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**REPRESENTATIONAL STRATEGIES IN THE
NOVELS OF HERMANN BURGER**

by

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Summary

This thesis focuses on the novels of Hermann Burger. It considers the experimental nature of Burger's writings as a form of opposition, or 'Verweigerung', to the restrictive discourses of Swiss nationhood expressed in the notion of 'Enge'. A central tenet of the argument advanced here is that Hermann Burger is both a very self-consciously Swiss author, and, at the same time, very self-consciously experimental; a constant tension between these two aspects of his writing is manifest in all his work.

Burger was not a provincial Swiss writer. Rather, he was an eclectic writer, and this thesis will examine the manner in which his work is framed by a broad spectrum of literary and philosophical ideas current in the wider international context of literary debate which serve to challenge the narrowness of intellectual discussion and forms of representation in Switzerland. To extend the discursive possibilities of the individual within the cultural space of the nation, Burger's novels involve a radical play with form and language which blurs the boundaries between the real, the unreal and the surreal, in order to challenge notions of the 'real'. A conflict between normative modes of expression and the desire for self-expression develops which is thematically central in Burger's work.

His novels present the reader with a complex set of inter-related issues: national identity; national culture; Art; nature; literature and representational strategies; art and life. The methodology adopted in this thesis reflects the belief that Burger's work is best appreciated as an eclectic mix of ideas. As Burger engages with the multifarious aspects of life and seeks to give them form, so his work is considered in relation to a broad range of theories which, taken together, provide insights into his work.

Representational Strategies in the Novels of Hermann Burger

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ABBREVIATIONS

These are editions of the main works referred to in the text that follows.
First editions of all texts are listed in the Bibliography.

- AV H. Burger, *Die allmähliche Verfertigung der Idee beim Schreiben* (Frankfurt a.M., 1986)
- Br H. Burger, *Brenner: Brunsleben* (Frankfurt a.M., 1989).
- D H. Burger, *Diabelli: Erzählungen* (Frankfurt a. M., 1979).
- DE P. Nizon, *Diskurs in der Enge* (Zurich and Cologne, 1973). (erste Auflage, Bern, 1970).
- DSS Bichsel, P., 'Des Schweizers Schweiz', in *Des Schweizers Schweiz* (Zurich, 1989), pp.9-36.
- FAZ *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*
- LaT A. Muschg, *Literatur als Therapie?* (Frankfurt a.M., 1981).
- KM H. Burger, *Die Künstliche Mutter* (Frankfurt a.M., 1982).
- MaW H. Burger, *Ein Mann aus Wörtern* (Frankfurt a.M., 1983)
- NZZ *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*
- Sch H. Burger, *Schilten: Schulbericht zuhanden der Inspektorenkonferenz* (Frankfurt a.M., 1979).
- SL H. Burger, 'Schweizer Literatur nach 1968' in *Als Autor auf der Stor* (Frankfurt a.M., 1987), pp.219-242.

INTRODUCTION

A brief overview of Hermann Burger's life reveals the brevity, yet intensity of his literary output. Born 1942 in canton Aargau, Burger studied 'Germanistik' at the University of Zürich; he completed his doctoral thesis on Paul Celan in 1973, and his 'Habilitationsschrift' *Studien zur zeitgenössischen Schweizer Literatur* in 1974. He taught subsequently at the universities of Bern, Zürich and Freiburg and became the youngest writer to deliver the *Frankfurter Poetikvorlesung* in 1986. His first published work was a poetry collection entitled *Rauchsignale* in 1967, which was followed in 1970 by *Bork*, a collection of short stories, neither of which received much critical acclaim. His first major work, which brought him to the attention of a wider public, was *Schilten*, published in 1976. Next he published a collection of short stories entitled *Diabelli* (1979). This was followed by publication of the *Kirchberger Idyllen* (1980) and of his second novel *Die Künstliche Mutter* (1982), and two further volumes of short stories *Blankenburg* (1986), and *Der Schuss auf die Kanzel* (1988); his final novel *Brenner Erster Band: Brunsleben* (1989) was followed by *Brenner zweiter Band: Menzenmang*, which was published posthumously as a fragment in 1992. In addition, he produced a treatise on suicide entitled *Tractatus logico suicidalis* (1988), three collections of essays, and numerous reviews and newspaper articles. In 1980 he received the Conrad Ferdinand Meyer Preis, in 1983 the Hölderlin Preis, in 1984 the Aargauer Literaturpreis and in 1985 the Ingeborg Bachmann Preis. He committed suicide in 1989.

It is perhaps this trajectory that has encouraged many critics to adopt a biographical approach when reviewing his work. Burger was an enigmatic figure who craved publicity and often thematised aspects of his own life in his work. It is

certainly tempting, therefore, to consider his work as semi-autobiographical. Such an approach will not be taken in this thesis. Burger, as an academic as well as a writer, was aware of literary trends and the development of literary theory which occurred in the seventies and eighties. It will be a contention of this thesis that Burger's work draws on a broad spectrum of literary and philosophical ideas current in the wider international context of literary debate to challenge the narrowness of intellectual discussion and forms of representation in Switzerland.

It has become usual to preface any work on Hermann Burger with the observation that, although heralded as one of the great new talents of German literature, since his death his work has attracted little attention.¹ The response of this thesis to such assertions is that too much emphasis has been placed upon his life to the detriment of a consideration of the radically experimental nature of Burger's writings as a form of opposition, or 'Verweigerung', to the restrictive discourses of Swiss nationhood. In 1974 Dieter Fringeli pointed out that 'Das Wort "Enge" ist im Hinblick auf die schweizersische Kunst und Literatur in den vergangenen Jahren nachgerade zu einem Modewort geworden'.² Burger's work will be considered as a response to the discourses of 'Enge'. A fundamental element in the argument advanced here is that Hermann Burger is both a very self-consciously Swiss author, and, at the same time, very self-consciously experimental; a constant tension between these two aspects of his writing is manifest in all his work. By examining Burger's

¹ Marcel Reich-Ranicki considered that 'Die deutschsprachige Literatur hat einen ihrer originellsten und skurrilsten Schriftsteller verloren, eines der größten Talente der in den vierziger Jahren geborenen Generation'. 'Artist am Abgrund: Zum Tod des Schriftstellers Hermann Burger' in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ), 3.3.1989.

² D. Fringeli, *Dichter im Abseits: Schweizer Autoren von Glauser bis Hohl*, Zürich, München, 1974, p.8.

three major novels: *Schilten*, *Die Künstliche Mutter*, and *Brenner:Brunsleben*, together with two volumes of short stories: *Bork* and *Diabelli*, this thesis will explore the nature and extent of this tension and Burger's experimentation with form and language.

Hermann Burger was not only one of the great talents of his age, but also gave powerful and creative expression to the frustration experienced by the writer in Switzerland. His writings never depart from the geographical space of the nation: they are distinctly Swiss in their location. Nonetheless, Burger was not a provincial Swiss writer; rather, he was, as this thesis will argue, an eclectic writer who drew inspiration and ideas from literary and theoretical innovations from outside Switzerland, in particular from literary debate in near-neighbour France which was, in part, triggered by the writings of the Swiss Saussure. Burger opposes the narrow reductiveness of national discourse with a range of narrative strategies and ideas which are intended to expand the concept of nationhood.³ His work rejects the idea of Switzerland as a natural, organic entity with an objective history: the nation is seen as a fiction, if a necessary one. By adopting what may be termed a modernist attitude to the notion of nationhood, Burger places himself in a position to undermine the fiction of the nation with alternative fictions, and to undermine monolithic discourse

³ Discourse is used in the sense given to it by Foucault in relation to his discussion of *discursive practices*. Said has commented in relation to Foucault's ideas that they show 'how discourse - impersonal, systematic, highly regulated by enunciative formations - overrides society and governs the production of culture. ... Over and above every opportunity to say something, there stands a regularising collectivity'. E. Said, *The World, The Text, and The Critic*, London, 1991, p.186 and p.216. In the context of this thesis, the dominant discourses are considered to be the 'collectivity' which establishes norms for discursive activity and imposes them through means of education, religion, and the military. Individual discourse is regarded as that which struggles against regulative control to express itself.

with a multiplicity of narrative perspectives. Yet Burger's intent is not to dismantle the nation, but to refigure it: to challenge and redefine the 'story of the nation'. This presupposes some kind of assent to the idea of a 'story of the nation', and it is out of this struggle, and the desire for a constructive response to the problem, that much of the narrative energy of Burger's work arises.

Burger regarded Switzerland as being defined by a repressive story based on masculine, militaristic virtues which extolled rational objectivity at the expense of the emotions and the imagination of the individual. Burger subscribed to the view that society consists of individual personalities, as opposed to over-arching ideologies, and was fond of pointing out, after Frisch, that even the most desirable society is made of individuals, and that life takes place in the 'Ich-Form'. Burger's expression of individuality thus becomes an expression of Swissness which is opposed to the collective notion of Swissness. The purpose of his literature is to situate the individual personality at the centre of any definition of nationhood, as opposed to the imposition of a model of citizenship upon the individual; it posits a concept of nation which is fundamentally democratic in character, and representative of the spirit of democracy on which Switzerland claims to be founded.

Consequently Burger's work does not offer a coherent alternative vision of the nation, but deals with an alternative method of creating the fiction of nationhood based on the needs and desires of each individual personality within the nation. He does not advocate a model of crude individualism, but one which responds to, and develops in accordance with, the needs of individuals within society. Burger's writings reject the objectively realist and ideologically rigid representations of *Sonderfall Schweiz* in favour of fiction which is fluid, self-reflective, and embraces the unobjective realms of the emotions and the imagination.

To extend the discursive possibilities available within the cultural space of the nation, Burger must confront the problem of how it is possible for an individual to express him- or herself in a language, and a cultural space, which is based on rational concordance between signifier and signified. Burger's method involves a radical play with form and language which blurs the boundaries between the real, the unreal and the surreal, in order to challenge notions of the 'real'. A conflict between normative modes of expression and the desire for self-expression develops which is fundamental to all Burger's work. In search of expressive modes, Burger steps outside the cultural framework of Switzerland to find not only ideas but also language with which to undermine the cultural certainties of the nation. Whilst the introduction of such ideas may, in the short term, lead to more extreme forms of repression, in the long term Burger seems confident that the dominant discourses will not be strong enough to resist.

In many ways then, Burger's creative work is about a journey in search of the creative-self, and in search of creative expression of the self. From the outset his journey is subject to the fundamental irony that he has no concept of this self, beyond its creative expression, and that no piece of work can ever fully express the self. The search for the self without a fixed destination is liable to go down many highways and by-ways, and Burger's is no exception. Indeed, the element of exploration and digression is a crucial part of his method. His novels present the reader with a complex set of inter-related issues: national identity; national culture; Art; nature; literature and representational strategies; art and life. This thesis will argue that his work is best appreciated as an eclectic mix of ideas, as Burger engages with the multifarious aspects of life and seeks to give them form, without confining them within form: he studiously avoids closure, and promotes a fluid narrative structure to

avoid the rigidity he perceives around him. The methodology adopted in this thesis reflects this belief. Burger's work is considered in relation to a broad range of theories, none of which is adequate in isolation as a basis for an analysis of his work, but many of which, it is hoped, help elucidate the ideas he was grappling with.

Implicit in the approach taken in this thesis is the belief that Burger's work benefits from this eclectic approach which allows the manifold aspects of his work to come to the fore and illustrates his versatility as a writer and the broad range of ideas covered in his work. It is also hoped that this will contribute to a debate about Burger's work which goes beyond biographical detail, and begins to appreciate him as a writer who sought to give expression not just to his own personal woes and dilemmas, but to a complex and highly differentiated understanding of the position of the individual in society. Literature was the weapon he chose, and at times his writing is bitterly satirical. Nonetheless, it will be argued, that Burger was far more than a satirist, or a stylist.

Chapter One seeks to show that Burger continues in the critical tradition of Swiss literature found in the work and critical writings of Frisch, Bichsel, Nizon and Muschg. The chapter considers the notion of 'Enge', and the response of Swiss writers to it. A broad distinction is drawn between those writers and artists who felt it necessary to leave Switzerland in order to fulfil their creative potential, and writers such as Burger who were unwilling to leave, and sought to redefine the cultural space of the nation through fiction. This leads to the slightly vexed question of Burger's political involvement. Burger was forthright in his rejection of 'engagierte Literatur', which has led to him being labelled apolitical. Yet, it will be argued here that Burger espoused a concept of art which was, in its challenge to established modes of seeing,

both radical and deeply political. Burger's idea that art should be a form of 'Opposition zum Bestehenden'⁴ posits a concept of art that is by definition political in its opposition to that which exists, and also political in its implicit demand for new forms, and language, to give expression to an individual creative vision.

Chapter Two examines Burger's first collection of short stories, *Bork*, and introduces some of the major themes of Burger's work. This chapter offers an insight into Burger's ideas about literature, and the conflict he perceives between art and life. Issues of narrative strategy will be considered from a broadly narratological standpoint, as the basis for a wider discussion of the often problematic relationship between the writer and the life he or she seeks to represent. This thesis also examines the influence of literary tradition, and the importance of the social and political framework within which art is produced. In this context, normative discursive modes and the manner of their imposition will be examined. An analysis of 'Bork' using Foucault's ideas provides telling insights into methods of social control, particularly in relation to the use of the house as a metaphor for Switzerland, and for the struggle on the part of dominant discourses to maintain control of the irrational, expressed in the figure of Bork.

Chapter Three examines *Schilten*, and reviews the reception of the novel, and subsequent critical responses to it, which provide a broad indication of the cultural environment in which he was writing, and illustrates the degree to which some critics remained unreceptive to Burger's ideas. Concepts of time and space are considered in relation to the representation of the nation. The fiction of the nation is examined from a theoretical viewpoint to enable a consideration of Burger's attempt to subvert

⁴ H. Burger, *Die allmähliche Verfertigung der Idee beim Schreiben*, Frankfurt a.M., 1986 p.100.

the dominant discourses and the narrative strategies they use to conflate their ideological dogma with the story of the nation. This chapter focuses on the strategies Schildknecht, the teacher, develops to create a personal space in a small village at the margins of society, in which he can express himself free from the control of the dominant discourses. That Burger situates Schildknecht in a school, where he deliberately undermines the children's education, suggests that he intended to stage a conflict between individual aspirations and a process of *Intersubjektivierung* based on archetypal and oppressive metaphors of what it means to be Swiss.

Chapter Four considers *Diabelli* as a transitional work between the more satirical, and confrontational, aspects of *Schilten*, and the search for origins coupled with a greater concern with the self expressed in *Die Künstliche Mutter*. The cultural framework in *Diabelli* is represented as sterile and oppressive: art fulfils an ideological function rather than an expressive need. This chapter shows that Burger is beginning to problematise the relation of the individual to the cultural framework: traditional concepts of art are seen in the stories examined here as a means by which dominant discourses interpose themselves between the individual and the creative expression of individuality. Central in this respect is the position of the mother; she is regarded as having abandoned her nurturing role in favour of an educative function. The search for self-expression is thus figured as a struggle to rediscover a 'mütterliches Fundament' which will provide the basis for genuine self-expression.

The desire for rebirth is examined in Chapter Five as a metaphor for the struggle to overcome the repressive discourses of the nation, associated with the mother. The chapter takes up the issues of origins, a concern with language, and of interlinked issues of figuration of the self and of the nation, as they are developed in the novel. Central to the argument advanced in this chapter is the use of feminist

theory, in particular that of Helen Cixous, to consider the representation of masculine and feminine discourses. It is argued that for Burger, masculine discourse is associated with a repressive, logocentric model of citizenship which relies on superficial metonymic patterns to prevent individual self-expression which would challenge the prevailing model of the nation. Against this is juxtaposed a model of the nation based on individual self-expression true to the democratic traditions of the nation, and which includes feminine modes of discourse associated with the irrational, the imagination, and metaphoric modes of representation. Schöllkopf's search for origin, it will be argued, thus becomes an attempt to transcend the restrictive masculine discourses of the nation to achieve a more genuine form of self-expression based on a fuller sense of self which encompasses both the masculine and the feminine, the rational and the irrational.

In the final chapter which deals with *Brenner: Brunsleben*, the clash between rational objectivity and the realm of the imagination provides a continuing paradigm for the conflict between the self-conscious narrative experimentation of the creative writer and the more restrictive, socially acceptable forms of self-expression. In *Brunslieben*, it will be argued, the oppositional function of art is re-affirmed. It is, nevertheless, more conciliatory in tone and thematises dialogue as a desirable social model both in its form and content. The dialogic nature of the text is juxtaposed with the monologic nature of the dominant discourses, which become the subject of parody. Bakhtin's discussion of dialogism provides a useful basis for the consideration of Burger's own ideas about the work of art as dialogic. It is used here to argue that by promoting a dialogic aesthetic, Burger was positing an artistic model which could lead to the re-invigoration of the narrative of the nation he had long sought.

CHAPTER ONE: HERMANN BURGER AND THE CULTURAL CONTEXT OF POST-WAR SWITZERLAND

The history of post-war Swiss art and literature may be briefly summarised as a struggle between cultural conservatism, which saw Switzerland, as a land untainted by fascism, as the guardian of the 'bürgerlich', humanist tradition, and a progressive modernist trend which sought to question the representation of Switzerland, and what it meant to be Swiss. Around this, admittedly oversimplified, paradigm, a number of other distinctions can be made, as between a realist and a modernist aesthetic, between material and spiritual aspirations. Such distinctions are not specific to the post-war period, but what lends the post-war period its particular tone is the shadow of the Second World War and the concomitant emphasis on *geistige Landesverteidigung* and the notion of *Sonderfall Schweiz*.¹

The rise of fascist parties in Germany and Italy helped to avert the polarisation of Swiss society threatened by the economic crisis of the thirties, and led to a consolidation of the centre and of co-operation rather than conflict; a move exemplified by the striving of the Schweizerische Gewerkschaftsbund for a 'Sozialpartnerschaft'. An important part of the resistance to fascist propaganda was the concept of *geistige Landesverteidigung*, considered, by the *Bundesrat*, to lie in:

¹ For a discussion of the development of Swiss literature prior to the outbreak of the Second World War see *Geschichte der deutschsprachigen*

der positiven Besinnung auf die geistigen Grundlagen unserer schweizerischen Eigenart, unseres schweizerischen Wesens und unseres schweizerischen Staates in den großen Komponenten seiner Geschichte, seines Volkstumes, seines Geistes und seiner Einrichtungen. ²

As a manoeuvre to protect the nation in a time of crisis the concept of *geistige Landesverteidigung* was supported by a broad spectrum of the populace including critical writers such as Bühler and Zollinger. What arises in post-war Switzerland, however, is the imposition of a narrowly conservative interpretation of the 'schweizerische Wesen' that exalts the clichés of nationhood above an engagement with the post-war world.

Genuine Swiss values were portrayed as deriving directly from the founding of the nation through the heroic oath of 1291 taken by the cantons of Uri, Schwyz and Nidwalden; the *Bundesbrief* of 1291 included provisions for 'Ewiger Zusammenschluß zur Verteidigung', 'Gegenseitige Hilfe' and for a 'Gemeinsames Strafrecht'.³ Independence, self-sufficiency, a love of freedom, justice and the land came to be the characteristics of the true Swiss; characteristics reinforced by the tale of the courageous resistance of Wilhelm Tell. The move towards myth to present the founding and subsequent existence of the Swiss nation as an act of will is understandable given the linguistic and cultural plurality of Switzerland, and the concomitant indebtedness to the three major European cultures surrounding it,

Schweizer Literatur im 20. Jahrhundert, edited by Pezold, K., Berlin, 1991, pp. 11-112.

² Botschaft des Bundesrates an die Bundesversammlung über die Organisation und die Aufgaben der schweizerischen Kulturwahrung und Kulturwerbung in *Bundesblatt*, Jg. 90, Bd. 2, Nr. 50, 14.12.1938.

which makes a definition of Swiss nationhood notoriously difficult to achieve. The problem which developed was that national consciousness became inextricably, and rigidly, linked to the myth of 1291 and Wilhelm Tell. As a consequence Swiss cultural life stagnated, as dominant conservative voices sought to isolate Switzerland from the intellectual currents of post-war debate, and avoid the manifold tensions which existed in relation to Swiss identity by stressing traditional Swiss values at the expense of a critical engagement with the post-war world. Such a cultural configuration led inevitably to conflict between a society keen to promote *Heimatkunst* and critical artists who felt themselves marginalised and ignored.

The term *Enge* came to denote the stiflingly restrictive atmosphere of Switzerland for creative artists and their subsequent marginalisation. Robert Walser's fate, although pre-war, has a symbolic importance in this regard. Walser (1878-1956) entered a sanatorium in 1933, after which there 'kam ... zum völligen und endgültigen Verzicht auf schöpferische Tätigkeit. Die Krankheit des Schriftstellers blieb ungeklärt. Am wahrscheinlichsten ist, daß seine Kräfte im ungleichen Kampf mit einer übelwollenden, kunstfeindlichen Umwelt einfach versagten und er aus ihr in die anonyme Existenz eines Patienten flüchtete'.⁴ The final silence is a triumph for society; the writer pushed into total isolation. Peter Grotzer suggests that Walser's 'Urverweigerung' has exerted a profound influence

³ F. Schaffer, *Abriß der Schweizer Geschichte*, Frauenfeld and Stuttgart, 1972, p.31.

⁴ K. Pezold, *Geschichte der deutschsprachigen Schweizer Literatur im 20. Jahrhundert*, p.71.

upon contemporary writers.⁵ For Grotzer, Walser's 'Verweigerung richtet sich wohl primär gegen die Normen, und dazu gehören auch jene der Sprache'.⁶

Walser undermines social norms in his work by denying the reader 'den verwendbaren Sinn, die erwartete Botschaft'.⁷ Peter Grotzer considers the term 'Verweigerung' in some detail, but concludes 'Nach all dem geht es beim Akt der Verweigerung - im Gegensatz zur Revolution z.B. - um die Behauptung eines Subjekts gegenüber einem Anspruch eines oder mehrerer anderer Subjekte oder eines Kollektivs'.⁸

The relevance of Walser's example to contemporary literary debate in Switzerland can be found in Paul Nizon's book *Diskurs in der Enge*, which will be returned to later, and his personal belief that it is barely possible for an artist to assert him- or herself in Swiss society; to fulfil his or her creative potential an artist must leave a system 'das in überwältigender ... Weise in Materialismus und Konservatismus ergraut; so sehr, daß man den Eindruck gewinnen kann, Stillstand und Immobilismus und ein entsprechendes Insichgekehrtsein seien

⁵ P. Grotzer, 'Literatur als Zeichen der Verweigerung oder: Zeichen der Verweigerung in der Literatur' in *Aspekte der Verweigerung in der neueren Literatur aus der Schweiz*, Sigriswiler Kolloquium der Schweizerischen Akademie der Geisteswissenschaften, Zürich, 1988, pp. 11-38.

⁶ Grotzer, 'Literatur als Zeichen der Verweigerung oder: Zeichen der Verweigerung in der Literatur', p.14.

⁷ Grotzer, 'Literatur als Zeichen der Verweigerung oder: Zeichen der Verweigerung in der Literatur', p.14

⁸ Grotzer, 'Literatur als Zeichen der Verweigerung oder: Zeichen der Verweigerung in der Literatur', p.13.

Staatsmaxime'.⁹ As late as 1988 Grotzer was able to elicit an emotive response from writers and critics alike to his question:

Literarisches ist im Überfluß vorhanden in unserem Land; es strebt zwar Öffentlichkeit an, doch bleibt es zu oft im Privaten stecken: ist die kleine Schweiz eine Enge, in der Künstler und Intellektuelle als Randfiguren der Gesellschaft zu ersticken drohen?¹⁰

The response to Grotzer's question suggested that the issue of *Enge* was still an unresolved problem.¹¹ Equally unresolved is the problem of how to deal with *Enge*: should a writer go into exile or should he or she remain and engage with the problem from within; this leads to the more fundamental problem of whether or not it is possible to produce literature in Switzerland which is anything other than provincial, and what strategies of 'Verweigerung' are appropriate, in particular the question of the nature of literary engagement with social and political issues.

That Hermann Burger was a participant at the Sigriswiler Kolloquium is not surprising: strategies of 'Verweigerung' which seek to undermine the power of the state are, as this thesis will argue, an important aspect of his work. Grotzer's differentiation between 'Verweigerung' and revolution serves to emphasize an important aspect of Burger's work, and that of writers he considered as influencing his work; they did not seek to overthrow or destroy the state; they

⁹ P. Nizon, 'Verweigerers STECKbrief' in *Aspekte der Verweigerung in der neueren Literatur aus der Schweiz*, pp.331-337, p.336.

