him back to his studies with fresh determination. For Manfred, however, the emphasis in his feeling of "seltene, kostbare Übereinstimmung mit der Welt" (GH 104) is on its rareness: the fact that he never again attains this feeling of harmonious integration lies partially, as discussed earlier, with the insensitivity of GDR authority in rejecting the modified 'Spinning Jenny' developed by Manfred and Martin Jung. At the same time, Manfred's refusal to fight this adverse decision, regarding it almost fatalistically as an "Orakel" (GH 146), is also crucial. It marks the beginning of Rita's loss of confidence in his will to transcend his "tödlische() Gleichgültigkeit" (GH 56), a process seen to be realisable only with her support and within the GDR. Rita's later rational recognition that Manfred has committed moral suicide in going to the West may not be powerful enough to prevent her from coming close to actual death, in a desperate withdrawal from what seemed a life-long commitment, but it represents the decisive turning point in her life:

Er hatte aufgegeben. Wer nichts mehr liebt und nichts mehr haßt, kann überall und nirgends leben. Er ging ja nicht aus Protest. Er brachte sich selbst um, indem er ging. GH 242

The ending of liaisons in which one partner is unable to live up to the standards of socialist morality - defined in 1964

by Robert Havemann, in the spirit of these novels, as deriving from "die Solidarität, der Widerstand, der Zweifel an allem Hergekommenen, das Selbstvertrauen, die Entschlossenheit, die Verhältnisse zu ändern"⁶⁶ - is fully understandable in a literature which fully rejects the notion of love as something independent of morality and environment. A situation, however, in which the marriage of committed socialists loses its vitality and breaks down through the involvement of a third socialist, is clearly more complex in its potentially disruptive effect upon the community. It inevitably affects all aspects of the life of each individual involved. The dimensions of this problem had already been revealed with an impressive directness in Beschreibung eines Sommers, through the disintegration of a marriage entered into prematurely by the young heroine Grit. Her seemingly admirable husband Georg has unwittingly forced her into a subordinate role, and thus threatened her personal development. Grit's attempt to liberate herself through volunteering for work on the Wartha site leads her beyond the personal involvement in the GDR's economic growth, which was the obvious lack in her life, towards the discovery of a repressed sensuality in her adulterous relationship with Tom Breitsprecher. At first it appears to be an uncontrollable physical desire - "es war nur reine Sinnlichkeit, ernsthafte, beharrliche, starke, standhafte, gegenwartslose, unbeirrbar Sinnlichkeit"⁶⁷ - but it develops into a uniquely profound relationship for both of them. Tom and Grit seem to feel that love like theirs is a solid basis for identity within the GDR, looking upon themselves as "die intimste Zelle der Gesellschaft".⁶⁸ But then the Party intervenes, in the interests of its members and the marital status quo, trying to force the lovers apart. Tom still counts

as an outsider despite his exemplary commitment to his work. The reason is evidently that the Party still tends, in keeping with puritan tradition, to equate socialist morality with sexual morality and to underestimate other crucial indicators of worth. Thus the works-manager has Tom, one of his best engineers, removed on these 'moral' grounds - "Wenn wir ein einziges Mal einen Einbruch in unsere sozialistische Moral ungestraft hinnehmen, sind wir für immer verrätzt".⁶⁹ Despite these pressures, Grit has the courage to seek a divorce, but without assuming any simple transfer of allegiance to Tom, so that the novel leaves the future course of events open, if relatively hopeful.

For all this, the case portrayed by Karl-Heinz Jakobs in Beschreibung eines Sommers is fairly uncomplicated in comparison to that in Spur der Steine. The point of departure is basically similar, the separation of husband and wife through the call of duty. Werner and Marianne Horrath have had eight years of married life before he is suddenly transferred as Party secretary from his post in Rostock to the Schkona works, a distance of a couple of hundred miles. Theirs seems to be a model relationship for the GDR, indeed, in the story Der Neue, which served as a first draft for parts of Spur der Steine, the equivalent relationship was exemplary.⁷⁰ Marianne teaches in a nursery school and is also a dedicated Party member, they have a daughter, and Werner has established an outstanding reputation. She is enlightened and well-balanced, characterised by her "vernünftigen, ruhigen Mut" (S 59) and her "geduldige Ausgeglichenheit" (S 299). He has, however, been so totally committed to his Party work, accepting assignments all over the GDR without demur, that they have only been able to spend a fraction of their married life together. They have accepted

this sacrifice of private happiness with idealistic determination:

Fünf Prozent unseres Lebens, wenn es hochkommt, Liebste, gehören uns, denn auch die Arbeit erfüllt uns, und seit Jahren werden wir auseinandergerissen. Laß uns so tun, als könnten die fünf Prozent uns hundertprozentig entschädigen ... S 126

Unconsciously, however, they have gradually lost the vitality and spontaneity of their earlier life together, but Werner realises it too late - "dauernd konnte er jedoch nicht verhindern, daß das Feuer einmal verblüschte" (S 304). His assignment in Schkona proves the toughest of them all, with the strains of organising 20,000 workers, and, in particular, the rejection of his carefully worked out amendments to the development plan for the chemical works, suddenly threatening his unquestioned loyalty to everything the Party stood for. The official 'Rüge' he receives for his reasoned criticisms destroys what is now seen to be a perilous inner equilibrium, confusing his powers of judgement and moral discrimination - "Es zermarterte ihn, und er wußte nicht mehr, was richtig war und was falsch" (S 180). It is precisely at this point that he finds Marianne lacking, since all her affections and sympathy are geared to offering him an escape from his torment, rather than helping him to resolve what has become a major identity crisis. Horrath's friendship with Katrin Klee rapidly develops into a total and adulterous involvement. What makes the difference is Katrin's ability to understand his despair and discuss it with him, to a point where he can transcend it - and in this sense she proves an outstanding representative of her educated and committed generation. She succeeds where Marianne fails - "... (Kati) allein hatte ihm geholfen, zu sich selbst zu finden" (S 198).

This is the moment of truth for Horrath, where a doubt is

raised whether socially constructive activity and the pursuit of personal fulfilment can be reconciled within the framework of the Party and its view of morality. As Horrath sees it much later in the novel, he now has the possibility of a "Neubeginn" (S 900), of liberating himself from the self-repression which has afflicted his generation through the Third Reich and the Stalin era. But the opportunity is lost, precisely because Horrath is incapable even of integrating his relationship with Kati into his public life as Party secretary. Whether it is real or an illusion of Horrath's tortured mind, the destructive factor is the same insensitivity within the Party in relation to emotional problems that Jakobs depicted in Beschreibung eines Sommers. — what Horrath calls "der unerbittliche Moralkodex in unserer Partei" (S 461). Horrath's insistence upon separating his feelings for Kati from his public 'self', far beyond the point of discretion during a period of emotional confusion, marks the start of a pathetic disintegration of personality. Even Kati's pregnancy fails to bring him to an open expression of his feelings: he simply continues his secret assignations with her, and compounds it all through the "größte Lüge" of concealing their affair from Marianne during their rare reunions (S 304). It is a grim reflection on the nature of comradeship within the Party that Horrath is incapable even of ascertaining privately whether the 'Moralkodex' has become more flexible in the GDR of 1960, although it is hardly reassuring to know that he has, in past years, pronounced the harshest of judgements in similar cases of sexual conflict without remorse. His moral paralysis, culminating in the grotesque scene in which he presides, Oedipus-like, over Kati's humiliation for refusing to name the father of her child, is almost beyond psychological belief.

Neutsch certainly makes it clear how dire the consequences for such an act of moral turpitude are, in terms which express again the traditional Socialist Realist view of character. After the Party's trial of Kati, Horrath recognises that "ein Kollektiv hat Grenzen, die Liebe übersteigt sein Urteilsvermögen, denn die Liebe ist nicht Kollektiv" (S 550), but it is too late. He has by now condemned himself to isolation, having subjected Kati to intolerable suffering on his behalf, and deceived Marianne beyond the bounds of the forgivable. The narrator emphasises the consequences:

Die Einsamkeit ... ist schon ein halber Tod,
eine verheerende Krankheit, die den Menschen
auszehrt und den Charakter aushöhlt. S 550

Horrath deludes himself that he can somehow salvage his "Verhältnis zur Partei", and a limited existence with Marianne, from the ruins of his affair with Kati, even though he sees that losing her has meant for him a loss of "Persönlichkeit" (S 626). The decline of his competence at work and his eventual dismissal completes a rapid fall from grace, which is exacerbated by his divorce, so that he is left without respite from the cynicism and despair that follows. As the newly perceptive Balla points out, "kein Tod ist sicherer als die Selbstverachtung" (S 799), and the only possibility left open to Horrath is to build up his personality again completely from scratch, and thus disprove his own bleak feeling - "einen dritten Anfang gab es nicht" (S 900). The novel certainly gives little reassurance that there is any effective way to reverse this process of disintegration.

Amongst the central figures in these novels who finish on a high note, the absence of a stabilising relationship in Balla's life makes him very much the exception. It is almost

surprising that Neutsch resisted the temptation to allow a close involvement with Kati to begin during their trip round Russia. He evidently recognised that it would have been too implausible so soon after her sufferings at Horrath's hands, quite apart from the total contrast in their backgrounds, to do more than stress their mutual understanding. At the conclusion of Spur der Steine, it is clear that Kati will be "noch lange eine Genesende", while Balla will leave on his travels through the 'Heimat' without establishing his emotional roots (S 941-5). Rita, in Der geteilte Himmel, is much further on the road to recovery than Kati, with a circle of sympathetic friends, and the possibility of a liaison with Wendland to provide the enduring fulfilment which Manfred was unable to provide. Wendland himself can also be assumed to be wiser, more conscious of the need to strike a balance between work-dedication and private self-development, after the failure of his earlier marriage to Meternagel's daughter. Although Wendland is the epitome of reliability and thoroughness, his interest in Rita has already influenced him sufficiently to have him, for the first time ever, invent an excuse to avoid a business meeting (GH 206). He has been careful not to reveal the extent of his attraction prematurely, during the difficult months of Rita's reckoning with Manfred, but his feelings have certainly been intimated to the reader during this period.

The potential strength of such a union of kindred spirits makes up part of the measured affirmation with which Der geteilte Himmel ends. The unambiguous optimism which emanates from the narrative present in Die Aula or Die Geschwister is no less attributable to the emotional security enjoyed by Robert Iswall and Elisabeth Arendt. In both these novels, the central

figures and their partners, Vera and Joachim, are equally involved in their working-life, the journalist and the oculist on the one hand, the artist and "vielleicht der jüngste Werk-leiter in der Republik" (G 40-1) on the other. Each couple strikes a productive balance between intellectual and practical concerns, with job-satisfaction and emotional harmony mutually interdependent. Even before marriage, Elisabeth is in no doubts as to the strength of her ties with Joachim, despite the inevitability of periods of separation as each pursues their demanding vocation:

Als (Joachim) fortging, küßten wir uns nicht einmal - mit solcher Sicherheit wußten wir, daß dies nur der erste von Tausenden Abenden war und daß wir Jahre und Jahre vor uns hatten, mit all ihren Stationen der Zärtlichkeit. G 91

Robert and Vera have already enjoyed several years of marriage, which have afforded both of them a sense of continuity from the ABF to their present responsibilities. The one lingering threat to Robert's sense of wholeness is his fear that he forced a wedge between "Freundschaft" and "Liebe" in bringing about the removal to China of his close friend Gert Trullesand, when he supposed him to be a rival for Vera's affections (Au 215). Robert's reunion with Trullesand and his wife Rose, which forms the last section of Die Aula, provides the reassurance that his earlier anxieties and jealousies were largely unfounded, and that they all still enjoy a natural closeness as "Genossen" which is unaffected by a ten-year separation.

A similar quality of shared experience is reflected in Ole Bienkopp, albeit in a rather sentimental vein, in the love which develops from the practical cooperation between Bienkopp and his young poultry-farmer Märtke. She, the orphan from a mining town, introduces a natural grace into Blumenau - "dieses Zopfmädchen

Märtke ... strebt nach Harmonie, und dieses Streben ist ihm eingeboren wie anderen Menschen die Zanksucht" (OB 301). Although pursued by all the eligible males in the area, she chooses the middle-aged Bienkopp at the harvest dance, and brings about a remarkable transformation in him. The connection between productivity and private happiness is again emphasised:

Für Bienkopp ist's Frühling. Ein später
Frühling. Sein Herz pocht heftig. Der
Tatendrang stößt ihn. Die Erntefestnacht
hat den Bauern verwandelt: wohl siebzig Küsse
nachts im Septemberwald. Vergessene Freuden:
behutsame Mädchenhände. Wie Fallwind,
wärmend und zausend, fiel die Liebe über den
Bauern her ... OB 391

The return of the now pathetic Annegret, refusing to agree to a divorce and disillusioned by her years in the "westliches Wunderland" (OB 390), can do nothing now in Bienkopp's eyes to destroy this idyll. It all appears to be approaching its climax, with the duck-farm flourishing and Märtke expecting a baby, when the Party bureaucracy strikes the final, unforgivable blow against his leadership of the colchos. Bienkopp dies before the dream of private self-fulfilment can be realised, an extraordinary case of "Eigensinn ohne Eigennutz" (OB 427), in which socialist authority appears in its most oppressive guise.

The balance is thus fairly evenly divided in these novels between stability and crisis in the emotional development of the central figures, whose socialist morality, in Havemann's sense rather than in terms of the SED's apparent 'unerbittlicher Moralkodex', is not in doubt. For the first time, the virtue of self-denying commitment to work is relativised by the presentation of the perils of neglecting to 'work', with a different kind of assiduity and care, at private relationships. In the evolving process of creating socialism in the GDR, the 'Anderswerden' of joining the Party or supporting the state can be no

more than the first step in a long struggle for self-understanding and a well-founded identity. Emotional conflicts do not, in the last analysis, suggest a view of love as some kind of daemonic force, but rather serve as a dramatic illustration of deep-seated problems in relationships, usually where one partner has failed to grow within the liaison. But the question of whether 'order' can be restored, once a conflict has become explicit, is seen to be far more than the rational issue the Party would wish it to be, and far from being amenable to resolution through public discussion.

This differentiation in the portrayal of socialist man in his private life and the recognition of its bearing upon his social productivity fully complements the historical analysis of the Party's role and the state's development in these novels. An unmistakable hint of antagonistic conflict, is given through Bienkopp's fate, and Horrath's case has a dimension of genuine pathos, but the experience of desolation or despair is otherwise relatively shortlived. The socialist community, for all its limitations, is still basically supportive. The optimistic tenor of Socialist Realism remains, but the thematic boundaries have been substantially and courageously extended.

It may be one of the final ironical twists in the course of the 'Bitterfelder Weg', from its inception in 1959 up to the publication of these important novels, that it brought about a new awareness of the private dimension of identity as much as it stimulated admiration for the GDR's economic miracle. It is this many-sided reflection of life during the GDR's desperately uneven development up to 1961, which represents the distinctive contribution of these novels to East German literature.

THE PARTING OF THE WAYS : THE ELEVENTH 'PLENUM'

1964 and 1965 were years of cultural vitality comparable only with 1956, although quite unlike the 'Thaw' in the sense that there was now no ambiguity in the writers' identification with the GDR as an established political entity. Furthermore, individual works of literature were enjoying a success which far surpassed anything previously achieved. The Bitterfeld novels had played the major role in bringing about this situation, gaining immediate popularity at home and stimulating serious critical interest in GDR literature for the first time in the Western world.⁷¹ The chief-editor of Neue Deutsche Literatur, Wolfgang Joho, acknowledged early in 1965 that the "Volksdiskussion um Literatur" was unprecedented:⁷² it seemed that a meaningful 'Volkstümlichkeit' had at last been attained, and through fiction which had differentiated its depiction of character and society under socialism more radically than any before it. Even though the discussion in the GDR was centred almost exclusively on the content of the novels, with little regard being paid to the interrelated modifications in narrative structure, there was also evidence of a new analytical subtlety in literary criticism.⁷³ The authors themselves were exposed to a variety of constructive cultural influences, those of internationally respected Marxists like Ernst Fischer and Jean-Paul Sartre as well as of progressive West German authors like Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Martin Walser and Max von der Grün.⁷⁴

The reaction of the Party leadership to this broadening of literary horizons was, at first, cautious but not entirely disapproving. At the second Bitterfeld Conference, held in April 1964, Walter Ulbricht asked for the perspective to be shifted away from the "Blickpunkt des empirischen Beobachters" and

towards the "Blickwinkel des Planers und Leiters". He thought it right that social contradictions should be depicted, although in a manner which showed them to be more capable of resolution than Ole Bienkopp and Der geteilte Himmel had.⁷⁵ The time was ripe for "eine offene, schöpferische Atmosphäre des Schaffens", but "revisionistische Aufweichung" could not be tolerated.⁷⁶ He accorded special praise to Erik Neutsch, whose Spur der Steine was published in a massive edition to coincide with the conference: it was significant that the Bitterfeld novelist least critical overall of the Party's management of the GDR's development was seen to be the one incarnating "den neuen Typ einer sozialistischen Künstlerpersönlichkeit".⁷⁷

The authors saw themselves vindicated in their independent judgments of where the balance should be struck between retrospective criticism and affirmation of the state's potential. The many-sided success of their fiction had the effect of restoring their confidence that there need be no contradiction between 'Parteilichkeit' and realism, since history was working in favour of socialism. They were increasingly determined to make their own decisions as to what constituted artistic quality and historical truth. Franz Fühmann had led the way with his open letter of March 1964 to Hans Bentzien, the sympathetic Minister for Culture appointed in 1961, which effectively called for a halt to the artificially harmonious depiction of the industrial world. Since most serious authors had insufficient first-hand knowledge to provide an authentic portrayal of "die differenzierten Gestalten des Arbeiters heute und hier in ihren Lebensmilieus, ihren Gedanken, Träumen, Wünschen, Sehnsüchten, Glücks- und Leidempfindungen", they should cease perpetuating myths through their attempts at industrial fiction and concentrate

upon their own most profound experiences. Echoing Lukács, he made a clear qualitative distinction between the provision of politically useful information in works of reportage, and the primary task of "künstlerische() Gestaltung".⁷⁸ Christa Wolf evidently had the cultural-political climate of the GDR in mind during the second Bitterfeld conference when she compared the creative writer to a trapeze-artist operating without a safety-net. Nonetheless, from this point on, she consistently adhered to the conviction which she had had Erwin Schwarzenbach express at the climax of Der geteilte Himmel: that the decisive action of erecting the Berlin Wall had ushered in an era in which 'die reine, nackte Wahrheit' and constructive self-criticism must prevail:

Die Wahrheit über /die sozialistische Gesellschaft/ zu verbreiten schadet ihr nicht, sondern nützt ihr. Zum erstenmal in der menschlichen Geschichte stellt sie keinen unüberbrückbaren Widerspruch mehr dar zum humanistischen Wesen der Kunst. 79

Wolf gave this general belief a far more specific connotation the following year, in making it clear that literary truth must of necessity be subjective, reflecting "die Handschrift, die Sprache, die Gedankenwelt des Künstlers".⁸⁰ Erwin Strittmatter was no less forthright at Bitterfeld in his defence of the unresolved contradiction with which Ole Bienkopp ended, making the Brechtian point that it is the reader's responsibility to see that such contradictions are resolved in the real world outside the fiction:

Der Schriftsteller will weniger seinen Held belehren als seinen Leser ... Wir wissen doch alle: Das Leben hat keine glatten Schlüsse. Sollen wir aber beim Abschließen von Geschichten ausgeredet aufhören, Dialektiker zu sein? Ist es die Aufgabe des Künstlers, Beruhigungspillen für einen gesegneten Nachtschlaf zu verteilen? Oder soll er mithelfen, daß Denken zur ersten Bürgerpflicht wird? 81'

It looked as if Socialist Realism in the GDR was about to fulfil the qualitative expectations which Brecht had shared with Lukács, and finally leave behind the Party's rhetorical generalisations on such crucial issues as the nature of identity in a technologically advanced socialist state.

What this might have meant in immediate practical terms can be assessed with reference to texts ready for publication by 1965, such as Stefan Heym's "Der Tag X", Manfred Bieler's Maria Morzeck, Heiner Müller's Der Bau and parts of Werner Bräunig's "Der eiserne Vorhang". Heym read from his novel during a tour of the Federal Republic, and the film-version of Bieler's fiction, entitled Das Kaninchen bin ich was made by the state company DEFA. Müller's critical variant on Spur der Steine was published as a drama script in Sinn und Form, while an excerpt from Bräunig's 'Entwicklungsroman' appeared in Neue Deutsche Literatur under the title "Rummelplatz".⁸² The unifying element in four such diverse projects was the desire to contribute further to the radicalized understanding of the relationship between the individual and society in the GDR since its inception, which the Bitterfeld novels had brought about.

Bräunig and Heym continued the liberating reckoning with the Stalin era, the one by describing in naturalistic depth the deprived existence of workers in the Wismut uranium mines in the late 1940's, the other by offering the first serious analysis of the events leading up to the workers' revolt of 17 June 1953. Müller also sought to provide a credible historical dimension to the development of socialism in the GDR, having Barka, his counterpart to Neutsch's Balla, describe the transition from "Eiszeit" to "Kommune" as a tortuous one, still far from complete.⁸³ The rhetoric of 'Gemeinschaft' and 'Anderswerden'

finally disappears beneath the weight of fresh realistic detail about the problematic nature of Party authority and the frustrations suffered by dedicated individuals in the state's early years. The authors' intentions were, however, anything but negative, most noticeably in Müller's case. Der Bau was intended to emphasise the collective contribution to socialist progress made by Barka's brigade, but as it has to bypass the incompetent planning bureaucracy in order to realise its ingenious plans for boosting productivity, the brigade represents a challenge to Party authority as well as embodying the transformed attitude to work brought about by socialism.⁸⁴ Müller deliberately confronted the political crisis which Neutsch had ignored in rounding off Spur der Steine in the months before the erection of the Wall. By making August 1961 his starting-point, he reflects the shattering effect the events of that month had throughout the GDR as honestly as Wolf had done in Der geteilte Himmel, and is further able to consider the extent to which the introduction of the 'Neues Ökonomisches System' marked the dawning of a new era for the hard-bitten labourers in the construction industry.

While Der Bau affirms the revolutionary strength of the politically enlightened and unified working-class, these texts generally highlight the fact that there are still fundamental identity problems for individual socialists, more profound than the Bitterfeld fiction had acknowledged in drawing attention to the 'private' dimension of self-realisation. There is a harsh recognition that the desperate economic pressures within the GDR had hitherto made unremitting hard work the primary reality for representatives of the state's authority and workers alike, turning many of them into totally one-sided personalities. In

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Der Bau, Horrath's counterpart Donat is entirely restricted to his public role as Party secretary:

Ich bin Parteifunktionär, die Politik macht den Charakter, und die Politik mache ich hier, ich wollte, ich könnte schon wir sagen, wer ist nicht gern wir ... Mit der Seele werden wir uns beschäftigen, wenn das synthetische Eiweiß in die Serie geht. Bis dahin Ökonomie. Die schmutzige Praxis. 85

The worker-hero Barka is no better off, as is shown in the speech which ironises Balla's proud vision of the 'Spur der Steine' in his personality growth:

Sind sie hinter dir auch her, Elmer, in der Nacht, Stein auf Stein und Wand auf Wand, die VEBS, die du gebaut hast, jagen dich von Bau zu Bau über den Globus, der sich dreht, du ~~mußt~~ sein Tempo halten, wenn du stehenbleibst, rollt er dich ins Leere. Du hast angefangen, du ~~mußt~~ weitermachen. Beton will Beton. Du bist der Bagger, und du bist der Baugrund, auf dich fällt der Stein, den du aufhebst, aus dir wächst die Wand, auf deinen Knochen steht der Bau, noch den Strom ziehen sie aus dir, mit dem die Turbinen das Land unterhalten. Das ist so, Elmer, Fleisch wird Beton, der Mensch ruiniert sich für den Bau, jedes Richtigfest ein Vorgeschmack auf die Beerdigung ... 86

In Maria Morzeck, one of Bieler's characters describes how this destruction of self occurs at the highest level, affecting a judge dedicated to the cause:

Man gerät in Versuchung, ihn mit der Sache, die er vertritt - er ist ja Stellvertreter geblieben - gleichzusetzen ... Er ist nicht er selber ohne die Sache. Aber er ist auch nicht er selber mit ihr. Auch dann ist er nur ihr Stellvertreter. Er kämpft für sie, was man so kämpfen nennt, an einem Schreibtisch, an einem Telefon. Gut. Aber er ist nicht identisch, weder mit sich, noch mit der Sache. Er ist nicht zu sich selber gekommen. Er ist unglücklich. Er ist ein Knecht. 87

The challenge here to earlier images of neatly reconciled public responsibilities and private needs is unmistakable, although there is little of the provocation inherent in the contemporaneous ballads of the new 'enfant terrible' of East German

literature, Wolf Biermann:

... Das Kollektiv liegt schief

Ich bin der Einzelne
das Kollektiv hat sich von mir
isoliert ...

Das Kind nicht beim Namen nennen
die Lust dämpfen und
den Schmerz schlucken
den goldenen Mittelweg gehen
am äußersten Rand des Schlachtfeldes
den Sumpf mal Meer, mal Festland nennen
das eben nennt ihr
Vernunft
Und merkt nicht, daß eure Vernunft
aus den Hirnen der Zwerge
aus den Schwänzen der Ratten
aus den Ritzen der Kriechtiere
entliehen ist? ... 88

Nevertheless, the reaction of the Party's Central Committee, at its Eleventh Plenum of December 1965, suggested that the aggressive outbursts of Biermann were the culmination of a concerted campaign of subversion organised by creative writers since the second Bitterfeld Conference. The sudden reversion to the dogmatism of the years before the Fifth Writers' Congress and the NÖS may have been primarily a manifestation of a general East European clamp-down on literary dissent: at the local level it was also a despairing attempt to halt the essential processes of differentiation upon which the writers had been consistently engaged since 1961.⁸⁹ The Plenum would have been no happier with new novels with the measured critical intent of Der geteilte Himmel or Ole Bienkopp than it was with the overtly aggressive lyrics of Biermann.

Despite the fact that the Bitterfeld literature had introduced a dialectical view of change within individuals and the GDR as a whole, it was the "Mißachtung der Dialektik der Entwicklung" and the "Tendenzen der Verabsolutierung der Widersprüche" which Erich Honecker, in the name of the Central

Committee, held to be intolerable in recent literature.⁹⁰ The Party could not accept the depiction of contemporary reality "nur als schweres, opferreiches Durchgangsstadium zu einer illusionären schönen Zukunft", and the writers were accused of undermining public morale by their "Popularisierung von Schwierigkeiten".⁹¹ Most incredible of all to the writers' ears must have been the revival of the dualistic moralism of the Stalin era:

Unsere DDR ist ein sauberer Staat. In ihr gibt es unverrückbare Maßstäbe der Ethik und Moral, für Anstand und gute Sitte. Unsere Partei tritt entschieden gegen die von den Imperialisten betriebene Propaganda der Unmoral auf, die das Ziel verfolgt, dem Sozialismus Schaden zuzufügen. 92

This insidious imperialist 'Unmoral' was responsible for declining standards of discipline at work and lack of respect for authority as well as for sexual promiscuity, love of beat music and brutality, and the writers were contributing to its growth. Scepticism, cynicism, nihilism, anarchy and pornography were all related and irreconcilable with the improvement of the standard of living in the GDR. The Party would collectively decide what represented "historische Wahrheit": it had no time for "abstrakte() Wahrheit", not to mention the "westlich orientierte Wahrheit" of works like Heym's "Der Tag X".⁹³ The only moderating voice at the Plenum was that of Christa Wolf, and her efforts cost her the hope of full membership of the Central Committee.

This was, culturally speaking, the GDR's darkest hour, because it revealed how readily the politicians could retreat to ideologically entrenched positions taken up in the Cold War, at a time when a new quality of critical commitment to the state seemed to be emerging, with the help of the creative achievements and the public courage of the writers. It demonstrated also how

fully the struggle for a more profound understanding of identity, community and continuity in literature was a political struggle against Stalinist authority, and how little the nature of that authority had changed in East Germany's first two decades. The writers' hopes of mediating between the Party and the less committed majority of the population were crudely dashed, and there seemed no alternative for most of them, after maturing so markedly in creative terms in the period of the NÖS, but to withdraw from the public limelight. "Der Tag X" lay dormant for years, until Heym rewrote it as Fünf Tage im Juni when he was rehabilitated in 1973. Bräunig abandoned "Der eiserne Vorhang" and was soon writing uncontroversial short stories. For Bieler, it meant the decisive break with the GDR and the eventual, modified, appearance of Maria Morzeck in the West in 1969. Müller was still waiting in the middle 1970's to have Der Bau performed in the GDR. It seemed, temporarily at least, as if Heym was justified in his assertion that the age-old conflict between intellectuals and "die Mächtigen dieser Welt" was as applicable as ever to the GDR, despite the fundamental changes since 1945 in political and economic structures.⁹⁴

CHAPTER 5

SUBJECTIVE REALISM - THE CRITICAL REAPPRAISAL.

GÜNTER DE BRUYN : BURIDANS ESEL,

CHRISTA WOLF : NACHDENKEN ÜBER CHRISTA T.,

HERMANN KANT : DAS IMPRESSUM,

BRIGITTE REIMANN : FRANZISKA LINKERHAND

THE RETREAT TO THE SELF

In Fritz Rudolf Fries' novel Der Weg nach Oobliadooh (1966), there is an episode in which the central figure, Arlecq, acting as an interpreter during an international conference held in the GDR in the late 1950's, demonstrates how ideologically conformist utterances tend to decline into predictable cliché through excessive repetition. Instead of simultaneously translating into German the Cuban delegate's marathon speech about North American imperialism, Arlecq switches off his receiver and fabricates a version of his own. His relaxed presentation is clearly appreciated by the German-speaking delegates, and he has no difficulty in anticipating the climax of the Cuban's speech:

Als Arlecq den Ton wieder aufdrehte, sagten sie, sein Redner, er, noch immer das gleiche, lief die Linie ihrer Gedanken zusammen: im Kampf für den Weltfrieden. Der Beifall der Delegierten wurde stehend geboten. 1

Fries' novel, published a few months after the deliberations of the Eleventh Plenum of the SED's Central Committee, but only in the Federal Republic, was, for all the apparent universality of Arlecq's irreverent dismissal of "scheißblöde(s) Fortschrittsgequassel",² written in the wake of the NÖS as a retrospective consideration of a less enlightened era. It was ironical that it also came to reflect the ideological state of affairs re-established in the GDR for the second half of the 1960's, when many established writers found themselves totally at odds with the 'Kulturpolitik' because of their increasingly complex scrutiny of the established concepts of self and society.