¹⁰ Grotzer, 'Literatur als Zeichen der Verweigerung oder: Zeichen der Verweigerung in der Literatur', p.11.

sought reform and change within a national context. In an earlier essay Hermann Burger makes use of the father-son metaphor to express the relationship of writers to Switzerland:

Was es bei uns zu bewältigen gab und gibt, ist die Provokation durch eine gute Schweiz, die Schweiz des geistigen Reduits, der erzwungenen Abschirmung und Isolation. Sich gegen einen guten Vater zur Wehr zu setzen, in Wissen, daß das Gute von gestern das Faule von heute sein kann, wenn man es auf den Obsthurden liegen läßt, ist unendlich viel schwieriger, als gegen einen bösen Vater anzukämpfen. Ich kenne kein Werk der Schweizer Nachkriegsliteratur, das diesen helvetischen Ödipuskomplex evidenter zur Sprache gebracht hatte als der Roman *Stiller* aus dem Jahr 1954.¹²

The familial framework within which writer and nation exist suggests that 'Verweigerung' is not to be perceived as revolutionary, but an attempt to reform and develop the nation, which, as a benevolent patriarchy, has become so convinced of its own benevolence that it has become authoritarian and overbearing. This chapter will consider the relationship of writer to society, and issues relating to 'Verweigerung' and engagement, as expressed in the work of some of the major Swiss authors who Burger refers to in his own writings on the subject of Swiss literature: namely Frisch, Bichsel, Nizon and Muschg. As Burger points out the obvious starting point is Max Frisch.

¹¹ Adolf Mushg's book *O Mein Heimatland!: 150 Versuche mit dem berühmten Schweizer Echo*, Frankfurt a.M., 1998, emphasises the unresolved nature of the issue.

Frisch's attitude to Switzerland was shaped by his experience and observance of the Second World War.¹³ Frisch, in common with many writers, rejected the idea of Swiss moral superiority, and, as Burger points out, sought to legitimate 'einer intellektuellen Zeitgenossenschaft, welche das helvetische "Cas-unique-Privileg" nicht auf die Kultur auszudehnen gewillt war. Das Ziel engagierter Literatur, heißt es im *Tagebuch*, sei eine Gesellschaft, die den Geist nicht zum Außenseiter mache'(SL, pp.223-4). The function of literature, and culture generally, becomes to combat the 'Irrelevanz [der] ... schweizerischen Existenz'¹⁴ and fashion a new, post-war, Swiss identity. To achieve this it was considered necessary to overcome the 'Heimweh nach dem Vorgestern'¹⁵ characteristic of 'Sonderfall Schweiz'.

For Frisch the reasons for Swiss resistance to the seduction of Nazism did not lie in mystical notions of cultural and moral superiority, but elsewhere. Addressing this issue, Frisch acknowledged the shared cultural heritage of Switzerland and Germany, yet attempted to define the difference between them which accounted for the different responses to Nazism. Frisch considered the difference to be explicable in terms of divergent concepts of culture. To elucidate

¹² H. Burger, 'Schweizer Literatur nach 1968' in *Als Autor auf der Stör*, Frankfurt a.M., 1987, pp.219-242, p.226. Further references to this essay, abbreviated as SL, are given after quotations in the text.

¹³ The following discussion of Frisch's work draws on Malcolm Pender's book: *Max Frisch: his work and its Swiss background*, Stuttgart, 1979, and Michael Butler's book: *The Novels of Max Frisch*, London, 1976.

¹⁴ Frisch, M., 'Notizen aus Berlin und Wien II', *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 6. März, 1948, quoted in Pender, *Max Frisch*, p.42

his point he develops the term 'ästhetische Kultur' to signify a concept of culture which creates a 'säuberliche Scheidung zwischen Kultur und Politik'.¹⁶ The aloofness from political issues inherent in pre-war German attitudes to art exemplifies the notion of 'ästhetische Kultur'. Contrasted with 'ästhetische Kultur' is the Swiss attitude to culture:

Unter Kultur verstehen wir in erster Linie die staatsbürgerlichen Leistungen, die gemeinschaftliche Haltung mehr als das künstlerische oder wissenschaftliche Meisterwerk eines einzelnen Staatsbürgers. Auch wenn es für den schweizerischen Künstler eine trockene Luft ist, was ihn in seiner Heimat umgibt, so ist dieses Übel, wie sehr es uns persönlich trifft, doch nur die leidige Kehrseite einer Haltung, die, von den meisten Deutschen als spiessig verachtet, als Ganzes unsere volle Bejahung hat - eben weil die gegenteilige Haltung, die ästhetische Kultur, zu einer tödlichen Katastrophe geführt hat, führen muss.¹⁷

Implicit in this is the recognition that an artist creates art in a distinct social and political sphere which is as important for his or her well being as any concern with the metaphysical: art and life must coincide and interact. This is not to say, however, that art must be subordinate to the demands of the state, or of a national aesthetic. Indeed, it is in the refusal of artists to collude in the perpetuation of myths of nationhood that conflict arises between the creative artist and the state.

¹⁵ M. Frisch, 'Cum grano salis' in *Gesammelte Werke in zeitlicher Folge*, Bd. III, Frankfurt a.M., 1976, pp. 230-232, p.236.

¹⁶ M. Frisch, *Tagebuch 1946-49* in *Gesammelte Werke in zeitlicher Folge*, Bd. II - 1, Frankfurt a.M., 1976, pp. 347-755, p.629.

¹⁷ M. Frisch, *Tagebuch 1946-49* in *Gesammelte Werke*, p.631.

A problem arises because the aesthetic of nationhood is bound to myths of the heroism of 1291, and of Wilhelm Tell; the latter having provided ‘an idealised view of history which has for two centuries provided the Swiss with a focus for their national identity’.¹⁸ In order to sustain the myth of the true Swiss in the present it becomes necessary for the Swiss to take on roles, which by their nature, as an ‘Existenzlüge’, cause insecurity:

Ich habe gesagt, die Schweiz habe Angst. Ich meine das ganz einfach:
 Jeder, der eine Rolle spielt, die nicht ganz mit der Wirklichkeit
 übereinstimmt, muss ja Angst haben, und darum erträgt er sehr wenig
 Kritik.¹⁹

Frisch’s criticism of Switzerland is that it seeks refuge from the rest of the world in the representations of itself as a ‘Sonderfall’. By so doing it reveals a fundamental insecurity in terms of its place in the modern world.

Frisch rejects the exhortation of myth within Swiss society as an exaltation of what he terms the ‘schweizerische Aberglaube an den Bestand’,²⁰ a celebration of a clearly delineated and fixed reality which leads to ‘Geschichtslosigkeit in musealer Ausstattung’(SL, p.227), and a concern for prosperity and wealth as a substitute for any type of inspirational vision. Prosperity is debilitating, as Frisch points out in his essay *achtung: Die Schweiz* (1954):

¹⁸ M. Pender, *Contemporary Images of Death and Sickness*, Sheffield, 1998, p.16.

¹⁹ M. Frisch, ‘Festrede zum Nationalfeiertag am 1. August 1957’ in *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. IV - 1, pp.220-225, p.221.

²⁰ M. Frisch, ‘Blätter aus dem Brotsack. Neue Folge’, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 29. Dezember, 1940.

Die Konjunktur, die unser Land dominiert und deformiert, macht alles Suchen überflüssig, scheint es. Den allermeisten Schweizern geht es ja so großartig; es besteht kein Anlaß zu geistiger Besorgnis, scheint es. Höchste aller Besorgnisse: die Konjunktur könnte nicht ewig sein. Ein Störenfried könnte kommen, jemand, der Uhrenzolle heraufsetzt, oder gar ein Russe. So wacht man mit patriotischem Eifer, dem die Selbstkritik schon als Verrat erscheint. Diese Situation ist unerquicklich, ungesund, gefährlich im höchsten Grad - sie ist geistestötend. ²¹

Inherent in the notion of *Bestand* is the desire for changelessness, the projection of the past into the present and future. What develops is the sublimation of spiritual and creative aspirations into an over-arching concern with material prosperity, and a collective neurosis which expresses itself in an allergic reaction to any form of criticism.

Any form of irony that exposes the construct of nationhood as a necessary, but nonetheless artificial construct is an anathema to Swiss society. Literature, in this context, need not be overtly political; it need simply address existential questions as they relate to the individual:

Manche Schriftsteller halten die Literatur gerade in politischen Dingen für untauglich und bevorzugen die direkte Aktion; ich denke: zu Recht. Das geht zugunsten der Politik und zugunsten der Literatur. Die Domäne der Literatur? Was die Soziologie nicht erfasst, was die Biologie nicht erfasst: das Einzelwesen, das Ich, nicht mein Ich, aber ein Ich, die Person, die die Welt erfährt als Ich, die stirbt als Ich, die Person in allen ihren biologischen

²¹ M. Frisch, *achtung: die Schweiz*, in *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. III - 1, pp.291-339, p.295-6.

und gesellschaften Bedingtheiten; also die Darstellung der Person, die in der Statistik enthalten ist, aber in der Statistik nicht zur Sprache kommt und im Hinblick aufs Ganze irrelevant ist, aber leben muss mit dem Bewusstsein, dass sie irrelevant ist - das ist es, was wenigstens mich interessiert, was mir darstellenswert erscheint: alles was Menschen erfahren, Geschlecht, Technik, Politik als Realität und als Utopie, aber im Gegensatz zur Wissenschaft bezogen auf das Ich, das erfährt.²²

Frisch's concern is with individual development; this posits a concept of the political which has as its starting point the experience of the individual, not the dominance of a state philosophy: democracy should work from the bottom up, not vice versa. His suspicion of 'Engagement', as a specific literary goal, suggests that for Frisch, and writers like him, the concept of 'engagierte Literatur' is a truism: any concern with the individual must have wider social and political connotations.

In Frisch's seminal novel *Stiller* (1954) Stiller wishes to cast off the identity society has imposed upon him. Ulrich Weisstein notes 'Den Kern der Handlung in *Stiller* macht der Versuch des Helden aus, eine neue Identität zu gewinnen und sein altes, gewöhnliches Selbst abzustreifen'.²³ In doing so Stiller lays claim to his right, as a 'Werdende', to change, a right opposed by society. All society can offer Stiller 'ist Flucht, nicht Freiheit, Flucht in eine Rolle'.²⁴ A basic paradigm for the clash between individual and society is established: either the individual fulfils his or her role, or he or she becomes marginalised. Stiller

²² M. Frisch, *Dramaturgisches: Ein Briefwechsel mit Walter Höllerer*, Berlin, 1969, p.34.

²³ U. Weisstein, 'Stiller: Die Suche nach der Identität' in *Über Max Frisch II*, edited by W. Schmitz, Frankfurt a.M., 1976, pp.245-265, p.248.

refuses to abandon his 'Verweigerung', and, as a consequence, he fades into silence: the reader learns of his end from a friend. The end 'erinnert an das Ende von Büchner's Lenz: "So lebte er hin." Das Ende der Verweigerung Stillers ist also keineswegs gleichbedeutend mit einer Lösung des Problems, das zur Verweigerung geführt hat, sondern eher deren verschlimmerte Fortführung. An ihrer Stelle tritt eine unabsehbare tiefe Resignation'.²⁵ Stiller cannot find the language to escape the clichés which bind him to society. A new language is a precondition for re-invention of the self. Hans Wysling notes 'Nur eine neue Sprache kann zu einem neuen Bewußtsein führen. Eine simple Gegen-Ideologie bleibt von der Ideologie abhängig, die sie kritisiert. Im eigentlichen Wortsinne brisant wäre einzig eine Sprache, die alles aus neuer Perspektive zu beleuchten vermöchte'.²⁶ The task Frisch bequeaths to future generations is the development of a language which will lead to a new consciousness, and enable the individual to break away from the 'Enge' in which s/he is confined; experimentation with language becomes an artistic imperative.

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Taking up the challenge put down by Frisch was a new generation of writers who 'immer aufs neue gegen das offizielle Bild der Schweiz angerannt ist'

²⁴ M. Frisch, *Stiller*, in *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. III - 2, pp.359-780, p.401.

²⁵ W. Stauffacher, 'Der Verweigerer und seine Partner - 1880 und 1950: Von Carl Spittlers "Prometheus und Epimetheus" zu Max Frischs "Stiller"' in *Aspekte der Verweigerung in der neueren Literatur aus der Schweiz*, pp.39-53, p.51.

²⁶ H. Wysling, 'Verschiedene Arten der Verweigerung - Versuch einer Kategorisierung' in *Aspekte der Verweigerung in der neueren Literatur aus der Schweiz*, pp.55-68, p.58.

and who saw 'im Kampf gegen die etablierte "vaterländische" Meinung ihre Aufgabe und ihr Heil'²⁷. Amongst this new generation of writers identified by Wysling, are two mentioned by Burger: Bichsel and Muschg.²⁸ In 1969 Peter Bichsel wrote:

Der Krieg hat unser Selbstbewußtsein gestärkt. Daß wir verschont wurden, beweist sozusagen alles, was wir bewiesen haben wollen: die Kraft unserer Armee, unsere Redlichkeit, die Stärke des Staates, die Demokratie und die Gottgefälligkeit unseres Landes. ²⁹

Bichsel draws attention to how little Switzerland had developed, and how it remained in thrall to its mythical icons. The continued inability to develop an identity relevant to the modern world leads to the irony that by clinging to the myths of independence Switzerland allows herself to be defined by the 'Ausland':

Wir sind das Land der Freiheit und mit Schiller und mit den Ausländern davon überzeugt, daß wir uns die Freiheit mit Revolutionen erkämpft hatten. Das ist nicht wahr. Wir sind ganz und gar nicht das Land der Revolutionen und waren es nie. Aber wir glauben daran, daß unsere Schweiz eine typische Schweiz sei, und fügen unserem Bild der Schweiz kritiklos alles Positive bei, was Ausländer von der Schweiz halten. Wir haben uns angewöhnt, die Schweiz mit den Augen der Touristen zu sehen.

²⁷ Wysling, 'Verschiedene Arten der Verweigerung - Versuch einer Kategorisierung' p.58.

²⁸ H. Burger, 'Schweizer Literatur nach 1968', p.228-9. Burger makes specific reference here to Bichsel's *Des Schweizers Schweiz* and to Nizon's *Diskurs in der Enge*.

²⁹ P. Bichsel, 'Des Schweizers Schweiz', in *Des Schweizers Schweiz*, Zürich, 1989, pp.9-36, p.15. Further references to this edition, abbreviated as DSS, are given after quotations in the text.

Ein Durchschnittsschweizer hält von der Schweiz genau dasselbe, was ein Durchschnittsengländer von der Schweiz hält. Unsere Vorstellung von unserem Land ist ein ausländisches Produkt. Wir leben in der Legende, die man um uns gemacht hat. (DSS, pp.18-19)

The problem Bichsel draws attention to is that of identity, or what Michael Butler calls 'centricity'.³⁰ The image of 'Swissness' becomes a tyrannical stereotype which must be adhered to and leads to a division between those who conform and are, therefore, Swiss, and those who, despite having 'das Bürgerrecht', are not. Consequently the concept of 'Swissness' becomes ossified and precludes change: 'Weil wir uns für typisch halten und auch glauben, für typisch gehalten zu werden, fällt es uns schwer, etwas zu verändern. Wir haben Angst, untypisch zu werden'(DSS, p.31).

According to Bichsel, a problem arises from confusion between 'Unabhängigkeit' and 'Freiheit': 'Unabhängigkeit ist nicht Freiheit, es gibt unabhängige unfreie Länder'. In consequence, the myths of 1291 and of Tell are lauded as the fundament of freedom when, in fact, they represent the achievement of independence; it was the achievement of the liberals in the 19th century to secure the freedom the Swiss are so proud of:

...daß es ein freier Staat wurde, hat mit Tell sehr wenig, mit Winkelried fast nichts, aber mit den Liberalen des frühen 19. Jahrhunderts zu tun. Ihnen habe ich meine persönlichen Freiheiten zu verdanken. Sie haben sie gegen Widerstände und Mehrheiten durchsetzt. Sie wollten einen Staatsgedanken durchsetzen, nicht nur wirtschaftliche Interessen. Demokratie hieß für sie,

³⁰ M. Butler, *The Novels of Max Frisch*, London, 1976, p.9.

gemeinsam einen Staat bilden, nicht gemeinsam persönliche Vorteile aus dem Staat herausholen. Ihre Nachkommen würden die Leute von 1848 zu den Unanständigen zählen, denn die Liberalen waren die Opposition, die Neuerer, die 'Linke'. Die Bundesverfassung ist ihr Werk.

Aber sie haben keine Nachkommen. Niemand beruft sich auf 1848. Man beruft sich nach wie vor auf den Geist von 1291. Wir halten uns nach wie vor an Tell. Er verpflichtet uns fast zu nichts, nur zur Unabhängigkeit.
(DSS, pp.21-2)

The debate Bichsel wishes to initiate is concerned with historical tradition and its central role in Swiss consciousness. By dating the modern Swiss state from 1848 Bichsel invokes a modern and challenging spirit at the heart of Swiss democracy.³¹ A spirit which welcomed open debate and had the courage to adapt and redefine itself in terms of the changing world around it; a spirit which is at odds with the 'Museum Schweiz' of the 1970s.

In effect Bichsel is accusing his fellow citizens of betraying the spirit of 1848:

Eine Demokratie ohne Diskussion wäre museal. Der innere Feinde der Schweiz heißt pervertierter Bürgersinn. Die Igelstellung - eingerollt und die Stacheln nach außen - ist zum Sinnbild unserer Unabhängigkeit geworden. Aber auch ein Igel muß sich zur Nahrungsaufnahme entrollen.
(DSS, p.36)

³¹ 1848 saw the introduction of a new constitution to supersede that of 1815 following the Swiss civil war of 1847, and the defeat of the conservative, Catholic *Sonderbund*. The constitution of 1848 saw the creation of a two tier parliament, the federal structure, and the introduction of the modern system of referenda and initiatives.

Yet confronted with 'Enge' of this nature, Bichsel, like Frisch, does not reject Switzerland but asserts his right to be Swiss without having to conform to a cliché:

ich liebe diese Gegend, ...Ich habe das Recht, hier zu bleiben. Das ist mir viel wert. Es macht mir auch Spaß, und ich werde bleiben, dem Satze zum Trotz: "Du kannst ja gehen, wenn es dir hier nicht paßt!"

Doch möchte ich hier leben dürfen, ohne ständig begeistert sein zu müssen. Ich bin nicht als Tourist hier... Ich gestatte mir, an einem Föhntag das Alpenpanorama zu ignorieren. (DSS, p.28)

Not only is Bichsel's commitment to Switzerland reminiscent of Frisch's, so is his attitude towards 'Engagement': he does not distinguish political culture from artistic culture. The role of the artist is perceived as providing a challenge to conventional ways of seeing, as Bichsel pointed out in his acceptance speech for the 'Förderpreis des Kantons Solothurn' in 1969:

Ich halte es... für meine Aufgabe, dem Bestehenden Schwierigkeiten zu machen, denn nur Schwierigkeiten veranlassen die Veränderung.
...Sie geben ihn [den Preis] für eine politische Arbeit, und ich hoffe, daß Sie auch die Arbeit meiner Kollegen und Freunde, die Arbeit des Bildhauers, des Malers, des Musikers, und des Kabarettisten als eine politische, als eine praktische betrachten. ³²

³² P. Bichsel, 'Dem Bestehenden Schwierigkeiten machen', Dankerede vom 14. Januar 1969 bei der Verleihung des Förderpreises des Kantons Solothurn, in *Des Schweizers Schweiz*, pp. 55-69, p.69.

Bichsel continues the trend of opposition to the discourses of official Switzerland. His own literary work acknowledges the 'Enge' in which the individual exists, whilst, nonetheless, exploring the possibilities of language, and the relationship of language to identity.

In a discussion of Bichsel's *Kindergeschichten* Burger comments that 'Die oft als "einfach", "simpel" und "lapidar" verurteilte Sprache von Bichsels Prosa ist imstande, komplizierte Phänomene, wie sie der Autor in der täglichen Auseinandersetzung mit seinem Gestaltungsmaterial erfährt, auf unauffällige Weise mitzuteilen. Hier ist ein Schriftsteller am Werk, der sich mehr mit den Wörtern beschäftigt hat, als ihm seine Kritiker nachsagen'.³³ Burger's admiration for Bichsel's work lies in his use of language and syntax to present the life of characters who seek communication, and to break out of their isolation, yet who are condemned by the very attempt to endure further isolation. The essence of Bichsel's art is play, self-conscious play with language:

Letztlich ist Literatur eine Spielform, die einigen, den Schreibern und den Lesern, gefällt - eine Spielform, auf die man sich einlassen und die man genausogut verewigen kann.³⁴

The self-conscious play of Bichsel's stories, the need to tell a story in order to find the language to tell it is precisely what makes them political. They threaten the 'museum' which seeks to store meaning in large portentous histories which divert attention away from their component parts. Language is political because it

³³ H. Burger, 'Semantische Aspekte in Peter Bichsels "Kindergeschichten"' in *Als Autor auf der Stör*, pp.243-256, p.255.

conveys meaning; the story of the nation is dependent upon language for its authority. Consequently any play with language is subversive as it threatens the authority of those discourses which seek to control it and through the self-conscious irony of the play it draws attention to, and undermines, the edifice built upon it. Bichsel's combination of play and politics demonstrates that 'engagierte Literatur' is possible without 'Entliterarisierung' (SL, p220).

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Paul Nizon echoes many of the criticisms of Swiss society found in Bichsel and Frisch, but differs ultimately in his solution. In a series of essays entitled *Diskurs in der Enge*³⁵ Nizon attempts to create a 'kulturtopographischen Landeskarte' (SL, p.229) of Switzerland. For the purposes of his undertaking Nizon attempts to define culture:

Kulturell, meine ich, ist jede Auflehnung gegen die blinde Hinnahme eines Realitätsdiktats zu nennen, gleichviel ob sie aus einem radikalen Lebensanspruch, aus erkenntnishungriger Neugier, aus schöpferischem Drang, im Namen einer besseren - vernünftigeren - Welt, im Namen der Utopie erfolge: sie beleuchtet das Dasein, sie impft dem Dasein mit der Beleuchtung Veränderungsmöglichkeit und Lebensenergie ein. Sie eröffnet Lebensaussichten. (DE, p.6)

Nizon follows Frisch and Bichsel in juxtaposing an idea of culture based on opposition with the pre-existing, official culture, which, by promoting a blind

³⁴ P. Bichsel, *Der Leser. Das Erzählen*, Darmstadt and Neuwied, 1982, p.21.

³⁵ P. Nizon, *Diskurs in der Enge*, Zürich, Köln, 1973. Further references to this edition, abbreviated as DE, are given after quotations in the text.

acceptance of reality, or *Bestand*, fails, by definition, to fulfil its role as culture: 'Von der Schweizer Kunst lässt sich sagen, dass sie sich lange zu einer Art falscher Propaganda verpflichtet fühlte... Sie ist auf weite Strecken eine latente oder wirkliche Heimatstilkunst'(DE, p.62). The purpose of Swiss art, by which official art is meant, is to shield Switzerland from the 'Puls der Zeit'(DE, p.62): modernity is 'verdrängt worden ... zu Gunsten eines zeitlosen Images der Schweiz - eines Images, das an bäuerlichen-heroischen Mythen festhält. Verdrängt, wie hierzulande die Idee "Grossstadt" oder auch nur "Stadt" verdrängt beziehungsweise verhindert worden ist'(DE, p.60). The myths of Swiss nationhood not only derive from the countryside, but are anchored in the political power of the rural cantons. The forces of conservatism, situated in the 'Land', are represented as triumphing over the modern *Zeitgeist*, which Nizon associates with the city, and it seems unquestionable that cities did indeed 'provide the generative environments of the new arts'.³⁶

Nizon attributes the remoteness of Switzerland from the *Zeitgeist* to the ascendancy of the countryside and also in part to the federal structure of Switzerland:

...wir sind ein Gebilde von 25 kleinen "staatlichen" Einheiten, eine Vielheit ...ohne echte Hauptstadt und ohne dominierendes Zentrum. Aber entscheidender: wir sind ein grösstenteils bäurisch geprägtes Volk, trotz Industrie, Welthandelsbeziehung, Bankenmacht und Landflucht... Die "Landschaften" spielten in unserer Geschichte eine wichtigere Rolle als die

³⁶ M. Bradbury, 'The Cities of Modernism' in *Modernism 1890-1930*, edited by, Bradbury, M., and McFarlane, J., Harmondsworth, 1991, pp.96-104, p.96. Interestingly Bradbury mentions Zürich as a city through which the Modernist current ran during the war.

Städte, und sie tun es - zumal in unserem Denken und Fühlen - heute noch.
(DE, p.14)

Nizon here does not distinguish between the 'Volk' as the reactionary backbone of the state, and their representation as such by dominant political discourses; a distinction Burger draws in *Schilten*.