Fries went furthest in Der Weg nach Oobliadooh in challenging the notion of the organic uniqueness of identity. His was the first novel by an East German writer to apply the picaresque view of life as a superficially entertaining, but

grimly serious, battle of wits between the individual and a hostile environment to the new socialist context.³ For Arlecq and his fellow-intellectual Paasch, facing the outside world of the GDR after graduating from Leipzig university in 1957, the freedoms arising from a flexible view of self are just as vital as for their fictional counterparts in West German literature in the era of Die Blechtrommel. The thought of becoming "ein nützliches Glied der Gesellschaft"⁴ is not yet more than a temporary expedient, motivated only by economic necessity, and is no indication of growing social maturity. Their goal is the subjective realm of fantasy and self-expansion conjured up for them by Dizzy Gillespie's jazz composition about the "wonderful Princess in the land of Oobliadooh",⁵ and they use role-experimentation as a defence mechanism against the ubiquitous external pressures to become socially stable and productive. Moreover, the pleasure which Arlecq and Paasch have in taking on each other's identity almost at will is anything but eccentric, since the state too is seen to have little regard for individuality when propagandistic interests dominate. The latter tendency is aptly illustrated by the confusion of the heroes' names and photographs in the GDR press as it exploits their rejection of Western society after their brief sortie across the ideological divide.⁶

Fries' application of a picaresque framework to the GDR of the 1950's met with official displeasure, even though the final stages of the novel hint at the likelihood of his heroes' eventual accommodation with society. The enlightened Bolivian visitor whom Arlecq accompanies as interpreter to the Warnow shipyard persuasively counters the latter's sceptical attitude to the GDR's economic miracle by offering a more positive view

of conformism - "Eine Anpassung ist kein Stillstand, sondern vielleicht der Übergang zu einer neuen Qualität."⁷ The tone of satirical irreverence prevails, however, and is not to be found elsewhere in the fiction of the later 1960's with the possible exception of Irmtraud Morgner's Hochzeit in Konstantinopel (1968), which substitutes the exoticism of a Yugoslav holiday resort for the phantasies of Oobliadooh as the context of its narrator's doubts about the primacy of 'Leistung' over 'Phantasie'.⁸

In general, any move to explore the possibilities of the self at a distance from the state's economic growth-points seemed certain to heighten the conflicts between cultural politicians and writers. There were severe ideological restrictions evident in all the Eastern European states after 1965, working against any literature seeming to blur the differences in the quality of life between socialist and capitalist societies. All tendencies towards 'convergence' in the Marxist theories of thinkers like Fischer, Garaudy and Sartre were firmly rejected and the sole validity of the wisdom of the Party leadership in literary matters was again asserted. The rapidly developing cultural relations between the two Germanies in 1964-65 were thus brought to an abrupt halt. And yet it was abundantly clear that many of the GDR's own recently acclaimed generation of writers were already convinced through their private experience that the creation of fiction was a more exploratory, subjective matter than even the tentatively innovatory narrative structures of the later 'Bitterfelder Weg' novels had indicated.

Nonetheless, from 1966 until 1971, newly appointed cultural functionaries like Klaus Gysi, the Minister of Culture, Werner Neubert, chief editor of NDL, and Max Walter Schulz,

director of the Institute for Literature in Leipzig (since 1964), joined forces with established Party spokesmen - Ulbricht, Hager, Koch, and less prominently now, Abusch and Kurella - to promulgate a cultural policy which was as rigorously consistent as it was remote from literary realities.⁹ The depths of unanimous predictability were plumbed at the Sixth Writers' Congress in May 1969, which represented a complete retreat to the clichés of the 1950's. The actual, or imminent, achievement of the "sozialistische Menschengemeinschaft" was taken as axiomatic, while the "sozialistisches Menschenbild" was described in totally unproblematical two-dimensional terms, most simplistically by Schulz in the main address to the Writers' Congress:

Nicht nur die Klassenverbundenheit, auch die Volksverbundenheit unserer Literatur ... setzt uns in den Stand, uns der tief eingewurzelten Vorstellung des Volkes von bleibender menschlicher Größe und menschlicher Schönheit zu bemächtigen. Im Volk lebt das Ideal von Gut und Schön und Wahr im Bild des Helden, im Bild des Kühnen, Klugen Menschen, der eine gute Sache vertritt, der die Situation, in die er gestellt wird, meistert, der zum Riesen aufwächst im Kampf mit den Gewalten, der ein Mensch bleibt, auch in seinen Schwächen, der die Angst überwindet vor Ritter, Tod und Teufel, der im Unterliegen dennoch siegt und der kein Gott ist als ein schöner, guter, wahrer Mensch. 10

The educational value of the heroic "Vorbild", the "Leitbild des ganzen Menschen", and the possibility of "Massenwirksamkeit" on this basis, was equally taken for granted, and the emphasis placed since the second Bitterfeld Conference on the "Sicht des Planers und Leiters" and the "Schrittmacher" was further strengthened.

The writers who had, between 1963 and 1965, taken carefully considered steps in their fiction to break down views of socialist character and society which they held alienating rather than morale-boosting - and had felt their judgments to be

amply confirmed by the surge of popular interest their works provoked - were now told they had naively fallen prey to subversive Western influences. A wave of innuendo suggested they had abused their well-paid, privileged positions, had sought Western recognition for egotistical reasons and had become elitist in their conception of literature.¹¹ The Party still evidently believed that literary form was something chosen at will and that topics could be designated without regard to the peculiarity of individual experience. The writers' autonomy and integrity had at the time of the first Bitterfeld Conference been threatened by the talk of 'cultural revolution' and the encouragement of the 'schreibende Arbeiter'; after 1965, the catch-word was collectivity - in the Writers' Union, in the publishing houses, in their area groups, they were all to see themselves as part of the "Kollektivwesen Literatur",¹² co-ordinated through the Ministry of Culture. Their primary responsibility was that of "sich-in-Übereinstimmung-bringen" with the collective voice, and there were unmistakable signs that those who ignored the Party's "Auftragswesen" would find themselves deprived of financial support. By 1968, Klaus Gysi was at pains to point out that this "Erhöhung der kulturpolitischen Führungsrolle der Partei" was "schöpferisch() und dynamisch()" rather than "dogmatisch",¹³ but there was little literary evidence to support this view.

Although increasing attention was now being paid to television as the best medium for ideological education, prose-writing was still regarded as being in the front-line because of its traditionally assumed capacity to create a social totality which could, if desired, be made more complete and purposeful than the real world.¹⁴ With the twentieth anniversary of the

foundation of the GDR approaching in 1969, there was exaggerated praise for any novel of monumental proportions reflecting an exemplary character-development or aspect of economic growth, and written in a conventional style - what Schulz deemed in a remarkable phrase "die wissende, parteiliche, anspruchsvolle Bescheidenheit der Schreibhaltung".¹⁵ The year 1968 produced a crop of much heralded novels, extensively publicised in advance of their appearance in book form.¹⁶ Only one of them, Anna Seghers' Das Vertrauen, was by an established author: as the sequel to Die Entscheidung (1959), it has an increasingly historical quality, ending with the crisis of June 1953 and even then distorting the circumstances of the abortive workers' revolt in an unacceptable manner.¹⁷ The others, Martin Viertel's Sankt Urban, Werner Heiduczek's Abschied von den Engeln and Alfred Wellm's Pause für Wanzka, were all, significantly, by authors whose previous work was in the field of literature for children and who evidently found it easier to adapt to the 'Kulturpolitik' than the serious novelists of the years before the Eleventh Plenum. Viertel presented an idealised view of the post-war situation in the Wismut uranium mines, in total contrast to the 'naturalism' in the published scenes from Werner Bräunig's proposed novel on the same theme in 1965.¹⁸ Wellm's novel was centred on a productive teacher-pupil relationship in a rural setting. Heiduczek developed the theme of 'divided Germany' beyond the 1961 crisis, provoking some criticism for showing his young 'Western' hero preferring to return home to fight the socialist cause there rather than remain in the GDR with his exemplary uncles after his stay with them, but leaving no doubt as to which state would finally prevail. It almost goes without saying that these novels seriously contradicted the view of

unresolved struggle towards the still distant goals of community and self-realisation which the later Bitterfeld fiction had conveyed.

Only Erik Neutsch, the most conventional of the Bitterfeld novelists, both supported the 'Kulturpolitik' at the Writers' Congress and published new work in conformity with it. He actually reverted to the harmonious socialist reportage of his earlier Bitterfelder Geschichten for his collection Die Anderen und Ich (1970). In the title story, Neutsch gives the impression that he is directly facing the criticism "unsere Bücher lesen sich zwar ganz gut, steckten jedoch voller Klischees", but then blithely asserts that there is no need for the writer to place any critical distance between the ideological ideal and GDR reality:

Soll ich beim Schreiben dem Leben zuwiderhandeln? Soll ich dem Menschen gar die Perspektive entziehen, die ihm unsere Gesellschaft bietet? Muß ich mich unverständlich machen, um besser verstanden zu werden? Wer von wem? Es gibt Leute, die entwerfen zwar jedes Jahr eine neue Mode, Literatur zu tragen, aber mit jedem neu-modischen Kram beschreiben sie immer dasselbe, das, was man seit hundert Jahren schon kennt, die Vereinsamung des Menschen, die Undurchschaubarkeit der Gesellschaft, in der sie leben, das Klischee. Wir dagegen halten uns lieber an die bewährten Traditionen, machen - vielleicht - den Satz wie von alters her, aber zeigen, daß die Welt nun erst recht durchschaubar geworden und veränderbar ist. 19

Neutsch's view that the uncritical acceptance of 'established traditions' in socialist writing had nothing to do with writing in clichés was one that many of his literary colleagues felt impelled to repudiate more decisively after the threatening turn taken in the 'Kulturpolitik' than before. The self-critical attitude with which officially approved novels were now regarded was illustrated in a subtle but penetrating manner by Günter de

Bruyn in his volume of stylistic parodies, Maskeraden (1966).²⁰ Part of this entertaining collection was devoted to expositions of the rhetorical excesses and the simplification of character and conflict in the novels of Noll, Schulz, Fuhmann, Strittmatter, Wolf, Reimann and, not least, his own Der Hohlweg, which required only slight exaggeration of familiar details of plot and style to highlight fundamental weaknesses. De Bruyn's effective 'Verfremdung' of many of the conventions of Socialist Realist fiction proved an excellent way of pointing to the perils of attempting any further extensive depiction of society, at a time when the scope for differentiation was more restricted than it had been when most of the novels he was parodying had been written.

There were, however, few alternatives between the extremes of the dutiful conformism of Neutsch or Seghers and the silence which, for different reasons, fell over the names of established novelists like Stefan Heym, Karl-Heinz Jakobs and Dieter Noll. The only productive way out of this bleak situation was the experimentation with shorter prose forms, in a more subjective vein than de Bruyn's fragmentary parodies, which characterises the work of writers as different as Erwin Strittmatter, Christa Wolf and Günter Kunert in the aftermath of the Eleventh Plenum. It is not a question here of the consistent adoption of certain formal structures - their work shows few common stylistic features. Strittmatter ranged between the anecdotes and sketches which make up his Schulzenhofer Krankkalender (1966) and what he called "Romane im Stenogramm" in the collection Ein Dienstag im September (1970).²¹ The allusive richness of Wolf's "Juninachmittag" is also evident in her essays on subjects like the Diary as a literary form or the work of Ingeborg Bachmann, in whom she

recognised a kindred spirit.²² Kunert favoured open-ended parable forms, but also explored his experience through the associations evoked by places as varied as old Berlin, Buchenwald and the Sächsishe Schweiz, and wrote short pieces on his life and creative work.²³ Much of this work was only made available years after it was written, some remains unpublished in the GDR: but it reveals an essential unity which is all the more striking for having been unplanned in contrast to that of the 'Entwicklungsromane' or Bitterfeld novels. The common feature is the desire to re-define the identity of the creative intellectual in the GDR, an identity felt to be threatened around the middle 1960's when collectivity became a synonym for hollow conformism. As a result, in these short prose pieces the usual basic sense of community recedes, while the dimensions of personal and historical continuity are correspondingly strengthened.

On the formal level, the 'klassisches Erbe' tends to be cast aside in favour of traditions held by the Party to be outmoded or irrelevant to contemporary socialist society. Strittmatter must have had Brecht very much in mind as he compiled a 'Kramkalender' for the age of centrally controlled mass-media, not only in the sense that many of his anecdotes were about his friendship with Brecht in the 1950's, but also because his revival of the 'Kalendergeschichte' recalled the latter's return in the isolation of exile to the same tradition of popular enlightenment. Kunert, whose earlier poetry had also reflected the influence of Brecht, now dared to suggest the continuing significance of Franz Kafka, both implicitly, in the 'Angst' which runs through many of his parables and, more directly, in an essay which described Kafka's work as "weltpräziser und zeithaltiger"

than that of the respected realist Thomas Mann, whom he felt had glaringly failed to give any sense of "die Schrecknisse des Jahrhunderts" in his weighty novels.²⁴ There was much to suggest the fresh applicability to the GDR of this period of the thesis that there are often deep socio-political reasons for the resurgence of short prose writing, related to the alienation of the writer in a discordant society. The outstanding Irish exponent of the short story, Frank O'Connor, had just made this basic point in his study of the genre, The Lonely Voice:

The novel can still adhere to the classical concept of civilised society, of man as an animal who lives in a community ... but the short story remains by its very nature remote from the community - romantic, individualistic and intransigent. 25

The authors in question here would all undoubtedly have made a clear qualitative distinction between any sensation of alienation in socialist society and the Western artist's isolation amidst the "totalen Zerstörungstrieb der spätkapitalistischen Gesellschaft", to which Christa Wolf referred in her essay on Ingeborg Bachmann, but the feeling of common experience is also undeniable at this point.²⁶

This renewal of association with neglected cultural traditions is complemented by the strength of the authors' personal involvement in the past and with nature. Strittmatter's wise old grandfather is the dominating personality behind the Kramkalender, a 'Dichter' who never wrote down a line and who lived to be ninety, providing the human continuity, in the midst of hardship and war, of a life moulded only by the seasons and the elements. The narrative 'Ich' carries on this spirit in his love of family and nature, keenly observing organic change and growth as he convalesces after a severe illness. The technological world outside is viewed with distinct misgivings,

except where it clearly assists productivity on the local collective farm. It is nature, however, which offers the crucial insights into human behaviour, although the analogy is often left for the reader to draw, as for example in the piece in which an excessively protective hen suffering from an "Überdosis Tugend" almost destroys her own chickens in the "Wachsamkeitsrausch" with which she tries to shield them from threatening external influences.²⁷ The feeling of disenchantment with such authority is never far from the surface.

Kunert, who is never able to forget the depths to which humanity descended in the "Epoche der Öfen",²⁸ has a more complex attitude to a past from which he has been irrevocably severed by the course of history. As "Fahrt mit der S-Bahn" illustrates, he still has a vision of an earlier self, from a period "als es noch Spaß machte, sich Erinnerungen zuzulegen",²⁹ and an unfulfillable dream of self-integration. On other occasions, however, he willingly affirms a feeling of organic unity which he knows to be illusory, as a bulwark against the imperfections of the present - the "Bild einer heilen harmonischen Welt" in the Berlin courtyards of his childhood,³⁰ or a sense of "Heimat" amidst the natural beauty of the Erzgebirge, paradoxically, as "ein Fremder unter fremdem Dach".³¹ In the relaxed atmosphere and historical richness of a town like Bernau, time becomes "ein Elixier, durch das der Einzelne, statt von sich fort, überhaupt zu sich kommt ... Dort, wo kein Zeitmangel herrscht, mangelt es auch nicht an anderen menschlichen Eigenschaften".³² As against such moments of inner harmony, the self is often in Kunert's parables an empty shell, vicious and guilt-ridden, in a world in which the Prussian ethos of martial repressiveness, obsession with duty and soulless bureaucracy is still rampant.³³

What has made many of Kunert's stories unacceptable in the GDR is the implication that such Prussianism is as firmly entrenched there as in the West: indeed, the one story which refers more specifically to the GDR, "Die Waage", depicts Karl Marx, trapped within his solid picture-frame, looking down impotently on his spiritual successors and their hollow claims to have achieved human harmony through "vorbildliche Planerfüllung" in a police state creating quite the opposite - "Unruhe, Unsicherheit, Angst, Reue, Verzweiflung, keine Selbstsicherheit".³⁴

Christa Wolf's "Juninachmittag", set more concretely again in the GDR of the mid-1960's, describes the processes by which a stable sense of identity can be undermined. The narrator's family is its focal point, while the garden in which they spend their summer afternoon is a sphere of creativity on the imaginative as well as the practical level. But the function of the narrative is to strip away its idyllic veneer layer by layer. The garden is too close to the Berlin air corridor and the state border to permit more than temporary respite from ideological conflict and the destructive potential of modern technology. The immediate human environment is equally alien: neighbours and passing acquaintances, as well as unseen figures like the elder daughter's teacher, are all stunted personalities, obsessive, unimaginative, trivial, materialistic. Death and violence are everywhere: in the book the narrator reads, in the newspaper, in the railway disaster which has just taken a friend's life, and even the garden's modest harvest seems destined to decay. As in a nightmare, past fears reassert themselves, and the narrator feels again "wie leicht mir immer noch ... der Boden unter den Füßen wegsackt". As the day ends, her only respite from this debilitating anxiety comes through the reassuring simplicity of routine.³⁵

What is consistent, and striking, about these various attempts to convey a more problematical awareness of identity through fragments of experience is the conviction with which their 'subjectivity' is taken by Strittmatter, Kunert and Wolf to be the only meaningful level of literary expression. Furthermore, it is recognised to be the key to the typicality in pursuit of which they would previously have altered or ignored crucial aspects of their experience. Kunert expressed this conviction most dramatically:

Schreiben ist Rettung vorm Tode, solange es anhält. Das ist der Augenblick der Wahrheit, da sich das Individuum seiner Individualität begibt und sich aufs innigste mit dem unsterblichen Ich menschlicher Allgemeinheit verquickt ... 36

Strittmatter, through one of the artistic personae he adopted for the more significant stories in Ein Dienstag im September, explicitly argued the necessity of defending the "Sicht seiner Einmaligkeit" against all the approved "Vorbilder" reflecting "das Gewohnheitsdenken und Gewohnheitssehen" of cultural politicians, in a mood of uncharacteristic resignation about the possibility of his perspective ever being accepted.³⁷ Wolf too, in her essay "Tagebuch - Arbeitsmittel und Gedächtnis" of 1966, claimed that the diary served the basic human need for "Authentizität" in self-expression, capable of taking over in "eine heillose Epoche ... das Amt des unbestechlichen, gerechten und wahrhaftigen Zeugen",³⁸ and thus, it might be added, providing the source material for creative prose like "Juninachmittag". She also made it clear that she regarded her own deepest concerns as typical, part of the "Durchschnittsproblematik gewöhnlicher Menschen".³⁹

But although the basic point about the primacy of individual experience over ideologically inspired assumptions about the

'Menschenbild' of the 1960's is well made in these stories and essays, it was clearly important to their authors that it should be illustrated within a more explicit social context and for their wider readership in the GDR - in effect, in novel form. For Kunert and Strittmatter, the priority in terms of a greater degree of fictional totality was to break through the clichés of the pioneering years after 1945, a task which, as previously indicated in this study, could only be partially fulfilled, in view of the rejection in 1967 of Im Namen der Hüte for publication in the GDR and the much delayed appearance of the second volume of Der Wundertäter in 1973.⁴⁰ It was an even bolder step to place the fictional perspective unambiguously in the present day and confront the problems of the GDR as it sought to achieve stability, after the status quo had been physically consolidated through the erection of the Berlin Wall, but this was what Wolf set out to do in her next major work, Nachdenken Über Christa T., which was ready for publication in 1968.⁴¹

Significantly, she was not alone in seeking to translate a new awareness of self into fictional terms, and by the late 1960's a small group of novels with broadly similar features was emerging, intent upon re-defining the relationship between the nature of socialist society and personal identity in this more subjective light. Günter de Bruyn's Buridans Esel (1968) was the first to appear, receiving rather uncertain official sanction at the time when the 'monumental' novels of Seghers, Heiduczek and the others were being made the focus of literary discussion.⁴² Nachdenken Über Christa T. was to become the most controversial work of the decade, and it seems as if the political storm it provoked around the period of the Sixth Writers' Congress contributed to the surprising rejection for publication of the

superficially comparable Das Impressum by Hermann Kant, after a substantial part of the work had already been serialised in the youth magazine Forum. Kant's novel eventually appeared in a slightly modified form in 1972,⁴³ while a fourth novel based on the experience of the same generation of authors, Brigitte Reimann's Franziska Linkerhand, was finally published in its uncompleted form in 1974, soon after the author's death from leukaemia, although it too had been substantially written by the late 1960's.⁴⁴

These variations in the time of publication should not, however, be allowed to obscure the many common factors which these novels share and which reflect a new quality of realism in East German literature. They still show the standard concern in German socialist writing since the exile years for the structure of personal development, influenced by the fictional model of the 'Entwicklungsroman', but the striking difference is in the growth of the dimension of the narrator. There is now a close, if complex, relationship between the narrator and the fictional protagonist, arising from the problematical sense of self which the short prose examined above had helped to establish, with the result that the action and the delineation of character in the fictional world beyond are noticeably reduced in importance. The narrative standpoint, in a recognisable and differentiated GDR of the middle 1960's, encompasses in a more comprehensive and intimate way the experience of the author's lifetime. Thus the interplay in the central character's life between self-discovery, social integration and the goal of total self-realisation is now more contradictory and open-ended than ever before. The depiction of contemporary society reflects the passing of the age of heroic struggle on the ideological

barricades and begins to take in the problems of an urban, technologically sophisticated existence. The continuity of interest is undeniable, but the questions being asked of socialist society are more radical and searching. These novels offer the most encouraging indication yet of the coming of age of East German literature.

FICTION AND 'SUBJECTIVE AUTHENTICITY'

The new confidence in the validity of private experience reflected in the short prose of the middle 1960's was to have a fundamental bearing on the structure of the novels upon which Wolf, de Bruyn and Reimann were working in the period immediately afterwards. There is now less of the sense of strained compromise found in the Bitterfeld novels at the level of the narrator between partisan omniscience and the search for a distinctive individual voice. The contradictions arising from the distortion of autobiographical realities felt to be 'untypical', in the interests of a consistent exemplary development in the central fictional figure, which go back to Becher's Abschied, have also largely disappeared. The fiction is much more subject to the practical limitations of individual knowledge and perception, and is thus a less effective vehicle for the transmission of ideological certainties. In recognition of the superficiality with which character had previously been portrayed and analysed, the interplay between the author, his distinctly personalised narrator and the central figure of the fiction becomes highly subtle and is kept in the forefront of what is now a fairly undramatic fictional action. The more the socialist "Alltag" of the increasingly stable 1960's is recognised as the appropriate

setting for the fiction,⁴⁵ the more the complexities of the self can receive its main focus.

The effects of this radically changing conception of the scope of the novel are perhaps best illustrated by the modifications to which Brigitte Reimann's Franziska Linkerhand was subject from the time she began writing it late in 1963.⁴⁶ Reimann saw it initially as a more serious attempt than in either Ankunft im Alltag or Die Geschwister to come to terms with her own deep frustrations amidst the chaos and anonymity of the new town of Hoyerswerda, by projecting them into the more exemplary development of a younger figure. Franziska Linkerhand, as a newly qualified architect at the outset of her career, might eventually succeed in bringing about practical improvements in this bleak environment where an intellectual like Reimann would only have limited powers of protest. Indeed, if Reimann's own experience since 1957 could be telescoped into a matter of months in the early 1960's, then the problems of Franziska's "Neustadt" might appear less deep-rooted and capable of speedier resolution. Reimann knew that the excessively rhetorical nature of her affirmation of the GDR in Die Geschwister needed to be checked, and thought at first of imitating the objective chronological style of Emile Zola. Life was to be made difficult for her idealistic heroine: her working environment was to be "entsetzlich alltäglich", and there would be "keine heldenhaften Schlachten, sondern die kleinen, zermürbenden Streitereien". At the same time, however, it would be a story of "Ganz Große Liebe" which would end in Franziska's reconciliation with this highly imperfect society - "Schließlich hört man auf zu bocken und macht mit" - if with an air of disillusionment - "Eine traurige Geschichte, und sie passiert jeden Tag".⁴⁷

Reimann had excerpts from Franziska Linkerhand published in 1964 in the GDR and soon afterwards in a Western anthology,⁴⁸ but the response in this period of fruitful East-West cultural contacts was less than enthusiastic - there was, for example, a stinging Western reference to her "freundliche Mittelmäßigkeit".⁴⁹ Thus, by the summer of 1965, Reimann had decided to re-think her novel completely, and to make a much bolder break with partisan convention than she had earlier envisaged:

... ich habe schon aufgehört, mich darüber zu ängstigen, schlage alle Lehren in den Wind und versuche zu schreiben, was ich fühle und denke (also weg, weg vom verbreiteten Wunschdenken), wie ich das Leben um mich sehe, nehme mir das Recht auf subjektive Sicht, auch auf Irrtümer 50

When she gave her next interview on the novel, in 1968, Reimann made it clear that she had found an effective means of expressing this subjective perspective in the narrative structure. There was now to be a framework first-person monologue, in which a slightly older Franziska, living in temporary, self-imposed exile from Neustadt, addressed her most intimate thoughts and feelings to 'Ben', an artificial figure based upon her lover Trojanowicz.⁵¹ This meant that her earlier life, and particularly her year in Neustadt, were being viewed at a critical distance, and implied that the novel could not close with anything more than the possibility of her return to her career and social productivity.

This radical change of plan, deriving from creative necessity over a period when the relationship between writers like Reimann and the cultural politicians was severely strained, raised questions of narrative consistency which she was unable to resolve before her death. The contrast between Franziska's more mature self as the narrator and her earlier life until the

crisis in which she leaves Neustadt to live with Trojanowicz, is effectively conveyed through changes from the first person to the third, and the virtual identity of the older Franziska and Reimann is suggested by the fact that the novel itself is presented as being the work of Franziska during her period of exile. At times, however, another impersonal and omniscient narrative voice can be detected, providing psychological insights which Franziska could scarcely have enjoyed, particularly in relation to the novel's third pivotal figure, Schafheutlin, the chief architect in Neustadt, and his reactions to Franziska. Reimann evidently wanted to anticipate the growth of a relationship between her heroine and her initially unattractive superior which would eventually be an important factor in her decision to leave Trojanowicz and return to Neustadt, and did not succeed in demonstrating this adequately from Franziska's perspective (e.g. FL 195-7, 400-2). Even though it should be allowed that such contradictions might have been overcome in a final revision of Franziska Linkerhand, their obtrusive presence in the published version provides an unusual insight into the extent of the difficulties involved in abandoning schematic structures in favour of a more authentic, restricted viewpoint.

The consistency which Reimann failed to achieve is impressively evident in Buridans Esel, despite initial appearances to the contrary. De Bruyn's narrator makes great play of the fact that he is a mere "Berichterstatter", following in the footsteps of his protagonist, the librarian Karl Erp, and forming independent judgments on the people and events in Erp's recent past - and yet he is suspiciously omniscient about Erp himself. In the course of Erp's marital crisis, which forms the external 'action' of the novel, he is an intimate recorder of the progress

of Erp's adulterous relationship with the young library assistant, Fräulein Broder, and authoritatively reveals the contradictions in Erp's thought-processes throughout his months of indecision. However much he maintains that his "Bericht" is purely factual, restricted to "die platte Wirklichkeit" (BE 93), it is clear that his standpoint is a more committed one, and that such categorical statements are often highly ironical. In fact, even though Erp is decidedly anti-heroic in his eventual failure to develop his personality through this crisis, there is a considerable biographical unity linking de Bruyn, his narrator and his fictional counterpart. The narrator's identity with de Bruyn is implied in references to earlier fiction like Der Hohlweg,⁵² while the similarly aged Erp's life follows the pattern of de Bruyn's own development in many essential respects, roughly up to the point when he became a full-time writer in the early 1960's. The tensions begin when Erp achieves the career success which de Bruyn could well have achieved as head of a Berlin public library, and then succumbs to the temptations of stabilising his life in an indolent, self-indulgent way - in obvious contrast to de Bruyn's subsequent progress. It is Erp's stagnation as a personality which de Bruyn is intent upon analysing, but in a situation of conflict which allows him a real opportunity to re-vitalise his existence, and with the author's privileged awareness of the narrowness of the dividing line between loss of self and growth of personality within Erp giving the novel its compelling ironical force.

De Bruyn was of course fully aware that this complex narrative structure effectively lifted the question of 'positive' or 'negative' character outside the previously insulated sphere of fictional action and confronted the reader with the more

demanding task of passing his own final judgment on Erp. He justified this procedure in an interview given shortly before the publication of Buridans Esel:

Um der Vielfalt der Wirklichkeit nahe zu kommen, mußte ich die schöne Oberfläche gedanklich aufrauen. Ich brauchte eine Form, die Raum bot für Reflexion, für Kommentar, für Abschweifung, für Für und Wider ... Der Erzähler wird beweglicher, der Leser aktiver, er muß mitdenken, mitarbeiten. 53

The confidence he expressed in the powers of the "denkender Leser", now mature enough to insist upon the "ständig wachsende() Differenzierung" of character, was crucial to the development of the novel in the GDR and the confirmation of the need for radical narrative innovation at this stage. In relation to Karl Erp's fortunes, it was of vital importance that "Identifizierung" and "Distanzierung" should stand "in einer dialektischen Wechselwirkung", and that - in the spirit of Brecht - the reader should become "die Zentralfigur, an der sich alles entscheidet".⁵⁴

Nachdenken Über Christa T. proceeds from a rather more unusual authentic basis - the attempt to write "eine Art von posthumer Lebenslauf" of a close friend after her premature death from leukaemia, which became something far more profound and personal as the author grew increasingly aware of the remarkable parallelism between her own life and that of her contemporary at school and university.⁵⁵ It was not just the knowledge of time spent together at various crucial stages of both their lives, but also a unique similarity in their inner responses to the changes in a turbulent environment, from the Third Reich to the recent past, and in their understanding of the special responsibilities of the creative intellectual. There were of course many points of divergence in their fortunes and temperaments, but it was this awareness of a shared identity,

constantly heightened by Wolf's researches into the past of the person she came to call 'Christa T.' which made the unforgettable impact upon her:

Ich stand auf einmal mir selbst gegenüber, das hatte ich nicht vorgesehen. Die Beziehungen zwischen "uns" - der Christa T. und dem Ich-Erzähler - rückten ganz von selbst in den Mittelpunkt: die Verschiedenheit der Charaktere und ihre Berührungspunkte, die Spannungen zwischen "uns" und ihre Auflösung, oder das Ausbleiben der Auflösung. Wäre ich Mathematiker, würde ich wahrscheinlich von einer "Funktion" sprechen: Nichts mit Händen Greifbares, nichts Sichtbares, Materielles, aber etwas ungemein Wirksames. 56

This experience had major implications for the way in which Nachdenken über Christa T. was conceived - not restricted to a documentary account of this relationship, but rather as a literary invention which would attempt to recreate in a more rounded manner the complicated interplay of self-recognition and differentiation involved - and in doing so confront the reader with the elusiveness and many-sidedness of identity. Wolf's choice of a first-person narrative standpoint is essential to this purpose, and yet almost a paradox in a novel so centrally aware of "die Schwierigkeit 'Ich' zu sagen" (CT 214-6).

It is therefore significant that the narrator makes extensive use of the first-person plural to chart the modifications in the relationship between Christa T., herself and 'society' in its various manifestations, sometimes exploiting the unspecific ambiguity of the 'Wir' form, which may at one moment refer generally to her generation or the GDR, then to the shared feelings of smaller, isolated groups.⁵⁷ There are times when Christa T. stands separate from the wider social group with which the narrator identifies, and the gulf between the two is emphasised: in their school days in the Third Reich, the narrator is timidly conformist (CT 10-14), while at university in Leipzig in the

early 1950's Christa T. seems to shirk her collective responsibilities (CT 46). On other occasions, the 'Wir' statements reflect the unanimity of the two friends, as sensitive representatives of their generation, against negative aspects of life in the GDR - opportunism, bureaucratic government and the like - which are in urgent need of reform (e.g. CT 33f, 167-9). Thus, when the narrator does express an individual viewpoint in the 'Ich' form, it stands out starkly, like the moment she chooses to assert the importance of Christa T.'s life in the authentic complexity with which she has presented it:

Ach, hätte ich die schöne freie Wahl erfundener Eindeutigkeit ... Nie wäre ich, das möchte ich doch schwören, auf sie verfallen. Denn sie ist, als Beispiel, nicht beispielhaft, als Gestalt kein Vor-Bild. Ich unterdrücke die Vermutung, daß es nicht anders erginge mit jedem wirklich lebenden Menschen und bekenne mich zur Freiheit und zur Pflicht des Erfindens. Einmal nur, dieses eine Mal, möchte ich erfahren und sagen dürfen, wie es wirklich gewesen ist, unbeispielhaft und ohne Anspruch auf Verwandbarkeit. CT 57

It is clearly not fiction as such which is under attack here, but rather the indefensible simplification and distortion of character in the conventional Socialist Realist fiction which authors like Wolf were still expected to reproduce.

Wolf had in fact gone further than either Reimann or de Bruyn in developing a theoretical framework - and a literary tradition - for this new subjective realism, in her essay "Lesen und Schreiben" of 1968, although this only became evident in 1972 when the collection of her work bearing the same title was published.⁵⁸ Recognising the importance of Brecht's epic theory for the revitalisation of drama in the twentieth century, she argued that authors like herself should now follow a similar path, making prose writing a vehicle for the stimulation of "dialektische(s) Denken in Modellen". It would once again become

"eine 'epische' Prosa", investigating a reality in which nothing can be "selbstverständlich", instead of reinforcing "die Konventionen" and "alte Denkinhalte".⁵⁹ Those largely neglected authors in the canon of realists, Büchner and Dostoyevsky, were seen by Wolf to have paved the way in epic prose-writing, not least in showing that the narrative world is four-dimensional: in addition to the three dimensions of the fictional action, "Prosa" needs "die vierte, 'wirkliche' (Dimension) des Erzählers". This is the subjective level at which the vital link between fiction and reality is established and maintained - "die Koordinate der Tiefe, der Zeitgenossenschaft, des unvermeidlichen Engagements, die nicht nur die Wahl des Stoffes, sondern auch seine Färbung bestimmt".⁶⁰

Essential to this method is the complex relationship between the narrator and his central figure, the profound interplay of identification and distancing to which de Bruyn also referred in his remarks on Buridans Esel. The examples Wolf cites have an obvious central bearing upon her own situation in conceiving Nachdenken über Christa T.: in Büchner's Lenz fragment, there is his remarkable empathy with the 'Sturm und Drang' figure, through which he "nicht zufällig unvermittelt, von einem Satz zum anderen vom 'Er' zum 'Ich' übergehen kann", while Crime and Punishment represents Dostoyevsky's self-salvation through working out his apparently insoluble conflicts in the figure of Raskolnikov.⁶¹ It is striking, in view of Wolf's recognition that genuine literature must derive from urgent inner necessity - "Für einen bestimmten Autor gibt es in einem bestimmten Augenblick nur einen einzigen Stoff"⁶² - that three of the most gifted authors of her generation should independently seek to create this four-dimensional prose, in conflict with the Party's understanding of

their social 'Auftrag' in the late 1960's. The phrase "subjektive Authentizität", which Wolf subsequently introduced into literary parlance in the GDR,⁶³ is an extremely apt term to describe the distinctive narrative quality of these novels.

The shift from 'objective' omniscience and the pursuit of extensive totality to this exploratory subjective standpoint brings with it a new recognition of the limitations of individual powers of perception. Difficulties previously held to be symptomatic of bourgeois decadence and lack of ideological certainty are now seriously faced. Memory, for example, is seen to be problematic. Günter de Bruyn shows an awareness of its unreliability in the scenes where Karl Erp is brought back by his father's death into contact with the past in his native village of Alt-Schradow. The narrator makes a firm distinction between his analysis of the "Erpsche() Vergangenheit" and Karl's "Erinnerungsbrille", which is always tinted in relation to his moods. He broadens this observation into a criticism of biographers and ideologues who manipulate details of memory in order to simplify the public's understanding of personality development:

Die Erinnerungsbrille ... war ... also unbrauchbar zur Markierung von Entwicklungskurven, oder vorsichtiger gesagt, zum Versuch dazu; denn so eindeutig Tatsachen sein können, so fraglich ist oft die Art ihres Einflusses: zum Glück für das Menschliche, zum Unglück für Manipulierer und Biographen, denen es lieb wäre, wenn sich aus jedem Weiß der Windeln mit Genauigkeit das des zukünftigen Arztkittels, aus der Stellung des Vaters die des Sohnes, aus Begegnungen Bewußtsein errechnen ließe. BE 147

This is not, however, made into a major theme in Buridans Esel or Franziska Linkerhand, where the main focus is on the recent past with all the advantages of near-autobiographical insight, in the way that it is in Nachdenken Über Christa T. Wolf is concerned with the whole life-pattern of a figure who has led a

separate existence, however parallel it may have run to that of the narrator, so that the details of her past are far less certain. As Wolf made clear in her "Selbstinterview", it was a matter of counteracting "die trügerische Erinnerung" with whatever documentary information could be unearthed - in Christa T.'s case her diaries, letters and literary sketches, together with her revealing dissertation on Theodor Storm's 'Novellen' - and taking account of the opinions and information supplied by others.⁶⁴ The opening lines of the novel warn against the trap of the "Vergessen, das man Erinnerung nennt" (CT 7). The great danger, in social intercourse as in literature, is seen to be the tendency to reduce the past to a series of neatly rounded "Geschichten", endowed with a significance and a unity which incidents in real experience never have, in order to boost each individual's sense of the meaning in his own life. It is a temptation to which the narrator and her educated friends are in no way immune, as they sense that an important turning-point in their development as GDR citizens has been reached, now that the crisis of 1961 has been resolved:

Wir begannen, über unsere Erinnerungen zu verfügen. Wir entdeckten auf einmal - keiner von uns älter als fünfunddreißig -, daß es schon etwas gab, was den Namen 'Vergangenheit' verdiente ... Es war unvermeidlich, daß wir anfangen, uns Geschichten zu erzählen, Geschichten, wie sie in einem auftauchen, wenn die Wasser sich verlaufen. Dann ist man ein wenig erstaunt, daß diese Geschichten alles sein sollen, was übrigbleibt, und man sieht sich gezwungen, sie ein wenig auszuschnüffeln, eine hübsche kleine Moral in sie hineinzulegen, und ihren Schluß vor allem ... zu unseren Gunsten zu gestalten. CT 209-11

The goal is to create a "Vergangenheit, die man seinen Kindern erzählen kann" (CT 211). Even as the narrator describes the New Year's Eve party at which these events took place, she reveals a necessary suspicion towards the version she has just given, which

is almost unavoidably coloured by her subsequent convictions about the importance of Christa T.'s life:

Wir tranken alle auf sie - oder ich wünsche mir doch sehr, wir hätten es getan -, zu der jeder von uns feste und jeder andere Beziehungen hatte ... Wenn wir an jenem Abend so gewesen sind, wie ich es mir wünsche, dann waren wir alle großmütig und wollten, daß uns kein Gefühl und keine Nuance eines Gefühls fehlen sollte, denn das alles, mögen wir gedacht haben, stand uns zu. CT 210

The best protection against such unavoidable human weakness is to remain, as Christa T. and the narrator appear to have done in the decisive moments of their maturity, "unbestechlich" (CT 206) and aware "daß man an seiner Vergangenheit arbeiten muß wie an seiner Zukunft" (CT 181). It may seem paradoxical that invention has an important part to play in this process, but the special justification of literature is that it can convey a truth which factual, documentary methods can only hint at: the creative writer's task involves "erfinden ... um der Wahrheit willen" (CT 31).⁶⁵

Just as serious as the distortion of the past through the unreliability of memory is the reduction of the personality of others, even where there is a continuing relationship, caused by the subjective need to categorise according to a limited range of basic 'types'. This problem, previously treated in depth in 'Western' novels like Uwe Johnson's Mutmaßungen über Jakob and Das dritte Buch über Achim, now becomes important in the GDR as these novelists show themselves less and less dependent upon the conventional stock of characters with unambiguous positive or negative tendencies. There is a refreshing admission of the danger of 'taking possession' of other individuals in order to make the fictional world more coherent. Christa Wolf's narrator is gripped with apprehension of her enormous responsibility in a

situation in which she can claim of the dead Christa T. - "Ich verfüge über sie ... Sie bewegt sich, wenn ich will" (CT 7) - yet knows that her images amount to no more than a dubious "Schattenfilm". For Franziska Linkerhand, on the other hand, it is a conscious, and comforting, self-delusion that the 'Ben' to whom she addresses her innermost feelings is a highly idealised image of her lover Trojanowicz, which she has assiduously cultivated since she first saw him in a bar in Neustadt. 'Ben' is indeed also endowed with the heroic qualities which Franziska has always admired in her older brother Wilhelm - a curious amalgam made more possible through the remarkable physical similarities between Wilhelm and Trojanowicz. Such is Franziska's subjective delight in the figure she sees as "meine einzige Liebe" on the mere evidence of appearances (FL 145), that she effectively avoids direct contact with Trojanowicz for months, to avoid placing this wish-fulfilling image at risk. (This behaviour is, by implication, a psychological reaction to a first, disastrous marriage, which has shattered her self-confidence and made her fearful of a further disillusioning commitment.) When she does finally get to know Trojanowicz, her carefully nourished fiction must inevitably give way to impenetrable reality:

Ich war bestürzt, als habe dich erst der Name unwiderruflich zu einem Teil der wirklichen Welt gemacht, die ich sehen, fühlen, riechen, schmecken kann ... Ich konnte nicht mehr über dich verfügen. Ich wußte nichts mehr von dir - in dem Augenblick, als du dich bekanntmachtest, wurdest du das Unbekannte Land, unwegsam (die Stromtäler und Geröllhalden der Erfahrungen, die vergangene Jahre zurückließen, und die tropischen Wälder der Erinnerungen), schwer erforschbar, vielleicht nie bis ins Landesinnere zu durchforschen. FL 350

Remarkably perhaps, their relationship does succeed for a limited period, bringing about a powerful emotional and intellectual

revitalisation in Franziska, but it is still the fictitious 'Ben' with whom she communes in her novel and who eventually survives the disintegration of her life with Trojanowicz. The fact that 'Ben' is such a deliberate artefact shows that Reimann is as aware of the problem of character as Wolf, but is less sure whether truth can be achieved through a process of stripping off all the external layers of personality. Her observation is provoked by the recollection of an experiment in portrait painting carried out by her friend Jakob:

An der Wand lehnten drei Porträts, immer derselbe Mann und immer ein anderer, als wäre bei jedem nächsten Bild eine Schicht vom nur Äußerlichen, jedermann sichtbaren abgeblättert, bloßgelegt, was man sonst den anderen verheimlicht, vielleicht nicht einmal sich selbst gesteht. Ist das denn Wahrheit in der Kunst, wenn man einen Menschen so preisgibt? Ich weiß nicht, Ben; ich weiß nicht mal, was Wahrheit ist. FL 85-6

Günter de Bruyn seems less sure of his ground in the matter of characterisation. On the one hand, he will, as an intended leitmotiv, assert the inscrutability of Erp's wife Elisabeth - "Wer kennt sich in Elisabeth aus" (BE 85, passim) - and approach her character with speculative caution; on the other, he feels able to offer extended insights into the development of Fräulein Broder (e.g. BE 46-50), which make her into a highly positive figure, not far short of Erp's assessment of her as a "Musterexemplar einer nächsten Generation" (BE 42). Thus, although de Bruyn's narrator generally does an invaluable, and witty, job in relativising the images which his characters have of themselves and of each other, there is still at times this reluctance to abandon the established image of the 'Vorbild'. Fräulein Broder is still too reflective of the idealisation of youth found in characters like Rita in Wolf's Der geteilte Himmel, while, at the other end of the scale, authority is placed in an exemplary light in the

person of Fred Mantek, Erp's former boss in the library, who now works in the Ministry of Culture.

Wolf and Reimann act rather more decisively against the whole ideology of the 'Vorbild', through which economic productivity and moral distinction can be neatly unified. It seems central to their portrayal of the human environment in which Christa T. and Franziska Linkerhand move that there are no unambiguously positive figures to guide their fortunes in a decisive way. Those who have gained official recognition for their services, like the chief architect Schafheutlin or the author Blasing in Christa T.'s provincial town, are seriously flawed personalities, while the majority still struggle to find a role which is socially constructive and will also allow them to develop their personal potential. With the fictional focus directed so fully upon the problematical central figure, any suggestion that her difficulties could be resolved by following the example of a convenient positive counterpart would detract seriously from the open-ended, epic force of the novels. Christa Wolf was, as elsewhere, more explicit in making the point within the fiction:

Wer den Kopf jetzt wegwendet, wer die Achseln zuckt, wer von ihr, Christa T., weg und auf größere, nützlichere Lebensläufe zeigt, hat nichts verstanden. Mir liegt daran, gerade auf sie zu zeigen. Auf den Reichtum, den sie erschloß, auf die Größe, die ihr erreichbar, auf die Nützlichkeit, die ihr zugänglich war.

CT 171-2

The fundamental change of literary orientation behind emphatic statements of this kind is unmistakable.

The extent of the maturing process that Wolf, Reimann and de Bruyn had gone through as novelists is strikingly illustrated by the gulf which now separates their work from Hermann Kant's Das Impressum. Kant continues to use the narrative perspective

he established in Die Aula: the protagonist, David Groth, the forty-year-old chief editor of the fictitious Neue Berliner Rundschau, who has just been appointed to a ministerial post in the GDR government, is also the narrator. Even though the narrative frequently switches with apparent purpose from the first person to the third, there is no significant tension between Groth's earlier and present-day 'self'. In fact, one of the most unsatisfactory aspects of the structure is the gap of almost ten years between the end of the largely chronological account of Groth's life, up to the late 1950's, and the narrative present in 1967, omitting the years when Groth proved his entitlement to the editorship of a leading magazine and then to take on ministerial responsibilities in a curiously unspecified field.⁶⁶ The contrast to Buridans Esel is almost total, since the years when Groth's development is by implication untroubled are precisely those when the life of that more minor 'Planer-und-Leiter' figure, Karl Erp, begins to fall apart.

As a son of the oppressed working classes in the Third Reich, Groth grows up naturally into the new socialist state - his progress is a "stetig steigende() Kurve" (I 10) from errand boy in the Rundschau to its editorship. The only indication of contradiction in the 'fourth dimension' of the narrator, in relation to what is elsewhere a major concern with questions of self, memory and authenticity, is on the rather banal level of Groth's protest that his curriculum vitae in the Party leadership's files represents less than the whole truth about him, when the actual differences seem fairly insubstantial (I 7-10). Groth as narrator is perfectly confident about his assessment of others and his recollection of past detail: indeed, his anecdotal style seems at times dangerously close to reproducing the artificially

rounded, didactically overburdened, 'Geschichten' of which Christa Wolf was so critical.

Furthermore, whereas Wolf makes frequent use of the 'Wir' perspective as a means of breaking down the conventional image of neatly interlocking levels of 'Gemeinschaft' into something more incomplete and contradictory, David Groth's first person plural reflects an uncomplicated integration in every sphere. At the most personal level, his marriage is synonymous with "Gemeinschaft, Gemeinsamkeit, Gegenteil zu Einsamkeit" (I 130); he is totally at one with his generation of pioneering activists and with the Party he has served loyally for twenty years, apart from a few significant, but temporary, conflicts. The Rundschau is run smoothly under his leadership, harnessing the varied talents of its workforce and serving the socialist cause in an unobtrusive way: each working week consists of "fünf Tage Produktion und Klatsch, fünf Tage Fortschritt, und keiner merkt es" (I 213). His identity is firmly rooted in the proletarian tradition into which he grew up, and it is the same "unsereins" who now form the GDR government (I 37-44). He feels able to speak for the whole state in refuting the clichés of Western propaganda:

In diesem Land herrscht Diktatur. Wir stöhnen hier unter dem Zwangsregime der Wissenschaft. Hier wird man mit der Leselampe gefoltert. Die Despotie preßt uns in die Gelehrsamkeit. Der Druck bedient sich des Buchdrucks. Qualifizierung - das Wort schon sagt es. Theorie ist die Praxis hiesigen Terrors. Forscher zimmerten unser Joch. Lehrer bewachen unsere Schritte. Unser Profosß ist Professor. Wir führen ein Hirnzellendasein. Für Denken gibt es ein Soll. Wir sind die kybernetisch besetzte Zone. I 27

In the final flourish of Das Impressum, Groth's 'Wir' becomes a futuristic one, taking in the whole of mankind, with all its hopes and blemishes - "jeder von uns ist der dreimilliardste

Teil dieses Wir" (I 476). With such untroubled solidarity in every sphere of his experience, it is clear why Groth's development has been so easy - but this is all too smooth to be credible beside the differentiation to which Kant's fellow novelists were firmly committed.

Kant's unchanged partisanship is further reflected in his choice of an outstanding figure from the ranks of the state's leadership as his hero, whatever the author's recent attempt to distance himself from the 'Kulturpolitik' of the late 1960's might imply to the contrary.⁶⁷ Groth alone is intended to represent the GDR's overall development in terms of the old 'objective' typicality which Wolf, Reimann and de Bruyn had all by now rejected - even his name is significant in the way that those of the heroes of earlier 'Entwicklungsromane' were. In the passage in which Groth ostensibly dismisses such simplifications as "allzu literarisch", it emerges that he has been named David after a Jewish benefactor who later falls victim to Nazi racialism - thus placing him on the side of virtue from the outset - while the family name is seen to have a certain kinship with the Biblical Goliath. Although he may distance himself from the family's naive hopes - "David Groth möge werden David und Goliath in einem und also unbesiegbar" (I 45) - it is clear that this reading suits the novel's overall intentions admirably.

Given such a conventional narrative framework, it is difficult to understand how Kant's limited critical intent in the detail of Groth's life was regarded as sufficiently threatening to have the novel withheld from publication for three years, only to re-appear in a form "weitgehend identisch" with the original.⁶⁸ It may be noteworthy that he makes a mildly irreverent attack on the Stalin cult of the early 1950's, or depicts the events of

17 June 1953 in a less incredible manner than Anna Seghers had done in Das Vertrauen, or is involved in gently satirical attacks on typical personalities in the Party leadership - but the novel remains a rather static, and arbitrary, collection of anecdotes. There is nothing of the creative urgency to reflect a new view of identity, and thus of the contemporary limits of community, in Das Impressum. For Wolf, Reimann and de Bruyn, on the other hand, it was now a question of how much validity such value concepts fundamental to socialist morality, but already appreciably qualified in recent fiction, could be seen to have in the context of the GDR of their own day.

THE THREAT TO IDENTITY WITHIN THE GDR

However much stereotype methods of character depiction are undermined in these novels, there is still no desire to question the Goethean view of the unique, organically developing identity with which each individual is endowed. For Christa Wolf, the special quality of 'epic prose' is its capacity to penetrate to the depths of the reader's being and stimulate the growth of his inherent personality:

Die epische Prosa sollte eine Gattung sein, die es unternimmt, auf noch ungebahnten Wegen in das Innere dieses Menschen da, des Prosa-lesers, einzudringen. In das innerste Innere, dorthin, wo der Kern der Persönlichkeit sich bildet und festigt. 69

She argues that in any technologically advanced society the dangers of individuality being reduced to streamlined uniformity are considerably increased, and that literature will have an ever more important role to play in helping to preserve the "Kontakt der Menschen mit ihren Wurzeln" and strengthen "Selbstbewußtsein".⁷⁰ De Bruyn's primary motivation in writing

Buridans Esel is to illustrate "das Problem von Stehenbleiben und Entwicklung der Persönlichkeit",⁷¹ since the peril facing figures like Karl Erp is that of "Persönlichkeitsverlust" caused by stifling the vital forces which sustain inner growth.⁷² For Reimann too, it is essential for Franziska Linkerhand to re-discover the "natürliches Selbstbewußtsein" of which her bourgeois home environment has deprived her, causing the instability and vulnerability of her adult self (FL 125).

Presuppositions of this kind about identity, in combination with the complex autobiographical motivation referred to in the previous section, meant that their novels would now have to take account of factors influencing the growth or retardation of the self over a lifetime rooted in the Third Reich and extending over the Stalin era into the middle 1960's. This would be far more challenging than the isolation of the primary processes of coming to terms with socialism after 1945 in the earlier 'Entwicklungsromane', or the less personalised differentiation of the GDR's development through the 1950's in the Bitterfeld novels. The way had been gradually prepared for more than a decade for this generation's comprehensive reckoning with a uniquely fluctuating past, and the time now seemed ripe to undertake it, despite the unfavourable ideological climate.

It was inevitable that the extension of narrative retrospection to cover more than thirty years would mean that childhood and youth in the Third Reich would be presented in a fragmentary manner which would provide less 'information' about the period than the earlier 'Entwicklungsromane', but which would equally compel the authors to concentrate upon features essential to their understanding of identity. Perhaps the most striking aspect in the depiction of this period is the isolation

of their central characters from any influence which might make them aware of an ideological alternative to their fascist environment. At a time when, as Wolf has suggested, they were totally cut off from the humanistic cultural heritage of the 18th and 19th centuries, including the moral, educative force of the classical 'Bildungsroman',⁷³ there was little likelihood of manifestations of the 'bourgeois individualism' upon which the characterisation of figures like Rudi Hagedorn in Wir sind nicht Staub im Wind or Wolfgang Weichmantel in Der Hohlweg depend so extensively. In fact, as de Bruyn now points out, the predominating influence of Nazi literature - "dieses Loch, das noch gefüllt sein muß" (BE 57) - is in far more urgent need of analysis. There is one obviously didactic scene in Das Impressum, in which David Groth's father, a man of decency and honesty who has suffered grossly for his modest integrity, passes on some basic truths, just before he despairingly commits suicide in uniform. David learns that it is the working class which must bear the heavy burden of fighting for justice, regardless of the personal cost, for the future of mankind:

Nun bin ich kein so großer Apostel für Tapferkeit und Gerechtigkeit; wenn man ohne sie einigermaßen leben könnte, würde ich sagen: Laß sie sausen - was hilft die Gerechtigkeit, wenn du hungerst, und was hilft dir Heldenmut, wenn du sterben muß; wer ins Bilderbuch kommen will, mag sich damit befassen, wir sind nicht dafür zuständig. Nur meine ich jetzt, wir sind dafür zuständig; es bleibt uns gar nichts anderes übrig, als gerecht und nicht feige zu sein, anders geht es uns an den Kragen ... I 89

Otherwise, there is no indication that guidance could have been forthcoming from parents - even those with evident moral courage, like the school-teacher fathers of Christa T. and Karl Erp - or schoolfriends, which might have pointed to a socialist alternative. The older mentor figures central to the 'Entwicklungsroman'

tradition are now seen not to have existed in Hitler's Germany, even within the horizons of such receptive protagonists.

The only personal relationship of any consequence is that between Christa T. and the narrator in Nachdenken Über Christa T., in which the latter comes to admire her new classmate because she alone has preserved a consciousness of self, in opposition to the systematic levelling processes at work everywhere else. Christa T.'s self-assurance is signalled by the defiant manner in which she trumpets through a rolled-up newspaper as she walks along the street, while her peers and elders stand apart in embarrassed and disapproving silence. For the narrator, this action brings a shock of recognition that natural independence is threatened with extinction - "ich fühlte auf einmal mit Schrecken, daß es böse endet, wenn man alle Schreie frühzeitig in sich erstickt" (CT 16). This insight is, however, as short-lived as it is profound. The chaos brought about by the final disintegration of the Third Reich is imminent, destroying whatever stability had previously existed and breaking all contact between the two friends for years. The narrator recognises that this loss is not just one of friendship: it is for her the end of a first opportunity to become conscious of her natural self:

(Man) würde ... ahnen, daß man sich schnell verlieren kann unter solchem Himmel, in diesem Licht. Und daß es uns kurz bevorstand, uns verlorenzugehen: einander und jeder sich selbst. So daß man ungerührt 'ich' sagt zu einem Fremden, die Unbefangenheit bewahrt, bis zu einem Augenblick, da dieses fremde Ich zu mir zurückkehren und wieder in mich eingehen wird. CT 20

For Christa T., self-expression is of course a more subtle business than the trumpeting which first attracts the narrator's attention: the diary which she starts keeping at the age of ten

represents her attempt to preserve the world of original experience from the destructive intrusion of external forces, first registered in traumatic personal terms when the family cat is killed before her eyes by a drunken house-tenant. The narrator, assisted by popular etymology, sees Christa T.'s writing as deriving from "ihr Hang, zu dichten, dichtzumachen die schöne, helle, feste Welt" (CT 27), thereby linking creative writing and the defence of an inherently harmonious identity in a deliberate and significant way.

The fact that the totalitarian endeavour to obliterate the subjective sense of self was carried on in the name of a quasi-metaphysical 'Volksgemeinschaft' is confronted in these novels with the awareness of the ambiguity of such abstract concepts perceptible in East German literature since Franz Fühmann's Kameraden. Wolf's narrator admits the extent to which she identified with the school "Gemeinschaft" fostered through organisations like the Hitler Youth and characterised by the group's "dümmlisches Grinsen" when faced with an individual like Christa T. (CT 10-14). De Bruyn's Karl Erp flees from his father's puritan insistence upon personal responsibility, attracted by "die Wärme der Begeisterung" into "die Verantwortungslosigkeit der Gemeinschaft" (BE 152). The progression from this condition of communal irresponsibility to service on the battle front is taken as a grim inevitability for eligible males like Erp, and not worthy of detailed recollection. David Groth demonstrates his atypicality further when, after becoming a gunsmith's apprentice, he manages to avoid battle action through his Schweikian cunning, accepting the humble position of "getreuer Knecht" to an air-force general who is impressed by his expertise in the field of weaponry. For all the others, survival is a matter of sheer good

fortune through a period when human life was pathetically cheap. It is only through the horror of 'private' details like the corpse of the baby which Christa T. sees abandoned by the roadside that the final collapse of the Third Reich is depicted. In any case, the chaos had been documented in the earlier 'Entwicklungsromane', whereas the vexed question of how the transition towards self-identification with the socialist cause after the war took place, had been notoriously glossed over and was now far more crucial.