For Nizon then the 'ländlich-landschaftlichen Réduit-Mythos'(DE, p.62), and its accompanying aesthetic, derives from the people and the land; the mountains themselves are perceived as the 'Kerkerwände unserer Enge'(DE, p.69). The 'heimatlich' aesthetic is seen to be anchored in the Swiss policy of neutrality:

...diese unsere heutige Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft hat sich, einmal etabliert, jede Ambition auf weltgeschichtliche Abenteuer oder Partizipation aus Selbsterhaltungsgründen strikte versagt; sie hat sich ihre diesbezügliche Abstinenz durch die Neutralitätsmaxime garantiert. (DE, p.15)

Neutrality is a means to preserve the 'Zeitlosigkeit' of the nation, and to remain aloof from the impulses of modernity. As a consequence writers and artists who 'suchen den Anschluss an den Stromkreis ihrer Zeit'(DE, p.17) have felt compelled either to leave Switzerland or resort to an unworldly 'Innerlichkeit':

der Ausstieg in die Überhöhung, das Sich-versteigen in die Vergeistigung, der Taumel in Richtung Kosmisches sind sublimere Formen derselben Überwindungssehnsucht; und sie sind nicht minder typisch für die Schweizer Kultur. (DE, p.45)

This is the view of the exile who feels crippled by the provinciality of Switzerland. For Nizon the problem is that the ‘moderne erzählende Literatur unseres Landes leidet eindeutig unter Stoffschwierigkeiten oder - genauer - unter Stoffmangel. ...’Welt’ Literatur im Sinne von “zeitgenössischer” Literatur lässt sich aus schweizerischen Alltagsmaterialien, lässt sich aus schweizerischen Schicksalen und Figuren und in schweizerischem Milieu nur sehr schwer verfertigen’(DE, p.46). Swiss society is too remote from the ‘Weltpuls’ to provide material which would have any resonance beyond its own borders, as a consequence the “Schweizer Roman” existiert als solcher ebensowenig wie der “Schweizer Film”’(DE, p.47).

Burger is quite definite in his rejection of Nizon’s assertion that there is no such thing as the Swiss novel or film:

Dieser ...Satz liest sich heute fast wie ein Witz, und war es damals auch, zumindest ein latenter Witz, wenn man daran denkt, daß sich die jüngere Schweizer Literatur - Otto F. Walter, *Der Stumme*; Jörg Steiner, *Strafarbeit*; Hugo Loetscher, *Abwässer*; und notabene Paul Nizons eigener Erstling, der Roman *Canto* aus dem Jahr 1963 - längst von dieser Zwangsinternationalität wegemanzipiert hatte; wenn man bedenkt, daß Alain Tanners Spielfilm *Charles mort ou vif* aus dem Jahr 1969 stammt; wenn man bedenkt, daß seit Kurt Martis Gedichtband *rosa loui* von 1967 ein eigentlicher Boom der schweizerdeutschen Mundartliteratur eingesetzt hat, auch im Bereich der Prosa und des Hörspiels. (SL, pp.231-2)

That Switzerland does not offer enough material for writers and artists to create literature which transcends the provincial appears as absurd to Burger as the idea

that in America a writer needs only 'auf sein Pflaster zu tauchen, und schon zieht er riesige Netze voller Lebensstoff an Land' (SL, p.231).

Burger is equally dismissive of Nizon's assertion that it is characteristic of a branch of Swiss writers that they '[die Enge] nach abwärts zu entschlupfen suchen' (DE, p.55):

Wenn es heißen soll, daß Seldwyla von vornherein weniger "welthaltig" sei als der Berliner Alexanderplatz; Jammers, der Schauplatz von Otto F. Walters Romanen, weniger modellhaft als *Zürich Transit*; wenn es heißen soll, daß der Schriftsteller, weil er den helvetischen Kerker nicht mehr zu sprengen vermag, den Kopf in den Sand steckt und nach typisch schweizerischen Würmern pickt, ist die Diagnose falsch. Regionalismus als literarische Intention ist kein Verzicht, keine Tugend, die aus der provinziellen Not geboren wird, sondern eine Weiterentwicklung der Schweizer Literatur. (SL, p.233)

Nizon concentrates on the criticism of Switzerland found in Swiss writers, as well as their personal suffering, to argue his point that 'Welt-Literatur' cannot be produced in Switzerland; however, he understates the irony that the works he refers to as thematising the stifling effects of 'Enge', Walser's *Jakob von Gunten* and Frisch's *Stiller*, were successful as 'Welt-Literatur': apparently provincial Swiss themes transcended their provinciality to find acceptance in the wider cultural world. Nizon does not distinguish sufficiently between the cultural demands of the state for 'official' culture and the Swiss art produced in opposition to it. Indeed, Nizon's argument would appear to lead to the conclusion that art which challenges 'official culture' is not possible in Switzerland. The danger of

such an argument is that it leads not to artistic engagement with the problems of Switzerland identified by Nizon but to the politicisation of literature.

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The danger Burger perceived was that the German model could be transposed onto Switzerland, and that the “unverwechselbaren Mikrokosmos der Person” (SL, p.241) would be neglected in favour of literature whose goal is the achievement of political ends. A concomitant danger Burger identified was the development of a ‘neuer Subjektivismus, eine neue Innerlichkeit’:

Schuld daran ist einerseits die uferlose Relevanz-Diskussion in Deutschland und mit Verzögerung auch in der Schweiz, die jungen Talenten den epischen Elan zu brechen drohte. Verantwortlich dafür ist andererseits der natürlicherweise immer wieder erfolgende Generationswechsel und die damit zusammenhängende, fast prinzipielle Opposition gegen das, womit die Vorgänger Erfolg hatten... (SL, p.241)

What Burger regards as of great significance to the development of Swiss literature is that ‘sich das nackte “Entweder-oder”, Spiel oder Zweck, Form oder Veränderung, gar nie richtig durchgesetzt hat’ (SL, p.239). The importance of this for Burger is that it avoids what he regards as the false dichotomy between Swiss and ‘World’ literature, which threatens to subsume not simply the specifically Swiss, but also the individual, within abstract political discussion; Burger foresaw that Frisch’s ‘ästhetische Kultur’ could be replaced with a political culture with potentially disastrous consequences.

The path Burger suggests draws on the work of Frisch, and Bichsel, whilst acknowledging that ‘die Schweiz [kann] kein Thema mehr sein, so wie sie Frisch erfahren hat’(SL, p.237). Literature can be both personal and playful without forfeiting political significance; indeed, its political significance lies in the very quality of its playfulness. Burger points to the challenge writing about Switzerland presents. The essence of literature is not the material it deals with but the questions it poses in regard to reality: this is substantially an issue of form rather than content. Burger quotes Otto F. Walter in support of his own opinion:

“Je höher der künstlerische Rang der Literatur ...desto größer die gesellschaftliche Relevanz”, aus dem einfachen Grund, weil Literatur ihrem Wesen nach mit jedem Satz - jedem guten Satz - in Frage stellt, was sie umgibt, und als utopischer Weltentwurf nicht der politische Aufklärungswille entscheidet über ihre Wirkung, sondern die formale Evidenz des Engagements. (SL, p.235)

Concentration on the position of the individual and a genuine attempt at individual expression will lead towards new and challenging forms which constitute engagement. Burger quotes an array of Swiss writers to support his case, including Dürrenmatt: “Man muß heute extrem sein eigenes Geschäft betreiben, seine eigenen Gedanken entwickeln, seine eigenen Ideen haben”(SL, pp.240-1). Writers of Burger’s generation, Leutenegger, E. Y. Meyer, Späth, Laederach, rediscovered ‘die Lust am Fabulieren’ and the ‘Subversität des Individuum’(SL, p.241), sought to give contemporary expression to Dürrenmatt’s injunction. Burger himself refers to ‘zwei Grenzbereiche: Kindheit und Tod als Inbegriff

privat erfahrener Welten' (SL, p.242) which are set against, and seek to subvert, the public world.

Subversion and redefinition of the centre from the margins are important aspects of Burger's literary project, as well as part of what he considers to be the project of developing a distinctly Swiss literature which is also relevant as world literature. Swiss literature itself is a 'Grenzbereich', yet as Burger points out 'die Literatur [hat] seit je wichtige Impulse von den Rändern erfahren' (SL, p.237).

Two projects become one: to create literature which asserts the validity of individual experience over state power, and to assert the worldliness of literature which draws its material from Swiss life:

Das Kontemplative ... richtet sich radikal gegen die totale Vereinnahmung der Existenz durch den Staat... Das Gefühl, der einzelne könne nicht mehr atmen, habe nicht mehr genug Raum, sich zu entwickeln und zu verwirklichen, ist ein Grundzug dieser neueren Schweizer Literatur. Schreiben in der Schutzzone? Schutz wovor? In Gegenteil: Eine neue Offenheit ist gefragt, helvetisch in ihrer Grundprägung und doch die Landesgrenzen sprengend, fernab von jedem chauvinistischem Insel-Kult. (SL, p.242)³⁷

In *Literatur als Therapie*?³⁸ Adolf Muschg argues substantially the same case as Burger; namely, that attempts to politicise literature ultimately destroy literature as

³⁷ This may be compared with the contemplative aesthetic introduced in *Brenner: Brunsleben*. See chapter 6.

³⁸ A. Muschg, *Literatur als Therapie?*, Frankfurt a.M., 1981. Further references to this edition, abbreviated as LaT, are given after quotations in the text.

self-exploration, and, thereby, undermine literature as a form of political engagement. Muschg, however, introduces a more pessimistic cultural tone.

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Muschg considers the eighties generation as the direct descendants of the generation of 1968, 'Kinder einer globalen Depression, die keine Zukunft mehr vor sich sahen oder spürten' (LaT, p.24). The culmination of this depression was the Zürcher Jugendunruhe of 1980, an expression of the contemporary *Zeitgeist*; the youth of Zürich 'kämpften um kein besseres Konzept mehr, sondern um ihr Leben. ...Sie erlebt den Feind nicht in diesem oder jenem System, sondern in jedem. Um genauer zu sein: sie erlebt nicht den Feind, sondern den Tod, das Unleben darin; es fällt ihr nicht ein, sich für ihr Unbehagen die guten Gründe anderswo zu holen als im eigenen Gefühl' (LaT, p.30). Against such nihilistic sentiments literature would seem to be directed towards a new 'Innerlichkeit' and an intemperate swing against any form of political engagement; a move which could even herald a return to a form of 'ästhetische Kultur'.

Art, according to Muschg, is 'geradezu Ausdruck eines Mangels an Kultur' (LaT, p.47). The manner in which art expresses the absence of culture is crucial for the development of society and the individual. Muschg believes that art should not ignore or conceal cultural deficiencies, but expose them; art is relevant only 'solange sie zeigt, wie wir der Befreiung und Erlösung bedürfen' (LaT, p.47). The therapeutic role of art lies, paradoxically, in its portrayal of hopelessness and absence, and its demonstration of the need to break free from social constraints; in effect, to show through the expression of isolation and repression the need for art as a form of communication, and self-expression.

Therapy of this kind leads back towards politicisation, yet seeks to coalesce political awareness with intensity of feeling. The apparent paradox that literature which is concerned with absence and 'Un-leben' should in fact be meaningful and alive is borne out by one of the most controversial books published in Switzerland since the war - Fritz Zorn's *Mars* (1976). The book is written by a terminally ill teacher and provides a record of his life and the sacrifice of his life to material, 'bürgerlich' values; his cancer is attributed to the suppression of his inner 'Ich' within a dysfunctional society:

Ich glaube es leicht, daß der Krebs die protestantische Krankheit sei, ein Todesurteil des verinnerlichten Über-ich über das unter unmenschlichen Geboten erstarrte, von eigenem Ungenügen gelähmte Individuum. ...die neue Seuche einer Zivilisation, die der Unterdrückung der Triebe honoriert, die Geißel bürgerlicher Völker, die tüchtig sind auf eigene Kosten. (LaT, p.67-70)

Mars is an indictment of a society which has sought to repress all creative impulses, and, as a consequence, destroys its own children. Malcolm Pender comments that 'Mars, a vehicle for the widespread contemporary opinion that the individual incurs cancer because he suppresses his vitality in response to social pressures, marks a highpoint in the historical shift in perception which causes the sick individual to be seen as a victim'.³⁹ Art itself is perceived by Zorn as 'nur ... ein Symptom für mangelnde Vitalität'.⁴⁰ Art thus becomes a compensatory

³⁹ Pender, *Contemporary Images of Sickness and Death*, p.63. Chapter 3, 'Autobiographical Depictions of Death' contains a detailed discussion of *Mars*.

⁴⁰ F. Zorn, *Mars*, Frankfurt a.M., Zürich, 1977, p.94.

measure for the lack of lived experience, a life *ersatz*. Zorn asks 'Ist das sinnvoll, daß ich nicht gleich an meiner Geburt gestorben bin? Nein, ich kann das nicht sinnvoll finden'.⁴¹ The desire to communicate the absence of life, the lack of meaning in life paradoxically conveys meaning, and provides the meaningless life with meaning through its criticism of the society which, fixated by work and consumption, has succeeded only in freezing the individual 'in der Anti-These; einen Mensch auf seinen Trotz zu reduzieren'(LaT, p.73).

In such a case, Muschg considers that civilisation stands in opposition to culture with the consequence that violence becomes necessary, even justified: 'Leider ist unter Menschen, deren Zivilisation mit so viel Triebunterdrückung und Glücksverzicht erkaufte werden muß, nicht viel Verlaß auf Aggressionshemmung'(LaT, p.79). The significant point being that, as in the Zürcher Jugendunruhe, Zorn's outpouring of aggression is not necessarily designed to achieve anything beyond the expression of itself: 'Sein Zorn hat nicht Entlastung gesucht, sondern Ausdruck - es ist keine heilsame Vorstellung, daß dieser Ausdruck starker sein kann als Leben und Lebenswunsch'(LaT, p.82). Art exposes hopelessness, but in its expression of a 'zerstörter und mörderischer Lebenserwartung'(LaT, p.83) it reveals the absence of the life that is craved:

Die Kunst und ihre Erfindungen sind an die Stelle des verdrängten Lebenswunsches getreten und ersetzen ihn, ohne über seinen Ersatz-Charakter ganz zu täuschen. Sie sind gerade darin Kunst, daß sie durchsichtig bleiben auf das Vermißte. Aber dieses selbst, in seiner

⁴¹ Zorn, *Mars*, p.174.

schwarzen Tiefe, bleibt undurchsichtig und darum uneinholbar'. (LaT, p.84)

Art exposes the absence of the self without seeking to placate or mollify. In the manner of Romantic irony, it undermines its own attempt both to substitute art for life, and to offer a revelation of the self. Indeed, for Muschg, ironic self-awareness is an important criterion in judging the validity of a piece of work as art; art is 'das radikale Spiel mit sich selbst. Es entwickelt seine Schöpfung im Geiste der Ironie'(LaT, p.145). In so doing, it opposes the prevailing cultural aesthetic which lacks irony; the myths at the heart of culture cease to be regarded as such, and come, thereby, to usurp life: life ceases to develop its own representation but becomes frozen in pre-given forms. Art must exist in opposition to pre-existing forms, it must always be in the process of becoming; in this sense 'Man kann ... Kunst ohne Nein nicht haben'(LaT, p.131).

The danger arises that the oppositional function of art will be reduced to mere political engagement, and be directed solely at the achievement of political aims. Muschg comments that many read *Mars* not as literature, but as a manifesto. Despite this Muschg, albeit it with reservations, believes that *Mars* is literature, whilst emphasising that the question of whether or not *Mars* is literature is an aesthetic question, not a moral or political one. Playfulness is a crucial part of a literary aesthetic; play is regarded as a necessary and inherent part of being 'menschlich': 'Daß der Mensch nur ganz Mensch sei, wo er spiele, ist nicht die Wahrheit der Ästhetik; er muß spielen, weil er nicht ganz Mensch ist, und weil er daran verzweifelt ist, es hinreichend zu werden'(LaT, p.151). Artful play is thus crucial to the process of becoming, of developing as a human, whilst never

managing to overcome the anxiety at the root of human existence, anxiety expressed in fear of death.

Opposition to play, and to the process of becoming, offers itself in the form of the 'Mythos der technischen Allmacht' (LaT, p.160): the claim of modern society to banish death. Technology, and its medical manifestation - the hospital - sanitises death and through its use of euphemisms, seeks to shield the individual from the 'Einsicht' into his or her own death. Ariès views this as characteristic of modern society: 'one must avoid - no longer for the sake of the dying person, but for society's sake... - the disturbance and ...unbearable emotion caused by the ugliness of dying and by the very presence of death in the midst of a happy life, for it is henceforth given that the life is always happy or should always seem to be so'.⁴² As a writer, Muschg understands the threat posed by the claims of technology: 'Die Bemühung der technischen Medizin, der Krankheit eine diagnostische Fremdsprache zu oktroyieren, kommt häufig einem Sprachverbot gleich' (LaT, p.168). In response the writer must 'seine Sprache absetzen von derjenigen des menschlichen Verschleißes. Sie hat, bis in ihren schöpferischen Kern brechen müssen mit Ritual und Gewohnheit, um zu dokumentieren, daß sie nicht zu den Strukturen gehört, sondern mit den Menschen fühlt' (LaT, p.201). Muschg encapsulates in these sentences the common theme which runs through the work of Frisch, Bichsel, Burger, Zorn and Muschg himself: art exists as opposition to the systemic structures of contemporary society.

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⁴² P. Ariès, *The Hour of our Death*, trans. H. Weaver, Harmondsworth, 1981.

Muschg notes of Burger that he is 'bekannt für seine Zauberkunststücke'.⁴³

Burger imbues language with magical power, not simply to oppose the 'Lüge der Wirklichkeit', but to conjure reality away.⁴⁴ Yet with Burger the illusion always remains transparent; he shows the reader the trick whilst inviting him or her to participate in the illusion, both to view the absence and the concealment of absence:

In Wirklichkeit sind Zauberei und Literatur für Burger *ein* Tun: sie potenzieren den Schein, in der utopischen Hoffnung, daß sich dieser dabei selbst aufhebe in einem Kunst-Stück doppelter Negation. Es geht zwar so nicht; aber glänzender kann man nicht zeigen, daß es so nicht geht. Burgers Kunst, wie diejenige Kafkas, "sekundiert der Welt", nämlich der Welt, die gegen die Kunst spricht; jener Welt, in der etwas aufscheint wie das Paradies: als verlorenes; nur so. ⁴⁵

Burger combines an awareness of the world with an awareness of the absence engendered by the world. His work follows that of Frisch, Dürrenmatt, Bichsel and other contemporary writers in opposing reality with fiction, and a utopian vision. In doing so he challenges and places demands upon the social and political framework of the nation which seeks to define the reality of Switzerland. It is in the context of art as engagement with society through experimentation, creative playfulness, assertion of a utopian vision, self-irony, and the 'productive' tension

⁴³ A. Muschg, 'Warum schreibt Hermann Burger?' in *Der Puck: Erzählungen*, edited by H. Burger, Stuttgart, 1989, pp.83-91, p.90.

⁴⁴ Muschg, 'Warum schreibt Hermann Burger?', p.85.

⁴⁵ Muschg, 'Warum schreibt Hermann Burger?', p.91.

which arises between artist and society, that Burger's work will be considered in the following chapters.

CHAPTER TWO: BORK: PROSASTÜCKE

Bork (1970) is Burger's first published collection of short stories. Burger himself describes the collection as the 'Ergebnis meiner Übungen und Studien in den sechziger Jahren', and divides the stories into one group which deal with the 'sogenannten Lebensmächten wie Liebe, Tod, Krankheit, Freundschaft.... und eine Gruppe von Literatursatiren'.¹ One story that combines elements from both groups is 'Bork', the title story. 'Bork' thematises the often problematic relationship between the writer and the life he or she seeks to represent. In doing so it touches on the force of literary tradition, and the importance of the social and political framework within which art is produced. Primarily with reference to the title story, 'Bork', this chapter will consider the way in which Burger explores the relationship between art and life, and the way this forms the basis of a wider critical examination of the relationship between the writer and Swiss society.

In considering the fragile relation between life and art Burger posits the danger that the writer will become so intoxicated with the great works of the past that his or her own creative potential will be lost. Such a danger had already been thematised in the story 'Der Mann der nur aus Wörtern besteht' in which the narrator is tempted by literature: 'Komm mit! Komm mit ins Reich der Wörter! Komm mit und werde ein Mann, der nur aus Wörtern besteht!' (AV, p.24). 'Nein' is the life-affirming answer. A reader, in particular the student of literature, must resist being drawn into the world of the text: 'nur wer dem Gelesenen seine Welt entgegenhält,

¹ H. Burger, *Die allmähliche Verfertigung der Idee beim Schreiben*, Frankfurt a.M., 1986. p.17. Further references to this edition, abbreviated as AV, are given after quotations in the text.

bleibt unbeschadet Leser. ... Ein Buch kann zwar die Summe einer Existenz enthalten, aber man muß ihm sein eigenes Gewicht entgegensetzen(AV., p.20). Life and art must hold each other in check if one is not to overwhelm the other.

That this was often not the case is the basis of much of Burger's criticism of contemporary writers whom he regarded as producing 'Machwerke' through an overemphasis on 'Schreibbezug' at the expense of 'Weltbezug'(AV., p.102), by which he meant that writers concentrated too much on creating 'art' and not enough on representing life. Even as a student, Burger appears to have had a clear idea of what it means to be a writer. Literature can, at best, only provide the impetus to write. Writers must write about their own existence, their own experience and perception of the world:

Seine [der schreibende Germanist] Sorge darf nicht das Meisterwerk, nicht die Literatur, nicht die Kunst sein; er schreibt nicht, um Kunst zu machen, sondern weil er schreiben muß, weil er ohne diese Befreiungsversuche seiner eigensten Welt nicht existieren könnte. ²

Writing becomes an 'Existenzform', in which the writer straddles both the world of art and that of life: 'Schreiben als Existenzform heißt, die komplementären Erfindungen suchen zu diesem Leben, das als Rohfassung nicht genügt. Entscheidend ist der Spieltrieb'(AV, p.105-6). For an author to play means to exist on the margins of the real and unreal, of reality and fiction, and to interweave the two

² H. Burger, 'Schreiben Sie, trotz Germanistik' in *Ein Mann aus Wörtern*, Frankfurt a.M., 1983, pp.239-247, p.245. First published in *Zürcher Student*, 4 Juli, 1967.

so that they constantly challenge and undermine each other. Play, as noted in the previous chapter, is a form of opposition:

Schreibend-Sein ist eine Stilform, der Realität zu begegnen. Mit der Frage “Was wäre zum Beispiel, wenn...”, die am Anfang jeder schriftstellerischen Erkundung steht, gebe ich zu erkennen, daß ich mit der Wirklichkeit, so wie ich sie antreffe, nicht zufrieden bin. Fiktion ist immer Opposition zum Bestehenden. ... Indem Literatur vorspiegelt, was sein könnte, setzt sie sich kritisch mit dem auseinander, was ist. (AV., pp.99-100)

Burger is not a proponent of *l'art pour l'art*, but, rather, of literature as a ‘Lebens-Übersetzungskunst’ (AV., p.102). Fiction expresses dissatisfaction with reality, and with life itself; art holds up a mirror to life, not to show it its reflection, but its possibilities. As Burger noted earlier, life itself is inadequate, unsatisfactory; it must be enhanced, provided with dignity and pathos. Thus art seeks to raise life to the level of art, whilst bound by the irony that for life to become art or vice versa would result in the destruction of both. Burger’s view of the relationship of life and art is a variant of Romantic irony in which striving for perfection is always balanced by the knowledge of the impossibility of its achievement: striving for perfection, or the process of creation, becomes more important than the finished work, becoming more important than being.

Play is a crucial part of artistic experimentation and striving, and art claims the freedom to challenge social and political reality through play. In his *Nachwort* to Burger’s volume of short stories *Der Puck*, Muschg poses a number of largely rhetorical questions: ‘Gibt es einen größeren Freiheitsbeweis als das Spiel? ... Wie

anders als im Spiel könnte man nach Schiller - "ganz Mensch" sein?".³ The extent to which the freedom of the writer to play is opposed by the society in which he or she lives provides an indication of the boundaries set for individual freedom, and for individual development. For Burger freedom to play is constrained by two important factors: language and the political and social environment in which literature is produced.