There is now no real dispute over the fact that the reconstruction of the Russian zone of occupation on socialist lines was greeted with widespread scepticism by a generation whose instinctive idealism had already been ruthlessly exploited. Equally, a point appears to have been reached relatively quickly when collective needs again took priority over the protection of a disorientated self. De Bruyn, whose achievement in Der Hohlweg was to show how much more than the rhetoric of 'große Worte' was necessary to win the commitment of perceptive young adults like Wolfgang Weichmantel, has Karl Erp recall, in similar vein, "die lächerlichen Aufbauparolen, die man erst ernst nimmt, als die ersten Erfolge sich zeigen" (BE 45). Groth quickly finds his feet, supporting the 'Aufbau' through the medium of the Neue Berliner Rundschau, while the other main characters are firmly confronted with the dilemma of a 'conversion' to the cause in the terms of the 'Anderswerden' basic to socialist thinking since Becher's writing in the 1920's. As Christa Wolf sees it, the creation of a 'new' self was essential to personal as well as to economic recovery, but dangerous in the longer term because it presupposed that the previous, 'fascist' self could somehow be excised. The realisation that socialism is "der Weg zu uns

selber" (CT 41) is unshakable for the generation indissolubly linked with East Germany since 1945, as is the conviction that they have helped to make "die neue Welt" a tangible reality:

Es gibt sie /die neue Welt/, und nicht nur in unseren Köpfen, und damals fing sie für uns an. Was aber immer mit ihr geschah oder geschehen wird, es ist und bleibt unsere Sache. Unter den Tauschangeboten ist keines, nach dem auch nur den Kopf zu drehen sich lohnen würde ... CT 66

With hindsight, however, the problematical aspect of the 'Anderswerden' comes into focus. The ideologically vital separation of the bourgeois 'them' from the socialist 'us' may seem the way to salvation, but it fails to take account of the organic continuity of personality:

Den Schnitt machen zwischen 'uns' und 'den anderen', in voller Schärfe, endgültig: das war die Rettung. Und insgeheim wissen: Viel hat nicht gefehlt, und kein Schritt hätte 'das andere' von uns getrennt, weil wir selbst anders gewesen wären. Wie aber trennt man sich von sich selbst? Darüber sprachen wir nicht. CT 36

Brigitte Reimann, as the youngest of these authors, appears to avoid this question entirely by making Franziska some four years younger again, and thus born around 1937. Franziska's growth from childhood into the GDR at first seems a harmonious natural process - "ich wuchs wie eine Pflanze" (FL 33) ... "ich war selig eingeordnet" (FL 35). She has a liberating sense of being different from her bourgeois elders and not needing to go through the agonies of adjustment they face:

... für mich, dachte ich, wird alles anders sein, und wenn ich das Leben, wie ich es mir damals vorwegträumte, in ein Bild umsetzen wollte, würde ich ein Pferd zeichnen, ein Pferd in rasendem Galopp, frei, wild, ohne Zaumzeug, die Mähne im Wind und mit Hufen, die den Boden nicht berühren ... FL 36

This proves, however, to be naive self-deception: although she is a world of experience away from her eight-year-old brother

Wilhelm, and can wear the "blaue() Bluse der Romantik" with her friends in the FDJ with boundless pride and enthusiasm (FL 59), the tensions between her fundamental identity and socialist society have only been delayed. By the time she begins her architectural studies in the middle 1950's she has been made harshly aware of the fact that she is no more a natural citizen of the GDR than her brother, because of their middle-class origins. On official forms they must describe themselves as "Sonstige" since they are neither farmers nor workers, and the new world suddenly seems dependent on an updated version of Calvinist predestination (FL 63). Franziska and Wilhelm nevertheless make the leap of faith, at a cost to their self which is not calculable in advance. They become part of the pioneering generation, along with Christa T., Karl Erp and their friends, enjoying the privileges of higher education and in turn giving unstintingly of their time in youth organisations, in voluntary labour on the farms and in various kinds of propaganda work for the state. These are the years when the individual and the collective are most fully unified: as Wolf's narrator says, "an die Stelle des Ich kann ... das Wir treten, niemals mit mehr Recht als für jene Zeit" (CT 65).

They were also years punctuated violently in the GDR by the workers' revolt of June 1953 and the 'Thaw' of 1955-6, when the need for a dimension of individual responsibility in determining the future of socialism was first articulated with a sense of urgency. Placing the struggle against dogmatism in a more precise personal context was, however, still a highly delicate matter, and produced a wide range of responses in these novels. For David Groth, the 17th June 1953 is less memorable for his bewildered opposition to the rebellious workers than as the day

when he decides to marry the photographer Franziska Grewe: that evening, "so ein würgender Tag" can be kept at a distance by their private "freies Gelächter" (I 412).⁷⁴ Nothing in the build-up to the crisis nor in the manner of its suppression seems to disturb Groth's uncomplicated sense of identity with the state, although he does allow himself a few critical remarks about the way the Party leadership handled the threat of a general strike. In relation to Karl Erp's development, it doesn't merit a mention, perhaps because it happens during his period of energetic dedication to a new career and marriage, when he is totally "er selbst" (BE 14). In contrast, Christa T., studying in Leipzig, sinks into a near-suicidal depression because of the contradictions between her private values and those of the world around her: "Da sie an der Welt nicht zweifeln konnte, blieb ihr nur der Zweifel an sich" (CT 92). Strikingly, Franziska Linkerhand uses almost exactly the same phrase in describing her brother Wilhelm's predicament at this time (FL 62).

The problem here is whether such a denial of self is ever more than temporarily justifiable, and whether an environment which demands this might eventually bring about a total loss of the continuity essential to the survival of personality. Franziska seems less worried by the long-term effects of an era when "wir verleugneten uns, hielten uns Augen und Ohren zu und sagten ja, ja, ja zu allem" (FL 62), and would rather consign such "alte Geschichten" to oblivion:

Wir sind nicht dran gestorben. Wir haben gelernt, den Mund zu halten, keine unbequemen Fragen zu stellen, einflußreiche Leute nicht anzugreifen, wir sind ein bißchen unzufrieden, ein bißchen unehrlich, ein bißchen verkrüppelt, sonst ist alles in Ordnung. FL 64

Wolf's narrator, however, insists more urgently that time alone will not be sufficient to eradicate the Stalinist mentality,

which tends to be resilient and self-perpetuating. The new world of socialism quickly becomes the "neue() Welt der Phantasielosen. Der Tatsachenmenschen. Der Hopp-Hopp-Menschen, so hat (Christa T.) sie genannt" (CT 66). Through a terrible lack of self-certainty stretching back to the Third Reich, this generation has allowed itself to become subject to a bureaucratic "Mechanismus" which would have it obliterate its personality - "sich auslöschen. Schrübchen sein" (CT 72). It is only after the "plötzlicher Lichtwechsel" caused by the revelations about the real nature of Stalinism in 1956 that a minority, like Christa T. and the narrator, regain confidence that their personality can be restored if they now accept individual moral responsibility for the future course of socialism (CT 168). There is, however, no immediate confirmation that their world has now lost its "eiserne() Definitionen", as they seek in vain for "eine Spur der neuen Sterne" on their horizon (CT 180). They do not suffer for their new convictions as severely as Franziska's lover Trojanowicz does. Although his past is only pieced together in speculative fashion by Franziska at a later stage of her novel, it stands out that his exemplary development from proletarian Berlin, via the FDJ and the ABF, to an academic career in Leipzig is abruptly halted in the repression which followed the Hungarian uprising. Trojanowicz is one of those "erschüttert" by the revelations of the 20th Soviet Party Congress into seeking radical reform (FL 531), who then spends four years in prison on an unsupportable charge of assisting subversion - experiences which shatter his self-identification with the GDR and help to drive him later into the "schwindelhafte() Existenz eines Außenseiters" (FL 501).

Most members of this generation continue to accept

self-limitation in the face of a basically unchanged authority-structure, with some degree of conformism along a scale stretching from "sich ein ... ordnen" to "anpassen wie ein Tier" (FL 62). David Groth runs foul of Party authority because of his "Neigung zu politisch gefährlichem Einzelgängertum" (I 325), but the circumstances are relatively unthreatening. The message for the reader of Das Impressum, as provided by a proletarian veteran, is nevertheless quite clear - the Party's collective wisdom must always be accepted by the individual:

... eines ist für einen Genossen die furchtbarste Scheiße, in die er geraten kann: daß er meint, er ist schlauer als die Partei. I 342

This kind of conformism, as seen by Groth himself, involves a balance of "Freiheit" and "Disziplin", and is based upon "Prinzipientreue" rather than "Dogmatismus" (I 377), but is never put to the test in a crisis in which socialist principles are themselves a matter of fundamental dispute. The only other central character whose career progresses through these years without a significant hitch is Karl Erp, but here the lack of tension only masks the superficiality of his achievement of socialist identity, with each step towards stability and success leading towards a dangerous "Gleichförmigkeit" (BE 13). The point at which socially productive activity can lose the quality of individual commitment and decline into 'Anpassung' is almost indefinable, but in Erp's case the problem seems to increase as life takes on the trappings of affluence. The acquisition of a villa from his wife's parents in the exclusive "Spreesiedlung" in Köpenick makes Erp himself aware "wie schnell und gern man sich anpaßt, wenn die neue Umgebung einem paßt" (BE 11).

While Erp's decline is influenced by relatively modern social factors, there is also the more deeply rooted aspect of

conformism, arising from the retardation of democratic consciousness amongst previous generations of Germans, which is seen as a continuing threat to the development of personality in the GDR. The extent to which Stalinism depended upon the 'Radfahrer' mentality in its bureaucrats had already been indicated in novels like Ole Bienkopp, but there are details in Franziska Linkerhand and Nachdenken Uber Christa T. which bleakly reveal how prevalent the levelling processes of 'Anpassung' were in almost every sphere of life in the 1950's. Franziska's first boyfriend, the uninhibited jazz-player nicknamed 'Django', who preferred to leave university rather than accept the official line on decadent Western influences, ends up as an utterly conventional school-teacher, whom she now sarcastically describes as "eine abgerundete Persönlichkeit" (FL 118). By accepting society's standards, Django has 'died' as an individual:

Django hat sich eingerichtet, er ist tot, er geht durch die Straßen, belehrt seine Schüler Über Gammastrahlen, zieht jeden Morgen ein reines Hemd an und ist mausetot. FL 41

Wolf's narrator is highly conscious of the critical point in the GDR's existence when optimism and trust were overtaken by "Berechnung, Schlüue, Anpassungstrieb" (CT 71). Almost at every turn, Christa T.'s unwillingness to conform unquestioningly is greeted with 'wiser' advice to accept things as they are. Her depression in the summer of 1953 is regarded by the university doctor as a neurosis deriving from "mangelnde Anpassungsfähigkeit an gegebene Umstände" (CT 92), and he is confident that an intelligent girl like her will learn to conform. When she begins teaching and is horrified that her pupils are only interested in achieving the good marks awarded for reproducing clichés, her headmaster - a sympathetic representative of the older generation - sees her as one of those "leicht erregbare()

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Gemüther()" who he always needs to "dämpfen" (CT 131). Years later, in the hope-filled 1960's, Christa T. is again shocked to hear that one of her brightest ex-pupils thrives on an attitude of "Anpassung um jeden Preis" as "der Kern der Gesundheit", in a complete abdication of responsibility for what she sees as "unsere moralische Existenz" (CT 141-3).

Conditions like these suggest a degree of alienation from the 'natural' self which in ideological terms ought to be inconceivable in socialist society. But where there is such little scope for overt non-conformism, and where socially approved activities are reduced to "Benennungen" with little substance (CT 46), figures like Christa T. are seen to have no option but to indulge in a rather tentative kind of role-playing to avoid stagnating as individuals. This does not mean a dissolution of the organic self into the 'pluralistic personality' widely depicted in positive terms in West German novels of the 1960's, but rather a temporary expedient offering possibilities of self-enrichment until the ideological climate is more conducive to the realisation of each individual's productive potential.⁷⁵

The sections of Nachdenken Über Christa T. which describe her life from the middle 1950's onwards return constantly to the complicated relationship between role-playing and identity. Disappointed with her lack of success as a teacher in Berlin, she adopts a policy of "erst mal ein paar Rollen durchprobieren, ehe man sich festlegt" (CT 151). In choosing the part of the heroine of Sophie de la Roche's Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim at a fancy-dress ball, she is weighing up her capacity to emulate the latter in making something positive out of an apparently dreary married life in provincial obscurity - mindful of the possibility of her becoming the wife of the veterinary

surgeon Justus, with a remote practice in Mecklenburg. The role proves surprisingly rewarding, if risky, since both must constantly extend themselves to avoid losing one another again (CT 152), and she resolves to make it permanent. Her "Spiel mit Varianten" seems relatively brief, but the need for a more solid commitment is evidently more pressing in a socialist environment than in the pluralist West. Christa T. accepts her role as "Tierarztfrau in mecklenburgischer Kleinstadt", but yet continues to see herself as "jemand mit Aussichten, mit geheimen Möglichkeiten" (CT 171-3). Although she appears to consolidate her married self in becoming a mother and designing a new home in picturesque surroundings, these attempts "sich inniger mit dem Leben zu verbinden" (CT 193) are threatened by provincial pettiness and boredom. The crisis which develops is sparked off by adultery, but it concerns her whole identity: she has lost the secret which made her uniquely "lebensfähig" - "das Bewußtsein dessen, wer sie in Wirklichkeit war" (CT 199). Her role-playing has gone temporarily wrong - "etwas muß sie gereizt haben, gerade solche Schritte auszuprobieren, die nirgendshin führten" (CT 200). The brief liaison with a young forester serves to begin the process of growth again, bringing back "das Leben", allowing her "etwas Neues über sich zu erfahren" and making her "plötzlich wieder sie selbst" (CT 199). But what she is now on the way to discover is that everything in her past life - and not just her consciously adopted roles - has been preparing her for the recognition that she can only fulfil herself by synthesising it all in her creative writing:

Was sie im Innersten wollte, wovon sie träumte und was zu tun sie seit langem begonnen hatte, lag offen vor mir, unbestreitbar und unbezweifelbar ... Ihr langes Zögern, ihre Versuche in verschiedenen Lebensformen, ihr Dilettieren auf manchem Gebiet

deuteten in dieselbe Richtung, wenn man nur Augen hatte zu sehen. Daß sie ausprobierte, was möglich war, bis ihr nichts mehr übrigblieb - das wäre wohl zu verstehen. CT 215

About the same time as Christa T. seeks a stabilising role in marriage to provide some protection against unpalatable forms of 'Anpassung', Franziska Linkerhand attempts to purge the sins of her bourgeois forebears by rushing into marriage with the handsome working-class lad Wolfgang Exß. Or so it appears with hindsight, since, rather than securing her identity, it leads the young student into a nightmare of violence, drunkenness and non-communication with a husband who has nothing in common with the proletarian 'Menschenbild' she hopes to discover. The role she takes on in trying to leave behind her "Doppelwesen" (FL 34) as a middle-class child in the workers' state creates a far more serious split in her personality, between her existence as a student of architecture and the traditionally submissive role which Exß expects her to fill. Indeed, the dichotomy is so psychologically destructive to Franziska that it appears to have the irreversibility of an organic process about it, rather than the flexibility of a chosen role:

Sie fühlte, wie ihr Leben auseinanderriß, als sei das ein organischer Vorgang, als habe sich ihr Inneres in zwei zerstörerische Wesen gespalten ... FL 88

As the marriage falls apart, she finds that she has lost her sense of 'home' and is living a "provisorische(s) Leben zwischen Risiko und Ergebung" (FL 95). Thereafter, the lack of anything more solid upon which to base her identity than her unflagging commitment to socialism gives Franziska's fortunes the dynamic openness of role-experimentation. The decision to give up the comforts of a professional career in the city for the hardship of a pioneer's life in Neustadt, and the subsequent abandonment

of her architectural work there for the stimulation of a private existence with Trojanowicz, both reflect this principle of provisionality, which accepts the stresses of instability as an integral part of living life to the full. She does, however, find herself at times so involved in her role as architect in Neustadt that she feels the desire to restrict herself to this productive self, which is "ungeteilt", and forget her private "angstvolle(s), bedrohte(s) Ich" (FL 379). But this is patently impossible for her, and, as time passes, her deeper yearning for the stability she feels must follow when she manages to re-integrate her self becomes more and more pronounced.

It was nonetheless a radically new proposition to suggest, through this central period in the development of both Christa T. and Franziska Linkerhand, that role-playing could become in socialist society both necessary and productive, and did so for many in the years after 1956, when the opportunity for a decisive improvement in the quality of individual life appeared to have been missed. At the same time, the dangers of becoming fixed in a role intended as a temporary expedient were also being stressed. In Franziska Linkerhand, the cases of Trojanowicz and Schafheutlin point to the problems which occur when the dynamic, flexible aspects of role-playing are forgotten. Trojanowicz has taken a job driving a tip-truck after his release from prison, and seems determined to keep his lively intellectual interests to himself. Before she knows anything about his past, Franziska is suspicious of his "angebliche() Identität mit einem Kipperfahrer" and is struck by the many facets of his behaviour intended to create a "Distanz zur eigenen Person" (FL 383-5). Schafheutlin, in contrast, has tried to suppress vital aspects of his personality in taking on the mantle of authority, as a dubiously neat

narratorial assessment suggests:

Schafheutlin war ihr sofort und entschieden unsympathisch, ein untersetzter, kurzhalsiger, kraushaariger Mann Mitte dreißig, dessen von Natur gutmütig und freundlich gebildetes Gesicht versteinert war durch einen Ausdruck von kalter Strenge und Argwohn. Dieser Mann, der als Bauingenieur tüchtig und gewissenhaft gewesen war, hatte seine neue Autorität wie einen zu strengen Handschuh angezogen, er spielte die Rolle eines Vorgesetzten und spielte sie schlecht ... FL 138

The glimpses into his earlier life suggest a well-balanced, creative person, fond of travel and jokes and with a "Verlangen nach Poesie" (FL 138), but all of this has been sacrificed to a life of duty in the service of an unimaginative central bureaucracy.

The schematic weakness of Reimann's novel is that Franziska is depicted as being a person uniquely suited to bring each of these diametrically opposed role-players back to a higher self-unity. Schafheutlin determines to liberate himself from a sterile domestic situation, with the ideal of harmonising his public and private selves through life with Franziska. It is not so much that he changes as that "etwas von seinem ursprünglichen Wesen wieder zutage trat" (FL 401). Yet he remains so deeply associated with the authority which frustrates all Franziska's plans to give Neustadt a vitalising social centre that she commits herself instinctively to the relationship with Trojanowicz. In their year together,⁷⁶ as each comes to terms with their past through literary analysis of it, she hopes that Trojanowicz will 'write off' his negative self in the novel, that "je weiter (dein anderes Ich) sich entfernt, desto näher rückst du wieder dir selbst" (FL 537). It is when this hope proves illusory, when his "innere Erstarrung" becomes manifest (FL 501), that Franziska considers the possibility of a new "kluge Synthese" (FL 582), in

Neustadt and in partnership with Schafheutlin, but this is of course where the novel breaks off.

In Buridans Esel, Erp's "Persönlichkeitsverlust" is indicated by the way in which, after he becomes 'established', he never puts more than part of himself into his various roles as "Chef", "Familienautorität", "Familienvater", "Schwiegersohn" and so on (BE 14, 104). In his romantic encounters with Fräulein Broder, as in his eventual return to wife and family, he tries to present the most favourable image of himself. He has little enough success, as the narrator delights in showing in characteristic ironical fashion: as Erp loses his way in the labyrinth of the Berlin tenement in which his prospective mistress lives, his clumsy presence is announced to most of Fräulein Broder's neighbours, and his illusion of himself as a model of amorous discretion is sadly tarnished:

... er hatte sich so benommen, wie er war,
und gar nicht so, wie er gesehen werden
wollte. Sich ihr so zu zeigen, schien ihm,
hätte das Ende vor dem Anfang bedeutet, und
deshalb schwieg er sich über die ganze
Geschichte aus. BE 39-40

His wife is no more convinced when he creeps back to her months later, presenting "eine reumütige, erschöpfte, leidende (Miene)" as the "Mann, der bei Jericho unter die Räuber gefallen ist und Anspruch auf seinen barmherzigen Samaritaner hat" (BE 191).

Not surprisingly, the idea that role-playing is a natural part of everyday experience, involving neither radical experiments with the possibilities of the self nor any break in the continuity of personal development, is found only in Kant's Das Impressum. To the perceptive eyes of his wife Fran, Groth is always "dieser David" whom she knows intimately:

Und so war dieser David immer da; auch wenn
er fort war zu einer Konferenz in Äquatornähe

oder entschwunden in die Schlacht gegen sorgloses Mittelmaß; er blieb erkennbar als dieser David unter dem Staub und zwischen den Girlanden der Jahrestage, blieb erkennbar auf entfernten Tribünen und im Getümmel der Kongresse, Ausschüsse, Komitees, Jurys und Delegationen, blieb David, der Mann von Fran, auch unter hundert Charaktermasken ...

I 133

Such a rounded view of personality, like so much else in Kant's novel, stands in patent contradiction to the findings of his more critically minded contemporaries. The static 'Menschenbild' of the cultural politicians, to which Kant clings here, seems finally to have lost its credibility. Identity, as de Bruyn, Reimann and Wolf illustrate in their novels through a variety of effective examples, had been seriously threatened by historical, social and ideological factors in the socialist context of the GDR between 1945 and the early 1960's. The idea of the qualitative superiority of life in the GDR over life in the West is, however, preserved, since neither the organic concept of personality nor the ultimate goal of self-fulfilment through socialism are sacrificed. The nature of the self is thus still very much a political issue, but for the first time there is a significant degree of common ground between writers in East and West Germany in the priority they give to the problematic aspects of identity.

THE URBAN CONTEXT OF CONTEMPORARY SOCIALISM

By the narrative present of the middle 1960's, as the GDR gained impressively in economic strength and technological sophistication, the language of 'Gemeinschaft' and 'Heimat' was finally recognised to be ideologically inappropriate as well as creatively obsolete. In these novels, the liberating step is

taken beyond the anachronistic transposition of modern socialist society into a pre-industrial framework of small interlocking communities and unspoilt nature. Fictional analysis had by now revealed enough that was disjointed, contradictory and counter-productive in the GDR's development to make it obvious that concepts overladen with associations of continuity and stability were better avoided - indeed, they could be seen as standing in the way of a convincing depiction of what was qualitatively new about East German society. The progress achieved since the Bitterfeld novels is marked by the absence of patently inauthentic central characters protectively cocooned by nature, home and the socialist community, like Rita in Der geteilte Himmel and Balla in Spur der Steine. Significantly, this refusal to make use of ideological cliché in the depiction of spheres of which the authors had insufficient subjective experience meant, at least temporarily, the disappearance of the worker-hero and his environment from serious fiction. Instead, there is much more foreground emphasis upon working environments not far removed from those of most full-time writers - the newspaper office, the library, the town-planning department, the classroom - as well as upon their own immediate creative problems. East German fiction thus moves into the sophisticated, urban world of the professionally qualified minority, and becomes correspondingly cut off from nature, the seasons and the organic community.

The common feature in the career pattern of the central characters is the move from a rural or small-town background to the city as an important step on the path to maturity. David Groth makes a decisive break with home after his father's suicide in 1943, moving quickly from his apprenticeship with the gunsmith in Berlin as peace is restored to begin his long involvement with

the Neue Berliner Rundschau. For the others, educational reasons predominate: Karl Erp, like Groth's wife-to-be Fran, moves to the metropolis around 1950, the one to train as a librarian, the other as a photographer; Christa Wolf's narrator and Christa T. study together in Leipzig in the early 1950's, then also live for a time in Berlin; Franziska Linkerhand studies architecture in an unspecified city a few years later. The home environment they leave behind is, to the extent it is described at all, generally parochial and restrictive, and is not seen to represent their 'roots' in any significant way. Where it has had a more positive formative influence, as in the case of David Groth or Christa T., the continuity has been broken by the effects of death or the division of Germany. The only novel in which contact with the past is seen to be maintained is Buridans Esel, in which Erp's feelings as he returns to his native village of Alt-Schradow are as ambivalent as they are in most other respects:

Das Dorf war für ihn ein Sack unnützen Krams, den man auf die Flucht mitgenommen hat: Er hindert, man verflucht ihn, aber die Kraft zum Wegwerfen fehlt. Deshalb seine Sehnsucht nach der Arbeit auf dem Lande, aber auch seine Angst davor, deshalb sein Rückzug an die Peripherie der Stadt, aber auch seine Sentimentalität auf der Heimfahrt. BE 148

Although Erp, following his father's death, comes to a less woolly appreciation of what family continuity means to him, the need for independent self-awareness is generally seen in these novels to be stronger than the need to preserve strong links with the native community. David Groth's comments on "böses Erbe" (I 36) and the tenaciousness of outmoded values illustrate the point: historically, the community has been a repressive force, a constant threat to individuality and progress, in the shape of "das Ungewohnte, das einsame Neue, das abweichende Talent, das verstörend Andere" (I 304). (Kant, however, still expects his

reader to differentiate between bourgeois and proletarian communities.)

The relative lack of contact the protagonists have with home and nature after forming their distinctive selves in the city suggests a more positive view of urban culture than was previously possible under the dualistic conception of 'Gemeinschaft' and 'Gesellschaft'. There is now also the major problem of introducing socialist culture into what are seen to be country backwaters. Erp may cherish a dreamy notion of "Leben und Arbeit auf dem Lande, wo die Kulturrevolution noch merklich Revolutionäres hatte, wo es war, als setze man in eine Brache den Pflug, wo man mit den Menschen auf du und du stand" (BE 123), but the thought of abandoning his life in Berlin for this, even with the genuinely committed Fräulein Broder, is unpalatable for him. Franziska Linkerhand, on the other hand, determined to start a fresh life by breaking decisively with her past, accepts the bleakness and monotony of life in the eastern provinces in the pioneering spirit, but under no illusions that communal warmth can be easily achieved in such virgin territory. The small town in Mecklenburg to which Christa T. and Justus move has preserved a rigid class system and is riddled with corruption. The pettiness and mediocrity of this existence threatens to destroy the sensitivities of the newcomers, especially when Justus finds himself falsely accused of embezzlement and professional negligence. Christa T. feels utterly trapped in this "toten Kreis" and almost loses her sense of self under the strain - "Sie sah sich in eine unendliche Menge von tödlich banalen Handlungen und Phrasen aufgelöst" (CT 199). For this "Waldschwärmerin" of earlier years (CT 12), nature and society seem at times to enter into the polar opposition of the Romantic

era, since the unspoilt environment of forests, sea and Mecklenburg lakes helps to restore the damage which a stagnant society inflicts upon her personality. The fear that little has changed since the 19th century haunts Nachdenken Uber Christa T., with "Poesie" and "Persönlichkeit" at risk in "eine von Niedergangstendenzen und Epigonentum gezeichnete Zeit" (CT 121), just as Christa T. saw them to be in the age of Theodor Storm - although it should be stressed that Wolf does show a newly critical, liberating atmosphere establishing itself in the GDR of the 1960's. She still comes close to attributing a metaphysical quality to man's relationship with nature, but has moved significantly away from the superficialities of the benevolent organic community.

This does not mean the abandonment of the notion of community altogether: it is still stressed by Kant and de Bruyn that the superiority of East German society is directly related to its coherence as a state through the encouragement of the co-operative spirit in every sphere of work or leisure activity. Community, in other words, is now of an institutional rather than an organic nature. While the uncomplicated team-spirit of the industrial brigades in the Bitterfeld novels is no longer evident, productive harmony still reigns in the Neue Berliner Rundschau and the public library. Individuals may appear to be irreconcilably different, yet wise leadership, with which the Party is fully identified, moulds them into an effective whole. This is most neatly depicted in Das Impressum, despite the obvious multiplicity of functions which need to be integrated to ensure the successful planning, production and distribution of a leading magazine. Sectional disputes are ironed out without difficulty, the idiosyncracies of Kant's typically caricatured journalists are always eventually compatible, and democracy prevails at every level. Although the

'Oberste Abteilung' (a euphemism for the 'Politbüro') frequently sees fit to interfere with articles on ideological grounds, and bitter exchanges ensue, there is continuing broad agreement on long-term aims. The journalist's goal of being "umsichtig, eindringend und unbeirrt auf die Wahrheit hin" (I 246) is not viewed as problematic once the bureaucratic restrictiveness of the early 1950's has been overcome. Groth, as chief editor, takes a personal interest in all his staff, and knows them well outside their roles as employees. The magazine is thus more than just a "Betrieb": those who work for it grow in stature as their product builds up its reputation and serves the socialist cause (I 212f.).

The pyramid of power functions effectively here, right up to the 'Oberste Abteilung'. Groth has close personal relations with many leading Party members - proletarian veterans like Xaver Frank, 'Kutschen-Meyer', and Fritze Andermann, and rigid ideologues like Johanna Müntzer, who are all 'Vorbilder' for him despite his awareness of their individual limitations. On the threshold of elevation to their ranks himself, Groth is confident that popular mistrust of 'unsere Oberen' arises only from an obsolete view of authority, and can easily be overcome by a process of education (I 35f.).

De Bruyn presents a similarly unified image of "unsere verständige Gesellschaft" (BE 163), if on a more modest scale. Although he undermines conventional ideas of the hero and the happy ending, all is basically well with his fictional library, and its problems - like Erp's extra-marital liaison with his young colleague - are sensitively dealt with by senior ministry officials like Fred Mantek, who is an old friend as well as a "Vorbild" (BE 125). De Bruyn may be felt to play down the extent of his mentor's influence, by describing him as a "reitende(r)

Bote() " (BE 171) as he arrives with a scheme to save Erp from exile to the provinces, at a time when Erp is already retreating from his dynamic new relationship into the comfortable routines of old. This is however no more than the healthy ironisation of mentor-figures who take on the role of benevolent destiny too deliberately, familiar since Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre, and does not detract from the overall well-being of the fictional world.

Far less of this implicit confidence in the achievement of "eine() auf den Menschen orientierte() Gesellschaft" (BE 173) by the middle 1960's is found in Franziska Linkerhand and Nachdenken Über Christa T. Everything about Neustadt in Reimann's novel seems as provisional as the narrator's own life at this stage. The basic conflict between functionalism and the pursuit of a new quality of life is as yet insoluble and constantly causes destructive frictions in the town-planning office. Economic pressures make cheapness and quantity the criteria for house-building and result in the impoverished existence of most of the new citizens of Neustadt. Those who, like Franziska, know that a living environment which is not planned with regard to the multiplicity of individual and social needs will cause at least as many problems as it eliminates, make depressingly little impact on an inflexible bureaucratic machine. The point may have been reached here, as in Nachdenken Über Christa T., where it becomes a moral imperative to confront the 'Tatsachenmenschen' before they do irreparable damage to the imaginative and creative faculties of the individual. To retreat from such conflicts into the generalities of community achievement seems, on the evidence of these two novels, no longer justifiable for a society now firmly established, but at a crucial stage of its development. If, as Wolf had directly experienced at the Eleventh Plenum in

1965, the Party leadership was itself too heavily weighted towards the functionalist position to be a genuinely unifying force, then it is hardly coincidental that there is no affirmation of the Party, or any other institutional grouping, in her novel. The collective 'Wir' of her narrator is, as indicated above, a more subtle and discriminating one. Franziska Linkerhand's longing to be more tangibly integrated into society increases towards the end of Reimann's novel - the sound of some favourite jazz music in a Berlin street after the tensions of a housing conference is enough to release it:

... ich empfand eine starke Sehnsucht, bei diesen Leuten, Studenten vermutlich, dort oben zu sein, oder mich unlösbar einer Familie, Freunden, einer Landschaft, dem Land verbunden zu fühlen, und ich dachte, was ich je gearbeitet habe, sei dieser Sehnsucht entsprungen, dem Wunsch nach dem Aufgehoben-Sein, das ich noch nicht, das ich noch immer nicht erreicht hatte. FL 580-1

Otherwise, she too is able to regard her independence as a productive condition and not as an indication of some lack of maturity, as it would have been viewed in earlier 'Entwicklungsromane'.