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Language, literature and politics come together in the sixties in the politicisation of literature discussed in Chapter One. Burger was renowned for his indifference to direct political involvement. His attitude is expressed in his observation that 'In den sechziger Jahren hätte ein Schriftsteller bei einer Preisverleihung gesagt: Die Welt muß verändert werden. Genügt es nicht, wenn sie mit anderen Augen gesehen wird?' (AV., p.104) Elsbeth Pulver observes of *Bork* that despite being published in 1970 'die Erzählungen dieses Bandes [sind] kaum geprägt von der 68er Bewegung; die damals relevanten Themen tauchen zwar auf, werden aber in einer Distanz gehalten, wie sie für einen Autor dieser Generation ungewöhnlich ist'.⁴ This view is substantiated by Claudia Storz's study *Burgers Kindheiten*⁵ in which Burger is portrayed as conservative and politically indifferent to the point where he rejects the work of the *Olten Gruppe*, a group of Swiss writers, including most of the leading writers, formed in 1971 whose goal, according to its

³ A. Muschg, 'Warum schreibt Hermann Burger?' in *Der Puck: Erzählungen*, (ed.), Burger, H., Stuttgart, 1989, pp.83-91, pp.84-5.

⁴ E. Pulver, 'Hermann Burger' in *Kritisches Lexikon zur deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur*, edited by H.L. Arnold, Bd. 2, München, 1978, Stand 1.8.94, p.4.

statutes was 'eine demokratische sozialistische Gesellschaft', as 'Schüler- oder Wandtafelsätze'.⁶ Politicisation of literature meant for Burger the disruption of the creative interaction between life and art which would ultimately result in the destruction of what he considered art to be: art would cease to represent the possibilities of life; it would engage with the reality of what was rather than what it could become.

The purpose of literature, as seen from a conservative viewpoint, was the subject of discussion in the *Zürcher Literaturstreit* (1966).⁷ This was initiated by Burger's one-time mentor, Emil Staiger, who complained that '[wir] sehen ... in der "littérature engagée" nur eine Entartung eines Willens zur Gemeinschaft, der Dichter vergangener Tage beseelte'.⁸ Staiger railed against a literature which he regarded as '[wimmelnd] von Psychopathen, von gemeingefährlichen Existenzen, von Scheußlichkeiten großen Stils und ausgeklügelten Perfidien'.⁹ His desire for a return to the 'heile Welt' of moral certitude elicited a critical response from a number of writers, most notably Max Frisch, who, predictably, not only took great exception to his use of the word 'entartet', but also to the role he prescribed for the writer. The crucial issue became whether writers should be seen as the guardians of a

⁵ C. Storz, *Burgers Kindheiten*, Zürich and Frauenfeld, 1996, p.297f.

⁶ For a brief description of the formation and work of the *Olten Gruppe* see Pezold, K., (ed.), *Geschichte der deutschsprachigen Schweizer Literatur im 20. Jahrhundert*, Berlin, 1991, pp. 173-5. A more detailed account is offered by *Taschenbuch der Gruppe Olten*, edited by D. Fringeli, P. Nizon, E. Pedretti, Zurich and Cologne, 1974.

⁷ A collection of articles by a number of authors relating to the *Zürcher Literaturstreit* can be found in *Sprache im technischen Zeitalter*, edited by W. Höllerer, Hefte 21-24, , Stuttgart, 1967, pp.83-206.

⁸ E. Staiger, 'Literatur und Öffentlichkeit' in *Der Zürcher Literaturschock*, edited by E. Jaeckle, Munich, Vienna, 1968, pp. 14-24, p.16.

⁹ Staiger, 'Literatur und Öffentlichkeit', p.19.

‘bürgerliche’, humanist literary tradition with its accompanying emphasis on education and morality, or whether they should be free to develop their own vision in response to the modern world.

Staiger was not opposed to artistic individualism or experimentation, but considered their validity as art to lie in the promotion of a ‘der Sittlichkeit gegründeten Menschengesellschaft’.¹⁰ Staiger’s concept of ‘Sittlichkeit’ expresses a belief in the nobility of the human spirit typical of the humanist tradition and draws on the writings of Schiller for support. ‘Sittlichkeit’ is associated with the efforts of writers from Homer to Keller to Rilke, defined by their use of an ‘echte, überzeugende, den Wandel der Zeit überdauernde Sprache’, to raise self-awareness and encourage the human spirit towards perfection. Staiger’s concept of perfection, however, is not without political connotations:

Vollendet ist eine Individualität, deren Sinnen und Trachten, Kopf und Herz sich mit den Gesetzen, die Ordnung und Dauer verbürgen, einverstanden erklären. Man wende nicht ein, daß diese Gesetze unzuverlässig und selber immer wieder der Prüfung bedürftig seien. Wer überhaupt die Gemeinschaft will, wer sich zu einer dauerhaften Ordnung des menschlichen Lebens bekennt, der wird sich auch zu den sittlichen Grundbegriffen bekennen müssen, die da heißen: Gerechtigkeit, Wahrheit, Maß.¹¹

In his invocation of the humanist ideal and the figure of Schiller, who immortalised the heroic figure of Wilhelm Tell, Staiger associates himself with the Swiss state, which viewed itself as the repository of the humanist ideals of ‘Gerechtigkeit, Wahrheit, Maß’. Staiger’s attack on ‘littérature engagée’ was perceived as an

¹⁰ Staiger, ‘Literatur und Öffentlichkeit’, p.20.

¹¹ Staiger, ‘Literatur und Öffentlichkeit’, p.18.

attempt to impose a normative classical aesthetic on modern literature; Staiger was seen as representing a conservative state, and the naïve belief that culture could guarantee human rights.

An effect of Staiger's speech noted by younger critics was to reinforce the concept of the *Gesinnungsschweizer*, the idea that to be Swiss one must be moral, dutiful and conform to all the clichés of Swiss nationhood, and to exclude those who did not conform:

Da schlägt die humanistische Gesinnung in eine anti-humane um; denn wo es nur eine bestimmte und einzige Art des Menschen gibt, ist es möglich, von Entartung zu sprechen. ¹²

The point to be made is that a normative mode of being, namely Swiss, was equated with a normative aesthetic. Those who did not conform to normative patterns of behaviour were portrayed as un-Swiss, and art which did not conform to a normative aesthetic was considered as deviant and not worthy of consideration. The moral and aesthetic value of a work of art was seen to lie not within the work itself but in its conformity to criteria outside itself. Were such a view to be taken to its logical conclusion the effect would be to limit the freedom of the artist by eliminating experiment and play, and, by restricting the acceptable subject matter for art, to disrupt the balance between life and art considered so crucial to the survival of art by Burger.

¹² H. Loetscher, 'Ein Konzil für Germanisten' in *Sprache im technischen Zeitalter*, edited by W. Höllerer, Hefte 21-24, , Stuttgart, 1967, pp.159-165, p.164.

Burger was himself critical of the 'versuchte Entliterarisierung der Literatur im Gefolge der Pariser Mai-Unruhen'¹³, and Staiger's views, and his fears that literature was being devalued by the demand that it be directed towards political ends, are not so far removed from those of Burger:

Literatur als "Inversion des Lebens", als der Hermeneutik bedürftige Kommunikation über Symbole wird trauerfeierlich zu Grabe getragen, und der Leichenzug, so Enzensberger, "hinterläßt eine Staubwolke von Theorien".

Es kommt zu einer eigentlichen Krise der Fiktion, weil die Erfindung, so meint man, die Verführung impliziere, die Machtlust die Manipulation. Begriffe wie "Inspiration", "individuelle Urheberschaft", "Schöpfung", "Größe" (eines Dichters) werden zutiefst suspekt, ja zum Ärgernis, weil sie aller Werte und Güter etcetera entgegengesetzt sind, dem egalitären Prinzip widersprechen. Nichts verpönter zu dieser Zeit als das Schöne, das "selig" in ihm selbst "scheint". Stattdessen wird eine Literatur gefordert, welche auf den trügerischen "Schein", auf ihre "ästhetischen Privilegien" verzichtet und ihren Gebrauchswert offenbart. Die Revolution, an deren Anfang Spontaneität, Kreativität gestanden hatte, forderte nun vom Schriftsteller weniger Phantasie als ein Plansoll an gesellschaftlichem Bewußtsein.¹⁴

The irony of Burger's complaint, however, is that it could equally well apply to the position of those critics grouped around Staiger. They sought to restrict the aesthetic privileges of the artist, and subordinate art to the moral dictates of a society which regards itself, in terms of its moral superiority, to be a *Sonderfall*.

¹³ H. Burger, 'Schweizer Literatur nach 1968' in *Als Autor auf der Stör*, Frankfurt a.M., 1987, pp.219-242, p.220.

¹⁴ Burger, 'Schweizer Literatur nach 1968', p.221. 'Nichts verpönter zu dieser Zeit als das Schöne, das "selig" in ihm selbst "scheint"'. This passage contains a reference to a poem by Mörike, subject of an exchange of interpretative views by Staiger and Heidegger.

Burger's ideas about literature and his development as a Germanist were greatly influenced by Emil Staiger.¹⁵ As a writer, Burger was, nevertheless, aware not only of his own personal need, but also of the need of writers in general, to break away from tradition, and Staiger's influence in particular: 'Natürlich würde es kein Schriftsteller lange bei Staiger aushalten, sollte er nach seinen *Grundbegriffen* oder den *Meisterwerken deutscher Sprache* ein Gedicht schreiben'.¹⁶ What seems clear is that Burger could have been neither ignorant of nor indifferent to the *Zürcher Literaturstreit* in whose shadow *Bork* is written. The problem Burger addresses in *Bork* is 'Wie kann Literatur wieder verbindlicher werden? Wie löst man den Konflikt zwischen Ästhetizismus und mitmenschlicher Verantwortung?'.¹⁷ Burger's concern is to reconcile the relation between art and life without succumbing either to the dictates of a normative aesthetic, or to the force of life.

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The perceived conflict between art and life is thematised in the title story, 'Bork'. 'Bork' is ostensibly the story of a retarded country yokel, who is treated as a figure of fun and provided with only the minimum of care by the community. Described by Burger as a 'verwahrloster Landstreicher und Säufer' (AV, p.20), he embodies, through his drinking, his inarticulateness, and his obsession with chopping

¹⁵ Burger's *Lizenziatsarbeit* and his *Dissertation* were both supervised by Staiger, and Burger remained in contact with Staiger, and discussed his work with him. In a letter to Burger Staiger says of *Schilten* 'das scheint mir ein Meisterwerk hohen Ranges zu sein', and goes on to compare Burger with Jean Paul. Brief von Emil Staiger, Horgen, Nov. 76, Schweizerische Literaturarchiv (SLA), Bern.

¹⁶ H. Burger, 'Schreiben Sie, trotz Germanistik', p.244.

¹⁷ H. Burger, "'Bork" wird literaturwürdig' in *Wynentaler Blatt*, Nr.74, Menziken, 18.Sept., 1970.

down the tree in the middle of the garden, the ‘Nachtseitenhafte der Natur’(AV, p.23). The ‘narrator’, as he observes Bork from the safety of his father’s house, views Bork with a degree of apprehension preferring to regard him more or less as an aesthetic object. It is only after Bork has been killed in a hail storm that he is viewed with any degree of compassion. Burger comments that ‘erst jetzt, nachdem der sogenannten wirkliche Bork tot ist, kann der künstliche, der “wirklichere” auferstehen. ... Jetzt erst, in der Figur, findet Bork zu seiner eigentlichen Existenz. “Bork” ist ein Zeichen für diesen neuen Wirklichkeitsgrad, der in allen Erzählungen angestrebt wird’.¹⁸ It is, however, with the onset of a degree of ‘mitmenschlicher Verantwortung’, and the desire to represent Bork as a human being rather than an aesthetic object that the problems of the narrator begin: the real subject of the story is not the figure of Bork, but the problems associated with imbuing life with artistic significance, of bringing Bork to life.

As noted, the ostensible subject of the narration is Bork; Bork, however, remains stubbornly resistant to any attempts by the narrator to represent his life artistically to the point where the focus of the narration moves away from him, as a character, and onto the act of artistic representation itself, and the relationship of the narrator to Bork. In considering the complexity of the relationship between the narrator and the object of the narration a broadly narratological approach will be taken, using for clarity, and consistency, the conceptual model and terminology provided by Mieke Bal.¹⁹ Bal refines the concept of *point of view* or *narrative perspective* in order to make explicit the ‘distinction between, on the one hand, the vision through which the elements are presented and, on the other, the identity of the

¹⁸ Burger, ““Bork” wird literaturwürdig’.

voice that is verbalising that vision, ...between *those who see* and *those who speak*'.²⁰

In order to make this distinction Bal employs the term *focalisation*; she calls the agent or character that sees the *focaliser* in order to distinguish him or her from the agent who narrates.

Another important distinction made by Bal is between the *story* and the *fabula*; 'This distinction is based upon the difference between the sequence of events and the way in which these events are presented'. A *fabula* is defined as a 'series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by actors'.²¹ This series of events is regarded as broadly corresponding to the 'demands of human "logic of events" provided that this concept is not too narrowly understood'.²² The *story* concerns the same events, but is related to the structuring of those events within the narrative; 'if one regards the *fabula* primarily as the product of an imagination, the *story* could be regarded as the result of an ordering'.²³ The following analysis of the *story* is intended to account for the effect the presentation of the *fabula* achieves; it deals, therefore, with the 'specific angle' from which the *fabula* is approached.

The main *focalisation* of Bork's life lies not with the narrator, but with his younger self who, however marginally, participates in the *fabula*, and through whose eyes Bork's life is witnessed. It is possible to draw a broad distinction between the external focalisation of the narrator, because situated outside of the *fabula*, and the internal, character-bound, focalisation of the younger self, who is part of the *fabula*.

¹⁹ M. Bal, *Narratology*, trans. van Boheem, C., Toronto, London, Buffalo, 1985.

²⁰ Bal, *Narratology*, p.101.

²¹ Bal, *Narratology*, p.5.

²² Bal, *Narratology*, p.12.

From the outset the narrator endeavours to tell the *story* of Bork. Immediately, however, he encounters difficulties: 'An die gestohlene Rose erinnere ich mich genau, obwohl sie eigentlich nicht gestohlen war. Eher kam ich mir selber als Dieb vor' (Bork, p.19). The technique employed here may be described as antithetical parallelism: each clause serves to undermine the preceding one. The process of structuring needed to create a *story* is attenuated by the narrator's immediate qualification of his first clause, and the subsequent uncertainty as to his own status vis-à-vis Bork. In fact the narrator abandons his external focalisation after only two sentences, and begins to narrate through the *focalisation* of his younger self; thereby further weakening the authority of the narrative voice.

The move to a character-bound focalisation does nothing to restore narrative authority. If anything it is further diminished by the observation of the character-focaliser that:

Ich dachte keinen Augenblick, Bork habe nun eine Rose gestohlen, eher kam ich mir selber als Dieb vor, da ich ihn beobachtet hatte ohne sein Wissen.
Oder wußte er es doch? (Bork, p.23)

The character-bound focalisation only reinforces the uncertainty concerning Bork, and raises questions in the mind of the reader, which would appear to reflect those of the external narrator. If the character-focaliser never considered the rose to be stolen why does he mention it, and for what reasons does he consider himself to be a thief? There is an underlying sense of guilt and uncertainty in terms of the representation of Bork, and of the relationship of the character-focaliser to Bork, which suggests a degree of self-reflection, a questioning of the validity of the *story* of Bork, on the part

²³ Bal, *Narratology*, p.49.

of the narrator. In the question as to whether Bork is aware that he is being observed or not there is the inkling of a suspicion that he is, and is simply playing out the role designated for him. If this is the case then the attempts to capture Bork's existence in language are being scornfully, and ironically, mocked: art which aspires to represent life ends up representing not life, but life as it wishes to see it, and the narrator is complicit in the misrepresentation of Bork's life.

What the reader learns of Bork is that he is a drunken country yokel. Barely capable of expressing himself he communicates in grunts and gestures. Bork embodies certain atavistic urges and a strength for which there is no place in a civilised society. These urges are associated with nature and a relationship to nature which appears senseless to others. An example is Bork's enmity towards the poplar tree in the middle of the garden: 'Wenn er an der Pappel vorüberging, murmelte er unverständliche Schimpfwörter, schüttelte drohend die Faust. Die Pappel war kerngesund' (Bork, p.20). Here, again, the final sentence undermines the previous one, and expresses the failure of the character-focaliser to understand Bork's hostility towards the poplar. Bork responds without dissimulation to nature, and it is the same with his sexual desires: 'Früher, so ging das Gerücht, hatte Bork dem Bauern und Wirten, bei denen er hauste, Schwierigkeiten gemacht. Er war in die Kammern der Mägde und Serviertöchter geschlichen, meist in angetrunkenem Zustand, und hatte ihnen Wäsche aus dem Schrank gestohlen, als Andenken' (Bork, p.21). Although this is a rumour, the character-focaliser does not question its veracity. Rather, he appears happy to accept the view of Bork as incontinent and irrational - a drunken yokel. Such a representation barely disguises the fact that for the character-focaliser Bork remains an unintelligible figure.

The purpose of the narrator's art in relation to Bork appears not to be to raise his existence to a new 'Wirklichkeitsgrad', but to make it socially intelligible, to fit it into social categories, and into language. A range of similes is used by the character-focaliser to try and make sense of Bork. On one occasion, as Bork stands before a statue of a woman's torso, the character-focaliser says 'Er kam mir vor wie ein Greis auf dem Friedhof, der sich schämt vor dem Grab einer früheren Geliebten und allein sein will' (Bork, p.21). Following the simile we learn that Bork then grabs the breasts of the torso, and suddenly the simile seems inappropriate. Moments later Bork breaks off a rose which he then throws to the ground as it pricks him. He reaches down to retrieve it:

Bork bückte sich nach dieser Rose so umständlich wie ein Clown. Es sah aus, als vollführe er einen Balanceakt auf dem Seil. Vermutlich war er schon wieder angetrunken. Das Fläschchen in seiner Jacke hatte ich zwar noch nie gesehen. (Bork, p.23)

The technique of the character-focaliser undermining his own assumptions about Bork is familiar, but it demonstrates a continuing failure to represent Bork in language. This culminates in the description of him as being like a clown. A clown may make the audience laugh, but he is not to be taken seriously; he is simply a performer whose job it is to fulfil the expectations of the audience, and make them laugh.

Bork appears, perhaps even self-consciously, to fulfil his role. He gropes the statue, threatens to blow up the poplar, and fulfils the expectations of those in the community who regard him as a theatrical or vaudeville act. He is the butt of jokes

and a figure of fun. We learn how the guests in the local pub amuse themselves with him:

Sie zahlten ihm Runde am Runde, ergötzten sich an seinem Geschwätz, und wenn er kaum mehr aufrecht gehen konnte, warf ihn der Wirt hinaus, um Scherereien zu vermeiden. (Bork, p.26)

The irony is that Bork is seen as a drunk because he is made drunk; the only way for him to be accepted within society is to conform to some degree with its expectations of him. In this way he is turned into a clown; that which is uncomfortable is placed within the confines of theatre where it can be safely enjoyed. A further irony lies in the fact that the character-focaliser himself provides the evidence that the view of Bork as a drunken clown is dubious. He had never seen Bork's flask, yet he does not question the representation of Bork as a drunk, on the contrary, he relates rumours and supposition to support it.

Literature as it relates to Bork appears anything but 'verbindlich': the character-focaliser exhibits a complete lack of sympathy for Bork; physical descriptions emphasise his closeness to nature, in his arms 'Dicke, geschwollene Adern wurzelten wie Efeu im Gelenk'(Bork, p.29), and a common image is of Bork as 'ein Stück lebendiges Holz'(Bork, p.31). Indeed, Bork is so 'naturnah' that he all but ceases to be human. As an archetypal outsider he is an important part of the binary opposition between normal and abnormal, civilised and uncivilised, moral and immoral, which serves to define the identity of the normal civilised world. By presenting Bork as uncontrolled nature, and then seeking to exercise control over him

through language, the character-focaliser reaffirms the civilised aspect of the house from which he observes Bork.

The house provides the security from which Bork can be safely observed:

Ich beobachtete ihn durch die halb aufgeklappten Brettchen der Jalousien. Da ich es vorübergehend allein bewohnte, war das große Haus wie ausgestorben, die Türen verriegelt. Bork hatte nur Zugang zum Keller und zum Schopf. Ich wollte mich nicht mit ihm einlassen, deshalb war ich nicht an die Haustür gegangen, als es schon früh am Morgen geklingelt hatte. (Bork, p.19)

Observation takes place through the half-opened blinds, thereby obscuring the view of Bork. Should the character-focaliser want a clear view of Bork then he must open them completely, as he does later. Interestingly, Foucault mentions that Bentham envisaged the use of venetian blinds for surveillance precisely because they would make the presence or absence of the observer unverifiable. Bork can never be sure that he is not being observed, and his behaviour reflects this; as he stands before the torso he 'blickte mehrmals um sich, langsam, gebrochen' (Bork, p.20).

Surveillance, according to Foucault, was part of a disciplinary project, the model of disciplinary control being Bentham's *Panopticon*, the major effect of which is 'to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power'. As an observer the narrator is caught up in the exercise of power, the essence of which is 'So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary: ... in short, that the inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the

bearers'.²⁴ As Foucault goes on to point out it is irrelevant who observes, anyone can do it, and the more people who do the better, as it increases the possibility that one is being observed.

Despite the fact that the house is empty there is a sense that the observer is himself being observed. The admission of the character-focaliser that he did not wish to engage with Bork, or let him into the house suggests that he has internalised its rules, yet lacks confidence, and is nervous of Bork's presence. The house provides a refuge, yet its symbolic significance in this passage is ambiguous. On the one hand, it provides a sense of 'Geborgenheit' as the narrator can lock himself in and away from what he finds threatening in the outside world. On the other hand, there is a sense of imprisonment, the doors are 'verriegelt' and the 'halb aufgeklappten Brettchen der Jalousien' resemble the bars of a prison cell. The classification of Bork as abnormal, as part of a series of binary oppositions, leads to a restricted view of him. What is regarded as protection can also be seen as restricting access to life by imposing a restrictive framework through which to view it.

The values of the house are associated with work, control of nature, reason and morality. On encountering Bork the character-focaliser says to himself "Bevor etwas getan ist im Garten ... braucht er weder Geld noch Schnaps" (Bork, p.19). An attempt is made to subjugate Bork to the economic system, to bring him under control. An attempt of a different kind to control Bork is made by placing him in a home for the elderly. It fails as he cannot sleep in a bed due to incontinence, complains about the snoring of his room mates, and moves into the cellar: 'Man

²⁴ M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. A. Sheridan, Harmondsworth, 1991, p.201. *Discipline and Punish* also contains an analysis of what Foucault regarded as the disciplinary project.

mußte ihn ausquartieren, es ging nichts anders. Bork war überglücklich, wieder in seinen Schuppen ziehen zu dürfen, wo er in einem Lattenverschlag hinter durchlöchernten Scheiben hauste' (Bork, p.22). Bork stubbornly resists the attempts, albeit with ostensibly benevolent goals, to hold him within a system, to control him, and in a metaphoric sense to deprive him of his life. The attempt to place Bork in a home for the elderly is similar to the wish of the character-focaliser to represent Bork's life in language: both can be seen as restricting Bork's life, placing boundaries on his actions by making them intelligible within a given framework.

The house, as a framework, provides Burger, as a Swiss writer, with a metaphor for the nation, and the cultural and political attitudes which serve to define it.²⁵ In his book "*Schweizerhaus*"²⁶ Martin Kraft points to the importance of the 'Haus-Motiv' in Swiss literature as an expression of Swissness which serves to distinguish Swiss-German literature from German, and Austrian, literature in general. To make this distinction Kraft draws on the example of the 'Rosenhaus' in Stifter's *Nachsommer*:

...auch es ist irgendwie ein Symbol menschlicher Gemeinschaft, aber dabei doch völlig verschieden von allen schweizerischen "Häusern": Zunächst fehlt ihm einmal die für dieses so bedeutsame "Gegenständlichkeit", die sich in der Gegenüberstellung mehrerer Häuser (Bosshart), im Akt des "Hausbaus" (Inglin, Zollinger, Frisch) oder in der Schilderung architektonischer Details (Bichsel, Muschg) manifestiert. Ebenso fehlt ihm die gegenbildliche Darstellung, die es als Symbol existentieller "Häuslichkeit" - sei es im Sinne von Geborgenheit oder von Gefangenheit - sinnfällig werden lässt.

²⁵ Emil Staiger also refers to culture as a 'Gebäude'. Staiger, 'Literatur und Öffentlichkeit', p.24.

²⁶ M. Kraft, "*Schweizerhaus*", Bern and Frankfurt a.M., 1971.

...Schliesslich aber - und das ist wohl das Entscheidende - zeigt dieses "Rosenhaus" nirgends Züge eines nationalen Symbols, indem es sich in einem irgendwie ort - und zeitlosen Raum befindet - während die von uns zu betrachtenden schweizerischen Häuser im Hier und Jetzt der Schweiz in einer bestimmten Zeitsituation unter wechselnden Vorzeichen immer wieder zur Verkörperung des Schweizertums überhaupt werden.