Even the continuing dependence of Kant and de Bruyn on some aspects of community cannot disguise the broad shift of emphasis towards an urban perspective on human relations. The city as a melting-pot for new ideas, as the setting for self-liberation from the parochialism of the rural community, as the natural environment of the specialists upon whom much of the GDR's future depends - all of this is now recognised as central to the understanding of the socialism of the 1960's. It is also the setting for the analysis of persistent conflicts and of less dynamic social features like alienation and the growth of a new class-structure.

Nowhere are the opportunities and the problems associated with the urbanisation of socialist society more revealingly juxtaposed than in Reimann's Neustadt. Franziska arrives with all the idealism of the young graduate that human relations can be transformed in a planned environment:

Das ist ein Abenteuer, ein Wagnis, von dem die großen Architekten geträumt haben: eine neue Stadt bauen, ein paar hundert Hektar Land, auf denen man eine städtebauliche Idee verwirklichen kann - und wem hat man je eine solche Chance geboten? Niemeyer mit seinem Brasilia, Corbusier, den Kiruna-Leuten ... FL 191

For her, towns are "Organismen ... die für das Zusammenleben so wichtig sind wie eine gemeinsame Sprache, Gesetze, moralische Normen" (FL 270). What she finds, however, is "ein städtebauliches Debakel" (FL 351), a "Labyrinth aus Beton, anonymen Straßen und Wohnsilos für eine geplante und statisch erfassbare Menge von Bewohnern mit ihren eingeplanten, kaum erforschten Bedürfnissen" (FL 238). In her frequent arguments with Schafheutlin, the economic and social priorities, the collective and individualistic views of man are thrashed out, but the "kluge Synthese" lies somewhere in the remote future. Her brief experience of Neustadt shows the cost of this urban experiment in human terms: the aggressions and the alienation of individuals and families who are "zusammengepfercht" (FL 157) in featureless blocks of flats; the boredom of a town where the only social entertainment is the Saturday night dance and there are no basic amenities; the symptomatic violence, vandalism and excessive drinking, and the alarming suicide rate, which includes her own close friend Gertrud. It is only in an emergency that a spontaneous community spirit emerges, when neighbours come together to deliver a baby after the ambulance has lost its way in the dark, anonymous streets.

For the resourceful, well-educated Franziska, there may be a stimulating quality in the new situation of being "fremd in einer fremden Stadt" (FL 159), but not for the resentful workers, some of whom have been forcibly removed from Berlin to Neustadt after the erection of the Wall (FL 147). When she embarks almost single-handed on a campaign to get funds for a civic centre, she receives considerable support from "Leute, die sich eine Heimat wünschen" (FL 577). Yet the continuing lack of progress on this vital issue is finally instrumental in persuading Franziska to leave Neustadt with Trojanowicz. The first years of the new town can thus be seen as far from successful, and it appears that, for Reimann, the GDR's future depended significantly on whether places like Neustadt could quickly create a new kind of communal identity and establish reasonable urban amenities.

Neustadt may seem worlds away from East Berlin, with its proletarian traditions and metropolitan culture, but there are common problems. Some of the most graphic scenes in Buridans Esel are those in which Fräulein Broder's environment is depicted. She lives in one of the city's old "Mietskasernen", with its own labyrinth of staircases and courtyards, in which Erp hopelessly loses his way when he first visits her. The building is sadly antiquated for the needs of modern society and has a generally disreputable air, with hints of criminality and prostitution, but there is something vital about its very venerability. Its location near the heart of much of Berlin's cultural life since the 18th century makes its survival fascinating when so many more of the GDR's links with its 'bürgerliches Erbe' have been lost. Yet the problem is that many of its proletarian inhabitants, for all their uniqueness as 'characters', have up to now failed to change their attitudes in acknowledgement of the new socialist order:

... dort oben hatte die neue Ordnung noch nicht gesiegt, dort herrschten noch immer das Chaos und die Gesetzlosigkeit der offiziell längst erledigten Nachkriegszeit ... BE 37

Indeed, the "Hausgemeinschaft", in the name of which some of the younger tenants mischievously arrest Karl Erp, on what seem like old-fashioned moral grounds after he leaves FrHulein Broder's flat late one night, is more of an institutional structure than a force for transforming the values of its inhabitants (BE 80).

The serious problems of Neustadt and proletarian Berlin reflect the limits of the GDR's success in changing the attitudes of its ordinary working-class citizens by the 1960's, but also point to the wider issue of the extent to which a meaningful community consciousness can be achieved in technologically advanced societies. As de Bruyn and Reimann both note, it is the era of the "Fernsehgesellschaft" (BE 127), and television itself has brought about major changes in social habits, making city-dwellers in particular blind to the cultural opportunities around them:

... die meisten Berliner ... (verkriechen) sich heutzutage, genau wie die Landleute, nach der Arbeit in ihre **Wohnungen**..., um sich durchs Fernsehen weltweite Kontakte vorzaubern zu lassen. BE 20

The liberating aspects of city life are scarcely evident to this majority: the dominating experience is the paradoxical isolation amidst the "Großstadtanonymität" (BE 20). Neustadt, of course, is so much worse off because there is not even the illusion of alternative entertainment, and has become, in Trojanowicz's view, "eine Siedlung von Fernsehöhlen" (FL 351). In contrast to the close friendships said to exist outside working hours amongst the staff of the Neue Berliner Rundschau, de Bruyn describes Erp's desperate efforts, in the years before the widespread availability of television, to break down "das ungeschriebene Großstadtgesetz

der absoluten Trennung von Arbeits- und Wohnplatz" (BE 21). Thus, for the many lacking the will and the personal resources to overcome these obstacles, the idea of the "Großstadtparadies" (BE 186) is entirely misleading. On the other hand, when intelligent and energetic young people give up their natural urban surroundings to assist in the cultural revolution in the provinces, there is a considerable element of self-sacrifice involved. In one of Franziska's blackest moments in Neustadt, she finds herself longing for the features of city life which are so glaringly absent there:

Ich liebe Städte.
Irgendwo auf der Welt muß es Städte geben und
den Widerschein ihrer Lichter am Himmel und
Trottoirs und Menschengedränge, in das du
dich wie ein Schwimmer wirfst ... FL 250

Such a range of attitudes suggests that there is something akin to a class barrier, based on educational attainment and job-responsibilities, separating those for whom city life is an enriching experience and those for whom it is alienating and harmful to their personality. The proletarian environment of de Bruyn's "Mietkaserne" is still in some ways reminiscent of the overwhelming metropolis in the work of Döblin or Hauptmann, and yet for the intellectuals and economic leaders with whom the novels are primarily concerned, the opportunities and stresses are rather more similar to those of contemporary Western society. The trappings of affluence are of course less widely available, but there is some recognition that the urban elite who accept the main burden of responsibility for the GDR's continued growth now have greater access to consumer goods and comforts. Even though this clearly has the effect of blurring the previously rigid distinctions between bourgeois and socialist life-styles, it is a significant aspect of contemporary society which can no longer be

ignored. Karl Erp is of course the most problematical member of this new elite. The acquisition of a villa in the 'Spreesiedlung' positively encourages the tendencies towards complacency and conformism in this recently appointed member of the establishment - a fact which might serve to confirm long-standing socialist assumptions about the relationship between a luxurious environment and moral decadence, since Erp's career seems exemplary up to this point. On top of this, there is de Bruyn's satirical exaggeration of the intolerability for Erp of the noise, dirt and primitive amenities of Fräulein Broder's tenement. Yet, as suggested in the previous section, the problem is more deeply rooted in Erp's past, in tendencies which he has suppressed rather than mastered in the 'Aufbau' years. When the narrator finally has Erp reduce his dilemma to the old classical formula of "die zwei Seelen, ach, in seiner Brust" (BE 182), his lack of genuine growth in earlier years is exposed.

In fact, neither property-owning nor affluence are seen to be per se reprehensible. The house which Christa T. and Justus design and build beside their lake in Mecklenburg seems at first a dubious proposition to the narrator, who undoubtedly speaks for most socialists in the GDR in having "etwas gegen eigene Häuser" (CT 191). Yet a project requiring tremendous determination and patience, in a state where building materials and fittings are desperately scarce, is later seen to have a very positive value in consolidating Christa T.'s badly shaken identity:

... nun lag es doch klar auf der Hand und war staunenswert, daß dieses ganze Haus nichts weiter war als eine Art Instrument, das sie benutzen wollte, um sich inniger mit dem Leben zu verbinden, ein Ort, der ihr von Grund auf vertraut war, weil sie ihn selbst hervor-gebracht hatte, und von dessen Boden aus sie sich allem Fremden stellen konnte. CT 193

More affirmatively still, the privileged life led by de Bruyn's Fred Mantek in his "fernbeheizte() Luxuswohnung" in the Karl-Marx-Allee (BE 134) presents no threat to his outstanding commitment to the state, and is seen to be no less than he deserves. This effective social separation of the elite is, however, still resisted in some quarters. The Groths, for example, are more egalitarian in their modest tenancy in a new block of flats, where the occupants seem to represent a fair social cross-section, while Franziska Linkerhand displays the fundamental hostility of the younger generation towards preferential treatment for any group within the state (except that she is later grateful to receive priority treatment in moving within Neustadt to an older, more pleasant apartment).

Other factors also contribute to the isolation of the intelligensia - a situation which is both a cause of concern to them individually and often provokes resentment against them. As highly qualified specialists in a situation where there is still a wide educational gulf separating them from most other workers, they have to cope with resentments and prejudices which could be even more socially divisive. Franziska often faces this antagonism in Neustadt: "... daß die Intelligenz alles besser hat, daran hat man sich doch schon gewöhnt. Euch blasen sie noch Staubzucker in den Hintern" (FL 247). Such reproaches positively spur her on to break down the educational barriers, to the extent that she spends half her leisure time giving free tuition to her neighbours, but she is seen as exceptional amongst her professional colleagues in this determination to overcome these new class differences. Christa T. finds it much easier, and more enjoyable, to communicate with the simple farmers of the local LPG than with the class-conscious townspeople nearer at hand. As Justus

explains to the narrator:

Ihr erzählten die Bauern alles, ich weiß nicht, wieso ... (sie) saß an der Theke und zog den Bauern ihre Geschichten aus der Nase. Die ließen sich nicht bitten, weil sie merkten, daß sie sich nicht verstellte, sondern wirklich vor Lachen beinahe vom Stuhl kippte, wenn sie ihr von Küster Hinrichsens Hochzeit erzählten ... CT 218

The preservation of this level of communication is vital, but is only brought about by this conscious striving against the distancing effects of specialisation. Kant gives a deceptive impression of boldness in using the word "Entfremdung" in regard to Groth's position as part of the elite, only to withdraw it immediately for 'tactical' reasons:

... die große Cheffrustration, was das angeht, so ist Schärferes dazu zu sagen und im selben Atemzug auch etwas zu jenem famosen Problem, das ihr [i.e. Groth's 'selves'] nur deshalb nicht Entfremdung von der Arbeiterklasse nennt, weil ihr die Prügel fürchtet, die sich rasch zuzieht, wer an der falschen Stelle von Entfremdung spricht. I 375-6

For Groth, the problem has the dual aspect, that the state's leaders are overburdened with responsibilities and thus a prey to the manifold stresses summed up in the word "Managerkrankheit" (I 355), and suffer at the same time from being cut off from the community at large. Indeed, Kant often seems to be arguing that the isolation enforced by an elevated sense of duty cancels out the personal freedoms which intellectuals like Groth acquire in rising above the restrictions of their home environment.

This could, however, be viewed as special pleading for the political leadership, and should not obscure the fact that these novels are otherwise very much concerned with the dimension of personal freedom to which the specialists - in marked contrast to the unskilled workers - of the 1960's now have access. In addition to bearing their heavy responsibilities for, it should be stressed, the moral as well as the economic health of the GDR,

they do now have greater opportunities to fulfil themselves as individual socialists. Their urban awareness of the need to tolerate, and positively encourage, individuality once a secure socialist consciousness has been established has, moreover, led them to develop yardsticks for self-realisation which go far beyond the conventional notion of productive self-integration into an already existent socialist community. The more inappropriate the old idea of 'Gemeinschaft', whether in institutional or in organic form, appears, the more formidable the challenge to realise the dream of the 'whole man' which unites the classical and Marxist traditions in German culture.

THE DREAM OF WHOLENESS

It is especially appropriate in the context of this study that Christa Wolf should have prefaced Nachdenken Uber Christa T. with the fundamental question raised in Johannes R. Becher's Tagebuch 1950: "Was ist das: Dieses Zu-sich-selber-Kommen des Menschen?".⁷⁷ The section of the diary from which this is taken is one of those sub-titled by Becher "Aus dem Leben eines bürgerlichen Menschen unserer Zeit", in the evident expectation that the transitional period for socialists like himself of middle-class origins would be a brief one, before the achievement of total integration into the socialist community, and with it the dream of personal wholeness. It was therefore highly revealing that the unforeseen problematical aspects of identity and community, which arose as the GDR became a reality, should provoke the same unanswered question a generation later. The fact that Wolf returns to it is a clear reminder that there has been no abandonment of the highest aspirations for the quality of

individual life under socialism, and implies the recognition that the inescapable priorities of establishing the GDR as a viable political and economic entity had previously allowed little scope for the many-sided needs of the individuals committed to that task.

The distance between 'finding oneself' as a socialist and realising one's human potential in a totally benevolent environment was now seen to be extensive and, for the first time, in need of critical scrutiny. The 'Anderswerden' was only the start of a long struggle which would necessarily involve the reform of political structures as well as the unflagging determination of the individual to avoid compromise and self-reduction. As Wolf suggested in her "Selbstinterview", "die realen Grundlagen für die Selbstverwirklichung des Individuums" had been established through the introduction of "sozialistische Produktionsverhältnisse". There was, however, still the same - and productive - "tiefe Unruhe der menschlichen Seele" which Becher had regarded in 1950 as "nichts anderes als das Witterungsvermögen dafür und die Ahnung dessen, daß der Mensch noch nicht zu sich selber gekommen ist".⁷⁸ Wolf's concern was that the process of critical differentiation of the GDR's development, got under way in the 1960's and aimed at refining the sensibilities of individual socialists, should now be pursued as a matter of urgency:

Unsere Gesellschaft wird immer differenzierter. Differenzierter werden auch die Fragen, die ihre Mitglieder ihr stellen - auch in Form der Kunst. Entwickelter wird die Aufnahmebereitschaft vieler Menschen für differenzierte Antworten. Das Subjekt, der sozialistische Mensch, lebt immer souveräner in einer Gesellschaft, die er als sein Werk empfindet: nicht nur denkt und weiß, sondern empfindet. 79

This was, in ideological terms, a much more challenging line of argument than that running through the Bitterfeld fiction. There.

the personal crises for which East German society was seen to shoulder at least part of the responsibility - those of Ole Bienkopp, Werner Horrath and Manfred Herrfurth - were seen mainly as isolated cases of parochial vindictiveness, moral inflexibility, bureaucratic incompetence and the like, and only tentatively as indicators of deep-rooted structural problems. For most of the other characters, fulfilment in the sphere of personal relationships still harmonised neatly with productivity at work to lay the foundations for an enduring self-unity. Now, the relationship between the individual and social authority - almost inevitably in the form of the Party - was being elevated by Wolf on to a more complex, even antagonistic plane, and all the convenient fictional formulae for self-realisation were being studiously avoided.

The same cannot, however, be said of Das Impressum and Buridans Esel, which are actually in some respects less critical of society and the Party's role than the Bitterfeld fiction. Kant, resorting readily (as Neutsch had done for the motto of Spur der Steine) to the Brechtian line that "die Mühlen der Gebirge" had been left behind in 1945, so that the remaining problems were mainly "die der Ebenen" (I 19), suggests that there are no effective hindrances to David Groth's self-realisation once he has ironed out his attitudes to Party authority in the late 1950's. The discrepancy between the Marxist ideal and the East German reality is not a cause for particular concern:

Wollte man dem Sozialismus am Zeuge flicken,
könnte man ihm vorwerfen, daß er das Reich der
Träume beschnitten hatte. Beschnitten oder
besiedelt oder bebaut, jedenfalls mit Wirk-
lichkeit besetzt und so verändert. I 105

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Groth's utopian dreams are for the victory of the socialist cause throughout the world rather than about how wholeness can be

achieved under prevailing conditions in his own land. Indeed, it might be felt that the additional chapter included in the revised version of Das Impressum, on the life of Groth's contemporary Gerhard Rikow,⁸⁰ is intended as an indirect commentary upon Christa Wolf's absorption in the unfulfilled aspirations of the unknown Christa T. Rikow too has just had his life tragically cut short by leukaemia, and Groth - recognising the exemplary quality of a career dedicated to the economically vital task of industrialising East German agriculture, of a man who became a government minister at a remarkably early age - considers how he might write a suitable biographical article for the Rundschau. Rikow's 'qualities' are unambiguous: he has been both "ein() unverbesserliche(r) Optimist" and "ein tätiger Träumer" (I 433-4), and there is no hint of even the minor discrepancies between the life of a leading "Persönlichkeit" and the private self which Groth finds in his own case (I 7-10, 360-1). In the event, the article is not begun, although Groth might well feel already that his deliberations have sketched in the essential detail. For Kant, the personality of the artist is clearly less important than the achievements of the economic leader - writers have the pragmatic task of boosting the morale of the working-class from a partisan viewpoint, and should above all, like the admirable Bienhofer (modelled superficially on Erwin Strittmatter), preserve their links with the people and the Party organisation (I 357-8, 379-80).

In Buridans Esel, the question of self-realisation is not taken for granted in this way, but certainly reduced to the central figure's capacity to fulfil his evident potential within the benevolent framework of "unsere verständige Gesellschaft". The onus is on Karl Erp to reintegrate his personality, not on

society to correct the kind of deformations acknowledged in the work of Wolf and Reimann. The fact that Erp is capable of attaining wholeness is emphasised in the account of his love-making with Fräulein Broder:

Da wurden zwei eins,
spürten einander, fügten sich ineinander,
flossen ineinander, jauchzten, schrien miteinander,
hatten endlich nicht mehr das Gefühl,
nur Hälfte zu sein, wurden ein Ganzes
und hatten doch nie zuvor die Macht und Herrlichkeit
ihres eignen Ichs so sehr empfunden. BE 107

The signs of resurgence are there too in Erp's new-found pleasure in his working life (BE 140), but he finally founders in a situation where society allows him an unhindered freedom of choice. It is a definite weakness of the novel that the ultimate issues of personality development are not placed in a dialectical relationship with the state of socialist society in the middle of the 1960's.

In fact, only in Franziska Linkerhand and Nachdenken Über Christa T. is this relationship between individual growth and society effectively conveyed. Neither protagonist can approach wholeness in an environment which in various respects alienates them, and both refuse a self-restricting accommodation with the Party's authority-structures and economic priorities which would lead to the denial of vital aspects of their personality. Significantly, the profound "Unruhe" which grips each of these apparently frail women long after their basic socialist identity is assured has a uniquely productive influence on those with whom they come into contact. To Wolf's narrator, Christa T. offers "das Beispiel für die unendlichen Möglichkeiten, die noch in uns lagen" (CT 210-11), while those involved with Franziska during her energetic year in Neustadt - Schafheutlin, Gertrud, Jazwauk, and Trojanowicz in particular - are confronted in different ways

with the one-sidedness of their existence.

One-sidedness, that loss of inner unity when the self is split into a succession of disparate roles, when working and private life are divorced, is dangerously prevalent. It is not of course synonymous with career-specialisation, which is seen to be essential in individual and social terms: it is rather that the pressures towards outer conformism are, as indicated earlier, so severe that few people have preserved their personality or realised their unique potential through the first twenty years of East German socialism. The lack of a 'Vorbild' in either novel, like the absence of fictional figures incarnating Party authority (even though many of the characters are sincere SED members) point to the limited progress towards self-perfection by this stage. It also leaves the extent of the Party's contribution to refining the sensibilities of East German citizens - whatever its undoubted achievements in the economic field and elsewhere - in an ambivalent light.

Although there is an unmistakable confidence running through both novels that important qualitative improvements were becoming possible by the middle 1960's, the GDR appears hitherto to have been, like Neustadt, essentially 'provisorisch' as far as its capacity to foster the pursuit of the ultimate human goal is concerned. Franziska, Christa T. and their friends are undoubtedly privileged citizens, part of the gifted minority involved at least partially in creative labour, and yet their experience of wholeness has been, at best, fragmentary and short-lived - Franziska in the moments when, for all her doubts, she is 'ungeteilt' in her work or totally at one with Trojanowicz; Christa T. with family and friends on the North Sea coast (CT 188-9) or engrossed in her writing (CT 214-7), rare occasions

when she can say 'Ich' in the face of her fundamental uncertainties about identity. How much more difficult, by implication, must it have been for all those less privileged to grow into harmonious, many-sided personalities.

Wholeness is thus taken decisively out of the sphere of propagandistic simplification as to what the GDR could have achieved in human terms since 1945, and viewed again - as it had been by the Weimar classicists and Marx alike - in its long-term, ideal dimensions. In consequence, the continuity between the philosophical deliberations of Johannes R. Becher, in his Tagebuch 1950 as in Abschied, and the conception of Nachdenken Über Christa T. or Franziska Linkerhand, becomes evident on another level. The dream of self-realisation, still remote on account of the imperfections of socialist society - however much it had by now developed beyond the version with which Becher was confronted in Russian exile - could again only be effectively pursued on an aesthetic plane. The special role of the writer and his literary product, defended, albeit fitfully, by Becher against the Party's predilection for a purely affirmative literature, and reasserted by the next generation against the original intentions of the 'Bitterfelder Weg', is a fundamental tenet for the Christa Wolf of Nachdenken Über Christa T. It is a central theme of her essay "Lesen und Schreiben" that the creation of significant 'Prosa' arises from the author's "Sehnsucht nach Selbstverwirklichung": writing may prove to be the only way to give expression to a complex awareness of self - "der Zwang des Aufschreibens, als vielleicht einzige Möglichkeit des Autors, sich nicht zu verfehlen".⁸¹ Literature alone can record those fragmentary moments of heightened self-unity which characters like Franziska and Christa T. experience empirically, as the author liberates

himself from time and space, and blends past, present and future into a coherent whole. The enormous intellectual efforts involved bring about a transcendence of individual limitations - "Über sich selbst hinaus ... wachsen" - but are also, paradoxically, the means of self-discovery - "sich ... erreichen".⁸² Furthermore, the opportunity of living through the self-realisation of other creative personalities in their subjectively authentic prose - Büchner in his Lenz fragment or Dostoyevsky in Crime and Punishment - can be highly productive for the reader's process of self-development.

It was in this spirit that Wolf chose to focus attention upon the economically and politically insignificant life of Christa T., and reveal the exemplary quality of her striving for selfhood behind the lack of career commitment, the instability of her domestic situation, the desire for private property and all the other apparently negative features of her existence. Christa T.'s creative writing may appear insubstantial and unsuitable for publication, but it has grown out of the highest human striving - "dieser lange, nicht enden wollende Weg zu sich selbst" - firmly rooted in her East German environment but also transcending its present limitations in the "viele Leben" and the "mehrere Zeiten" which it embraces (CT 221-2). Her artistic vocation is no freely chosen one which can be laid aside at will - she is uniquely equipped to record the fundamental experience of her generation in its extraordinary complexity. As the narrator's definition of Christa T.'s temperament suggests, her basic "Sehnsucht" arises from an irrepressible "Sucht, zu sehen" (CT 112), and she is equally addicted to the search for meaning in life - "sinnsüchtig ... deutungsüchtig" (CT 180). Such elevated claims for her progress towards wholeness through the medium of

literature are open to the criticism that the excerpts from her writing quoted by the narrator give little indication of any entitlement to be regarded in the same literary context as a Büchner or a Dostoyevsky. This anomaly can really only be resolved if, as Heinrich Mohr has suggested, Wolf's novel itself, as the product of a remarkably kindred sensibility, is seen as representing the identity of Christa T. and the author on a higher creative level.⁸³

Reimann shows herself less inclined to isolate aesthetic progress towards self-knowledge from renewed social engagement, conscious perhaps of the weakness in Wolf's novel that the two processes are not seen to be of necessity inter-related. Franziska's period away from Neustadt, during which she writes her autobiographical novel, is full of self-doubts about the validity of her literary endeavours, making it at best a "Zeit der Besinnung" (FL 481) - although she suggests elsewhere, through references to figures as different as Marlowe and Chopin, that the highest justification of any existence comes with "schöpferische Leistung" (FL 472). In the end, she places her novel at society's disposal as a contribution to the vital quest for "die kluge Synthese zwischen Heute und Morgen, zwischen tristem Blockbau und heiter lebendiger Straße, zwischen dem Notwendigen und dem Schönen" (FL 582), with the implication that she can only begin the task of self-realisation once she returns to active involvement in Neustadt. There is, however, a grim irony in this contrast between the two novels and their authors, since Franziska rejoins the everyday struggle for a better life in the manner which was sadly denied to Brigitte Reimann, while Christa Wolf has continued since the publication of Nachdenken über Christa T. to demonstrate the courageous commitment to the

intellectual well-being of East German society which her heroine was prevented from developing by her premature death.

Of these two outstanding novels, the more aesthetically sophisticated Nachdenken Über Christa T. occupies the pivotal position in the progress of East German fiction. In continuing to treat the question of personal wholeness as a major theme, it stands firmly in the tradition of 'Bildung', as mediated for German socialist realism by Lukács and - subsequently - Becher, and still depends on their elevated view of the writer and of the totality attainable in the 'Kunstwerk'.⁸⁴ And yet the subjectivity of its focus, the open-endedness which breaks through the conventional framework of fictional totality, and the critical differentiation of character and environment within socialism, all suggest the need for a radical departure beyond this very tradition. It leaves East German prose finely poised, at the end of the Ulbricht era, between a cultural continuity threatening to become a hindrance to creative originality, and the Brechtian insistence that only "neue Formen" can effectively contain "die neuen Inhalte"⁸⁵ in an increasingly impenetrable modern world.

Nachdenken Über Christa T. represents a remarkable synthesis of the fundamental conflicting views on the form and function of socialist realist fiction, the culmination of some forty years of cultural-political debate and literary practice. In making authenticity the new keynote of East German prose, Wolf was bringing to an end a period which had seen so much well-intentioned recourse to outmoded models for depicting the individual and his relationship with society, that works of literary merit and critical force were no more than fortunate exceptions to the rule. The way now seemed clear for fruitful literary experimentation - on the assumption of course that the wholly unproductive phase

of 'Kulturpolitik' inaugurated in 1965 could be brought speedily to an end.

CONCLUSION

During a public discussion in the East Berlin 'Akademie der Künste' at the end of 1975, Christa Wolf felt able to look back upon four years in which the cultural climate in the GDR had undergone a decisive change. When she referred to the frustrations of a "Zeit, in der sehr massiv dumme, kunstfremde und feindliche Meinungen herrschen und immer und überall vertreten werden", it was unmistakably the period between the Eleventh Plenum and the ending of the Ulbricht era in 1971 which she had in mind. It was, by implication, the appointment of Erich Honecker to the post of First Secretary of the SED which marked the highly significant turning-point. The standing conflict between artists and the "offizielle Politik" was a thing of the past: it was now more accurate to think in terms of a mutually fruitful relationship binding together writers like herself and a discriminating "Öffentlichkeit", and she was already more confident that "der Kampf um den Realismus in der Kunst irgendwann aufhören oder leicht sein wird".¹

She had good reason to be optimistic. The assurance which Honecker had given the GDR's artists in his first months of office, that there would be "keine Tabus" for those whose point of departure was "(die) festen Positionen des Sozialismus" had been seen to be genuine in almost every respect.² A new, and highly talented, generation of prose writers had emerged in the first half of the 1970's, such as Jurek Becker, Volker Braun, Ulrich Plenzdorf, Klaus Schlesinger and Martin Stade.³ The creative work of the authors who had previously fought so hard to establish the highest standards of authenticity and integrity behind their fictional realism was perhaps less impressive, sometimes rather tentative, like Wolf's Unter den Linden (1974) or Fühmann's 22 Tage oder die Hälfte des Lebens (1973), sometimes too

reminiscent of earlier achievements, like Strittmatter's new volumes of stories or de Bruyn's Die Preisverleihung (1972). Yet, as Günter Kunert suggested in an interview in 1972, there had been in their recent past too little of the "gesellschaftliche() Kontinuität" essential to the production of important literature in the "große Formen", so that it was more advisable for them to set their sights upon more modest objectives.⁴ What they could, and did, do in the interim was to provide a wealth of fundamental insights, in remarkably frank interviews and articles, into ~~their~~ problems as writers over the previous two decades - insights which, as noted elsewhere in this study, have greatly contributed to the understanding of East Germany's literary development. The leading periodicals, especially Sinn und Form, acted as a forum for radical discussions on the increasingly critical role of literature in a stable socialist society, and the Seventh Writers' Congress late in 1973 further reflected this wind of change. It was acknowledged in well-informed circles in the Federal Republic that the West had nothing to compare, either qualitatively or in terms of its impact upon social and political life, with this stimulating literary debate.⁵

For all the unexpectedness and swiftness of this transformation, the continuity in the writers' central concern was equally striking. Their commitment to a new quality of realism was still inextricably bound up with the need to analyse why the still unquestioned goal of 'Selbstverwirklichung' remained well out of the grasp of most of the population, despite the GDR's dramatic progress in, for example, economic and sporting spheres in the 1970's. The writers' release from the cultural-political situation under which it had only been possible to describe the hindrances to self-realisation in the GDR in a gradual, circumspect

manner had anything but the imaginable effect of making them turn with relief to the sort of short-lived cults and trends which dominated much of the West German literature of the late 1960's and early 1970's. On the contrary, most East German prose writers renewed their determination to expose their fundamental moral objectives to an increasingly differentiated scrutiny. Wolf dismissed the idea that the question of how the individual becomes an integrated "moralisches Wesen" had lost any of its urgency: in stating that "die Problematik, die in diesem Themenkreis steckt ... reicht für die Literatur einer ganzen Epoche", she was speaking for most of her younger colleagues as well as her literary contemporaries.⁶

Although the uniquely complicated identity problems arising from an upbringing in the Third Reich continued to permeate the work of Wolf's generation, most notably in her own recent Kindheitsmuster (1976), the narrative emphasis was being shifted in what might be regarded as the most distinctive prose of the 1970's towards the situation of those whose formative experiences had been more or less entirely within the GDR. The time was, it seemed, ripe to scrutinise perhaps the only utopian conception from pre-war socialist literature to have survived the successive waves of fictional analysis of the reality of the GDR - the idea that self-development would be a relatively uncomplicated process for those whose sense of identity had always had a 'natural' socialist dimension. Psychological problems unforeseen in, say, the characterisation of Rita in Der geteilte Himmel or Fräulein Broder in Buridans Esel, were memorably articulated by the seventeen year old protagonist of the most popular work of these years, Ulrich Plenzdorf's Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.:

Den meisten von uns geht es so. Sie haben nichts gegen den Kommunismus. Kein einigermaßen

intelligenter Mensch kann heute was gegen den
Kommunismus haben. Aber ansonsten sind sie
dagegen. Zum Dafürsein gehört kein Mut. Mutig
will aber jeder sein. Folglich ist er dagegen. 7

It appeared through this and other probing fiction, such as Volker Braun's Das ungezwungene Leben Kasts (1972) and his shorter "Unvollendete Geschichte",⁸ that those who wield authority in the GDR had not yet succeeded in striking a balance between their aims of inculcating unshakable socialist values in the state's youth and the need felt by young people like Plenzdorf's Edgar Wibeau to assess the validity of these values through their own experience. They were able to establish a general feeling of identity and community in an unproblematical way, but progress beyond this was seen to depend substantially upon breaking through the hierarchical structure of a society which still tended to rate conformism more highly than critical participation. Wibeau's adolescent rebellion is against the narrow path of development laid down for the would-be 'Vorbild', directed too **overtly** towards immediate social productivity. Although his protest is in many respects immature and unspecific, and needs to be understood as such, it derives implicitly from the fear that he will never discover his full potential as an individual if he does not opt out, if only temporarily, of this one-sided emphasis upon 'Leistung'. The period of preoccupation with his private self which he seeks in the anonymity of Berlin proves in the event to have a socially productive dimension as well, since he ends up, in true activist spirit, inventing a paint-spraying machine for the brigade with which he has found temporary employment. The Heath Robinson absurdity of the machine itself may be a deliberate irony on Plenzdorf's part, yet the main point is that 'kämpferische Persönlichkeiten' like Wibeau naturally channel their energies into creative labour, and will in the long

term contribute much more to the state if they are granted a greater degree of individual freedom.⁹

In a literature which has set so much store upon its organic links with the aspirations of the Weimar classicists, and yet demonstrated how illusory it is to expect the values of another age to be realisable in an uncomplicated way in a modern socialist state, it was a distinctly healthy development to discover a belated suggestion of the spirit of 'Sturm und Drang', to which the mature humanism of Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre or Über die Ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen owed such a great deal. The analogy with Goethe's Werther which Plenzdorf's work develops on many levels serves to demonstrate more convincingly than almost anything before it that the relevance of the 'bürgerliches Erbe' for the GDR is a complex, dialectical one. It also indicates that considerable progress has been made over the intervening two hundred years towards the goal of individual self-realisation in socially productive activity.¹⁰ Equally, however, it confirms the conclusions reached by East Germany's leading novelists since the 1960's that it will be a formidable future achievement when the relationship between the individual and society begins to approach the ideal. Yet, as one contributor to the encouraging discussions on Die neuen Leiden des jungen W. suggested, the GDR's younger generation was capable of transforming what was still a constricting situation through its own potential 'Sturm und Drang':

Das emotional ungeheuer starke Bekenntnis zum Subjekt, der Geniekult, die Behauptung (bis Überschätzung) der eigenen Persönlichkeit - das sind einige der Punkte gewesen, die die Stürmer und Dränger der für sie rational überbetonten Aufklärung entgegengesetzten. Und unsere heutigen jungen Menschen stehen in einem ähnlichen Verhältnis zur Realität. Vollgepfropft mit dem Wissen der Väter, suchen

sie ihren eigenen, persönlichen Standpunkt zu sich und der Welt. Dazu brauchen sie - besser sage ich, dazu brauchen wir - ganz starke subjektive Anregungen und nicht so sehr - und schon gar nicht in der Kunst - Lehrmeisterei und rationelle Aufklärung darüber, wie wir die Welt zu begreifen haben. 11

Much still depended, however, on the authors' capacity to give the imaginative lead in this process, and on the Party leadership's continued readiness to preside over a dynamic and unpredictable public debate which would inevitably have serious political implications.

It still seemed at the end of 1975 that this last major revision of the understanding of identity and community which the theorists of Socialist Realism had culled from such diverse sources could proceed impressively in the wake of provocatively open-ended works like Die neuen Leiden and Braun's "Unvollendete Geschichte". But then the Party's perennial fear that too much critical enlightenment too quickly could threaten the very foundations of the GDR seemed to reassert itself. The outward signs, since the Autumn of 1976, have been the expulsion of Wolf Biermann and the harassment which has brought about the reluctant exile in quick succession of other offending authors such as Reiner Kunze, Bernd Jentzsch and Sarah Kirsch. The reaction to Biermann's expulsion, the unprecedented appeal by the majority of leading figures in cultural life to the Party leadership to reconsider its decision, and the fact that it apparently fell on deaf ears, showed that the constraining force of the "offizielle Politik" on literature could still be as powerful as it had ever been, if the occasion was seen to demand it.¹²

Yet, if the evidence of the past thirty years is a reliable guide to future developments, these latest efforts to restore the façade of social order and harmony will have no more than a

temporary retarding effect on the literary reflection of contemporary reality. The preoccupation of East German authors with their changing experience of identity, community and continuity seems bound to be maintained - however obsessive it may at times appear - since it also serves such a crucial social function in the GDR. With the ideological climate again uncertain, Christa Wolf's prediction that the analysis of the hindrances to self-realisation will remain the primary task of prose writers like herself for the foreseeable future has a new, and ominous, ring of truth to it.

FOOTNOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. "Der Befreier", in Von der Größe unserer Literatur: Reden und Aufsätze, Leipzig, 1971, pp. 302-42 (pp. 337, 340).
2. "Schillers Menschenbild und der sozialistische Humanismus", in Humanismus und Realismus in der Literatur: Aufsätze, Leipzig, 1971, pp. 59-85 (pp. 82, 84).
3. The term 'Kulturpolitik' is used throughout this study to describe the collectively determined policy of the SED in relation to literature. Its course can be followed through the speeches and articles of a small group of Party functionaries - who are themselves generally not creative writers - with posts in the Central Committee, or in its 'Institut für Gesellschaftswissenschaften', or in the Ministry of Culture, e.g. Walter Ulbricht, Alexander Abusch, Kurt Hager, Alfred Kurella, Hans Koch, Klaus Gysi. Although various authors have at different periods been closely identified with the prevailing 'Kulturpolitik', e.g. Johannes R. Becher, Erwin Strittmatter, Anna Seghers and Max Walter Schulz, the relationship has often been problematical. The most accessible overall perspective is provided by E. Schubbe's Dokumente zur Kunst-, Literatur- und Kulturpolitik der SED, Stuttgart, 1972, which covers the period 1946-70.
4. Schubbe, Dokumente, pp. 133-41.
5. cf. the proposals of the intellectually influential Harich Group in 1956, which included the possibility of post-Stalinist cooperation between the West German SPD and a reformed SED to bring reunification closer - an idea never to recur. Severe disciplinary action was taken against leading members of the group late in 1956. Its programme is reprinted in F. J. Raddatz, Traditionen und Tendenzen: Materialien zur Literatur der DDR, Frankfurt, 1972, pp. 53-7, 485-7.
6. The phrase has been an integral part of cultural policy since Walter Ulbricht's speech at the Second Bitterfeld Conference in 1964. cf. Schubbe, Dokumente, p. 968 and thereafter.
7. General biographical information is not provided in this study, in view of the growing amount available elsewhere. A useful recent reference work is G. Albrecht et al. (Hrsg.), Schriftsteller der DDR (Meyers Taschenlexikon), Leipzig, 1975.
8. The now standard formulation of the distinction is that found in Ferdinand Tönnies, Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft (1887), available in the reprint of the Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt, 1970.

9. The main documents, starting with Lukács' "'Größe und Verfall' des Expressionismus" of 1934 and continuing through the 'Expressionism debate' in the periodical Das Wort (1937-38) can be consulted in P. Raabe (Hrsg.), Expressionismus: Der Kampf um eine literarische Bewegung, München, 1965, and H. J. Schmitt (Hrsg.), Die Expressionismusdebatte: Materialien zu einer marxistischen Realismuskonzeption, Frankfurt, 1973.
10. "Gruß des deutschen Dichters an die Russische Föderative Sowjet-Republik", in L. Rubiner (Hrsg.), Kameraden der Menschheit: Dichtungen zur Weltrevolution, Leipzig, 1971, pp. 20-1.
11. "'Größe und Verfall' des Expressionismus", in Raabe, Expressionismus, pp. 254-73, *passim*.
12. The fundamental analysis from which these points are developed is that of R. Hinton Thomas, "Das Ich und die Welt: Expressionismus und Gesellschaft", in W. Rothe (Hrsg.), Expressionismus als Literatur, Bern und München, 1969, pp. 19-36.
13. Kurella's early articles are discussed in F. Trommler, "Die Kulturpolitik der DDR und die kulturelle Tradition des deutschen Sozialismus", in P. U. Hohendahl and P. Herminhouse (Hrsg.), Literatur und Literaturtheorie in der DDR, Frankfurt, 1976, pp. 13-72, esp. pp. 44-5.
14. G. Heintz (Hrsg.), Texte der proletarisch-revolutionären Literatur Deutschlands 1919-33, Stuttgart, 1974, pp. 67-84 (p. 79).
15. The work of the BPRS, and the complex shifts of orientation in its ideological thinking from 1928-33 are described more thoroughly than is possible here in Helga Gallas' illuminating Marxistische Literaturtheorie: Kontroversen im Bund proletarisch-revolutionärer Schriftsteller, Neuwied, 1971.
16. "Die Reserven der proletarisch-revolutionären Literatur in den kapitalistischen Ländern", in Deutsche Akademie der Künste (Hrsg.), Zur Tradition der sozialistischen Literatur in Deutschland, Berlin, 1967, pp. 295-313 (p. 303).
17. The phrase, coined by Hans Magnus Enzensberger in his essay of 1962 in Einzelheiten I, Frankfurt, 1962, pp. 7-17, seems equally applicable to the situation in the Weimar Republic.
18. Gallas mentions an audience of almost four million reached in the 1928-29 season: Marxistische Literaturtheorie, p. 94.
19. This was a main theme of the second World Congress of proletarian-revolutionary writers held in Charkow (1930). cf. Becher's speech, "Die Kriegsgefahr und die Aufgaben der revolutionären Schriftsteller", in Von der Größe der Literatur, pp. 71-109.

20. J. P. Stern's Hitler: The Führer and the People, Glasgow, 1975, does an invaluable job in demonstrating how the traditional 'German' values were exploited by Hitler in establishing his ideology.
21. T. Mann, Politische Schriften und Reden, Band 2, Frankfurt, 1968, pp. 165-73.
22. cf. the detailed analysis in Gallas, Marxistische Literaturtheorie, of the sequence of events and the content of Lukács' essays.
23. "Entwurf zu einem Programm des Bundes proletarisch-revolutionärer Schriftsteller", in Zur Tradition der sozialistischen Literatur, pp. 385-402, 762-4 (p. 389).
24. ibid., pp. 393-4.
25. ibid., pp. 392-5.
26. Gallas, Marxistische Literaturtheorie, pp. 64-69.
27. The situation has been further complicated by the distorted view of Lukács' work dogmatically cultivated in the GDR after his brief involvement with the provisional Nagy regime in Hungary in 1956, and only just beginning to be rectified, e.g. in Werner Mittenzwei (Hrsg.), Dialog und Kontroverse mit Georg Lukács, Leipzig, 1975.
28. cf. "Willi Bredels Romane", "Tendenz oder Parteilichkeit?" and "Reportage oder Gestaltung?", in Essays über Realismus, Neuwied, 1971, (Werke, Bd. 4), pp. 13-68.
29. Reprinted in F. J. Raddatz (Hrsg.), Marxismus und Literatur: Eine Dokumentation in drei Bänden, Reinbek, 1969, Band 1, pp. 347-53.
30. An informative account of the years after 1933 is provided by D. Schiller, "... von Grund auf anders": Programmatik der Literatur im antifaschistischen Kampf während der dreißiger Jahre, Berlin, 1974.
31. "Zur Theorie der Moral", in Zwischendurch. Verstreute Essays 1934-40, Berlin, 1961, p. 74. Quoted by Trommler, "Die Kulturpolitik der DDR", p. 58.
32. "Vor neuen größeren Aufgaben", in Zur Tradition der sozialistischen Literatur, pp. 843-6 (p. 846).
33. Most of these essays are now included in volumes 4-7 of the Werke (Probleme des Realismus I-III, Deutsche Literatur in zwei Jahrhunderten).
34. The essay of 1939 on Gottfried Keller, in Deutsche Literatur, pp. 334-419, is a revealing example of this tendency.
35. I am indebted to Professor Roy Pascal for having allowed me to read parts of his unpublished work on Lukács, which provided many illuminating insights into the problems of

interpreting Lukács' writings of these years.

36. "Die menschliche Komödie des vorrevolutionären Rußland", in (Hrsg.) P. Ludz, Georg Lukács: Schriften zur Literatursoziologie, Neuwied, 1970, pp. 403-18 (p. 415).
37. Essays Über Realismus, p. 184.
38. ibid., p. 183.
39. ibid., pp. 184.
40. Deutsche Literatur, p. 371.
41. Raddatz, Traditionen und Tendenzen, p. 10. Hans Mayer also stresses the gulf between the two literatures in his Zur deutschen Literatur der Zeit, Reinbek, 1967, and the point has been taken up uncritically elsewhere.
42. "Einheimische Kentauren", in Erfahrungen und Leseerfahrungen, Frankfurt, 1965, pp. 33-50 (pp. 40-41). Quoted by Raddatz, Traditionen und Tendenzen, p. 14, who does not, however, point out its positive implications for literature in the era of 'Ideologieverdacht'.
43. Werke, Bd. 4, Berlin, 1972, pp. 459-93 (p. 482).
44. ibid., p. 466.
45. Werke, Bd. 9, Berlin, 1970, pp. 127-33 (p. 132). Quoted by R. A. Nisbet in his section on Community in The Sociological Tradition, London, 1970, pp. 66-70.
46. Gesammelte Werke, Bd. 8, Frankfurt, 1967, pp. 256-59.
47. Gesammelte Werke, Bd. 18, pp. 222-39 (pp. 231-5).
48. ibid., pp. 241-46.
49. cf. F. Erpenbeck's afterword to the reprint of Das Wort: Literarische Monatsschrift 1936-39, Hilversum/Zürich, 1969, Bd. 11, pp. 9-10.
50. Brecht's unwillingness to differentiate is reflected in Walter Benjamin's posthumously published "Gespräche mit Brecht", in Versuche über Brecht, Frankfurt, 1966, pp. 117-35.
51. Bloch's "Diskussionen über Expressionismus", the jointly written "Die Kunst zu erben" by Bloch and Eisler, and Seghers' correspondence with Lukács are all reprinted in Raddatz, Marxismus und Literatur, Bd. 2. Benjamin's "Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit" and "Der Autor als Produzent" only became generally known after publication of the Suhrkamp editions (1963 and 1966) in which they are included and the short-lived East German anthology Lesenzeichen (Reclam) of 1970. Brecht's essays on realism are in volume 19 of the Gesammelte Werke of 1967, while his revealing Arbeitsjournal only appeared in 1973.

52. Gesammelte Werke. Bd. 19, pp. 314-15.
53. Gesammelte Werke. Bd. 1, p. 336.
54. Gesammelte Werke. Bd. 19, p. 316.
55. ibid., p. 373.
56. cf. Benjamin, "Gespräche mit Brecht", pp. 128-35.
57. The first version of Leben des Galilei dates from 1938, his 'Kalendergeschichten' Das Experiment, Der Mantel des Ketzers and Der verwundete Sokrates, all from 1939, and the four completed books of Die Geschäfte des Herrn Julius Caesar also from 1938-39.
58. The more general term 'Entwicklungsroman' is used in preference to Lukács' term 'Erziehungsroman' throughout this study, except where there is a specific reference to the eighteenth century context of 'Bildung' and the 'Bildungsroman'.
59. Gesammelte Werke. Bd. 19, esp. pp. 359-61.
60. ibid., p. 349.
61. "Volkstümllichkeit und Realismus", ibid., pp. 322-33.
62. "Über Formalismus und neue Formen", ibid., pp. 526-27.

CHAPTER 1 : THE UTOPIAN PROJECTION

1. cf. the detailed account of the issues involved in H. Gallas, Marxistische Literaturtheorie.
2. Gallas notes an undocumented comment that Becher scoffed in private at the efforts of the proletarian writers, ibid., p. 26.
3. J. R. Becher, Von der Größe unserer Literatur, pp. 22-26.
4. ibid., p. 26.
5. ibid., p. 21.
6. In a discussion in the Frankfurter Zeitung (1923). Quoted in J. R. Becher, Lyrrik. Prosa. Dokumente: Eine Auswahl, Wiesbaden, 1965, pp. 57-58.
7. ibid., p. 58.
8. Becher, Von der Größe, p. 26.
9. ibid., p. 28.
10. ibid., p. 26.

11. ibid., pp. 43, 35, 89.
12. cf. Gallas, Marxistische Literaturtheorie, pp. 27-30.
13. Becher, Von der Größe, pp. 31-2.
14. ibid., pp. 124-6.
15. ibid., pp. 253-93 ("Von der Größe unserer Literatur").
16. cf. H. A. Walter/H. L. Arnold, "Die Exilliteratur und ihre Erforschung: Ein Gespräch", in Akzente, 6/73, p. 502.
17. cf. H. Huppert, "Im lyrischen Dezernat", in Sinn und Form (2. Sonderheft J. R. Becher), 1959, pp. 308-313.
18. cf. F. J. Raddatz (Hrsg.), Marxismus und Literatur, Reinbek, 1969, Bd. 2, pp. 110-38.
19. Raddatz, Marxismus und Literatur, Bd. 1, pp. 335-353.
20. Becher, Von der Größe, p. 146.
21. ibid., pp. 171-2.
22. ibid., p. 173.
23. ibid., p. 175.
24. ibid., p. 153.
25. N. Hopster, Das Frühwerk Johannes R. Bechers, Bonn, 1969, p. 1.
26. Becher, Kleine Prosa, Berlin, 1974, (Gesammelte Werke, Bd. 9), p. 366.
27. ibid., p. 371.
28. Becher, (CHCL-CH)³As: 'Levisite' oder Der einzig gerechte Krieg, Berlin, 1969. (Gesammelte Werke, Bd. 10), passim.
29. ibid., p. 555 (from Becher's foreword to the 1926 edition).
30. Sinn und Form (2. Sonderheft J. R. Becher), p. 137.
31. ibid., p. 138.
32. ibid., p. 142.
33. R. Pascal, Design and Truth in Autobiography, London, 1960, p. 59.
34. K. Pinthus (Hrsg.), Menschheitsdämmerung: Ein Dokument des Expressionismus, Reinbek, 1966, p. 213.
35. cf. Hopster, Das Frühwerk Johannes R. Bechers, for a detailed analysis of Becher's development up to 1924, with close reference to biographical facts throughout.
36. cf. R. Pascal, The German Novel, London, 1965, esp. pp. 96-8.

37. Huppert, "Im lyrischen Dezerat", p. 313.
38. "Vom Geist der Medizin", in Autobiographisches, Frankfurt, 1968, (Werke, Bd. 19), p. 106.
39. W. Herzfelde, "Wandelbar und Stetig", in Sinn und Form (2. Sonderheft J. R. Becher), pp. 47-8).
40. cf. R. Hinton Thomas, "Das Ich und die Welt: Expressionismus und Gesellschaft".
41. Herzfelde, "Wandelbar und Stetig", p. 48.
42. G. Lukács, "J. R. Bechers Abschied" (1941), in Schicksalswende: Beiträge zu einer neuen deutschen Ideologie, Berlin, 1956, p. 208.
43. All page references to the novel Abschied. Wiederanders, Berlin, 1975, (Gesammelte Werke, Bd. 11), are included in the main text, together with the prefix A.
44. E. Fischer, "Stimme aus dem Exil" in Über das Schaffen von Johannes R. Becher, Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena, Gesellschafts- und Sprachwissenschaftliche Reihe, Jahrgang 10, 1960-61, Heft 3, pp. 421-5 (p. 422).
45. J. W. Goethe, Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre, Book 7, Chapter 1 (dtv Gesamtausgabe, Bd. 16), p. 133.
46. Lukács, "J. R. Bechers Abschied", p. 210. Dieter Schiller argues in his afterword to the new edition of Abschied that there is an "Erzähler-Medium" responsible for the symbolical elucidation of Gastl's problems and the separation of the "Bewußtseinsprozeß" from the "geradlinig erzählte Fabel". But the didactic anonymity of such 'narrator' interventions conflicts so crassly with the vivid personal immediacy of the main narrative that it still could not be regarded as anything other than a serious error of judgment on Becher's part, with the ideological climate of the middle 1930's as the only mitigating factor. cf. Abschied. Wiederanders, Nachwort, pp. 633-8.
47. F. Tönnies, Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft, Darmstadt, 1970. cf. R. A. Nisbet, The Sociological Tradition, pp. 47-106.
48. M. Weber, Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus (1904/5); English translation, ed. R. H. Tawney, London, 1968.
49. cf. R. Pascal, From Naturalism to Expressionism: German Literature and Society 1880-1918, London, 1973, pp. 223-5.
50. Based on Leonhard Frank. For the links between fiction and reality in these scenes, cf. P. Raabe (Hrsg.), Expressionismus: Aufzeichnungen und Erinnerungen der Zeitgenossen, Olten, 1965, esp. pp. 84-100, 320-331.
51. Based on Emmy Hemmings. See above, footnote 50.

52. G. Lukács, "Größe und Verfall des Expressionismus", in P. Raabe (Hrsg.), Expressionismus. Der Kampf um eine literarische Bewegung, pp. 254-73.
53. cf. Raabe, Expressionismus: Der Kampf, pp. 273-293; Raddatz, Marxismus und Literatur, Bd. 2, pp. 7-109.
54. Lukács, "Größe und Verfall", pp. 259-60.
55. ibid., p. 256.
56. In L. Rubiner (Hrsg.), Kameraden den Menschheit, p. 64.
57. ibid., p. 66.
58. Pinthus, Menschheitsdämmerung, pp. 42, 44.
59. I. Fradkin, "Zu J. R. Bechers 'Wiedergeburt'", in Sinn und Form (2. Sonderheft), p. 217.
60. In Der Glücksucher und die sieben Lasten, Moskau/London, 1938, p. 112. Quoted by Fradkin, p. 217.
61. "Es nahen andere. Zeiten", in Als namenloses Lied: Gedichte, Leipzig, 1972, p. 53.
62. F. Engels, Der deutsche Bauernkrieg (1850), in Marx/Engels, Werke, Bd. 7, Berlin, 1971, pp. 327-413.
63. In "Urworte Orphisch", Werke, Hamburg, 1956, Bd. 1, p. 359.
64. In Pinthus, Menschheitsdämmerung, pp. 253-4.
65. ibid., pp. 285-7.
66. ibid., p. 44.
67. See above, footnote 46.
68. Becher first attempted to have Abschied published in America in 1938/9, when he entered the novel for a literary competition organised by the 'Bund für Freie Deutsche Kultur', for which a prize of \$4,520 had been offered by a consortium of publishers for a new work of an autobiographical nature, to be submitted anonymously. The judges, who included Thomas Mann and Leon Feuchtwanger, strongly commended Abschied, but without awarding it the prize. Whether Becher had reasons for wanting to publish outside Russia is not clear, but it appears that it was largely through Lukács' support that it was ever accepted for publication in Moscow in 1940. The correspondence relating to the competition (only the replies from the Bund to Becher) is in the Johannes R. Becher-Archiv in East Berlin.
69. The (undated) script of Fallada's commentary is in the Becher-Archiv.
70. [Anon], "Ein neuer Entwicklungsroman", in Der Morgen, 22 December 1945 - again in the Becher-Archiv.

71. In a letter of 27 February 1947, in Becher, Lyrik, Prosa, Dokumente, p. 147.
72. Becher, Von der Größe, p. 179.
73. All page references to Becher's Auf andere Art so große Hoffnung: Tagebuch 1950, Berlin, 1969, (Gesammelte Werke, Bd. 12), are included in the text, together with the prefix T.
74. cf. Ilse Siebert, Nachwort to Tagebuch 1950, pp. 770-2.
75. Becher, Lyrik, Prosa, Dokumente, p. 154.
76. Becher, Von der Größe, pp. 322-3.
77. ibid., p. 316.
78. ibid., p. 333.
79. ibid., p. 330.
80. ibid., p. 333.
81. ibid., p. 315.
82. ibid., p. 325.
83. ibid., p. 325.
84. Lukács, "J. R. Bechers Abschied", p. 208.
85. H. Mayer, "Bechers Tagebuch 1950", in Deutsche Literatur und Weltliteratur, Berlin, 1957, pp. 665-81. (First published in Aufbau, 9/51).
86. ibid., p. 672.
87. R. Weisbach, "Rebellion und Revolution im expressionistischen Gedicht: Bechers frühe Lyrik im Urteil seines Tagebuches von 1950", in W. Mittenzwei (Hrsg.), Revolution und Literatur, Leipzig, 1971, pp. 302-3.
88. Mayer, "Bechers Tagebuch 1950", p. 678.
89. ibid., pp. 678-9.
90. Published separately as Verteidigung der Poesie (1952), Poetische Konfession (1953), Macht der Poesie (1955) and Das poetische Prinzip (1957). Now together as Bemühungen I-II, Berlin, 1972 (Gesammelte Werke, Bd. 13-14).
91. Bemühungen II, p. 195.
92. Sinn und Form (2. Sonderheft), pp. 491-2.
93. Bemühungen I, p. 415.
94. Bemühungen II, pp. 137-8.

95. Bemühungen I, pp. 220-1.
96. ibid., pp. 360-1.
97. cf. Jürgen Rühle, "J. R. Bechers Poetische Konfession", in Literatur und Revolution: Der Schriftsteller und der Kommunismus, München, 1963, pp. 216-34; Hans-Dietrich Sander, Geschichte der Schönen Literatur in der DDR, Freiburg, 1972, esp. pp. 150-74. The fact that Kurella's appointment at the head of the Politbüro's new 'Kommission für Fragen der Kultur' in October 1957 formally indicated the insignificance of Becher's retention of the post of Minister of Culture, is implied by Sander, but no light is shed on Becher's actual situation from October 1956 until his death.
98. cf. Deutscher Schriftstellerverband (Hrsg.), Über Joh. R. Bechers Poetische Konfession, Berlin, 1955, (Beiträge zur Gegenwartsliteratur, Bd. 10). Referred to by Rühle, pp. 226-7).
99. "Wiederanders: Fortsetzung des Romans Abschied: Fragment", in Sinn und Form. (2. Sonderheft). pp. 511-51.
100. cf. Ilse Siebert in her afterword to her selection of Becher's short prose, Die Korrektur, Leipzig, 1971, p. 141. D. Schiller, in the afterword to Abschied. Wiederanders, points to the 'autobiographical' revision of the sections on expressionism, but makes no attempt to analyse the significance of the 1957 narrative framework or the prevailing mood of Wiederanders. (pp. 646-8)
101. J. R. Becher, Gesammelte Werke, Bd. 11, pp. 435-607. The typescript copy of Wiederanders (201 pp.) is in the Becher-Archiv and was kindly made available to me, together with other documents relevant to Abschied, by the Archiv staff in 1973.
102. H. F. Bachmair, "Vorläufige Bemerkungen zu J. R. Bechers Roman-Fragment Wiederanders", dated Sept. 1960, 12 pp. (in the Becher-Archiv). The figure of Aichinger in Book 2 of the fragment is based on Bachmair, who takes care to point out how little truth there is in many of the scenes in which he is depicted. cf. his slightly earlier "Bericht des ersten Verlegers", in Sinn und Form (2. Sonderheft). pp. 97-110.
103. Bachmair, "Vorläufige Bemerkungen", p. 2.
104. Lukács, "Das Problem der Perspektive", in P. Ludz (Hrsg.), Schriften zur Literatursoziologie, Neuwied, 1970, p. 258.
105. ibid., p. 259.
106. ibid., p. 258.