Als Spezifikum der Deutschschweizer Literatur steht das Haus-Motiv in einem engen Zusammenhang mit ihrem ganzen Wesen. ²⁷

In 'Bork' Burger plays with the two aspects of the house, 'Geborgenheit' and 'Gefangenheit', to show its ambiguity. The house offers a point of mediation between Bork and his unbridled impulses. It also offers a positive model of paternal concern and protection, which extends to Bork as the ward of the narrator's father:

Bork bezog seit langem eine Invalidenrente. Mein Vater bewahrte als Vormund das Geld auf. Man gab es Bork in kleinen Raten, fünflicherweise, damit er nicht alles verschnapste. (Bork, p.23)

Protection, however, cannot be divorced from control. A problem arises when control becomes overbearing, the framework of the house too rigid. Bork exists on the periphery of society, in the cellar of the house, because the house is unable to mediate between individual freedom and the demands of society. It becomes a centre of power which imposes what Foucault describes as 'disciplinary mechanisms'. These function best when they are internalised and are perceived not as discipline, but as socially positive.

²⁷ Kraft, "Schweizerhaus", pp.8-9.

Foucault traces a move away from the 'enclosed institution' towards the model of the *panopticon* which aims to 'strengthen the social forces - to increase production, to develop the economy, spread education, raise the level of public morality; to increase and multiply'.²⁸ The *panopticon* creates new 'relations of discipline' which are based on the spread of 'disciplinary procedures, not in the form of enclosed institutions, but as centers of observation disseminated throughout society'.²⁹ The mechanism of discipline becomes centred on education, health, official religion, and the army amongst others, all of which pervade society and inculcate the value of, and need for, discipline:

The heaviness of the old "houses of security", with their fortress-like architecture could be replaced by the simple, economic geometry of a "house of certainty." The efficiency of power, its constraining force have, in a sense, passed over to the other side - to the side of its surface of application. He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for himself, he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles, he becomes the principle of his own subjection.³⁰

Bork refuses to become the 'principle of his own subjection'; he may play a role, yet he has not internalised it, and in this sense the 'disciplinary mechanisms' fail.

There is, indeed, a degree to which Bork exhibits a greater understanding of his own role playing than the character-focaliser. Bork's awareness of the

²⁸ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p.208.

²⁹ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p.212.

³⁰ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, pp.202-3.

importance of role play and his ability to manipulate the character-narrator is illustrated in the case of the rose:

ich [bemerkte] eine Veränderung in seinem Gesicht ..., eine groteske Verzerrung wie bei einem stechenden Schmerz. Ich glaubte, er mache schlapp, und öffnete rasch die Tür. Aber Bork lachte. Zum ersten Mal sah ich ihn lachen, Es war kein menschliches Lachen, eher ein Ausdruck des Schmerzes, ein verschmitztes Grinsen, ein säuerliches Welken des Gesichts, als hätte er in eine Zitrone gebissen. Er schmatzte, schob den Unterkiefer vor und zurück und fuchtelte mit seiner Rose vor meinem Gesicht herum. Ich entnahm seinem Geklöne, daß es eine Serviertochter gebe, in der "Quelle", daß er die Rose ihr bringen wolle und daß wir ja genug Rosen hätten, auf eine mehr oder weniger komme es nicht an. (Bork, p.25)

Bork seems to virtually flaunt his power to manipulate the character-focaliser and to mock any notion that he could be capable of understanding and giving expression to Bork's being: Bork can open the door to the house, but it cannot unlock the door to Bork. Bork also takes the initiative by anticipating the criticism that he took the rose without permission, and, thus, suggests that he was indeed aware of being observed. In doing so he returns the gaze of the observer and forces him to justify his own position; so it is that when the character-focaliser maintains that he never once considered the rose to be stolen he is responding to the charge made by Bork and attempting to justify himself.

In returning the gaze Bork inverts the position of observed and observer, and, as a consequence, the observer must consider his own position vis-à-vis Bork; he must answer the charge that he considered the rose to be stolen. This is especially so, as the rose, as a symbol, has not been stolen but invigorated with new life. Instead of

a tired, staid metaphor it is seen as a genuine expression of feeling, of Bork's feelings for the waitress, in contrast with which the more sophisticated images of the character-focaliser appear dull and contrived because they cannot give sufficient expression to life.

In the final encounter of the character-focaliser with Bork their positions are reversed:

Durchs vergitterte Fenster sah ich Bork noch einmal von außen... Die Rose lag neben den Socken auf dem Tisch. Dies war mein letzter Blick vom lebenden Bork: Blick durchs Waschküchenfenster auf die Bühne eines Kellertheaters. (Bork, pp.30-31)

To the narrator looking in the bars of the window are emphasised, the sense is of Bork imprisoned, observed and controlled. The space in which he is allowed to exist, a stage, always subject to the public gaze, is emphasised. Yet, the irony seems to be that Bork is aware of the stage on which he plays, aware of the audience. The character-focaliser appears not to be aware of the stage on which he finds himself and the controls placed upon him which restrict his view of Bork, and result in the failure to express his life in art. The bars through which the character-narrator views Bork are those of the house which divide him from life, and constitute the frame through which he is allowed to view it. The narrator may be considered as part of a theatre audience, before and for which the actor performs, and whose presence and demand for conformity to certain conventions, restrict the actor's freedom.

It is only upon the death of Bork that the character-focaliser seems to step outside the frame and view Bork as a human being:

Ich stand vor Borks Totenbett, fröstelnd, die Hände nutzlos in den Hosensäcken vergraben. Ich sah ein Stück Mensch, weggeworfen wie Abfall. Und noch einmal stand Bork auf, um sich hinzulegen... (Bork,p.35).

It is at this juncture that the 'wirklichere' Bork should be resurrected by art from the compost heap of life. The character-focaliser makes a final attempt to turn Bork's life into art.

As he stands before Bork the character-focaliser reconstructs Bork's final moments. However the picture he creates is sentimental and bathetic:

Ganz genau sah ich ihn am schwülen Nachmittag, wie er aus dem Keller mit den tropfenden Röhren schlurfte, den Teekrug in der Hand, die Schnapsflasche unter den angewinkelten Arm geklemmt. (Bork, p.35)

The long sentences and the use of apposition are suggestive of fond memories flooding back. Bork is no longer the abrasive, autistic drunk, in death he is eulogised as a romantic figure in touch with nature:

Er schimpfte mit dem Holz, und es verstand ihn besser als Menschen, er redete ja die Sprache der Strünke, Wurzeln, Scheiter, der knorrigen Äste, Knebel und Prügel. Jeder Axthieb war ein Wort, jeder Sägeschnitt ein Satz. Und Bork selber war aus Holz, ein Wurzelstrunk mit Armen und Beinen, verwittert und alt, uralt. (Bork, p.36)

The desire to rescue Bork's life from the 'in Sumpf und Morast verwandelten Kompostschicht' (Bork,p.39) leads the character-focaliser to resurrect a range of romantic clichés to suggest that what previously was perceived as anti-social bed-wetting is now to be exalted as closeness to nature. Just as in life Bork was assigned

the role of freak, so in death he is redefined, and finally domesticated, as a childlike being at home in nature, which alone could understand him. In both instances the life of Bork is lost, and, after his death, art does not create a more real and meaningful existence, but buries Bork beneath a string of clichés as deadly as any hailstones. Nothing is done to resolve the mystery of his being; the questions he inspired remain.

One reason why Bork remains such a nebulous figure is touched upon by Monika Großpietsch in her book *Zwischen Arena und Totenacker*.³¹ She perceives that Bork:

repräsentiert ... durch seinen Namen und andere Baum-Attribute wie hölzerne Glieder und ein knorriges Herz das Leben. Bork denkt zyklisch, "wie Holz denkt, in Kreisen"(37), was, im Gegensatz zum linearen Denken, durch das Einbeziehen des Todes in den Stirb- und Werde- Prozeß lebens- und naturnah ist. ³²

She also draws attention to the difference between Bork who thinks 'zyklisch', and a narrative which is linear. She comments further that the voyeurism of the character-focaliser constitutes a 'Diebstahl am Leben'.³³ And indeed Burger himself comments, in regard to the voyeuristic position of the character-focaliser, that 'zuschauen, ohne zu handeln, hinterläßt ein schales Gefühl'(AV., p.22). Yet, voyeurism does not in itself constitute theft of life; the idea of theft is centred on the failure of art to represent life, and that rather than raising Bork's existence through

³¹ M. Großpietsch, *Zwischen Arena und Totenacker*, Würzburg, 1994.

³² Großpietsch, *Zwischen Arena und Totenacker*, p.34.

³³ Großpietsch, *Zwischen Arena und Totenacker*, p.34.

art, quite the reverse is true and his life is actually diminished by art. While Großpietsch hints at the reason for this in her observation that Bork stands in opposition to linear thought, she does not develop the point that the diminution of Bork's life results from the attempt to impose a linear narrative upon a non-linear existence. Because the narrative seeks to make Bork intelligible through the use of a rational model of reality it ignores the irrational, non-linear aspects of his life.

Bork, as Burger suggests, represents not life *per se* but rather the 'Nachtseite' of life. The night in the work of many Romantic writers, Novalis, Hölderlin, and more specifically in Bonaventura's *Nachtwachen*, is associated with the darker irrational side of man, and with creativity; it exists in a state of tension with the rational world of conscious activity. Burger's view of the role of the artist, the emphasis on the subjective vision at the expense of social involvement, appears, superficially at least, to draw on the legacy of Romanticism, and to make use of Romantic leitmotifs, and the concept of 'Genie' with its concomitant emphasis on peasant intuition and the child. Within 'Bork' the 'naturnahe' is not balanced by reason, just as the rational narrative of the character-focaliser is not balanced by feeling, and, as in *Die Leiden des jungen Werther*, the protagonist is drawn towards death as a consequence of the imbalance between reason and feeling. Werther is unable to produce art due to excessive emphasis of feeling; in Bork the character-focaliser is unable to produce art due to the constraints of an overly rationalistic and socially determined concept of art. Life, Burger seems to suggest, encompasses both the rational and irrational, and art, which seeks to represent life, must do the same. In fact, Burger goes further to suggest that art which fails to acknowledge the irrational 'Nachtseite' cannot be considered as art. Art which relies on rational explanation to provide life with meaning serves only to limit life; it reveals itself as another strand

of the disciplinary mechanisms which seek to emasculate life within a rationalistic social system.

The model of art posited by Burger in 'Bork' is not one of art looking at life, but of art looking at art through the medium of life. Bork subverts the character-focaliser's attempts to present his life in a linear narrative by returning his gaze, thereby revealing the frame within which he seeks to narrate. The opening by the external focaliser, who then observes his younger self creating a story, reinforces the view that this is a *story* about writing a *story*; by highlighting its own failure to elevate Bork's life through art it, paradoxically, reaffirms a central tenet of art: art must continually examine itself as art, it must engage in a dialogue with itself, and question the frame through which it represents life.

This is not to suggest that the frame should be abolished. Burger was aware of the paradox that if art is to represent life it must maintain distance from it, yet if the distance is too great, art becomes a parody of itself. The issue is one of balance, and the extent to which the house, as a frame, is conducive to the creation of art. The failure of the house as a point of mediation between the rational and the irrational is demonstrated in 'Bork', as is its reliance on a range of disciplinary mechanisms to enforce a rationalist concept of reality. Art as a means of representation of reality can be seen to be one of the many strands of discipline within Swiss society, and the extent to which art should impose discipline by promoting a particular view of life is a central theme of the *Zürcher Literaturstreit*.

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The tension which exists between art and life, and the extent to which intuition, spontaneity and the creative unconscious are suppressed by a framework of

conscious control, associated with society, are themes which run through every story in *Bork*. Some stories address the issues of social control more or less directly; in 'Nachtwache im Panzer', for example, where the protagonist dismantles a tank, the conflict between the army, as a disciplinary mechanism, and the unconscious desires of the night are clearly juxtaposed against each other. In 'Das Lochbillard' the trick shot is unsuccessful when deliberately calculated and observed. Two further stories, 'Die Ameisen' and 'Die Lederausgabe', will be briefly addressed here as they introduce sexual desire as an expression of the subconscious, and notions of decay and illness associated with its repression, both of which are developed in Burger's later work.

In 'Die Lederausgabe' Eduard, a young student, intoxicated by Rilke, befriends Rita, an aristocratic lady, with whom he feels he can be completely open:

Wir sind uns nahe gekommen, hautnah sogar, wir haben über alles offen gesprochen, und dennoch bin ich nie auf die Idee gekommen, mit dir schlafen zu wollen. Es wäre ja lächerlich gewesen, ich, ein junger Student, und du, eine waschechte, knochige Aristokratin. Und wenn uns der Altersunterschied nicht gehindert hätte, so wäre es dein Körper gewesen, der für mich nie die geringste erotische Anziehungskraft besaß. Du warst mir eine Freundin ohne Fleisch und Blut. Idealer kann man sich ein Verhältnis nicht mehr vorstellen. (Die Lederausgabe, p.130)

This ideal relationship is based on an apparently shared interest in Rilke, but it quickly becomes apparent that Rita is only simulating an interest in order to seduce Eduard. The technique used by Burger to show the awareness on the part of the narrator of his sexual desire is similar to that used in 'Bork'. In the same way that the narrator's assertion in 'Bork' that he never thought the rose to be stolen suggests

that, in truth, he did, so Eduard's assertion that he has no sexual interest in Rita highlights the struggle to repress it. An intellectual appreciation of Rilke, coupled with his detached observation of her body, becomes the shield with which Eduard attempts to ward off his desire. That this is being progressively undermined is further shown by the use of free indirect discourse which reveals Eduard's interest in the physical: 'Für eine Fünzigerin waren die Beine eigentlich noch sehr straff' (Die Lederausgabe, p.131). Such thoughts are quickly banished by a return to an 'objective' narrative viewpoint, not, however, before the conflict between rational repression of sexual desire and the unconscious desire itself has been brought to mind.

Eduard senses the irony of his position, that he is living vicariously through Rilke while the opportunity to develop his own creative potential is being squandered. But when his advance does come it is too late, and is contaminated by the association with Rilke, 'Schlafen wir zusammen auf Rilkes gesammelten Gedichten' asks Eduard, but he is rejected:

Eine Zeitlang wäre ich zu allem fähig gewesen, damals beim Wasserfall.
Aber du hast nicht einmal die Hütte gesehen zehn Schritte weiter. Du bist ein hoffnungsloser Träumer gewesen, in dich vernarrt wie Narziß in sein Spiegelbild. (Die Lederausgabe, p.140)

Rita recognises that Eduard uses Rilke to project an image of himself as a feeling, and creative individual, whilst he is, in fact, obsessed with the conscious projection of an image of himself at the expense of his own creativity. Eduard, insofar as he may be considered an artist, has been consumed by 'Schreibbezug': he seeks only to imitate art and will succeed only in imitating the control 'art' seeks to exert over life.

As Eduard has no life to counter literature with, his life becomes a pastiche which lacks both originality and passion. His existence only mocks the beauty of Rilke's poetry through its failure to invigorate it with his own experience and passion.

Yet, it is a sad irony that the strength of Eduard's denial, and his approach to Rita, demonstrates an awareness of the truth expressed in another of the stories in *Bork*, 'Der Büchernarr'. The 'Büchernarr's' warns that books 'Wie Bluteigel heften sie sich an ihre Phantasie und saugen sie leer' ('Büchernarr', p.50). Eduard has, as has the 'Büchernarr', forfeited his 'ich'. Alarmed by the laughter of the books, the 'Büchernarr' seeks reassurance of his own existence in the mirror:

Das Oval zeigte kein Gesicht, so nahe ich auch herantrat. Ich starrte durch mich hindurch und sah bloß die Bücher der Rückwand, wie sie bedächtig hin und her schaukelten. Ringsum Bücher, Bücher und kein Ich mehr. Wo war ich, wenn nicht im Spiegel?

Die Bücher hatten mich aufgeschluckt. ('Büchernarr', p.50)

Both Eduard and the 'Büchernarr' have mistakenly sought life in literature. Now, looking for their respective 'I's they discover only hollowness. The 'I' looking at itself from outside itself approximates to the distinction encountered in 'Bork' between the external-focaliser and the character-focaliser. An external-focaliser detached from the culturally constructed rational 'I' looks in and delivers his damning verdict.

In 'Die Ameisen' the narrator's desire for refuge from the vagaries of life in the carefully constructed natural setting of a house above the lake, 'inmitten von Akazien und Kastanienbäumen' suggests that he too is aware of a latent conflict within himself, which he hopes to suppress. As a rational construct, the narrator is

symbiotically linked to the house, and here, more clearly than in 'Bork', the house can be seen as symbolising a rational, logocentric culture. Any hopes of security the narrator cherished are dashed by the arrival of Astrid.³⁴ Astrid, one of those from whom the narrator 'zuletzt geflohen war' (Die Ameisen, p.93), lies 'Nackt ...auf ihrem Liegestuhl in der Sonne' (Die Ameisen, p.86) and roasts her flesh. With her come the ants, a symbol of the narrator's unconscious desire, who begin gnawing away at the foundations of the house:

Der ganze Vorplatz war unterhöhlt von ihren Gängen. Rings ums Haus schien der Garten Ameisen auszuspeien. Und bald waren sie auch im Haus. Durch einen Spalt in der Bodenplatte gelangten sie in den Wohnraum. ...Sie klebten unter dem Klosettdeckel und an der Seife. Nachts liefen sie mir übers Gesicht. (Die Ameisen, p.85)

The chink through which the ants gain access to the house is the belated awareness on the part of the narrator that the *story* he has tried to construct of life is totally inadequate as a representation of life, and that literature written on the basis of the exclusion of the unconscious cannot be regarded as art. As this realisation dawns the narrator reflects on his life:

Vor mir auf den Blättern, verfilzten sich die Sätze zu einem Leben, das ich nie gelebt hatte, weil ich immer vor mir geflüchtet war, geflüchtet aus der Wirklichkeit in eine Scheinwirklichkeit, Ich hatte mein Leben als etwas Vorläufiges, Nebensächliches betrachtet, als eine Hauptprobe zur Premiere des Schreibens, wie in einer Notiz vermerkt stand. Das Studium war

³⁴ The significance of women as symbols of the unconscious will be considered in Chapter Five, *Die Künstliche Mutter*, which deals with the masculine/feminine opposition.

abgebrochen aus Ekel vor einem Beruf. Die Liebe hatte ich abgebrochen aus Ekel vor dem Fleisch. ...Zuletzt war ich geflüchtet in dieses Haus hoch über dem See, inmitten von Akazien und Kastanienbäumen, ein Trummerfeld von angefangenen Beziehungen und Tätigkeiten hinterlassend. Ich hatte mich in die Aufzeichnungen gestürzt, in die Beschreibung dieses Lebens, das doch nie ein Leben gewesen war, sondern immer nur eine Flucht. (Die Ameisen, p.88)

Once again, in the passage quoted above, the technique previously referred to in regard to 'Bork' as antithetical parallelism is used. The narrator is here not considering a stolen rose, but his own life. By undermining his previous statement the narrator introduces a profound questioning of the 'ich': the 'I' who narrates distances himself from the 'I' who experiences. The 'Scheinwirklichkeit' in which the narrator has sought refuge proves itself inadequate, and inimical to the development of a genuine 'I', which achieves a synthesis between the rational and the irrational. Yet the insight gained by the narrator is positive in that it provides the basis for a new engagement with life, and the creation of a rejuvenated art. In this case the achievement of distance from the narrative becomes a corollary of self-knowledge: the narrator has reached the point where he can understand the meaning of his past experience, and shape it into new narrative forms, which give primacy to the fullness of the individual vision.

A possible narrative response could be in the direction of 'neue Innerlichkeit'. Yet, as was suggested in Chapter One, Burger seems resistant to the ideas of 'neue Innerlichkeit'. Such a view is supported by Gerda Zeltner who believed that Burger recognised that 'Der Sog [der neuen Innerlichkeit] läßt sich nur eindämmen, indem man ihm etwas Objektiverees entgegensetzt, das heißt, indem man das Schreiben-über-mich durch formale und strukturelle Erfindungen ins Überprivate umzugestalten

versucht'.³⁵ A possibility in the direction of objectivity is offered by the impersonal narrative of the *nouveau roman* and its rejection of anthropocentrism. Zeltner argues that the *nouveau roman* has exerted a significant influence on contemporary Swiss literature, and, without necessarily agreeing with her analysis, it is possible to see how Burger's analysis of the relation between Swiss society and literature echoes that voiced by proponents of the *nouveau roman*, who claimed that in many of its manifestations the novel had become a means of imposing meaning upon the individual:

THE NOVEL IS THE WAY THIS SOCIETY SPEAKS TO ITSELF; to be accepted in it, the individual MUST LIVE this way. Thus it is essential that the "novelesque" viewpoint be clear, omnipresent, and untouchable... Moreover, everything happens as though these books were henceforth written in advance: as if they were part of this all-powerful, anonymous language and thought which reign inside and outside, from public information to the mutest intimacy, with an exaggerated visibility which renders them invisible. Our *identity* depends on it: what is thought of us, what we think of ourselves, and the way our life is insensibly arranged. In oneself one recognises only a character from a novel. ...What language would escape this insidious, incessant language which always seems to be there before we think it? ³⁶

The *story* Swiss society wishes to tell itself is of a 'Willensnation', moral, dutiful and courageous, a *Sonderfall*.³⁷ The values associated with such qualities are predominantly masculine and logocentric, and accordingly the ordering of the *fabula*

³⁵ G. Zeltner, *Das Ich ohne Gewähr*, Zurich, Frankfurt, 1980, p.7.

³⁶ P. Sollers, 'The Novel and the Experience of Limits' in *Surfiction*, edited by R. Federmann, Chicago, 1975, pp.59-74, pp.60-61.

³⁷ See Chapter One, pp.11-13.

of the nation provides a restrictive model of life which reaffirms the values of society.

Personal identity is moulded within a framework that seeks to exclude, or suppress all that is other, or does not conform. Paradoxically, this results in the recognition of the limitations imposed upon fiction and language, and leads, ultimately, to distance from the framework of the nation, which enables it to be examined critically. Implicit in Burger's project is the wish to extend the possibilities of language, and the possibilities of constructing stories, to include that which was previously excluded, without, however, repudiating the need of frames through which to view and order life. The following chapters will consider the manner in which Burger seeks to combine an objective analysis of the frame through which life is viewed, and the wish to project the personal, irrational dimension into the public, rational sphere.

**CHAPTER THREE: SCHILTEN: SCHULBERICHT ZUHANDEN DER
INSPEKTORENKONFERENZ**

In the previous chapter a burgeoning conflict was identified between the desire of the writer for artistic expression and the narrow referential framework of society. It was argued in Chapter One that 'Verweigerung' is an important aspect of post-war Swiss literature, and, as Hans Wysling notes, 'Die Frage, was denn zur Verweigerung führt, wird durch jedes Werk neu beantwortet. Die Antworten sind sich aber im ganzen ähnlich: Leiden und Kampf werden ausgelöst durch die Festgefahrenheit und Arroganz öffentlicher Institutionen und privatwirtschaftlicher Mächte'.¹ This conflict can be distilled into a paradigmatic opposition between an array of culturally dominant discourses dependent for their power upon what Foucault terms disciplinary mechanisms, and the work of artists who seek to extend the frame of cultural referentiality to include that which has been previously repressed. In *Schilten*, Burger provides his own answer to the question of what causes 'Verweigerung', but he does so within the basic paradigm of opposition, identified by Wysling, between the individual and the state.

Schilten is the tale of a provincial school master who writes a report to justify his pedagogic methods to a school inspectors' conference. The school in which he teaches is situated adjacent to a graveyard, and the respective worlds of the school and the graveyard are inextricably linked: funeral services are held in the school gymnasium. The relationship between life and death is further inverted by

1 H., Wysling, 'Verschiedene Arten der Verweigerung - Versuch einer Kategorisierung' in *Aspekte der Verweigerung in der neueren Literatur aus der Schweiz*, edited by P. Grotzer, Zurich, 1988, pp.55-68, p.55.

Schildknecht's teaching, which is directed towards preparation for death, not life, 'Friedhofkunde anstelle von Heimatkunde' (Sch, p.134). As Schildknecht's isolation increases, the reader learns that Schildknecht, who is himself a self-reflective character, is in fact a pseudonym, or 'pädagogischer Künstlername', for Peter Stirner, the 'real' teacher. It finally transpires that Schildknecht has, in fact, been teaching to empty classes. As the novel moves towards its climax, Schildknecht's isolation, and descent into madness is paralleled by an important structural tension in the novel which will be considered in this chapter. The potential failure of the narrator, Stirner, to maintain distance from the character-bound focaliser, Schildknecht, threatens at any moment to destroy his attempt to tell his own story and subvert the dominant discourses. As the novel progresses so the distance between Stirner and Schildknecht diminishes until it reaches a crisis point where the writing of the novel becomes coterminous with the events it is narrating. Once this point is reached Stirner must decide whether to continue to narrate unreflectively, or to abandon the narration.