CHAPTER 2 : THE RHETORIC OF SOCIALIST TRANSFORMATION

1. For the historical development of the Cold War in the GDR, cf. D. Childs, East Germany, London, 1969, esp. pp. 24-35.
2. Schubbe, Dokumente, pp. 103-6 (p. 105). It seems significant that the second sentence of the quotation was omitted from Klaus Jarmatz's excerpt in the equivalent East German anthology, Kritik in der Zeit, Halle, 1970, p. 151.
3. Schubbe, Dokumente, p. 92.
4. cf. the excerpt from the Kulturbund's manifesto in H. D. Sander, Geschichte der Schönen Literatur in der DDR, Freiburg, 1972, pp. 92-3.
5. Lukács' central role in these years has only recently been acknowledged in the GDR: cf. W. Mittenzwei, Dialog und Kontroverse mit Georg Lukács, Leipzig, 1975, esp. pp. 83-90.
6. The periodical Aufbau, founded in 1945, was the main forum for these discussions in the early post-war years.
7. An account of the congress is given by Sander, Schöne Literatur, pp. 94-99.
8. "Vom Willen zum Frieden", in Jarmatz, Kritik in der Zeit, pp. 100-9 (p. 103).
9. "Eine Diskussion über den sozialistischen Realismus zwischen sowjetischen Schriftstellern und einer Delegation deutscher Kollegen in Moskau 1948", in Jarmatz, Kritik in der Zeit, pp. 134-39.
10. "Von der Bedeutung des Auftrags", in Jarmatz, Kritik in der Zeit, pp. 153-61 (pp. 160-1).
11. "Die Vermenschlichung des Menschen", in Jarmatz, Kritik in der Zeit, pp. 185-92.
12. Zweig continued with his cycle of novels on the 1914-18 War, Der große Krieg der weißen Männer, begun with Der Streit um den Sergenten Grischa in 1926; Uhse's next substantial work was Die Patrioten, about the resistance movement during the Second World War, the first part of which was published in 1954.
13. "Die Diskussion in der Sowjetliteratur und bei uns", in Jarmatz, Kritik in der Zeit, pp. 221-23.
14. Schubbe, Dokumente, p. 93.
15. "Über das Schaffen unserer Schriftsteller", ibid., p. 104. Lukács' essay "Reportage oder Gestaltung?" is reprinted in Essays über Realismus, pp. 35-68.
16. His most famous pieces of reportage from the 1920's are reprinted in the volume Der rasende Reporter, Berlin, 1974, (Gesammelte Werke, Bd. 5).

17. The first title is an anthology, published in the Verlag Kultur und Fortschritt, Berlin, 1951, the second a collection by Peter Nell, also Berlin, 1951.
18. Berlin, 1950. cf. E. Röhner, Arbeiter in der Gegenwartsliteratur, Berlin, 1967, p. 33.
19. "Brigade Franik", in H. Hauptmann (Hrsg.), DDR-Reportagen, Leipzig, 1969, pp. 41-52 (p. 47).
20. An excerpt is included in DDR-Reportagen, pp. 33-41. The importance of the Garbe material for the drama of Bert Brecht and Heiner Müller has recently been analysed in detail: cf. H. Fehervary, "Heiner Müllers Brigadenstücke", in Basis 2, Frankfurt, 1971, pp. 103-40; B. Brecht, "Büsching: Stückentwurf von 1954" and H. Brenner, "Schule des Helden. Anmerkungen zu Brechts Büsching-Entwurf", in alternative 91, 1973, pp. 212-21; B. Greiner, Die Literatur der Arbeitswelt in der DDR, Heidelberg, 1974, esp. pp. 67-95.
21. It was left to Heiner Müller to realise some of the potential of the subject-matter in his play Der Lohndrucker of 1957: reprinted in his Geschichten aus der Produktion 1, [West] Berlin, 1974, pp. 15-44.
22. DDR-Reportagen, p. 40.
23. Ruhelose Jahre: Erinnerungen, Halle, 1968, p. 356.
24. ibid., p. 356. "Vom schweren Anfang" is republished in E. Claudius, Salz der Erde: Erzählungen, Halle, 1969, pp. 300-90.
25. Ruhelose Jahre, p. 357.
26. Both Brenner and Greiner, however, fail to recognise the limited degree of distinctiveness which Menschen an unsrer Seite does have over the other 'Aufbauromane': cf. "Schule des Helden", p. 215, Literatur der Arbeitswelt, pp. 69-71.
27. "Ach, weißt du", fuhr Wende fort, "du bist ja nicht Aehre ... du bist eine ganze Garbe".
 "Eine Garbe?" wiederholte Aehre fragend.
 "Ja, eine ganze Garbe," lachte Wende.
 Auch Aehre lachte, gequält, unsicher; seine Fäuste lösten sich.
 "Eine Garbe mit vielen Ähren, und die muß man dreschen."
 (M 235-6)
 This, and all following references to Menschen an unsrer Seite in the main text, is given with the prefix M and the appropriate page-number from the currently accessible edition in the Reclam Verlag, Leipzig, 1971 (RUB 471).
28. Ruhelose Jahre, pp. 373-78.
29. Interestingly, it had been on similar grounds that the Russians had refused to translate Claudius' Grüne Oliven und nackte Berge, which also reflects a sensual love of life and spares the reader little in some of its descriptions of death and injury in the Spanish Civil War: ibid., pp. 251-52.

30. ibid., p. 375.
31. ibid., p. 378.
32. Weimarer Beiträge, 5/64, p. 784.
33. cf. the third chapter, pp. 38-46. A wider general survey of this literature is given by Lutz-W. Wolff, "Auftraggeber Arbeiterklasse: Proletarische Betriebsromane 1948-56", in H. J. Schmitt (Hrsg.), Einführung in Theorie, Geschichte und Funktion der DDR-Literatur, Stuttgart, 1975, pp. 247-91.
34. "Der Kampf gegen den Formalismus in Kunst und Literatur", in Jarmatz, Kritik in der Zeit, pp. 248-53 (pp. 250-1).
35. "Kampf um ein realistisches Schaffen", in Schubbe, Dokumente, pp. 239-40.
36. Quoted by Eduard Claudius at the Fourth Writers' Congress: Protokoll, Heft 1, Berlin, 1956, p. 167.
37. ibid., p. 167.
38. "Die Kunst im Kampf für Deutschlands Zukunft", in Schubbe, Dokumente, pp. 205-9 (p. 208).
39. These references are all taken from the main cultural-political statements of 1950-51, as they appear in Schubbe, Dokumente, pp. 131-224, and can be regarded as typical for the period.
40. ibid., pp. 153-73.
41. ibid., p. 165.
42. ibid., p. 176.
43. Berlin, 1952.
44. Röhner, Arbeiter, p. 42.
45. Laggner, Stahl, p. 47.
46. ibid., p. 314.
47. ibid., p. 144.
48. ibid., p. 258.
49. ibid., p. 363.
50. Begegnungen mit Literatur: Beiträge zur neuen deutschen Literaturkritik, Weimar, 1953, pp. 280f.
51. "Kulturpolitik und Akademie der Künste", Gesammelte Werke, Bd. 19, pp. 540-44 (p. 541).
52. ibid., p. 543.
53. Ruhelose Jahre, pp. 361-62.

54. cf. "Die Legende vom Dichter Marchwitza", in Wer schreibt, provoziert, München, 1966, pp. 126-30.
55. The same subject had already been treated by Karl Mundstock in his Helle Nächte (1952).
56. "Offener Brief an unsere Schriftsteller", in Jarmatz, Kritik in der Zeit, pp. 319-23.
57. Republished Köln, 1972.
58. Die Kumiaks (1934) and Die Heimkehr der Kumiaks (1952) had already been published and were to be followed by Die Kumiaks und ihre Kinder (1959). They appeared as a trilogy, Berlin, 1964-65.
59. "Die Literatur und ihr natürlicher Boden", in Jarmatz, Kritik in der Zeit, pp. 327-30 (p. 328).
60. B. Martin, "Recht viele mögen davon lernen!", in Jarmatz, Kritik in der Zeit, pp. 333-34.
61. All references to Roheisen in the text are given with the prefix R and the appropriate page-number from the edition published in the Tribune Verlag, Berlin, 1955.
62. Hans Marchwitza/Otto Gotsche, (Schriftsteller der Gegenwart, Bd. 7), Berlin, 1962, pp. 9-10.
63. The caricature of intransigence which Grube offers - "in allem der Kleinbürger geblieben, ... trotz guter Schule und allem, was ihm die Partei gegeben hat" (R 182) - stands as a strange exception to the confidence expressed throughout the novel that men will change fundamentally for the better, if only the environment is the right one.
64. Der Held und sein Wetter: Ein Kunstmittel und sein ideologischer Gebrauch im Roman des bürgerlichen Realismus, München, 1971.
65. Ilya Ehrenburg's novel of 1954, entitled The Thaw, is generally taken as marking the beginning of this period of cultural liberalisation.
66. Reprinted under the title "Zu Marchwitzas Roheisen", in Jarmatz, Kritik in der Zeit, pp. 373-75 (p. 373).
67. ibid., p. 374.
68. "Der Anteil der Literatur an der Bewußtseinsbildung des Volkes", IV. Deutscher Schriftstellerkongreß. Protokoll, Heft 1, pp. 43-70 (pp. 53, 56).
69. ibid., p. 57.
70. ibid., p. 68. It is ironical that Seghers has herself since 1956 published two 'monumental' novels about the first years of the GDR, Die Entscheidung (1959) and Das Vertrauen (1968), both of which have been conspicuously less successful than her shorter prose pieces.

71. Protokoll, Heft 2, p. 12.
72. ibid., p. 37.

CHAPTER 3 : THE IDENTITY PROBLEMS OF THE WAR GENERATION

1. cf. Hans Mayer, "Der totale Ideologieverdacht", Zur deutschen Literatur der Zeit, Reinbek, 1967, pp. 300-19.
2. H. J. Bernhardt's essay, "Franz Fühmanns Novelle Kameraden", Weimarer Beiträge 3/65, pp. 380-9, begins with a typical assessment of West German war literature up to 1956.
3. Reprinted Berlin, 1969. For a detailed analysis of the novels of Bredel and Uhse referred to here, cf. G. E. Edwards, The theory of Socialist Realism and its practical application in East German prose fiction 1945-66, unpublished M.A. Dissertation, University of Wales, 1972, pp. 168f, 197f.
4. Reprinted Berlin, 1968. For the novel's origins, cf. Bodo Uhse/Eduard Claudius, (Schriftsteller der Gegenwart, Bd. 5), Berlin, 1961, pp. 30-1.
5. Reprinted in König Ödipus: Gesammelte Erzählungen, Berlin, 1968, pp. 75-120.
6. "Fahrt nach Stalingrad" (1955), in Jarmatz, Kritik in der Zeit, pp. 360-66.
7. König Ödipus, p. 88.
8. ibid., p. 90.
9. ibid., p. 82.
10. ibid., p. 106.
11. ibid., p. 98.
12. ibid., p. 101.
13. ibid., p. 114.
14. ibid., pp. 115-6.
15. ibid., p. 117.
16. "Die Bürde der Vergangenheit", Neue Deutsche Literatur 8/59, pp. 132-4 (p. 133).
17. Werner Neubert, "Franz Fühmann: Zur Ideologie und Psychologie eines Werkes", Neue Deutsche Literatur 4/74, pp. 44-70 (p. 49).

18. Josef-Hermann Sauter, "Interview mit Franz Fühmann", Weimarer Beiträge, 1/71, p. 40.
19. The term 'Vergangenheitslosigkeit' was used in criticism of the 'Aufbauliteratur' in general at a conference of young Germanists held in September 1955. cf. the report by Christa Wolf, "Die Literaturtheorie findet zur literarischen Praxis", Neue Deutsche Literatur, 11/55, pp. 159f.
20. "Weshalb keine Literatur über den Krieg?", Neue Deutsche Literatur, 1/56, p. 126. The course of the ideological debate on war literature from 1955 onwards is well documented in Frank Trommler's most helpful essay "Von Stalin zu Hölderlin. Über den Entwicklungsroman in der DDR", in Basis 2, Frankfurt, 1971, pp. 141-90 (esp. pp. 150-60). The first comprehensive study of this period within the GDR is Sigrid Töpelmann's recent Autoren, Figuren, Entwicklungen: Zur erzählenden Literatur in der DDR, Berlin, 1975, pp. 192-321.
21. This cooperation was marked by the publication of joint anthologies like Deutsche Stimmen (Hrsg. M. Bruns), Halle, 1956 and Transit (Hrsg. W. Höllerer), Frankfurt, 1956. Neue Deutsche Literatur was still able in March 1957 to devote a whole issue to war literature in East and West, including excerpts from authors like Ledig and Ott, and with editorial stress on the amount of common ground (pp. 7, 146-52). It is worth noting that even Strittmatter was prepared, in his speech to the Bitterfelder Conference in April 1959, to denounce the 'harte Schreibweise' as a damaging Western influence: cf. "An die Basis - gegen die Selbstzufriedenheit", in Schubbe, Dokumente, pp. 562-4.
22. First published in Sonntag, 2.12.56, reprinted in Zur deutschen Literatur der Zeit, pp. 365-73 (pp. 365, 371).
23. Published under the title "Bis auf den letzten Mann", NDL 3/56, pp. 90-108; reprinted in H. Korall and W. Liersch (Hrsg.), Erfahrungen: Erzähler der DDR, Halle, 1969, pp. 237-60.
24. Berlin, 1971. Borrowings from Mailer can be detected throughout the novel, especially in the characterisation, the flashback sequences and descriptions of combat.
25. Berlin, 1969. cf. Wilfried van der Will, Pikaro Heute. Metamorphosen des Schelms bei Thomas Mann, Döblin, Brecht, Grass, Stuttgart, 1967.
26. Die Stunde der toten Augen, p. 452.
27. Der Wundertäter, p. 479. Strittmatter's readers had to wait until 1973 for the publication of Part 2 of the novel, to learn how the alienated fugitive from the Wehrmacht eventually became a local secretary of the SED and an established writer.
28. Abusch, "Im ideologischen Kampf für eine sozialistische Kultur", in Schubbe, Dokumente, pp. 489-95 (p. 490);

- R. Hoffmann, "Wo steht die Neue Deutsche Literatur?", ibid., pp. 486-9 (p. 487).
29. "An die Basis - gegen die Selbstzufriedenheit", p. 564.
30. "Die Tiefe und Breite in der Literatur", Glauben an Irdisches, Leipzig, 1974, pp. 231-69 (p. 269). Also in Schubbe, Dokumente, p. 729.
31. Quoted by Marianne Lange, Beiträge zur Gegenwartsliteratur, Heft 16, Berlin, 1959, p. 23.
32. "Die große Abrechnung: Probleme der Darstellung des Krieges in der deutschen Gegenwartsliteratur", in Jarmatz, Kritik in der Zeit, pp. 416-23.
33. "Vom Standpunkt des Schriftstellers und von der Form der Kunst", NDL 12/57, p. 123. Quoted by Trommler, "Von Stalin zu Höllderlin", p. 158.
34. "Die große Abrechnung", p. 423.
35. It was one of the series of lectures given at the Deutsche Akademie der Künste in East Berlin in January 1956, first published in Italian (Turin, 1957), then as Wider den mißverstandenen Realismus, Hamburg, 1958. Now in the Werke, Bd. 4 (Essays über Realismus), Neuwied, 1971, pp. 457-603.
36. ibid., p. 560.
37. ibid., p. 574.
38. ibid., p. 595.
39. Fühmann's Stürzende Schatten (1959) and Mundstock's Die Stunde des Dietrich Conradi (1958) were variously criticised on publication (cf. note 16 above). The 1959 conference on war-literature represented a further attack on Mundstock, together with Thürk and Rudolph Bartsch, for their 'naturalism' and preoccupation with the 'Held mit Fehlern' (proceedings published as Beiträge zur Gegenwartsliteratur, Heft 16, 1959). Only Bruno Apitz's novel on the resistance movement in the Buchenwald concentration camp, Nackt unter Wölfen (1958), met with unqualified praise at this period.
40. "Die große Abrechnung", p. 418.
41. Werke, Bd. 4, p. 575.
42. Trommler develops this point in some detail: "Von Stalin zu Höllderlin", pp. 183-5.
43. Sämtliche Werke, Berlin, 1970, Bd. 2, pp. 261f.
44. Das Judenauto: Vierzehn Tage aus zwei Jahrzehnten, Zürich, 1968, p. 180.
45. ibid., p. 221.

46. The following analysis refers in detail to these editions: Günter de Bruyn, Der Hohlweg, Mitteldeutscher Verlag, Halle, 1963; Franz Fühmann, Das Judenauto, Diogenes, Zürich, 1968; Dieter Noll, Die Abenteuer des Werner Holt, Bd. 1, Aufbau, Berlin, 1968, Bd. II, Aufbau, Berlin, 1974; Herbert Otto, Die Lüge, Verlag Kultur und Fortschritt, Berlin, 1956; Max Walter Schulz, Wir sind nicht Staub im Wind, Mitteldeutscher Verlag, Halle, 1968. All references to these works are given in the body of the text by means of the following abbreviations and the appropriate page number: Der Hohlweg = H, Das Judenauto = J, Werner Holt = WH and WH 2, Die Lüge = LU, Wir sind nicht Staub im Wind = S.
47. Wolfgang Joho, "Abrechnung der Vierzigjährigen", in Jarmatz, Kritik in der Zeit, pp. 524-31 (p. 527).
48. cf. H. J. Geerdts, "Die Schicksalsfrage Büchners neu gestellt: Bemerkungen zu Nolls Roman Die Abenteuer des Werner Holt", in Weimarer Beiträge 1/65, pp. 147-58.
49. Geerdts comes close to this in his recent assessment of Noll's work, in H. J. Geerdts (Hrsg.), Literatur der DDR in Einzeldarstellungen, Stuttgart, 1972, pp. 355-75 (p. 361).
50. ibid., p. 366.
51. J. P. Stern's study Hitler - The Führer and the People, Glasgow, 1975, is centrally concerned with this element of willing self-deception regarding the credibility of the ideology of National Socialism.
52. cf. F. Trommler, "Von Stalin zu Höllderlin", pp. 163-5.
53. Haferkorn, in remote Russian captivity, is an obvious exception here.
54. cf. W. Leonhard, Die Revolution entläßt ihre Kinder, Köln, 1955, and F. Löwenthal, News from Soviet Germany, London, 1950. Factual accounts in any detail from East German sources on this period are conspicuously unavailable.
55. Goethe's contrast between the richness of British history, which Walter Scott had been able to draw upon for his novels, and the bleakness of the recent German past, which led him to seek utopian alternatives in Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre, is quoted in Roy Pascal's The German Novel, London, 1965, p. 29.
56. In the 1968 afterword to the Western edition, p. 221.
57. cf. Geerdts, Literatur der DDR in Einzeldarstellungen, p. 367.
58. De Bruyn in effect offers a welcome demonstration here that the potential for virtue or vice revealed in youth is by no means a sure pointer towards future development: the initially progressive Eckert later falls prey to egotism in his pursuit of journalistic recognition. By the end of the novel, it is Weichmantel who is demonstrating the decisiveness which Eckert exemplified earlier at the 'Hohlweg', by

resigning on moral and political grounds from the Jugend-Rundblick.

59. "Erpreßte Versöhnung", in Noten zur Literatur, Bd. 2, Frankfurt, 1965, pp. 152-87.
60. ibid., p. 185.
61. ibid., pp. 186-7.
62. ibid., p. 187.
63. Werke, Bd. 5, (Probleme des Realismus, Bd. 2: Der russische Realismus in der Weltliteratur), Neuwied, 1964, pp. 545-65.
64. ibid., p. 551.
65. "Sechs Personen diskutieren einen Autor", in NDL 4/64, pp. 105-19.
66. ibid., p. 112.
67. ibid., pp. 106-7.
68. By 1974, the first book had reached its twenty-seventh edition and the second its sixteenth. An excerpt from Kippenbergs was published in NDL 8/69.
69. His essays and speeches from 1962-67 were collected in the volume Stegreif und Sattel: Anmerkungen zur Literatur und zum Tage, Halle, 1967.
70. ibid., p. 84.
71. "Das Neue und das Bleibende in unserer Literatur", in VI. Deutscher Schriftstellerkongreß vom 28. bis 30. Mai 1959. Protokoll, Berlin, 1969, pp. 23-59 (see below, Chapter 5).
72. "In eigener und nicht nur in eigener Sache", in Stegreif und Sattel, p. 14.
73. Otto provides a brief summary of these years in W. Paulick (Hrsg.), Junge Schriftsteller der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik in Selbstdarstellungen, Leipzig, 1965, pp. 27-33.
74. His 'Bitterfeld' reportage Kabelkran und blauer Peter, is dealt with in Chapter 4. Only his recent 22 Tage oder die Hälfte des Lebens (1973) undertakes a more comprehensive view of his life.
75. Both stories are included in König Ödipus: Gesammelte Erzählungen, Berlin, 1968.
76. "Der Holzweg", in G. Schneider (Hrsg.), Eröffnungen: Schriftsteller über ihr Erstlingswerk, Berlin, 1974, pp. 138-43.
77. ibid., pp. 139-41.
78. ibid., p. 141.

79. ibid., pp. 141-2.
80. ibid., p. 142.
81. ibid., p. 142.
82. ibid., p. 143.
83. ibid., p. 142.
84. Günter Kunert, Im Namen der Hüte, München, 1970, p. 10.
85. ibid., pp. 169-70.
86. Kunert has suggested, in discussion at the University of Warwick in February 1975, that sexual taboos were a more powerful factor than political unacceptability in determining the fortunes of his novel, but both elements are linked, in the sense that Harry's erotic adventures amidst the post-war chaos tend to emphasise the extent of his disregard for ideological matters. Im Namen der Hüte was announced for publication in October 1976 in the Eulenspiegel Verlag, Berlin, but I have still no knowledge of its actual appearance.

CHAPTER 4 : CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN THE GDR'S DEVELOPMENT

1. cf. the excerpts from the speeches by Walter Ulbricht and Alfred Kurella in E. Schubbe (Hrsg.), Dokumente, pp. 534-38. The Maoist tendencies are emphasised by H.D. Sander, who describes the 'Bitterfelder Weg' in predictably deprecating terms as "eine sozialistische Chinoiserie", in Geschichte der Schönen Literatur, pp. 181-2.
2. Ingeborg Gerlach, Bitterfeld: Arbeiterliteratur und Literatur der Arbeitswelt in der DDR, Kronberg, 1974, p. 34.
3. This is essentially the perspective from which Ingeborg Gerlach considers the 'Bitterfelder Weg' in her study.
4. The intellectual ferment of 1956 was clearly far more widespread than this isolated reference to these three historically significant figures might suggest. Any direct examination of the course of events would need to consider the importance of the Harich group and its political programme as a rallying point (their manifesto is reproduced in Raddatz, Traditionen und Tendenzen, pp. 53-7, 485-7), outline the campaign against academic critics like Hans Mayer, Alfred Kantorowicz and Ernst Bloch, and discuss the impoverishment of literary talent brought about by the subsequent departure to the West of young writers like Uwe Johnson and Heinar Kipphardt.
5. Werke, Bd. 19, pp. 542-3. Brecht's Buckower Elegien, completed a few months later in 1953, could be taken as providing a timely illustration of this argument.

6. Von der Größe unserer Literatur. p. 282.
7. cf. Ulbricht's general criticisms at the Fifth Parteitag (Schubbe, Dokumente, p. 535); Abusch's direct attack on Lukács a few weeks earlier at the Theoretical Conference of the Writers' Union (reprinted in part in his Humanismus und Realismus in der Literatur, pp. 166-80 (p. 166)); Kurella's scarcely veiled criticism of Becher's leadership of the Ministry of Culture, at the Parteitag (Schubbe, p. 537).
8. R. Hastedt, Die Tage mit Sepp Zach, Berlin, 1959, p. 15.
9. ibid., p. 23.
10. ibid., p. 163.
11. ibid., pp. 159-60.
12. ibid., p. 170.
13. ibid., pp. 169-70.
14. W. Paulick (Hrsg.), Junge Schriftsteller der DDR in Selbstdarstellungen, Leipzig, 1965, pp. 176-7.
15. Some statistical data and the economic background are provided by E. Deuerlein (Hrsg.), DDR: Geschichte und Bestandsaufnahme 1945-70, München, 1971, pp. 236, 160-7. cf. also D. Childs, East Germany, London, 1969, pp. 41-4.
16. Deuerlein, DDR, p. 207.
17. A selection of this reportage is available in H. Hauptmann (Hrsg.), DDR-Reportagen, Leipzig, 1969 (cf. especially those by B. Seeger, W. Eggerath, J. C. Schwarz, E. Neutsch, pp. 92-150), and in F. Selbmann (Hrsg.), DDR-Porträts, Leipzig, 1974 (e.g. the piece by B. Seeger, pp. 175-82).
18. 'Ich schreibe': Arbeiter greifen zur Feder, was published as an annual anthology from 1960 to 1964 (Berlin/Halle): together with the Deubener Blätter: Arbeitsmaterialien des Zirkels schreibender Arbeiter im Braunkohlenwerk 'Erich Weinert', 3 Bde., 1961-66, it represents the most accessible source for the early work of the 'schreibende Arbeiter', which has scarcely ever been re-published.
19. Biographical information about the lesser-known Party journalists referred to under footnote 17 can be found in G. Albrecht et al. (Hrsg.), Schriftsteller der DDR (Meyers Taschenlexikon), Leipzig, 1975. The majority of the contributors to 'Ich schreibe', Bd. 3, 1962, appeared also to come from the ranks of the 'white-collar' workers, including a factory-librarian, the editor of a works-newspaper, the organiser of a local centre for 'Volkskunst', an official of the 'Gesellschaft für deutsch-sowjetische Freundschaft', a trade-union official and a technologist. Manual workers like the electrician, the mechanic and the laboratory assistant in this volume are rather the exceptions (cf. pp. 184-9).

20. U. Steinhausen, D. Faulseit, J. Bonk (Hrsg.), Handbuch für schreibende Arbeiter, Berlin, 1969. It suggests for example that the 'große Formen' should be regarded as the preserve of the experienced professionals and preaches the virtues of concentration and self-limitation for the 'schreibende Arbeiter', pp. 107-89.
21. 'Ich schreibe', Bd. 3, p. 125.
22. I. Garlach, Bitterfeld, p. 50.
23. cf. the special praise given to Strittmatter at the Fifth Parteitag, Schubbe, Dokumente, pp. 534-5.
24. "An die Basis - gegen die Selbstzufriedenheit", in Greif zur Feder, Kumpel: Protokoll der Autorenkonferenz des Mitteldeutschen Verlages Halle (Saale) am 24. April 1959 im Kulturpalast des Elektrochemischen Kombinats Bitterfeld, pp. 45-52 (p. 52). (Excerpt in Schubbe, Dokumente, pp. 562-4).
25. "Fragen der Entwicklung der sozialistischen Literatur und Kultur", ibid., pp. 94-116 (pp. 104-5). (Excerpt in Schubbe, Dokumente, pp. 552-562).
26. This undoubtedly important novel falls outside the scope of this study, largely because it is, in thematic terms, a belated addition to the 'Aufbauliteratur' of the early 1950's, presenting the harshness of the years 1947-51 far more convincingly than Marchwitza and his colleagues, and with a variety of character and setting reflecting Anna Seghers' breadth of experience in exile and thereafter. The idea of a qualitatively superior socialist community lies beyond the post-war struggles for survival, as an article of faith rather than as a tangible reality. And yet Seghers' unwillingness to portray the identity problems arising from the war, or to reveal a perspective beyond the historical crisis-points of 1953 or 1956, makes Die Entscheidung ultimately a work which contributes little new to East German literature in these difficult years.
27. "Die Tiefe und Breite in der Literatur", in V. Deutscher Schriftstellerkongreß vom 25. bis 27. Mai 1961: Referate und Diskussionsbeiträge, (Beiträge zur Gegenwartsliteratur), Berlin, 1961, pp. 32-66 (p. 51). (Excerpt in Anna Seghers, Glauben an Irdisches: Essays aus vier Jahrzehnten, Leipzig, 1974, pp. 248-259.)
28. "Unser Weg ist richtig", ibid., p. 118.
29. cf. "Volkstümlichkeit und Realismus", Werke, Bd. 19, pp. 322-34.
30. "Unser Weg ist richtig", ibid., pp. 120-1.
31. ibid., pp. 248-73. (Excerpt in Sander, Geschichte der Schönen Literatur, pp. 199-200.)
32. cf. F. Trommler, "Prosaentwicklung und Bitterfelder Weg", in H. J. Schmitt (Hrsg.), Einführung in Theorie, Geschichte

- und Funktion der DDR-Literatur, pp. 293-327 (pp. 300-1).
33. ibid., pp. 306-7.
 34. Halle, 1961. The stories referred to here are also included in Erik Neutsch, Tage unseres Lebens: Geschichten, Leipzig, 1973.
 35. Tage unseres Lebens, p. 63.
 36. Rostock, 1961, p. 6.
 37. ibid., p. 37.
 38. ibid., pp. 127-8.
 39. Berlin, 1961.
 40. cf. G. Schneider (Hrsg.), Eröffnungen: Schriftsteller über ihr Erstlingswerk, Berlin, 1974, p. 172. De Bruyn's essay "Der Holzweg" (pp. 138-43), was referred to in the previous chapter; Wolf's "Über Sinn und Unsinn von Naivität" (pp. 164-74), relates principally to her Moskauer Novelle of 1961, but has obvious wider implications.
 41. This story is dealt with at greater length in Trommler, "Prosaentwicklung und Bitterfelder Weg", pp. 298-304.
 42. Berlin, 1969, p. 14.
 43. cf. the more detailed analysis in T. Feitknecht, Die sozialistische Heimat: Zum Selbstverständnis neuerer DDR-Romane, Bern, 1971, pp. 47-48; I. Gerlach, Bitterfeld, pp. 120-4.
 44. cf. J. Walther (Hrsg.), Meinetwegen Schmetterlinge: Gespräche mit Schriftstellern, Berlin, 1973, pp. 28-9.
 45. Beschreibung eines Sommers, pp. 70-82.
 46. ibid., p. 65.
 47. ibid., pp. 65-66.
 48. ibid., p. 66.
 49. Neue Deutsche Literatur, 10/61, pp. 129-33.
 50. cf. Deuerlein, DDR, pp. 160-67, 236.
 51. J. Wohlgenuth's Egon und das achte Weltwunder, the main Bitterfeld novel published in 1962, was as conventional as 'first wave' works like Ankunft im Alltag. cf. Trommler, "Prosaentwicklung und Bitterfelder Weg", pp. 299-300.
 52. Christa Wolf's essays of 1957-58 on the realism discussion and Kant's views of 1957 on war-literature were considered in the previous chapter. Their literary debuts, in book form, were Die Moskauer Novelle (1961) and the collection

of stories, Ein bißchen Südsee (1962), both of which lie outside the scope of this study.

53. Reference will be made in the rest of this chapter to the following editions of these central works, with title abbreviations and page-numbers as before in the body of the text: B. Reimann, Die Geschwister. Aufbau, Berlin, 1963 = G
C. Wolf, Der geteilte Himmel. Mitteldeutscher Verlag, Halle, 1971 = GH
E. Strittmatter, Ole Bienkopp. Aufbau, Berlin, 1968 = OB
E. Neutsch, Spur der Steine. Mitteldeutscher Verlag, Halle, 1968 = S
H. Kant, Die Aula. Fischer Bücherei, Frankfurt-a-M, 1968 = Au
54. cf. the recognition of Kant's stylistic innovations in the essay by Silvia and Dieter Schlenstedt, "Modern erzählt: Zu Strukturen in Hermann Kants Roman Die Aula" in NDL 12/65, pp. 5-34.
55. cf. the general essay on Kant by W. Spiewok in H. J. Geerdts (Hrsg.), Literatur der DDR in Einzeldarstellungen, pp. 416-34, and Raddatz's comments in Traditionen und Tendenzen, pp. 327-41.
56. The decline of Alfred Kurella as a central figure in cultural politics is the only indication of change. It dates from the period between the SED's Sixth Parteitag in January 1963 and the conference involving writers and Party leaders in March of the same year. Kurella was criticised for devoting too much time in his capacity as leader of the Politbüro's 'Kunstkommission' to the work of the 'Schreibende Arbeiter' and neglecting the ideological struggle against critical authors like Peter Hacks, Peter Huchel and Günter Kunert. His post was abolished and he was transferred to the more innocuous position of directing the 'Dichtkunst und Sprachpflege' section of the East Berlin Akademie der Künste. Much of his work, and influence, was taken over by Kurt Hager, who became head of the Politbüro's 'Ideologische Kommission' at the same time. cf. Sander, Geschichte der Schönen Literatur, pp. 206-10.
57. The publisher's comments on the cover of the West German paperback edition of Die Aula reflect this attitude unmistakably: "Romane, die in beiden Teilen Deutschlands spielen, gehören noch zu den Raritäten. Die Aula des gebürtigen Hamburgers und jetzigen DDR-Bürgers Hermann Kant schildert ein Stück deutscher Wirklichkeit, das den meisten von uns kaum bekannt, aber nichtsdestoweniger Teil unseres nationalen Schicksals ist." H. Mohr, on the other hand, emphasises the real problem of the one-sidedness of the West German critical reception in his essay "Gerechtes Erinnern. Untersuchungen zu Thema und Struktur von Hermann Kants Roman Die Aula und einige Bemerkungen zu bundesrepublikanischen Rezensionen", in Germanisch-Romanische Monatshefte, Bd. 21, 1971, pp. 225-45.

There have also been attempts to compare and contrast Christa Wolf and Uwe Johnson as 'Dichter der beiden Deutschland'. (The almost meaningless phrase seems to stem from Gunter Blocker, Kritisches Lesebuch, Hamburg, 1962, p. 196.)

- The fruitful thematic contrast lies more specifically in their differing views on the GDR, in the sense that the heroine's fate in Der geteilte Himmel is, on one level, a corrective to the death of Jakob Abs in Mutmaßungen über Jakob. The most comprehensive study of the depiction of divided Germany is Peter Hutchinson's Literary Presentations of Divided Germany: The Development of a central theme in East German fiction 1945-1970 (Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, 1974), just published in a slightly modified form by Cambridge University Press (Anglica Germanica: Series 2), 1977.
58. cf. D. Childs, East Germany, pp. 24-35.
 59. 'Radfahren' is defined by H. Küpper in his Wörterbuch der deutschen Umgangssprache, Bd. 1, Hamburg, 1965, as "Gegenüber Vorgesetzten unterwürfig, aber gegenüber Seinesgleichen oder Untergebenen herrisch sein", p. 398. Uwe Johnson develops the concept into a central metaphor in his Das dritte Buch über Achim (1961), which is, on one level, about the problems of writing a truthful biography of the East German cycling champion.
 60. cf. Raddatz's criticisms, Traditionen und Tendenzen, pp. 356-62.
 61. The chronology of, and some factual detail relating to, land collectivisation are set out in A bis Z: Ein Taschen- und Nachschlagebuch über den anderen Teil Deutschlands, Bonn, 1969, pp. 382-6.
 62. Strittmatter is an undoubted exception here, largely it seems as a result of the age-gap of more than 15 years separating him from his fellow Bitterfeld novelists.
 63. The situation of the 'heroine', Grit, in Beschreibung eines Sommers, is very similar. Jakobs describes the 'Kleinstadtlangeweile' (p. 162) and the moral consequences of this domestic instability with considerable success.
 64. Brigitte Reimann goes little beyond her idealised portrayal of brigadier Lukas, while Kant and Strittmatter are not directly concerned with the industrial world of the 1960's.
 65. Neutsch refers to the rebellious Haduweit brigade (the model for the 'Ballas') in his earlier story Der Neue, as "ganz alte Zunftgesellen": Tage unseres Lebens, p. 24.
 66. R. Havemann, Dialektik oder Dogma? Naturwissenschaft und Weltanschauung, Reinbek, 1971, p. 151.
 67. Beschreibung eines Sommers, p. 61.
 68. ibid., p. 129.
 69. ibid., p. 200.
 70. Tage unseres Lebens, esp. pp. 57-61.
 71. As an indication of the popularity of these novels, Der geteilte Himmel had sales of well over 100,000 in the GDR

- in its first year, while 80,000 copies of Spur der Steine were published in a matter of months (cf. NDL 3/65, p. 192). These two, like Ole Bienkopp, Die Aula and Beschreibung eines Sommers, have frequently been reprinted in large editions, while Der geteilte Himmel and Die Aula have become widely known in the Federal Republic in paperback versions. Only works such as Nackt unter Wölfen and Die Abenteuer des Werner Holt have enjoyed equal popularity in the GDR, but their literary merits are much more questionable. The Western critical interest was stimulated by works like M. Reich-Ranicki's Deutsche Literatur in Ost und West, München, 1963, and H. P. Anderle's Mitteldeutsche Erzähler, Köln, 1965, and has continued unabated ever since.
72. "Notwendiges Streitgespräch: Bemerkungen zu einem internationalen Kolloquium", NDL 3/65, pp. 88-97 (p. 88).
73. A good impression of the range of reactions to these novels is provided through the volume documenting the reception of Der geteilte Himmel - Martin Reso, Der geteilte Himmel und seine Kritiker, Halle, 1965. Reso's own concluding essay (pp. 256-98), like that by G. Dahlke (reprinted from Sinn und Form 2/64) are examples of the new qualitative standard of literary criticism. The outstanding overall analysis of the Bitterfeld fiction to appear in these years was Dieter Schlenstedt's "Ankunft und Anspruch: Zum neueren Roman in der DDR", Sinn und Form 3/66, pp. 814-35.
74. The Kafka conference held near Prague in May 1963 is generally held to mark the significant broadening of literary horizons, although SF 5-6/62 had published programmatic essays by Sartre and Louis Aragon together with Fischer's "Entfremdung, Dekadenz, Realismus". Fischer's Kunst und Koexistenz, Reinbek, 1966, indicates the general line of development well. Christa Wolf's comments at the International Colloquium held in East Berlin in December 1964 (NDL 3/65, pp. 97-104) reflect the close contacts which she and many of her colleagues had with their West German counterparts at this time.
75. Über die Entwicklung einer volksverbundenen sozialistischen Nationalkultur, Berlin, 1964, pp. 12-13. (Also in Schubbe, Dokumente, pp. 956-91).
76. ibid., p. 39.
77. ibid., p. 9.
78. "Brief an den Minister für Kultur", first published in E. Kohn (Hrsg.), In eigener Sache: Briefe von Künstlern und Schriftstellern, Halle, 1964, pp. 34-46. Reprinted in Fühmann, Erfahrungen und Widersprüche: Versuche über Literatur, Rostock, 1975, pp. 5-15 (pp. 7, 9).
79. Protokoll der von der ideologischen Kommission beim Politbüro des ZK der SED und dem Ministerium für Kultur am 24. und 25. April im Kulturpalast des Elektrochemischen Kombines Bitterfeld abgehaltenen Konferenz, Berlin, 1964, pp. 224-33 (p. 229). Wolf's development as a cultural-political

- influence during this period is well dealt with by M. Jäger in his essay "Auf dem langen Weg zur Wahrheit: Fragen, Antworten und neue Fragen in den Erzählungen, Aufsätzen und Reden Christa Wolfs", in Sozialliteraten: Funktion und Selbstverständnis der Schriftsteller in der DDR, Düsseldorf, 1973, pp. 11-101 (esp. pp. 21-30).
80. "Diskussionsbeitrag Christa Wolfs, Kandidat des ZK, auf dem 11. Plenum des ZK der SED", in Schubbe, Dokumente, pp. 1098-1100 (p. 1099).
81. Protokoll, pp. 201-10 (p. 208).
82. It is impossible to give a precise assessment of these works as documents of 1965. "Der Tag X" was never published, and information about it has come via sources like Robert Havemann's Fragen, Antworten, Fragen, Reinbek, 1972, pp. 116-21, and F. J. Raddatz's review of Fünf Tage im Juni, "Gruppenbild mit Genosse", in Der Spiegel 47/74, pp. 176-9. Maria Morzeck only appeared in 1969, in a substantially revised version, after Bieler had emigrated to the West, and it remains a matter of surmise whether his views on identity changed in the meantime. (Paperback edition, Maria Morzeck oder das Kaninchen bin ich, München, 1972.) Nothing more was heard of Brünig's "Der eiserne Vorhang" before his death in 1976: "Rummelplatz" was reprinted in H. Brenner's anthology Nachrichten aus Deutschland, Reinbek, 1967, pp. 295-314. Der Bau has remained an unrealisable drama project in the GDR, but has reached a wider audience through the collected edition of Müller's works, Geschichten aus der Produktion, Bd. 1, West/berlin, 1974, pp. 85-136.
83. Der Bau, p. 134.
84. cf. the analysis of Der Bau in the context of Müller's industrial drama in H. Fehervary, "Heiner Müllers Brigadestücke", Basis 2, Frankfurt, 1971, pp. 103-40 (esp. p. 126).
85. Der Bau, p. 108.
86. ibid., p. 118.
87. Maria Morzeck, p. 143. It is an open question whether Bieler's interest in the 'Zu-sich-selber-Kommen-des-Menschen' derives, as in the motto of Christa Wolf's Nachdenken über Christa T., from J. R. Becher's deliberations in his Tagebuch 1950 (cf. the section "The Dream of Wholeness" in Chapter 5 below).
88. "Rücksichtslose Schimpferei", in Die Drahtharfe, West/berlin, 1965, pp. 69-70.
89. It is hardly coincidental that the Eleventh Plenum followed closely upon the arrest of the authors Sinyavsky and Daniel in the USSR and a visit of Leonid Brezhnev to East Berlin: cf. E. Honecker, Bericht des Politbüros an die 11. Tagung des Zentralkomitees der SED, Berlin, 1966, pp. 26-9. Extracts from Honecker's speech, together with other main contributions to the Eleventh Plenum, are found in Schubbe, Dokumente, pp. 1076-1117.

90. Bericht des Politbüros, p. 57.
91. ibid., p. 57.
92. ibid., p. 56.
93. ibid., pp. 58, 60. The most explicit reference to the Party's exclusive access to historical truth comes in P. Fröhlich's speech, "Fester Standpunkt - gute Ergebnisse", in Schubbe, Dokumente, pp. 1095-8 (p. 1096).
94. cf. "Die Langeweile von Minsk", Heym's much criticised article of 1965, ibid., 1057-60.

CHAPTER 5 : SUBJECTIVE REALISM - THE CRITICAL REAPPRAISAL

1. F. R. Fries, Der Weg nach Oobliadooh, Frankfurt, 1966, pp. 266-7.
2. ibid., p. 287.
3. Picaresque tendencies had previously only been regarded as acceptable in novels dealing with the war and its chaotic aftermath - the period before the establishment of socialism and, by implication, social harmony. Apart from Strittmatter's Der Wandertäter and Kunert's Im Namen der Hüte, discussed in Chapter 3 above, Manfred Bieler's Bonifaz oder der Matrose in der Flasche (1963) was the only notable contribution to the genre.
4. Fries, Der Weg nach Oobliadooh, p. 176.
5. ibid., p. 67.
6. ibid., pp. 228f.
7. ibid., p. 286.
8. cf. the diary entries in the novel for 25. and 29. June, which are particularly concerned with these fundamental differences of opinion between the narrator Bele and her boy-friend, the physicist Paul (paperback edition, Berlin, 1975, pp. 140-49, 180-84).
9. The unchanging situation between the Eleventh Plenum and the Sixth Writers' Congress is best observed in the excerpts from the speeches of these main 'Kulturpolitiker' in Schubbe, Dokumente, pp. 1076-1509. cf. also Peter Orlow, Die Bitterfelder Sackgasse: Literaturpolitik der SED zwischen 1965 und 1969, (Die Orientierung, Erstes Beiheft 1970), Pfaffenhofen/Ilm, 1970.
10. "Das Neue und das Bleibende in unserer Literatur", in Deutscher Schriftstellerverband (Hrsg.), VI. Deutscher Schriftstellerkongreß vom 28. bis 30. Mai 1969 in Berlin. Protokoll, Berlin, 1969, pp. 23-59 (p. 45).

11. cf. the excerpts from speeches by Walter Ulbricht, Helmut Sakowski and Max Zimmering in Neue Deutsche Literatur 2/66, pp. 3-40.
12. Schulz, "Das Neue und das Bleibende", p. 26.
13. Schubbe, Dokumente, pp. 1385-6.
14. The first indication of any modification of this view of fiction as purely 'illustrative' comes in the discussion between authors, including Hermann Kant, and cultural politicians, chaired by Heinz Plavius and published in NDL 5/68 in the section entitled "Romanschreiben heute", pp. 12-42. Here, fictional 'totality' is beginning to be understood in relation to the author's narrative perspective rather than as the reproduction of a social-historical panorama.
15. Schulz, "Das Neue und das Bleibende", p. 41.
16. Neue Deutsche Literatur in particular published lengthy excerpts from the novels, usually with supportive discussions with their authors, e.g. Martin Viertel, 4/68 pp. 6-64; Anna Seghers 5/68, pp. 43-97, 5/69 pp. 149-71; Werner Heiduczek 8/68 pp. 61-125; Peter Edel, "Die Bilder des Zeugen Schattmann", 2/69 pp. 11-69.
17. It was evidently hoped that this officially sanctioned version of the events of 1953 would finally supercede the markedly less harmonious impression which Stefan Heym had hoped to provide through his "Der Tag X", and thus consign the matter to innocuous oblivion.
18. cf. the references to "Rummelplatz" in the final section of Chapter 4 above.
19. E. Neutsch, Die Anderen und Ich, Halle, 1970, p. 17.
20. The fact that this is a crucial period in de Bruyn's evolution as a writer is further emphasised by the publication in the same year of the second, significantly revised, edition of his collection of stories, Ein schwarzer, abgrundtiefer See. cf. S. Töpelmann, "Zu de Bruyns Erzählweise", Weimarer Beiträge 6/68, pp. 1184-1207 (esp. pp. 1198f.).
21. The much delayed appearance of Ein Dienstag im September was much commented upon at the time: many of the pieces included in the collection had been published in NDL in 1967, including the uncharacteristically negative "Saubohnen" and "Schildmuse" - 6/67 pp. 24-39, 11/67 pp. 43-80. cf. Raddatz, Traditionen und Tendenzen, pp. 365-8.
22. "Juninachmittag", first published in the Aufbau Verlag's Neue Texte 1967, has subsequently appeared in various anthologies in the West, including H. Brenner's Nachrichten aus Deutschland, L-W. Wolff's Fahrt mit der S-Bahn, München, 1971, and P. Hutchinsons's Die DDR erzählt, London, 1973. Reference is made below to the Wolff edition, pp. 229-46.
Wolff's essays appeared in different editions, both entitled Lesen und Schreiben (Berlin, 1971 and Neuwied, 1972)

which are compared by J. B. Bilke in "Zumutbare Wahrheiten", Basis 4, Frankfurt, 1973, pp. 192-200. Reference is made below to the East German edition, except in regard to the essay "Die zumutbare Wahrheit: Prosa der Ingeborg Bachmann", which has only appeared in the West.

23. Kunert's longer prose pieces of this period have been published in the West in the collections Die Beerdigung findet in aller Stille statt, München, 1968 and Ortsangaben, Betonformen, Berlin, 1969. Most of the short parables, descriptions of places and pieces about his work as a writer, written between 1964 and 1971, are included in Tagträume in Berlin und Andersorts, München, 1972 - but without the necessary bibliographical detail about where and when they previously appeared. The East German edition, Kramen in Fächern, Berlin, 1968, consists of a selection from this material, but also includes some short pieces not found in the Western editions.
24. "Verzauberung", Tagträume, pp. 286-7.
25. The Lonely Voice: A study of the short story, London, 1965, p. 21. The view of the short story in the GDR presented in the recent volume by G. Jäckel and U. Roisch, Große Form in kleiner Form: Zur sozialistischen Kurzgeschichte, Halle, 1974, is inadequately differentiated. The authors see the short story as providing a 'microcosm' of the social 'macrocosm', and thus still as a harmonising force within an unthreatened socialist community (e.g. pp. 16-7, 81). While this may be true of the work of writers like Werner Bräunig and Joachim Nowotny, it cannot be said of the critical short prose analysed here.
26. Lesen und Schreiben, Neuwied, 1972, p. 134. cf. my earlier essay on the work of Kunert, Strittmatter and Johannes Bobrowski, "Community under scrutiny: The short story in contemporary East German writing", Atlantis, No. 6 (Winter 1973/74), Dublin, 1974, pp. 26-33.
27. "Die Glucke", Schulzenhofer Kramkalender, Berlin, 1969, pp. 246-7.
28. "Verzauberung", Tagträume, p. 286.
29. "Fahrt mit der S-Bahn", Beerdigung, p. 77.
30. "Berliner Gemäuer", Tagträume, p. 217.
31. "Ortsangaben", Kramen in Fächern, p. 193.
32. "Exkursion in die Geschichte nebst Abschweifungen", Tagträume, p. 165.
33. e.g. "Schrecken der Einsamkeit", "Die Taucher", "Das Telefon" in Tagträume; "Märchenhafter Monolog", "Die Waage", "Die Beerdigung findet in aller Stille statt" in Beerdigung; "Betonformen" in Kramen in Fächern.
34. "Die Waage", Beerdigung, pp. 15, 21.

35. "Juninachmittag", p. 233. There are some useful comments on this story in A. Stephan, Christa Wolf. (Autorenbücher 4), München, 1976, pp. 101-6.
36. "Selbstporträt im Gegenlicht", Tagträume, p. 284.
37. "Saubohnen", Ein Dienstag im September. Berlin, 1970, pp. 88-9.
38. Lesen und Schreiben. pp. 71, 74.
39. ibid., p. 79.
40. See above, Chapter 3.
41. Details of its delayed publication and the hostile reception in the GDR are given in H. Mohr's fundamental analysis, "Produktive Sehnsucht: Struktur, Thematik und politische Relevanz von Christa Wolfs Nachdenken über Christa T.". Basis 2, Frankfurt, 1971, pp. 191-233 (pp. 215ff). Page references in the following sections of this study are to the West German edition, Luchterhand, Neuwied, 1969, and will be accompanied by the prefix CT.
42. Extracts from the novel appeared in Sinn und Form 2/68, pp. 500-15 and Neue Deutsche Literatur 6/68, pp. 14-65, and there were refreshingly frank interviews with de Bruyn in NDL 6/68, pp. 9-13, by H. Plavius, and in Weimarer Beiträge 6/68, pp. 1171-83, by S. Tüpelmann. Page references below are to the dtv edition, München, 1971, accompanied by the prefix BE.
43. A useful comparison of the two editions (to the extent that the first can be assessed through the excerpts in NDL 5/69, pp. 34-57, and the youth magazine Forum) is provided by H. Sander, "Ein Phönix aus der Schublade?", Deutschland-Archiv 5/72, pp. 527-32. The relatively unenthusiastic reception it received in the GDR is reflected in A. Große's article, "Vom Wert der Geschichte", which follows a lengthy interview with Kant in WB 8/72, pp. 32-91. Page references below are to the East German edition, Rütten & Loening, Berlin, 1973, with the prefix I.
44. The best insights into the novel's progress are provided by the author's interview with A. Auer, Sonntag 7/68, and the correspondence between these two published since Reimann's death in 1973, in Sonntag 9/73 and NDL 8/75, pp. 134-40, and more recently collected in W. Liersch (Hrsg.), Was zählt, ist die Wahrheit: Briefe von Schriftstellern der DDR, Halle, 1975, pp. 288-330. Page references below are to the East German edition, Verlag Neues Leben, Berlin, 1974, with the prefix FL.
45. De Bruyn's interview with S. Tüpelmann makes it especially clear that the appropriate subject-matter for the novel in the stable GDR of the later 1960's is the "Problemkomplex des Alltäglichen", WB 6/68, p. 1171.
46. cf. Reimann's letters of the period in Liersch, Was zählt, ist die Wahrheit, pp. 288ff.

47. ibid., pp. 302-4 (letter of 26.11.63).
48. Neue Texte, Berlin, 1964; H-P. Anderle (Hrsg.), Mitteldeutsche Erzähler, Köln, 1965, pp. 248-55.
49. Liersch, Was zählt, ist die Wahrheit, p. 305 (letter of 11.2.65).
50. Sonntag 9/73, p. 6 (letter of 1.7.65) - a regrettable and unexplained omission from the Liersch anthology.
51. Sonntag 7/68, interview with A. Auer.
52. There is a self-critical remark on the misguidedness of authors who give their heroes significant names, evoking associations which distort the truth more than they assist it, from Goethe's Wilhelm Meister to his own Weichmantel in Der Hohlweg (BE 59); later, during Erp's Sunday excursion with Fröhlein Broder round the Mark Brandenburg, they pass the place which the narrator recalls as being the location for "Hochzeit in Weltzow", an early story of de Bruyn's (BE 143).
53. NDL 6/68, p. 11.
54. ibid., p. 13.
55. cf. "Nachdenken über Christa T. - Ein Selbstinterview", Kürbiskern 4/68, pp. 555-8 (p. 555).
56. ibid., p. 555.
57. It has thus become a more subtle device than the occasional 'Wir' which expresses general solidarity with the population of the GDR during the darkest hours of 1961 in Der geteilte Himmel: see above, Chapter 4.
58. Lesen und Schreiben, pp. 176-224.
59. ibid., pp. 208-10.
60. ibid., p. 205.
61. ibid., pp. 204-216 (p. 205).
62. ibid., p. 215.
63. Hans Kaufmann, "Gespräch mit Christa Wolf", WB 6/74, pp. 90-112 (p. 95).
64. "Selbstinterview", p. 555.
65. The deep relationship between Nachdenken über Christa T. and "Lesen und Schreiben" is further underlined by the fact that these insights into the problems associated with memory and the past are closely echoed on the theoretical level in the section of the latter entitled 'Medallions', pp. 194-8.

66. A. Große emphasises this weakness of Das Impressum in her essay "Vom Wert der Geschichte", pp. 84-5.
67. In the interview with A. Große, p. 45.
68. ibid., pp. 57f.
69. "Lesen und Schreiben", pp. 208-9.
70. ibid., p. 223.
71. Interview with S. Töpelmann, p. 1173.
72. Interview with H. Plavius, p. 12.
73. cf. the section 'Tabula rasa' of "Lesen und Schreiben", pp. 187-94.
74. The 17. June 1953 is still seen by Kant in terms of the threat to the survival of the GDR presented by the rebellious workers, with implicit reference to the 'Tag X' theory of systematic Western subversion, and therefore as a time for solidarity rather than internal conflict. His semi-documentary account of the rough treatment meted out to the proletarian minister Fritz Selbmann (lightly disguised as Fritze Andermann) in front of the Haus der Ministerien in Berlin concentrates upon the sufferings of a sympathetic representative of an otherwise anonymous leadership, and no more than hints at the way in which its mismanagement of the 'Neuer Kurs' contributed to the confrontation. Kant may go further than Anna Seghers in Das Vertrauen, but still falls badly short of the level of authenticity achieved by Robert Havemann in his Fragen, Antworten, Fragen (1970) or Stefan Heym in his Fünf Tage im Juni (1974). cf. my review article on the English edition of Heym's novel, THES, 11.2.77.
75. cf. R. Hinton Thomas and K. Bullivant, Literature in Upheaval: West German writers and the challenge of the 1960's, Manchester, 1974, pp. 2-30.
76. The chronology of Reimann's novel in its unfinished state presents various difficulties: the conception of the narrative present suggests that Franziska leaves Neustadt after about a year, perhaps late in 1963, and spends about the same amount of time with Trojanowicz before deciding to return. Yet the framework seems to stretch in the final stages of the novel into the later 1960's through documentary references to events in West Germany and further afield, e.g. FL 485-6. If this were the case, meaning that Franziska's exile has lasted several years, then the links with Neustadt and the possibility of re-integration would appear extremely tenuous, and the novel's unity would be seriously threatened.
77. Auf andere Art so große Hoffnung: Tagebuch 1950, Berlin, 1969, p. 224.
78. "Selbstinterview", pp. 556-7.

79. ibid., p. 557.
80. Chapter 13, pp. 420-49. The historical basis for these deliberations is explained by Kant in his interview with A. Große, WB 8/72, pp. 58-9.
81. "Lesen und Schreiben", p. 218.
82. ibid., p. 181.
83. H. Mohr, "Produktive Sehnsucht", p. 215.
84. cf. R. Pascal, "Georg Lukács: The Concept of Totality", in Culture and the Division of Labour, University of Warwick, 1974, (Occasional Papers in German Studies, no. 5), pp. 63-100 (pp. 65-9).
85. Brecht, Gesammelte Werke, Bd. 19, p. 527.

CONCLUSION

1. "Diskussion mit Christa Wolf", in Sinn und Form 4/76, pp. 861-88 (pp. 885-8).
2. cf. the report of the fourth Plenum of the Central Committee of the SED, in Neues Deutschland, 18 December 1971.
3. Braun had already established his reputation as a dramatist and lyric poet since the early 1960's, while Becker's debut with his outstandingly original Jakob der Lügner had come at the tail-end of the Ulbricht era in 1969. They have, however, like the other authors mentioned, grown impressively in literary stature in the 1970's.
4. Joachim Walther (Hrsg.), Meinetwegen Schmetterlinge: Gespräche mit Schriftstellern, Berlin, 1973, pp. 79-97 (p. 97).
5. cf. M. Krüger (Hrsg.), "Literaturkritik in der DDR", in Tintenfisch 7, [West]berlin, 1974, pp. 60-68 (p. 60). The debates in the various 'Arbeitsgruppen' at the Writers' Congress reflect the spirit of the period better than the formal speeches: Schriftstellerverband der DDR (Hrsg.), VII. Schriftstellerkongreß der DDR: Protokoll, Berlin, 1974, Bd. 2.
6. Hans Kaufmann, "Gespräch mit Christa Wolf", in Weimarer Beiträge 6/74, pp. 90-112 (p. 112).
7. Die neuen Leiden des jungen W., Rostock, 1973, pp. 58-9.
8. "Unvollendete Geschichte" has so far only appeared in Sinn und Form 3/75, pp. 941-79.
9. I am indebted to Ulrich Plenzdorf for his many helpful remarks during his visit to the New University of Ulster in

January 1975 on his intentions in writing Die neuen Leiden.

10. These points are illuminatingly developed by Robert Weimann in his influential essay "Goethe in der Figurenperspektive", in Sinn und Form 1/73, pp. 222-38.
11. Peter Ullrich, in "Diskussion um Plenzdorf", Sinn und Form 1/73, pp. 248-50.
12. The open letter to the Party leadership and the list of signatories were only published in the West, e.g. Die Zeit, 3 December 1976, p. 34.

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The bibliography is divided into four sections, none of which makes any claim to be exhaustive. The primary texts listed in Section 1.1 are those analysed above in some detail at least and viewed as either historically significant or representative of well-established attitudes to matters of identity, community and continuity in East German fiction. (Since these themes are almost inevitably present in some form in most novels published in the GDR, there seemed no virtue in attempting to be more comprehensive.) The date of first publication is given in brackets wherever a later edition has been used; Berlin always means East Berlin unless otherwise indicated.

Since this study has been closely concerned with the inter-relationship between authenticity and realism, it seemed helpful to list, as Section 1.2, interviews and articles in which the main authors provide background information, often of an autobiographical nature, to their prose-writing and their role as intellectuals in the GDR.

The body of secondary literature on the relevant aspects of East German culture and society has grown enormously in recent years: I have therefore decided in Section 2.1 to restrict myself to those full-length studies which deal directly with at least some of my primary texts, and to the most helpful articles on individual works and general tendencies. The leading East German periodicals, Sinn und Form (1949-), Neue Deutsche Literatur (1953-) and Weimarer Beiträge (1955-) have been my most invaluable sources of information on trends and changes in the literary climate: article references from them are given with the abbreviated title forms SF, NDL, and WB, followed by the appropriate sequence number for the given year.

The 'wider cultural context' in Section 2.2 is, for obvious reasons, the most inexhaustible category of all. Only those titles directly referred to in the main text and a number of others of fundamental background importance are listed.

The division is therefore as follows:

<u>Primary literature</u>	1.1 <u>Main texts</u>
	1.2 <u>The authors on their own work</u>
<u>Secondary literature</u>	2.1 <u>Literature and society in the GDR</u>
	2.2 <u>The wider cultural context</u>

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