The decision confronting Stirner is crucial, as the importance of reflection to the process of narration is a central aspect of Burger's criticism of the 'story of the nation'. Absence of self-reflexivity, and a lack of self-criticism are the charges levelled against Swiss society, and these are pressed with imaginative vigour in *Schilten*. In this respect the interaction between art and life discussed in the previous chapter is paradigmatic. If art is to be created the artist must achieve a degree of detachment from life, without, however, compromising his or her art: the artist must be both within life and outside observing it. The nation as a whole has lost the ability to regard itself with detachment; it has become entrapped within its own image of itself, which it seeks to perpetuate and impose upon life within the framework of the nation. Sollers suggested an analogy between the nation and the story of the nation.

The story Switzerland tells itself, and the consequences which arise for the individual, will be considered in this chapter in an attempt to show that Burger's critique of the nation goes beyond satire to challenge the definition of Switzerland and what it means to be Swiss. At the heart of the conflict between the artist and the discourses of the nation is a dispute which goes to the very core of what the nation is, how it is defined, and by whom.

Burger believed that with *Schilten* he had found his 'großen Stoff' (AV., p.25). It will be argued here that what makes the material important is the manner in which it facilitates the thematisation of the clash between the modernist desire to extend the concept of reality and a narrowly realist aesthetic which seeks to restrict it. Indeed the role of school teacher is an ideal vehicle for Burger to represent the conflict which arises between the individual wish for creative expression and the restrictive norms of society. The position of teacher is used to expose and satirise education as a 'disciplinary mechanism', and to explore the reasons for Schildknecht's isolation. Malcolm Pender has noted that Schildknecht is the antithesis of Peter Käser in Gotthelf's *Leiden und Freuden eines Schulmeisters*, and there is an implicit intention in *Schilten* to subvert past representations of the role of the teacher in Swiss society.²

This chapter will consider the many facets of the conflict between the individual and the state as they are represented in *Schilten*, and the struggle of the writer to employ complex aesthetic and narrative forms of expression appropriate to the individual in the modern world. The clash between different notions of time and

² M. Pender, *Contemporary Images of Death and Sickness*, Sheffield, 1998, p.203.

space, as they relate to the individual and the nation, the development of a 'surreal' method as the basis for creative expression by Schildknecht, and the struggle to find self-expression will all be examined in the context of the conflict between the individual desire for self-expression and the imposition of a static, unreflective aesthetic model by the dominant discourses of the nation.

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The conflict between modernist and realist approaches is apparent already in the reception of *Schilten*, in particular, and of Burger's work in general. Given Burger's intent to challenge the cultural boundaries of the nation, and to extend the range of creative expression, reception of his work becomes an important issue. The willingness, or otherwise, of critics to engage with a work of art, and question their own criteria for judging it provides a gauge for the openness of the culture in general to new and original work. Before beginning with an analysis of *Schilten* the critical reception of the novel, and the direction this gave to later Burger criticism, will be considered as the basis for subsequent discussion of his work.

Burger's first novel was generally well-received, if without unanimous critical acclaim, and is widely regarded as his *magnum opus*. As an articulation of the isolation and mental breakdown of Schildknecht the text may be seen as performative: it enacts rather than describes. Burger's use of theatrical metaphors was noted in Chapter Two, and *Schilten*, too, abounds with theatrical metaphors. One of the most poignant becomes clear only at the end of the text, namely that Schildknecht, the teacher, is teaching before an empty classroom.

The absence of an audience makes the articulation of loneliness and isolation even more courageous and subversive; in its assertion of the individual voice it

represents a refusal to capitulate to the demands of a society for a particular type of teaching, or a particular type of art. As an allegory of the relation of the writer to society it was uncomfortably prescient: Burger found himself engaged in a struggle with publishers to have the text published uncut. Siegfried Unseld, director of Suhrkamp, expressed the view that ‘Der Text ist zu dicht, die Textstruktur zu gleichförmig, als daß ein Leser über einen solchen Umfang hinweg goutieren könnte’.³ A similar view was expressed later by Lothar Baier. In a generally positive review he describes *Schilten* as a ‘Geduld strapazierenden Roman’ and points out: ‘Die dreihundert engbedruckten Seiten dieses Romans ...zu lesen, ist keine geringe Plackerei, und man fragt sich am Schluß, ob sich die Mühe gelohnt hat’.⁴ There can be little doubt that the perception of Burger as a ‘difficult’ writer has hindered a broader engagement with his work.

A further problem associated with critical perceptions of Burger’s work has been the tendency to view it as essentially autobiographical. Rosemarie Zeller has protested against the use of the ‘einfachste Muster ...[der] Roman als autobiographischen Schlüsselroman [zu lesen] und so das komplizierte Spiel von fiktionaler Realität, Entwurf von Realität und Entwurf von Fiktion zu zerstören’.⁵ In Burger’s case Zeller’s criticism appears to be borne out by the proliferation of critical

³ Letter from Dr. Siegfried Unseld to Burger, Frankfurt, 25.2.76, Schweizerische Literaturarchiv (SLA), Bern. A similar view was expressed by Bruno Mariacher, Artemis Verlag, who, according to Burger, ‘glaubt nämlich, ...keineswegs, dass es einen Leser gibt, der über dreissig Seiten hinauskommt’. Letter from Burger to Toni, 26.1.76, SLA, (Bern). Toni is probably Anton Krättli.

⁴ L. Baier, ‘Dieser Wahnsinn hat Methode’, FAZ, 7.12.76.

⁵ R. Zeller, *Der Neue Roman in der Schweiz*, Fribourg, 1992, p.77.

works which view *Schilten* as an attempt by Burger to confront his own concerns, often at the expense of a consideration of the subversive nature of his fiction.

A number of critics have regarded *Schilten*, together with the rest of his work, as reflecting the existential problems of the author. Monika Großpietsch believes that Burger 'bringt sich unübersehbar in den Text ein, indem er Daten seiner Wirklichkeit in die Fiktion übernimmt. Die Schreibzeit und das Alter Burgers stimmen mit Schildknechts Schreibzeit und Alter überein. Der Vorname "Hermann" wird in *Schilten* zu "Armin"'.⁶ Claudia Storz constructs 'zehn Urgeschichten' to explain the problems of his childhood which 'als Keimzellen im Werk immer wieder anzutreffen [sind]'⁷, and reports that '...im Werk, wie auch in den Gesprächen, kreist er ein Leben lang um seine Kindheit, Brennpunkt Menziken'.⁸ Burger's long periods of depression and his eventual suicide have also formed the basis of an interpretation of his work. Exemplifying this approach, John White asserts, not untypically, that:

⁶ M. Großpietsch, *Zwischen Arena und Totenacker*, Würzburg, 1994, p.66. Großpietsch nevertheless considers the indignation of the residents of the Schiltwald as unjustified as 'Fiktion in allen Einzelheiten' should not be confused with reality. *Schilten* is a 'nach außen projizierte Innenwelt des Protagonisten' (p.67). She considers the main factors governing Burger's choice of location for *Schilten* to be his 'damaligen Wohnsitz' and his need to find a setting in which to project his 'angegriffene Psyche'. Consequently the discovery of the 'Stoff' is as 'eine Uebereinstimmung innerer Disposition mit selektiv aufgenommenen Stimmungseindrücken zu verstehen, in diesem Fall die Korrespondenz der inneren Existenzproblematik mit der Metapher der lokalen Todesstimmung'. The book purports to examine the 'Funktion des allgegenwärtigen Todes ...in Zusammenhang mit dem Thema der psychischen Krise'. (p.55) Her underlying thesis appears to be that it is the 'altered' psychological state of the writer which leads to fiction.

⁷ C. Storz, *Burgers Kindheiten*, Bern, 1996, p.18.

⁸ Storz, *Burgers Kindheiten*, p.17.

'Viewed from the vantage-point of such a final act, his writings, his life even, now seem to possess a distinct teleology'.⁹

There can be little doubt that Burger's work draws on the experiences of his own life; the question which arises is the extent to which it can be considered autobiographical. In the seventies there was a move towards subjectivity and autobiography amongst second and third generations of Swiss post-war writers, alongside that towards 'neue Subjektivität' in West Germany.¹⁰

Vermehrt sind in den letzten Jahren denn auch Romane aufgelegt worden, die sich von Autobiographien fast nur noch darin unterscheiden, dass sie nicht als solche deklariert sind. Man denke hier beispielsweise an "Der Immune" von Hugo Loetscher, an "Stolz" von Paul Nizon, an "Vorabend" von Gertrud Leutenegger, an "Die Rückfahrt" von E.Y. Meyer, an "Der Kiosk" von Hans Boesch u.v.m. ¹¹

⁹ J. White, 'Hermann Burger: 'Die allmähliche Verfertigung des Todes beim Schreiben', in *Rejection and Emancipation: Writing in German-speaking Switzerland 1945-1991*, edited by M. Butler, and M. Pender, Oxford, 1991. pp. 184-201. (p.184) There remains a degree of uncertainty as to whether Burger did in fact commit suicide. Claudia Storz reports: 'Da er an den gleichen Tabletten stirbt, die er seit langem in großer Menge genommen hat, und da seine Gesundheit seit Monaten stark angegriffen war, spricht die Todesmeldung von einem Herzversagen. Anne Marie Burger und Marcel Reich-Ranicki -obwohl sie früher ein Suizid gefürchtet haben - glauben nun nicht an vorsätzliche Selbsttötung, sprechen von einem Unglücksfall'. p.362

¹⁰ John White states of Burger that 'the author's work surely belongs to the widespread contemporary fashion for 'Neue Subjektivität' rather than any over-disguised, indirect form of 'Erlebnisdichtung''.(p.190)

¹¹ Y-D. Köchli, *Themen in der neueren schweizerischen Literatur*, Bern/ Frankfurt a.M., 1982. pp.4-5. See also *Geschichte der deutschsprachigen Schweizer Literatur im 20. Jahrhundert*, edited by K. Pezold, p.238.

Increased subjectivity is associated with the manifold social conflicts which developed in Switzerland in the late sixties and early seventies¹², the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, and other developments in the Eastern Bloc which resulted in general ideological scepticism and a 'Beharren auf der Subjektivität des Einzelnen und die Hinwendung zur kritischen Aufarbeitung individueller Erfahrung mit literarischen Mitteln'.¹³ Thus, a critical response to literature developed which sought to combine 'eine großangelegte philosophisch-weltanschauliche Debatte beziehungsweise eine ins Grotteske getriebene Gesellschaftssatire jeweils mit dem Streben nach autobiographisch gestützter Authentizität'.¹⁴

The different forms this could take are discussed by Hans Wysling who attempts, not unproblematically, to categorise types of 'Verweigerung', and to place *Schilten* within the wider context of 'Verweigerung'. For Wysling 'Die ohne-mich-Haltung zeigt sich in der deutschschweizerischen Literatur der Nachkriegszeit in den

¹² Following the *Zürcher Literaturstreit* of 1966 came the *Zürcher Jugendunruhen* in 1968, the dismissal of the artistic director of the *Zürcher Kunsthhaus*, and the *Schwarzenbach Initiative* against *Überfremdung*, amongst others. Symptomatic of the division between 'official' culture and writers was the formation of the *Olten Gruppe* after the president of the official Schriftsteller Verband had colluded in the production of the *Zivilverteidigungsbüchlein* produced by the *Eidgenössische Militärdepartement* in which intellectuals and writers are represented as 'moskauhörige Subversive und potentielle Landesverräter'. Otto F. Walter portrays the conflicts in Swiss society in collage form in his novel *Die Verwilderung* (1977), in which an attempt to found an alternative group on the edge of the city is destroyed by hostility towards, and fear of, that which does not conform

¹³ R. Käser, in *Die vier Literaturen der Schweiz*, edited by B. Stocker, St. Gallen, 1995, p.61.

¹⁴ *Geschichte der deutschsprachigen Schweizer Literatur im 20. Jahrhundert*, edited by K. Pezold, p.238.

Formen des Protestes, der Evasion, der Apathie und der utopischen Restitution'.¹⁵

Burger is placed in the apathetic category, the same category as Fritz Zorn. Apathy is 'eine rätselhafte dritte Form der Verweigerung...: Es kommt da nicht mehr zu Protest oder zur Suche nach irgendwelchen Paradiesen. Das beherrschende Gefühl ist die Angst. Sie führt in die Krankheit, in ein Sprechen, das nur noch gegen die Krankheit anredet, sie umkreist, schließlich ins Verstummen mündet oder aber in eine verzweifelte Beredsamkeit'.¹⁶ Burger's writing is regarded as a performance of his own 'tödliche Lähmung':¹⁷ he is damned 'das tödliche Leiden an der Existenz in gekonnte Tiraden von Todesgelächter und Teufelsartistik aufzulösen'¹⁸

As the imposing metanarratives and ideologies are perceived as morally bankrupt so the individual is thrown back upon his or her own resources; the balance between society and the individual changes, and with it the role of the writer:

Der Autor von heute ist ja nicht mehr der Lobpreiser von der Eigenart und Schönheit seines Landes, sondern er hat die des Mahners übernommen.
...Und genau deshalb ist für die reine Fiktion wenig Platz in seiner Dichtung. [my emphasis] Dies zeigt ja auch die zunehmende Reprivatisierung der neueren Schweizer Literatur, wird hier doch am eigenen Leibe sozusagen "realitätsnah" aufgezeigt, was wirklich beschäftigt, was wichtig erscheint, was Probleme verursacht, was Betroffenheit auslöst...¹⁹

¹⁵ H. Wysling, 'Verschiedene Arten der Verweigerung - Versuch einer Kategorisierung' in *Aspekte der Verweigerung in der neueren Literatur aus der Schweiz*, edited by P. Grotzer, Zurich, 1988, pp.55-68, p.55.

¹⁶ Wysling, 'Verschiedene Arten der Verweigerung', p.62.

¹⁷ Wysling, 'Verschiedene Arten der Verweigerung', p.62.

¹⁸ Wysling, 'Verschiedene Arten der Verweigerung', p.64.

¹⁹ Köchli, *Themen in der neueren schweizerischen Literatur*, pp.11-12.

Köchli here draws attention to important developments in Swiss literature.

Nevertheless, her attitude is indicative of the belief among certain critics that for social criticism to be effective and valid it must be based on genuine experience: the exaltation of the real over the fictional demeans fiction as a socially critical medium.²⁰ Köchli's attitude lays bare an essentially realist aesthetic, which, whilst sympathetic to social criticism, unwittingly undermines the attempts of writers such as Burger to challenge society by blurring the boundaries between fiction and reality.

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In his book *Das Schreiben über den Tod*, which considers, amongst others, Burger's *Schilten* and Zorn's *Mars*, Steinert appears to take a similar view to Köchli. He believes that in the seventies there is a move away from 'pure' fiction towards a more concrete engagement with reality. So it is that the grand, metaphysical concepts, such as death, develop a more concrete and rational meaning:

Das Schreiben über den Tod verliert im Verlauf der siebziger Jahre zwar an philosophischer Tragweite, gleichzeitig aber gewinnt es an Konkretion, und zwar insofern als das Problem des Sterbens oder des Sterbenmüssens in den Vordergrund rückt. Der Tod wird nicht mehr als Metapher verstanden, als vorgegebenes omnipräsentes Sinnzentrum, sondern als Erfahrungswert. Für die meisten Autoren der siebziger Jahre ist der Tod nicht etwas, über das man

²⁰ Discussing *Schilten* Burger claims that 'nur wer *Schilten* am eigenen Leib erfahren hat, kann den Fall *Schildknecht* beurteilen'. In 'Strategien der Verweigerung in "*Schilten*"' in *Aspekte der Verweigerung in der neueren Literatur aus der Schweiz*, pp. 133-142, p.136. The relationship of the body to ideological discourse is discussed later in this Chapter, and also in Chapter Five.

spekuliert, er geschieht. Diesen Prozeß könnte man als
 "Entmetaphorisierung" des Todes bezeichnen.²¹

Steinert regards Thomas Bernhard as a crucial figure in the process of
 'Entmetaphorisierung'. His importance lies in that '...einerseits [steht er] noch in der
 Tradition eines metaphysischen Todesbegriffs, andererseits besteht sein
 erzählerisches Verfahren gerade darin, daß er diesen zerstört'.²² Bernhard 'setzt den
 Tod absolut. Der Tod bleibt bei ihm die Generalmetapher, das Sinneszentrum, an
 dem alles andere gemessen wird'.²³ Burger's admiration for Bernhard was no
 secret²⁴ and Steinert points out that Bernhard's formulation: 'Die Welt ist die Schule
 des Todes. Das einzig erreichbare Lernziel ist der Tod', could easily be the motto for
Schilten: 'In "Schilten" thematisiert er das 'media in vita in morte sumus' in
 verschiedenen Dimensionen mit einer Ausführlichkeit, die ansonsten in der
 Gegenwart nur in der Literatur Thomas Bernhards zu finden ist'.²⁵ *Schilten* is
 regarded as 'lebensfeindlich', a representation of *nature morte*: the village becomes
 the concrete, physical manifestation of death, a point also made by Hagenbüchle who
 believes that 'Die Monotonie von Raum und Zeit, das zeitlos tradierte Geschehen im

²¹ H. Steinert, *Das Scheiben über den Tod*, Frankfurt a.M., Bern, New York, 1984. p.16

²² Steinert, *Das Scheiben über den Tod*, p.14.

²³ Steinert, *Das Scheiben über den Tod*, p.15.

²⁴ This is expressed in. 'Schönheitsmuseum - Todesmuseum' in *Ein Mann aus Wörtern*, Frankfurt a.M., 1983, pp.124-145.

²⁵ Steinert, *Das Scheiben über den Tod*, p.147. A similar point, if in a different context, is made by Elsbeth Pulver in 'Das Niemandland zwischen Leben und Tod' in *Schweizerische Monatshefte*, 1977, p.729: '[Schilten] stellt ...die radikalste Gestaltung der Omnipräsenz des Todes dar, die es in der gegenwärtigen Literatur gibt...'

Dorf, die Dämonie des Ortes, dies sind letztlich die Ursachen für Schildknechts Abgleiten in den Irrsinn'.²⁶

Schildknecht is driven to madness by the omnipresence of death: 'Ausgestattet mit einem durch intensives Quellenstudium erlangten Fachwissens ..., läßt der Autor seine literarische Figur ihren thanatologischen Obsessionen nachgehen'.²⁷ In comparison with Bernhard's *Die Verstörung* the *Rollenprosa in Schilten* 'gewinnt an Realismus'²⁸; however, for Steinert, Schildknecht is not a powerful enough narrative construct 'den Tod als omnipräsentes Faktum sprachlich zu vergegenwärtigen und zu verstehen'.²⁹ Consequently he sees in the break-up of the character-focaliser Schildknecht, and presumably in the announcement that 'Ich will als Armin Schildknecht keine Sekunde weiterexistieren' (Sch, p.301), and the 'Nachwort' of the inspector, the 'authentic' figure of the author: 'In den letzten vier Seiten liegt die Andeutung einer 'realistischen' Auflösung der Rolle Stirners/Schildknechts verborgen, somit auch die Entlarvung des wahnhaft-todestollen Unterfangens der Kunstfigur. Die Unmöglichkeit der Totalerfassung des Themas hat folglich Konsequenzen auf die Erzählform'.³⁰

The principal consequence Steinert identifies is the move, in the late seventies, away from *Rollenprosa* towards authentic autobiographical representations

²⁶ W. Hagenbüchle, *Narrative Strukturen in Literatur und Film: 'Schilten', ein Roman von Hermann Burger: Schilten ein Film von Beat Kuert*, Bern, 1991, p.106.

²⁷ Steinert, *Das Scheiben über den Tod*, p.151.

²⁸ Steinert, *Das Scheiben über den Tod*, p.153.

²⁹ Steinert, *Das Scheiben über den Tod*, p.163.

³⁰ Steinert, *Das Scheiben über den Tod*, p.153.

of death; narrative fictions of death become unnecessary, as closure is achieved by death itself:

An die Stelle fiktionaler Rollenprosa (Bernhard, Burger) und anderer verschlüsselter, das Autobiographische nur andeutender Schreibweisen (Bachmann, Handke) treten Texte, die sich als offen autobiographisch zu verstehen geben. Wenn Autoren wie Günter Steffens, Bernward Vesper oder Fritz Zorn in der Ich-Form schreiben, dann sind das nicht nur thematisierte, literarische Ichs, sie meinen sich auch selbst damit; wenn sie vom eigenen Tod sprechen, dann meinen sie auch ganz konkret ihren Tod...³¹

Authenticity is seen to reside in the correspondence of the narrating subject with the author: 'Immer häufiger legen Texte nahe, daß das sorgsam herauspräparierende erzählende Ich weitgehend identisch ist mit dem Ich des Autors, daß beide sich überschneiden wie Doppelgänger und daß ihre Autoren auf die schöne literaturwissenschaftliche Begrifflichkeit, die ihnen eine goldene Brücke gebaut hat, pfeifen. Immer häufiger ist das erzählende Ich ein authentisches Ich'.³² Steinert's analysis offers interesting insights into *Schilten*, yet his initial premise that Schildknecht is driven to madness by the omnipresence of death presupposes a personal obsession with death which leads back to the person of the author. The desire to see the figure of the author in the text leads Steinert to ignore the differing narrative foci. Indicative of this is his repeated reference to the figure of 'Stirner/Schildknecht', as though they were coterminous, and did not, in fact, represent different narrative foci.

³¹ Steinert, *Das Scheiben über den Tod*, p.208.

³² Steinert, *Das Scheiben über den Tod*, p.209.

In his comparison of Burger's novel with Beat Kuert's film of the novel, Hagenbüchle follows Steinert in considering *Schilten* as 'das Schreiben gegen den Tod'³³, and is concerned with the relation of the author to the text. Nevertheless he regards Schildknecht as 'eine in hohem Masse reflektierende, sich selbst beobachtende und - sezierende Erzählinstanz'³⁴, and asserts further that 'Peter Stirner alias Armin Schildknecht ist nicht Hermann Burger, das Ich somit kein echtes, sondern ein fingiertes Aussagesubjekt innerhalb eines Textes der dichtenden Sprache'.³⁵ Hagenbüchle supports his assertion by highlighting the fact that Schildknecht's narrative is often in the present tense: 'Das echte erlebende Ich des Autobiographen bereitet Vergangenes auf, stellt die erlebte Welt des erzählten Ich chronologisch vor den Akt der Niederschrift; sein Berichtstempus ist das Präteritum als Vergangenheitsaussage. In *Schilten* erzählt das fingierte Ich im Präsens'.³⁶ This suggests that Schildknecht has indeed taken on a life of his own and exists only in the act of 'enunciation which defines it'.³⁷ Whilst Hagenbüchle differentiates between the author and the fictional narrator, in stating that Schildknecht is not 'echt' he betrays his own discomfiture with the absence of an 'authentic', because real, narrative instance who would provide the text with authority.

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³³ W. Hagenbüchle, *Narrative Strukturen in Literatur und Film* ', p.103.

³⁴ Hagenbüchle, *Narrative Strukturen in Literatur und Film*, p.134.

³⁵ Hagenbüchle, *Narrative Strukturen in Literatur und Film*, p.130.

³⁶ Hagenbüchle, *Narrative Strukturen in Literatur und Film*, p.130.

³⁷ R. Barthes, *Death of the Author*, in *Modern Criticism and Theory*, edited by D. Lodge, London and New York, 1988, pp.168-171, p.170.

There appear to be two basic approaches to Burger's work. The first acknowledges the social context, but considers art to be subordinate to life; it highlights the powerlessness of the 'authentic' narrator in the face of his ensnarement by illness and the prospect of imminent death. More seriously, by exalting 'authentic' experience above the imagination, it raises questions about the efficacy of fiction to engage with and challenge reality. The second approach may not consider the author to be dead, but draws an important distinction between the narrating subject and the author.³⁸ Art is seen as having a distance from life which allows it to raise life to a new 'Wirklichkeitsgrad'.³⁹ Malcolm Pender states that if Burger's works 'represent "Bruchstücke einer einzigen, einer großen Krankheitsgeschichte"', they do so from a position of protest and attack since he is a writer for whom "Kampfeslust" was "unabdingbar". The commitment to aesthetic standards, from being originally the reflection of an intellectual standpoint, assumes existential connotations as life is increasingly interpreted in terms of defeat from which meaning can only be wrested by transformation into literature'.⁴⁰

The transformation of life into literature requires distance from life, as was suggested in Chapter Two, and, as in *Bork*, Burger maintains a narratological distinction between the character who sees and the character who narrates. In *Schilten* the use of the pseudonym Armin Schildknecht for Peter Stirner corresponds to the distinction between the external-focaliser and the character-focaliser in 'Bork': by choosing a pseudonym Stirner already asserts his detachment from the

³⁸ Burger himself points to the independence of Schildknecht: 'Die Geschichte Schildknechts beruht auf keinerlei Faktizität, sondern entsteht im jeweiligen Moment des Schreibens auf dem Papier'. (AV., p.42)

³⁹ see Chapter Two, p.55.

fabula.⁴¹ Thus within the body of the text there exists Armin Schildknecht, who in referring to himself in both the first and the third person suggests a certain critical self-awareness, and Peter Stirner, who adopts a pseudonym in order to narrate the *story*. *A fortiori* Burger creates distance between himself, as author, and the events of the narrative, and seeks to stress the self-conscious, self-reflexive nature of the narrative.

It is the distance from life which enables art to redeem life; the sustaining illusion in *Schilten*, which distinguishes it from the helplessness of 'authentic' texts, is the result of an imaginative *tour de force*. Fiction provides a distance from the event which enables it to be viewed with a certain humour. Thus it is that Elsbeth Pulver can claim that *Schilten* is 'eine Darstellung der Todesangst und zugleich des Versuchs, diese Angst zu überwinden, eine Annäherung an den Tod..., die zugleich ein verzweifelter, aber auch komischer Versuch der Abwehr und Rettung ist'.⁴² In pointing to this Pulver differs from many other critics in her refusal to identify the figure of Armin Schildknecht with the authorial voice:

Bei einer Betrachtung stilistischer Eigentümlichkeiten darf aber nie ausser acht gelassen werden, dass der Roman unmissverständlich als ein Stück Rollenprosa konzipiert und geschrieben ist. Keineswegs geht es an, den Autor Hermann Burger mit seiner Figur Armin Schildknecht gleichzusetzen, obwohl natürlich eine scharfe Trennung nicht möglich ist. ...Der Bericht ist aus dem

⁴⁰ Pender, *Contemporary Images of Death and Sickness*, p.196.

⁴¹ See Chapter Two, pages 51-2, for a discussion of narratological terminology.

⁴² Hagenbüchle in *Narrative Strukturen in Literatur und Film*, p.102, claims that 'Zentrales Motiv in Hermann Burgers *Schilten* ist das Schreiben gegen den Tod, ein Thema also, das in der deutschen Literatur der Nachkriegszeit an eine konsistente Tradition anknüpfen kann'.

Geist Armin Schildknechts geschrieben, wenn man nicht sogar sagen muss, dass darin ein Ort zu Sprache geworden ist, und es ist Hermann Burger auf bewundernswerte Weise gelungen, der inneren Welt eines Menschen ihr sprachliches Äquivalent zu geben. ...in Schilten diese Eigentümlichkeiten [ergeben] sich nicht zwanghaft, sondern bewusst eingesetzt, virtuos variiert und zu einem eigentlichen Artefakt stilisiert werden. Und es wäre ganz falsch, den Roman als Krankengeschichte zu lesen: der Bericht spiegelt nicht primär die innere Welt eines Kranken, sondern eines durch Einsamkeit und Angst gefährdeten Menschen, dessen Gefährdung sich in Krankheitssymptomen äussert.⁴³

What Pulver acknowledges is the fictionality of the text and its irreducibility to biographical detail. She rejects the idea that *Rollenprosa* is the disguised voice of an author who has slipped into a role in order to express his personal concerns. It seems too often that discussions of roles fail to distinguish between the authorial role taken on by the author in order to write and the narrative levels within the text, and the figure of the author. Such a failure ignores the freedom of the author to take on authorial roles, and implicitly restricts his or her artistic freedom.

Max Frisch, who recognised the fundamental nature of role playing and understood the need to play a role in order to express oneself, also understood the danger that an individual may become bound by his or her *Bildnis*. The paradoxical result of an attempt to create a *Bildnis* of the author through his or her texts is that such an approach imposes upon the writer who seeks to extend the possibilities of creative expression within a restrictive society precisely the type of constraints from

⁴³ E. Pulver, 'Das Niemandsländ zwischen Leben und Tod. Zum Roman 'Schilten' von Hermann Burger' in *Schweizerische Monatshefte*, H.8, 1976, pp.729-736, pp.733-4.

which he or she seeks to escape. This was a problem Max Frisch drew attention to in his *Tagebuch 1946-1949*:

In gewissem Grad sind wir wirklich das Wesen, das die andern in uns hineinsehen, Freunde wie Feinde. Und umgekehrt! auch wir sind die Verfasser der andern; wir sind auf eine heimliche und unentrinnbare Weise verantwortlich für das Gesicht, das sie uns zeigen... Wir halten uns für den Spiegel und ahnen nur selten, wie sehr der andere seinerseits eben der Spiegel unsres erstarrten Menschenbildes ist, unser Erzeugnis, unser Opfer. ⁴⁴

In warning of the dangers of an over-prescriptive view of the other Frisch imposes a responsibility on critics to engage imaginatively with texts and not to resort to an overly reductionist realism which assumes that author and narrator are coterminous.

The desire for the certainty of biographical interpretation exposes a latent desire for the certainty of realism. Rosmarie Zeller regards her book *Der neue Roman in der Schweiz*⁴⁵, subtitled 'Die Unerzählbarkeit der modernen Welt', as a 'Beitrag zu einer deskriptiven Poetik des modernen Romans'.⁴⁶ It is intended to promote a constructive engagement with literature which 'Schreibweisen verwendet, die nicht einfach konsumierbar sind' and which 'zu einer Diskrepanz zwischen Autor und Publikum [führt]'. Zeller regards such texts as being 'bevormundet' by the desire for realism inherent in the adoption of an autobiographical approach:

⁴⁴ M. Frisch, *Tagebuch 1946-1949*, Frankfurt a.M., 1965, pp.33-4.

⁴⁵ R. Zeller, *Der neue Roman in der Schweiz*, Fribourg, 1992.

⁴⁶ Zeller, *Der neue Roman in der Schweiz*, p.3

Es ist auffällig, wie sehr autobiographische Lektüremuster für die moderne Literatur herangezogen werden, obwohl ... die modernen Autoren ... alles [tun], um die für die Autobiographie typische Identität von Erzählinstanz und erzählter Figur zu verunklären. Texte, die sich einer solchen autobiographischen Lektüre verweigern, ja die Identität des Ichs deutlich in Frage stellen, werden von der Kritik häufig als unverbindliches Spiel abgetan. ... Es entsteht die einzigartige Situation, daß eine Betrachtungsweise, wie sie die Literaturwissenschaft im Positivismus und seinem Nachfolger, dem Marxismus, entwickelt hat, wo das Kunstwerk auf äußerliche biographische und soziologische Faktoren zurückgeführt wird, noch immer die Leseweise eines großen Teils des literarischen Publikums bestimmt. Was bei dieser Betrachtungsweise häufig untergeht ist die Eigenheit der Kunst, Wirklichkeit auf eine andere Weise zu bedeuten als in der alltagssprachlichen Darstellungsweise der Medien. Das fehlende Bewußtsein dieses Unterschieds in breiten Leserschichten führt sehr häufig zu einer reduktionistischen Rezeption ..., wo die hypothetische Schreibweise, die vielfache Vermittlung des Dargestellten, die eine vieldeutige und schillernde Wirklichkeit hervorbringt, meistens nicht beachtet wird.⁴⁷

Zeller regards modern literature as an 'Auseinandersetzung' with the realist tradition and draws on the work and ideas of Alain Robbe-Grillet, the problematisation of the role of the narrator in a fragmented reality, as a model for the development of modern literature in Switzerland. Gerda Zeltner considers *Schilten* in this context in her book *Das Ich ohne Gewähr*⁴⁸ in which she seeks to trace the influence of the *nouveau roman* on Swiss literature. The important point of Zeller's comments as they relate

⁴⁷ Zeller, *Der neue Roman in der Schweiz*, pp.2-3.

⁴⁸ G. Zeltner, *Das Ich ohne Gewähr*, Zürich, 1980.

to Burger are his desire to go beyond reality, to oppose what exists through the power of fiction.⁴⁹

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Burger had his own personal idea of authenticity. For him it meant fulfilment as a creative writer within the cultural space of Switzerland. Consequently he discusses his own work and the problems encountered by the artist within society at some length, and some of his work may be regarded as allegorising these problems. Nevertheless his work, and his project, always seek to go beyond what is known to create a new reality. Burger compares the work of a writer with that of a magician:

Der Prestidigitateur beginnt nicht mit der Frage: Was wäre wenn...?, sondern er erklärt: Da ist...! Er bezichtigt die Wirklichkeit, so zu sein, wie er sie haben will. Da ist eine Schachtel, und die ist leer, wie Sie sich selber überzeugen können. Natürlich ist sie nicht leer, sonst könnte man nicht in Handumdrehen zwölf bunte Tücher daraus hervorziehen. Während der Schriftsteller von erfundenen Voraussetzungen immer mehr zu seiner Realität und Wahrheit vordringt, gelangt der Zauberer von unumstösslich scheinenden Tatsachen zum vollkommenen Wunder. Der Schriftsteller, der diesen Namen verdient, hat - ausser seinem Text - kein Geheimnis preiszugeben und daher auch keine Interpretation zu fürchten.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ It is curious that although Zeller's choice was based on 'das Interesse an der Auseinandersetzung der Autoren mit traditionellen Schreibweisen, die sich in ihren Werken auf mannigfaltige Weise manifestieren' Hermann Burger receives no mention whatsoever, not even a bibliographical reference.

⁵⁰ H. Burger, 'Verfremdung zur Kenntlichkeit' in *Verfremdung zur Kenntlichkeit*, Bern, 1995. p.8.

Any attempt to interpret fiction in relation to the facticity of the author's life is to undermine and contradict the artistic project, to deny the truth and reality towards which the text strives; it is to confuse the writer with the magician. For as Burger maintains everything is invention: 'Alles, was wir berichten, auch das Autobiographische, erfinden wir noch einmal'.⁵¹ If the purpose of literature is to fictionalise life, to move beyond it to a new reality, then a method which seeks to re-impose life upon fiction seems not only inappropriate but inimical to the text itself.

Burger's desire to go beyond the 'Gegebenheiten' of reality is shown in his use of what has variously been termed *Pararealität* and *Realitätsplagiat*. Schilten is a provincial Swiss village at the end of the Schilttal in the Aargau and as such is:

nur ein leicht verdecktes Pseudonym für das im aargauischen Ruedertal gelegene Dorf Schiltwald. Das im Roman genannte *Schmitten* ist Schmidrued, *Mooskirch* Kirchrueud usw. Realität wird gesetzt - auch im Biographischen - und zugleich raffiniert entzogen. Elsbeth Pulver setzte für diese Technik den bezeichnenden Begriff *Realitätsplagiat*'.⁵²

By interweaving the real and the fictional Burger 'stellt sich mit seiner betonten Setzung des Regionalen in die Tradition Otto F. Walters, der mit seinem fiktiven Jammers - das er jedoch nie im Titel verwendete - eine regionalistisch geprägte Tendenz einleitete'.⁵³ What Burger achieves with his 'parareale Verdichtung' is 'die wohl beengendste Raumsymbolik der aktuellen Schweizer Literatur... Der Raum als

⁵¹ Burger, 'Verfremdung zur Kenntlichkeit', p.15.

⁵² S. Spiegelberg, *Diskurs in der Leere*, Bern, 1990, p.14.

⁵³ Spiegelberg, *Diskurs in der Leere*, p.14.

das räumliche Erfassen des beengenden Lebensgefühl in Kleinstaat Schweiz...'.⁵⁴

Space and time, together with language, are regarded by Spiegelberg as 'wesentliche Elemente der künstlerischen Einbildungskraft' which challenge our perception of reality and contribute to a 'wesentlichen Prozess der Sinnbildung selbst'.⁵⁵

Consequently he classifies *Schilten* as a text 'der Verweigerung, der Opposition, die im Leser etwas auslösen wollen, nämlich ein anderes, vertieftes Bewußtsein über unserer eigene Umwelt, über uns selbst'.⁵⁶ In this *Schilten* is more than a portrayal of 'Kleinstaat Schweiz'. It goes beyond the portrayal of social conflict to use the imaginative force of fiction to challenge the fiction of the nation and the role of the individual within it.

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In discussing the direction taken by Swiss literature in the seventies Klaus Pezold comments that in the sixties and early seventies 'Aufklärung im Sinne eines aggressiv analysierenden Angehens gegen nationale Mythen verliert an Bedeutung gegenüber dem Bemühen, sich über die eigene Existenz und deren gesellschaftliche Bedingungen im Schreibprozess selbst klar zu werden und den Leser in diesen Prozeß einzubeziehen'.⁵⁷ In *Schilten* Burger does not deal with specific myths or historical figures such as Tell and Pestalozzi; instead, he considers the manner in which the concept of the 'Volk', as the spiritual, and physical, core of the nation, has

⁵⁴ Spiegelberg, *Diskurs in der Leere*, p.17.

⁵⁵ Spiegelberg, *Diskurs in der Leere*, p.9.

⁵⁶ Spiegelberg, *Diskurs in der Leere*, p.7.

⁵⁷ K. Pezold, *Geschichte der deutschsprachigen Schweizer Literatur im 20. Jahrhundert*, p.239.

been absorbed and manipulated by the civilising discourses of the nation, and the effect the resultant concept of nationhood has upon the individual.

Herder identified the idea of the nation with the 'Volk' and the spirit of the 'Volk' manifest in folk tales and songs. Bakhtin believed that 'the novel's roots must ultimately be sought in folklore'.⁵⁸ This is nowhere more true than in Switzerland where literary representations of the nation have often centred on the alpine folk and their customs. The virtues of the alpine peasant have been extolled as a source of authenticity, whose attitudes, beliefs, customs and language are at the heart of the nation. The search for folkish roots led back to 1291 and the myth of Wilhelm Tell, as symbols of the spirit of the 'Volk'. These folkish roots became the basis of the attempt by the *Aufklärer* to promote a sense of patriotism based on a shared system of values rooted in the virtue, piety, and independence of the peasants. This became the basis of subsequent political and cultural development in Switzerland to the point where the idea of the nation is perceived as untenable without the idea of the 'Volk' to sustain it. The result is what Guy Marchal describes as 'eine imagologische Bastelei':

Unter dieser aufklärerisch-patriotischen Zielsetzung griffen die helvetischen Bastler ganz bestimmte Bausteine aus dem vorgefundenen Schatz der Geschichte heraus. ... Es war ein Geschichtsbild von den "Alten Eidgenossen". Als die helvetischen Aufklärer es aufgriffen, war es bereits zu einem semantischen System geworden. Begriffe wie "unsere Älten", "die Eidgenossen" oder das "in die Fusstapfen unserer frommen Altvordern

⁵⁸ M.M. Bakhtin, 'Epic and Novel' in *The Dialogic Imagination*, edited by M. Holquist and C. Emerson, Austin, 1981, p.38

treten" waren kodierte Signale, hinter denen sich eine ganz bestimmte geschichtlich orientierte Selbstschau offenbarte. ⁵⁹

The image of the alpine peasant becomes synonymous not just with the moral fabric of Swiss society but also with Switzerland itself. By associating the 'Volk' with the institutions of state a synthesis is achieved between the nation as a constitutional entity and as a spiritual one.

Schilten, a 'gottverlassene, aber sektenreiche Tal', is home to the 'Volk', the inhabitants of the valleys and mountains who are considered the descendants of Tell. What becomes apparent in Schildknecht's description of the people of Schilten is the antagonism between the 'Volk' and the civilising discourses of the nation. Once in the 'Abdankungshalle' the locals display their discomfiture:

Sektenbrüderlich und -schwesterlich schnuppern sie in der provisorischen Abdankungshalle herum, mustern mit verstohlenen Blicken die Trauerdekorationen, zählen die Kränze und drücken sich in den Seitengängen den Wänden entlang, um sich im Schutz der Geräte irgendwo verschlaufen zu können... (Sch, p.22)

The people of Schilten show themselves to be a stubbornly insular, even somewhat unpleasant, community who live up to the motto 'Hart im Geben, hart im Nehmen'(Sch, p.23).⁶⁰ Nevertheless, their presence in the school testifies to their

⁵⁹ G. Marchal, 'Das "Schweizeralpenland": eine imagologische Bastelei' in *Erfundene Schweiz*, edited by G. Marchal, and A. Mattioli, Zürich, 1992, pp.37-49, pp.39-40.

⁶⁰ Heinz Schafroth comments, somewhat provocatively, that it is no wonder that the inhabitants of Schilten complained of their representation in *Schilten* for they are 'durchaus stellvertretend gemeint...: für Verstocktheit,

containment by the rational discourses of the nation. The locals are fiercely resistant to outsiders, both Schildknecht, 'der Herr Lehrer', and Stäbli, the 'Herr Pfarrer' (Sch, p.22), are interlopers, and 'im Grunde empfinden es diese Leute als etwas höchst Unanständiges, wenn sich ein Außenstehender wie Bruder Stäbli in ihren Todesfall einmischt' (Sch, p.23). Yet, once again, resistance is replaced by resentment as they obediently listen to the civilised tones of Stäbli, the priest.

Stäbli seeks to emasculate death in his 'Todesdeutsch, dieser alles Lebendige einbalsamierende Tonfall' (Sch, p.25). He is perceived by Schildknecht as a peddler of 'logische Lebensregel' with which he '[nimmt] dem Tod den Stachel':

Abdankungspredigten oder sogenannten Leichenreden sind im allgemeinen nach einem dreiteiligen Schema aufgebaut. Erste Stufe: Eingliederung des speziellen Todesfalls in die generelle Tödlichkeit des Daseins. Zweite Stufe: Die Erschütterung des Glaubens infolge des Todeserlebnisses. Dritte Stufe: Jesus als Überwinder des Todes, als Garant dafür, daß das Schreckliche, Unfaßbare seinen Sinn hat. (Sch, p.29)

Stäbli draws a civilised veil over death. Death, like life, must be controlled by the discourses of civilisation. There is no real engagement with the individual life in his mundane and formulaic sermon, only an attempt to locate the life passed in a rational religious construct. Stäbli's language is 'überraschend bildkräftig und konkret, geradezu diesseitig orientiert' (Sch, p.30): it is designed to place the individual life in a definite, and dominant, social context and to deprive it of its metaphysical status; to

Verklemmtheit, Kantönligeist, Festgefahresein und Missgunst, für die gute Schweizerart alles in allem'. H. Schafroth, 'Anschreiben gegen die Friedhofsruhe' in *Salü, Hermann. In memoriam Hermann Burger*, edited by K. Isele, Eggingen, 1991, pp.172-182, p.173.

appropriate and temporalise the power of death, and to convince the congregation that they should subordinate themselves to a higher authority, of which Stäbli is the terrestrial representative; the dominion of death is transferred from the 'jenseits' to the 'diesseits'. Religion thus reveals itself as a secular discourse; the sublime poetry of Christianity gives way to a realist aesthetic in which the dead person is 'simply a zero, a non-value'⁶¹, and in which 'Not only death, but suicide, that perennially most crucial of existential themes ... is demoted to the rank of a simple, momentary incident or to that of a trivial, clinically described occurrence'.⁶²

The attempt to absorb the 'Volk' into the larger construct of identity which posits the generality over and above the individual is, however, not necessarily a smooth process. As a representative of the 'Volk', Jordibeth offers some resistance to the 'Bevormundung' of the people by state-sponsored religion, and its attempts to obviate the profound fear of death found amongst the 'Volk'. In response to Stäbli's reading of the obituary:

verwahrt sich die Jordibeth gegen die fromme Stilisierung der Lebensläufe zu einer biedereren Legende und korrigiert und ergänzt halblaut den Nekrolog. ...Für sie bedeutet sterben nicht einfach sterben, sie bekleidet ihr Ehrenamt nach dem Motto: Sag mir, wie du gestorben bist, und ich sage dir, wie du gelebt hast! (Sch, p.25)

A fundamental conflict arises between Jordibeth and Stäbli centred upon the representation of the life that has passed. Jordibeth 'setzt sich die ganze Geschichte

⁶¹ L. Nochlin, *Realism*, Harmondsworth, 1971, p.60.

⁶² Nochlin, *Realism*, p.73.

von der Wiege bis zur Bahre und darüber hinaus mosaikartig zusammen' (Sch, p.25); whereas Stäbli 'bastelt nach den Angaben aus dem Trauerhaus ein sinnvolles Schicksal zusammen, nie begreifend, daß es auch in einem Säuferleben auf jede Einzelheit, sozusagen auf jeden Schluck ankommt' (Sch, p.25). By describing the details of the individual life Jordibeth seeks to counter the attempt by Stäbli to provide the life with 'meaning' by shaping it into a respectable existence in a fixed schema; the use of the adjective 'bieder' suggests the restrictive nature of such an existence. Against this Jordibeth can oppose only a formless totality; consequently, her 'halblaut' murmurings, and any hint of rebellion, are ultimately emasculated by, and subsumed within, Stäbli's official discourse.

The greater and more culpable failure lies with Stäbli. For in seeking to subjugate the life of the 'Volk' to a rationalist dominant discourse he interposes himself between life and its artistic expression thereby, hindering attempts to raise life to a new 'Wirklichkeitsgrad'. Religion and the law gain a detachment from death at the expense of an engagement with life itself; in contrast, lacking the distance from death provided by the mystical invention of tradition and superstitions, the 'Volk' are unable to view death with any detachment and succumb to its deadening impulses. Just as the private world of the individual is subsumed within a greater public discourse, so the individualistic spirit of the 'Volk', which the nation claims to represent, is shown to be bound within a system wholly inimical to its expression. The wish to mould the material of life into a meaningful form by seeking dominion over death reveals itself as a sham to usurp power from the individual citizen:

That death is so carefully evaded is linked less to a new anxiety which makes death unbearable for our societies than to the fact that the procedures of power

have not ceased to turn away from death. In the passage from this world to the other, death was the manner in which a terrestrial sovereignty was relieved by another, singularly more powerful sovereignty; the pageantry that surrounded it was in the category of political ceremony. Now it is over life, throughout its unfolding, that power establishes its domination; death is power's limit, the moment that escapes it; death becomes the most secret aspect of existence, the most "private".⁶³

The supposedly civilising discourses of the nation undermine and usurp the private, existential, dimension of life by insisting on its public and realistic representation. What cannot be represented in terms of physical and social detail ceases to exist. Thus it is that death, as a fearful personal experience, is banished. Philippe Ariès concludes his study of death with the observation that in modern society 'Neither the individual nor the community is strong enough to recognise the existence of death', yet this has allowed, paradoxically, the 'old savagery' of death to creep back in. In response a 'small elite of anthropologists, psychologists, and sociologists ... struck by this contradiction ... propose to reconcile death with happiness. Death must simply become the discreet but dignified exit of a peaceful person from a helpful society that is not torn, not even overly upset by the idea of a biological transition without significance, without pain or suffering, and ultimately without fear'.⁶⁴ Fear of death is replaced by the tyranny of happiness and the secularisation of power: power is located in science, morality and social organisation. As a consequence a

⁶³ M. Foucault, 'Right of Death and Power over Life' from *The History of Sexuality*, Vol I, in *The Foucault Reader*, edited by P. Rabinow, Harmondsworth, 1991, p.261.

⁶⁴ P. Ariès, *The Hour of our Death*, trans., H. Weaver, Harmondsworth, 1981, p.614.

chasm opens up between life and its representation which leads to the 'friedhöflichen Omnipräsenz'(Sch, p.10) in the village, and to inhabitants who think in 'Friedhofkategorien'.

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In the 'sektenreichen Tal' of Aberschilten a subtle form of 'Bevormundung' is practised, as the quaint, but absurd, customs of the 'Volk', based on fear of death, and an acknowledgement of the violence of nature are absorbed and redefined by the modern cults of nationalist pedagogy: law, religion, medicine, the military. The old customs, the 'uralten Aberglauben..., daß die Lebensgeister des Verstorbenen bei der Nennung seines Namens oder spätestens beim Verlesen seiner Biographie zurückkehren würden , im Fall daß er nur scheinot gewesen wäre'(Sch, p.14), become irrelevant and laughable in a modern society. Ariès notes how in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries people were gripped by a fear of "“being buried alive, of waking up in the bottom of a grave”"65, and how such a fear was opposed by doctors with a 'passion that surprises us. This is because the debate over apparent death raised the possibility that death could be, at least for a time, an ambiguous condition. They did not accept the idea that there could be a state that partook of both life and death; it had to be one or the other. ... The concept of death as a state was intolerable'.66 This same hubris is found in Schilten where the 'Amtsarzt mit dem Leichenschau beauftragt [wird]' and a 'Totenschein' is issued to ensure that there are no interstices between life and death. The modern world of science and

⁶⁵ Ariès, *The Hour of our Death*, p.396.

⁶⁶ Ariès, *The Hour of our Death*, pp.403-4.

reason has no place for superstition; it asserts a real time which provides the benchmark for all life.

Death is handled in a clinically efficient and detached manner. The way in which the task of administering death has been appropriated by the *polis* is the subject of one of Schildknecht's digressions. He remarks that:

Nichts ist ja umstrittener als der sogenannte Totenfriede, Es wird zu beweisen sein, daß die fingierte Totenruhe, welche das Gesetz schützen und die Umfriedung symbolisch einhegen soll, dem Bedürfnis der Lebenden entspringt, Ruhe vor den Toten zu haben. Je fortschrittlicher die Gesellschaft, desto deutlicher die Tendenz, die Totenstätte aus dem öffentlichen Leben, den Tod aus dem Bewußtsein zu verdrängen. (Sch, p.135)

In support of his theory he traces the history of the 'Friedhof' from the time 'der engen und natürlichen Gemeinschaft zwischen den Lebenden und Toten'(Sch, p.138) to their descent 'sozusagen in den Untergrund':

Die Verstorbenen verlassen ...den Kultraum der christlichen Gemeinde, der neuzeitliche Friedhof entsteht, der sich von der Verscharrungsstätte für Interdizierte zur staatlich verwalteten und öffentlich anerkannten Sanitätsanstalt entwickelt. (Sch, p.139)

The establishment of the 'Friedhof' sanitises death, removes it from consciousness. The effect of this is signalled in the name of the sexton, Wiederkehr. As his name makes clear, Wiederkehr's function is to ensure 'die ewige Wiederkehr'. Wiederkehr's role is to ensure the anaesthetisation of death through a soothing 'Gartenarchitektur': hedges, gardens and fountains are the aesthetic accoutrements

designed to console, but which, paradoxically, make people 'lebensmüder nicht lebensfroher'(Sch, p.139). The aestheticisation of death in this way asserts the power of the state to protect the populace from death, but, by excluding the spiritual dimension of death, and any sense of the infinite, it destroys the creative interaction between life and death so essential for progress.

The cultural and political edifice derives its power not simply from death but from the power to represent death and to protect those within the culture from the power of death. The discourse of death takes precedence over that of life precisely because it is in death that temporal power lies:

Death is ... necessarily constructed by a culture; it grounds the many ways a culture stabilizes and represents itself, and yet it always does so as a signifier with an incessantly receding, ungraspable signified, always pointing to other signifiers, other means of representing what finally is just absent. Representations of death thus often serve as metatropes for the process of representation itself: its necessity, its excess, its failure, and its uses for the polis.⁶⁷

The life which there is is represented by Wigger. Wigger the 'Friedhof-Faktotum', and 'Friedhofnarr' is strangely independent and unfathomable. Rooted in the land and superstition he is undismayed by death and unresponsive to the civilising customs of modern society: 'Wigger ist die personifizierte Feldfriedhofschwermut' (Sch, p.97). There are clear similarities between Bork and Wigger. Burger comments that 'Wigger gehört in die *Bork*-familie'(AV., p.38), and

⁶⁷ S. Goodwin and E. Bronfen, in *Death and Representation*, edited by S. Goodwin and E Bronfen, Baltimore and London, 1993, p.4.

Wigger is, like Bork, 'bevormundet'. Wigger's 'Vormund' is Wiederkehr, who seeks to ensure that Wigger is bound up in the social system. Wigger, however, shows himself to be more adept at traversing the line between life and death than Bork. He does not succumb to deathly nature; rather, he exists on the cusp between life and death.

The metaphor Schildknecht uses to convey this is Wigger's bicycle control. He rides in an inimitable manner continually on the brink of falling off:

Wigger, diktiere ich den Schülern ins Generalsudelheft, bewegt sich immer an der Grenze dessen, was die Erfüllung der Gleichgewichts-Pflichten gerade noch zuläßt. (Sch, p.95)

Life on the edge is a form of control which defies reason, as the failure of the Schüler to imitate Wigger demonstrates. 'Wiggers Radentledigung ist ein artistisches Nebenprodukt seiner Friedhofstrebigkeit. Deshalb sieht er so aus, als ob er, je näher er dem Friedhof komme, desto mehr die Beherrschung über das Velo verliere. Er verliert aber nicht die Beherrschung über das Velo' (Sch, p.96). Wigger crosses the boundary between the life and death, he asserts the ambiguity of death: its suppression does not lead to happiness.

To maintain control in the face of the graveyard, of death, is what the state and the 'Volk' have failed to achieve; to approach death, but not succumb to it is what Schildknecht strives for. Towards the end Schildknecht realises his error:

Wie konnte ich nur all die Jahre Wigger durch die Art, wie ich ihn beurteilte, behandeln wollen, wo es doch umgekehrt nötig gewesen wäre, mich seiner Therapie ... zu unterziehen. (Sch, p.290)

Schildknecht has, to some extent, followed the model of the narrator in 'Bork' and observed Wigger through the protective framework of the school. Yet Schildknecht's own position vis-à-vis Wigger is ambivalent. On the one hand he perceives Wigger as a crazy oddity, yet on the other he recognises the consequences of curing him of his 'Schwachsinn' with a 'Tonika der Vernunft':

Allerdings würden wir uns durch diese Heilmethode selber um jenen Aberschiltener bringen, der von den hiesigen Mißständen, Zwitterverhältnissen, absurden Raum- und Landschaftszwängen am meisten begriffen hat (Sch, p.33)

Schildknecht recognises something precious in Wigger's madness, something indescribable and unrepresentable, which challenges him and undermines his confidence in the school and his 'Schulwissen' (Sch, p.292). Unlike the narrator in 'Bork', Schildknecht makes no secret of his observation of Wigger; the hidden doubts which plagued the narrator in 'Bork' are made manifest in *Schilten*. The challenge presented by Wigger, to move closer to life whilst maintaining artistic balance, provides the motivation for Schildknecht's narrative. Schildknecht is disingenuous in asserting that his position vis-à-vis Wigger is one-sided: there are good grounds to assume that in many respects Wigger's balancing act provides a model for Stirner's attempt to maintain a balance between his role as external focaliser and the demands of the character focaliser, Schildknecht, and for

Schildknecht's 'Scheintotlehre', his wish to break down the barrier between the real and the unreal, the rational and the irrational.⁶⁸

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Schildknecht shows himself aware of the rigid ossification of the 'Volk' in his attempt to reawaken their spirit. He understands that to do this it is necessary 'ganz andere Töne an[zu]schlagen als Bruder Stäbli'(Sch, p.23). The burial service is the one occasion when Schildknecht comes into contact with the villagers, when they are '[seiner] Botschaft ausgesetzt' (Sch, p.26), and it allows him the 'Narrenfreiheit' of 'freier Improvisation', as he plays the harmonium. 'Turnhalle I' and 'Turnhalle 2' are the pieces he chooses to influence the parish:

So oder so ist die Gemeinde für die folgende Sektenpredigt verketzert, so oder so habe ich die Haberstichianer aus ihrem unverbindlichen Beileid-Trotz herausgerissen und in die Turnhallen-Oppositionen getrieben. Worauf hoffend? Daß tatsächlich einmal einer aufstehen und mit flammenden Worten die Aberschiltener Verhältnisse geißeln würde, Bruder Stäbli in seine Kapelle nach Mooskirch hinunter und mich in die Lehrerwohnung hinauf treibend? (Sch, p.28)

Any illusions Schildknecht cherished in this respect are quickly shattered; his power to move his audience to rebel against the 'Aberschiltener Verhältnisse', Stäbli, and the authority of the school is sadly limited:

⁶⁸ Burger points to the importance of Wigger in *Die allmähliche Verfertigung der Idee beim Schreiben*, (AV), p.38: 'Ich habe dem Regisseur bei der Verfilmung des Romans völlig freie Hand gelassen, aber als er Wigger ausklammern wollte, habe ich protestiert, vergeblich'.

...in einem solchen Dorf [ist] die Friedhofschwerkraft stärker als alles, was mit Bildung zu tun hat, und ohne mich jetzt schon rühmen zu wollen, möchte ich doch festhalten: Es bedeutet schon allerhand, wenn es ein Schulmeister wie Armin Schildknecht zumindest fertig bringt, Sand, Kreidestaub im Getriebe des Engelhofs zu sein! (Sch, p.29)

Schildknecht recognises the extent to which the 'Volk' of Schilten have been subdued by the dominant discourses, to the point where it becomes virtually impossible for them to rebel. They are bound within a lifeless construct and within a lifeless representation of themselves. 'Bildung', in which Schildknecht appears to have some faith, is undermined by the lifelessness of the culture, and reduced to a form of 'Ausbildung' which seeks to inculcate existing values rather than to question and to progress. The spirit of the 'Volk' is undermined by 'Bildung' aimed at inculcation and suppression. Caught in this deadly spiral, Schildknecht's efforts are directed towards ensuring that whatever independent spirit remains is protected from further harm from Stäbli's 'Todesdeutsch'.

Schildknecht is clear that 'entweder das Schulhaus oder der Friedhof, beides zusammen, beides nebeneinander geht nicht!' (Sch, p.9). The distinction Schildknecht draws between school and graveyard points to a fundamental dichotomy between the two, but one which is not actually present: within the context of the nation the school and the graveyard work in tandem to promote a belief in, and acceptance of, the primacy of social organisation, and rational models of reality. In seeking to disentangle the two, Schildknecht asserts the value of 'Bildung' over and above the interests of the state: 'Bildung' would appear to imply an engagement with life and existential concerns, a real understanding of the self and its position in the

world, as opposed to a narrow social model of knowledge. Thus, as Schildknecht attempts to develop his own pedagogic method, to create an education suited to life rather than death, he becomes cast in the role of rebel. The creation of a pedagogic method independent of the state suggests an act of rebellion against the state. Indeed, in seeking to justify his methods to a fictional Inspectors' Conference there is a sense in which Schildknecht attempts to create an instance above the apparatus of the state which will embody his own values. For whilst the Inspectors' Conference may not exist there are undoubtedly instances of authority which do and it is precisely these 'überdimensionierten und durchorganisierten Apparate von Staat, Militär, Justiz, Polizei, Schule und Wirtschaft'⁶⁹ that Schildknecht challenges.

A central apparatus of state, with its mission to defend the concept of 'Swissness', is the Swiss Army. In his book *Why Switzerland* Jonathan Steinberg discusses the importance of the military for Swiss national identity:

To attack the army is to attack the *status quo*, for a militia stretches like a tight garment around the shape of the existing social order. To attack the army is to assail the very identity and self-image of the Swiss people. ...The Swiss have always been a nation in arms. Switzerland was created in battle, reached its present dimensions by conflict and defended its existence by armed neutrality thereafter.

...The true Swiss is armed. Popular culture has been saturated with military activities, ...As Max Frisch says in *Dienstbüchlein*, if you do not know what a true Swiss (*rechter Schweizer*) is ... you learn about it in the army.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Wysling, 'Verschiedene Arten der Verweigerung', p.55.

⁷⁰ J. Steinberg, *Why Switzerland*, Cambridge, 1996, p.236.

The 'true Swiss' is associated with the free, armed mountain peasant and the sacred alpine domain at the heart of the nation. The irony is that the Swiss army is the embodiment of the Swiss myth: its main function becomes not simply to protect the frontiers of the nation, but to protect itself. In doing so it becomes a major force of reaction.

The pre-eminence of the army in Swiss society serves to cast an 'alpine fog' over the nation. This is the metaphor Schildknecht chooses to satirise the army. Schildknecht's 'Verschollenheitslehre', which parodies military manoeuvres, takes place in the fog, either a natural alpine fog or an artificial one as the class possesses 'einen ausgedienten Armee-Nebelgenerator ... mit dem [Sie].. das Schul-und Engelhof-Gelände nicht nur einräuchern, sondern ganz Aberschiltten ausräuchern können'. (Sch., p.211) The pupils are given 'poetische Decknamen' such as 'Nebelkrähe', 'Nebelhorn' and 'Nebelmeer' and should a pupil wish to ask a question:

...bedient er sich der militärischen Funkersprache. Nebelgranate von Nebelhorn, antworten! Nebelhorn von Nebelgranate verstanden, antworten! Verstanden. Anfrage: Schreibt man Bodennebel mit zwei n? (Sch., p.205)

The presentation of the military as absurd should not obscure the more serious criticism of their nebulous function. They promote obfuscation, the loss of the self within a concept of the 'true Swiss'. 'Nebel' is associated with the alpine regions, yet as a metaphor it points to the way in which the 'Volk' have been cut off from the rest of the nation and vice versa and to the way the whole nation has been shrouded in a nostalgic alpine fog. As Schildknecht points out 'Leben' spelt backwards produces 'Nebel' and what can be said about life can also be said about 'Nebel:

Ein Kampf um Nebel und Tod.

Den Ernst des Nebels kennen lernen. (Sch., p.206)

Nebel is portrayed as restricting the vision of other possible modes of existence. The power to generate 'Nebel' represents the power to control space and constrain the development of ideas and progress. By enveloping the nation in fog the army is clearly a constraining influence. Many contemporary Swiss writers have attempted to lift the 'fog'. They have sought to resist the fiction of the nation and rather than '... submit to authority (through, for example, incarceration or surveillance in an organised space)' have sought to '...carve out particular spaces of resistance and freedom - heterotopias' - from an otherwise repressive world'.⁷¹

Yet Schildknecht finds that his own attempts at resistance attract the attention of Dr. Krähenbühl. Krähenbühl is a mephistophelian figure. 'Patienten von Ihrem Schlag ziehen mich magnetisch an, sagt Doktor Krähenbühl. Meistens kommt er nach Mitternacht, wenn es in Aberschilten finster ist wie in einer Kuh'(Sch, p.124). Krähenbühl offers an incisive analysis of the problem of modern medicine:

Schmerz ... ist eine subjektive Empfindung, und wir haben in der Klangfarben-Bestimmung unserer Nerven-Akkorde noch sehr wenig Fortschritte gemacht. Warum? Weil uns die Chemie daran hindert. Alle Ärzte neigen, von den Angeboten der chemischen Fabriken verführt, von ihren Terminkalendern getrieben, zunächst einmal dazu, einen Schmerz abzutöten, bevor er voll ausgereift ist, bevor die Grenze des Erträglichen

⁷¹ D. Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, Oxford, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1989, p.213.

erreicht, ja für Erkundungszwecke sogar überschritten worden ist. ... statt das Idiom zu erlernen, das der Schmerz, sich unserer Organe als Sprachrohr bedienend, spricht, schneiden wir ihm dauernd das Wort ab und sagen ihm mit der Holzhammer-Methode den Kampf an. Resultat: Der Schmerz verzieht sich, um sich für einen neuen, viel grausameren Überfall zu rüsten. (Sch, pp.125-6)

Krähenbühl's theory of medicine is similar to that expounded in *Mars* in which illness is regarded as a consequence of the repression of its expression. Medicine participates in this process by treating the symptoms and thereby concealing the causes of illness.

As a doctor Krähenbühl plays out his mephistophelian role: he acknowledges the existence of pain, the possibility of death associated with becoming and constant striving, yet seeks to stifle the action it inspires by advising Schildknecht to abandon the 'Bericht', and his 'Beruf - und damit Schilten- an den Nagel zu hängen' (Sch, p.131). It assumes that the avoidance of pain is the main goal of life. Yet pain is a part, a necessary part even, of self-expression based on reflection. Self-expression becomes an existential imperative for Schildknecht, as he notes: 'Entweder man verrichtet seine Arbeit, oder man läßt sich einsargen' (Sch, pp.119-120).

Krähenbühl's offer of 'Freiheit' is a siren call to abandon the spirit of life for the appearance, a 'Beruhigungsspritze, die allerdings vom Schönheitsfehler behaftet ist, daß sie der Arzt aus Versehen in den eigenen Arm gestochen hat' (Sch, p.132). The assistance offered by Stäbli and Krähenbühl represents their own desire to live comfortably within a cultural edifice which excludes that which challenges the mantle of power it has adopted - namely death. The discourses of medicine and religion amount to arrogant displays of self-deception.

The glue which binds the nation together and defines the space in which nation exists is the communications network. Schildknecht goes to great lengths to place Schilten geographically. We learn from his tortuous description of the journey to Schilten not only the tortuous nature of the journey, but the extent of the communications network which links Schilten with other villages and the centre, the 'Hauptstadt' Aarau. The post too is crucial in propagating and consolidating the myths and customs of nationhood. Montesquieu believed: 'It is the invention of the post which has produced politics'.⁷² Politics in turn has created the fiction of the nation, and it is through the institution of the post that it endeavours to maintain it.

For Schildknecht the post symbolises the authority of the centre which seeks to hinder artistic expression and to bind the individual to a single unitary identity. He attempts to remove the post box and thereby distance himself from the influence of the post. The post, however, is not to be denied so easily, and his attempts are circumvented by the 'sogenannte "Eigenhändige Abgabe"' (Sch, p.164), a particular example of the use of the post to bind the individual within the system:

Wie verhält es sich mit Pseudonymadressen? Uneingeschriebene Sendungen mit Pseudonymadressen dürfen nur ausgeliefert werden, wenn ein wirkliches Künstlerpseudonym vorliegt und kein Mißbrauch getrieben wird mit dem Decknamen. Bei einer Einschreibung muß der Träger des Pseudonyms dem Postpersonal persönlich bekannt sein, und in der Empfangsbescheinigung müßten Sie, Herr Lehrer Schildknecht, Ihren richtigen Namen angeben, zum Beispiel: Peter Stirner alias Armin Schildknecht. (Sch, p.165)

⁷² Montesquieu. 'De la politique' in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Oster. D., Paris, Seuil, 1964, pp.172-5, p.175. Quoted in Bennington, G., 'Postal politics and the institution of the nation' in *Nation and Narration*, edited by H.K. Bhabha, London and New York. 1990, pp.121-137, p.125.

The post invokes a concept of citizenship by which the nation appropriates the power to signify the individual, to define who he or she is and to define his or her role and duties as a citizen. The state seeks to impose the duties and responsibilities of citizenship upon each individual with the intent of establishing his or her identity within the system and thereby establishing control of 'alternative' identities and artistic production.

The problem Schildknecht experiences is a lack of post, with which he means 'das Fehlen wesentlicher Post' (Sch, p.174). The absence of any worthwhile communication points to the absence of dialogue between the centre and the margins, and the lack of impetus for progress and change. A consequence of this is not only the writing of Schildknecht's report and the creation of the fictional Conference as an audience for it, but also the setting up of a new postal system to ensure that any response is delivered:

ich habe für diesen Zweck einen eigenen Boten aus meiner Einheitsförderklasse rekrutiert, einen Boten, der... täglich im Departement des Innern vorspricht und fragt, ob der eingeschriebene Brief an Armin Schildknecht versandtbereit sei. Ist er versandtbereit ... hat mein Privatbriefträger den versiegelten Umschlag herauszufischen und mir im Eilmarsch zu überbringen. Der Brief wird also der Post unter die Nase gehalten. ...Er wird auf dem direktesten Weg von Aarau aus ... eilen... (Sch, p.175)

The postal system itself is regarded as hostile towards meaningful communication. The 'Bericht' itself is conceived as meaningful, as is any reply and consequently requires a new postal network with 'Privatbriefträger' to ensure delivery. The entire

communication system is perceived as tainted by the political function it fulfils, which is regarded as being complicit in Schildknecht's isolation. An attempt to undermine the monopoly of the postal system is as subversive as it is utopian.

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A conflict arises between the apparatus of the state determined to defend the 'Konstrukt' of the nation upon which its power is dependent, and the demands of the individual for self-expression, and self-definition. Before considering the specifics of Schildknecht's challenge, this thesis will consider some of the theoretical aspects of the relation between the 'Volk' as a symbol of national origins and the assertion of national sovereignty. To define itself the apparatus of the state sets two processes in motion:

These are first of all, a delimitation in time, or the assignation of origins, in the sense of an *Ark*. This means that society does not derive from an infinite regression of cause and effect. A point of origin is fixed, the mythic birth of the Polis, the birth of Civilization or of the Christian era, the Muslim Hegira, and so on. This zero point or starting point is what allows ritual repetition, the ritualisation of memory, celebration, commemoration - in short, all those forms of magical behaviour signifying defeat of the irreversibility of time.

The second founding gesture of any human society is its delimitation within an enclosed space. Here also there takes place an encounter with the sacred, in the sense of the Temple. ⁷³

⁷³ R. Debray, 'Marxism and the national question', in *New Left Review*, no.105, Sept.-Oct. 1977, p.26.

Debray draws attention to the manner in which acts of 'ritual repetition' become bounded within a 'sacred' space. The individual is not bound simply by a disjunctive concept of time, but also by concepts of space.

The presentation of space as a homogeneous, fixed dimension offers tacit support to the sovereign state, for, as Boyarin has noted, space is associated with the concept of the nation:

our reified notions of objective and separate space and time are peculiarly linked to the modern identification of a nation with a sharply bounded, continuously occupied space controlled by a single sovereign state, comprising a set of autonomous yet essentially identical individuals.⁷⁴

The self and ideas of life are linked to the world "out there" identifiable by its coordinates which can be manipulated by a discrete, sovereign individual or state'.⁷⁵

The state in turn draws upon tradition and a fixed national identity for its own legitimisation:

The coalescing of a tradition often corresponds to the settlement and organisation of a society within definable geographical boundaries, for which the writing down of traditions acts like a set of intellectual fenceposts... The hold of the past is not only legal and cultural. It is expressed in land and

⁷⁴ J. Boyarin, 'Space, Time and the Politics of Memory' in *Remapping Memory: The Politics of Timespace*, edited by J. Boyarin, Minneapolis, 1994, pp.1-38, p.2.

⁷⁵ Boyarin, (ed.), *Remapping Memory: The Politics of Timespace*, p.2.

people, who are geographically placed, and may think they are divinely ordained to mirror a particular tradition. ⁷⁶

In Switzerland it is in the timeless world of the 'Volk' that the traditions of Swissness are to be found. The everyday life of the 'Volk' and the many metaphors it gives rise to become unified within a single originary metaphor. The 'Volk' as a metaphorical construct bonded to the mountains signifies the spatialisation of time: the history of the nation becomes visible in the daily life of the 'Volk'.

Yet, as Bhabha points out, no one metaphor, as an account of origin, is adequate:

If ... we are alive to the *metaphoricity* of the peoples of imagined communities - migrant or metropolitan - then we shall find that the space of the nation is never simply horizontal. Their metaphoric movement requires a kind of 'doubleness' in writing; a temporality of representation that moves between cultural formations and social processes without a 'centred' causal logic. ⁷⁷

The issue Bhabha draws attention to is the divide between the idea of nation as a historical entity and the 'contingent and arbitrary signs and symbols' of nationhood which, in search of homogeneity, freeze the past in the present and vice versa:

Historians transfixed on the event and origins of the nation never ask, and political theorists possessed of the 'modern' totalities of the nation - 'Homogeneity, literacy and anonymity are the key traits' - never pose, the

⁷⁶ B. Stock, *Listening for the Text: On the Uses of the Past*, Baltimore, 1990, pp.162-3.

⁷⁷ H.K. Bhabha, 'DissemiNation' in *Nation and Narration*, pp.291-322, p.293.

awkward question of the disjunctive representation of the social, in this double-time of the nation. It is indeed only in the disjunctive time of the nation's modernity - as a knowledge disjunct between political rationality and its impasse, between the shreds and patches of cultural signification and the certainties of a nationalist pedagogy - that questions of nation as narration come to be posed.⁷⁸

Burger seeks to exploit the disjunction between nationalist pedagogy, the disparate yet ultimately coherent set of discourses which constitute the narrative of the nation, and the cultural signification upon which it is founded. It is no coincidence, therefore, that Burger locates his novel in Schilten, at the margins of the nation. It is here that he can show that whilst the myth of the 'Volk' has been exalted, the 'Volk' itself has become increasingly marginalised in a modern industrialised society.

The disparity between the image of the 'Volk' as sturdy, independent peasants who carve a living from a hostile environment and whose innate desire for freedom led to the creation of the uniquely democratic Swiss system and the more realistic picture of surly peasants stubbornly rooted in superstition and hostile to the imposition of rational discourse is exploited to expose the failure of the 'narrative of the nation that must mediate between the teleology of progress tipping over into the 'timeless' discourse of irrationality'.⁷⁹ In Switzerland, Burger seems to suggest, the narrative of the nation has indeed become stuck in a timeless discourse anchored in an over-rationalisation of reality which has become irrational in feverish adherence to the image it has of itself as the cradle of democracy populated by independent-minded folk. Paradoxically, the absorption of economic and technological advances

⁷⁸ Bhabha, 'DissemiNation' p.294.

has served only to reinforce this image: as modern developments undermined the idea of the nation, so the representation of the nation assumed an importance in inverse proportion to the effects of modernisation. Rather than develop new representations of the nation recourse was sought in the old. The consequence was an increasing rigidity and paranoia in relation to anything that was new.

In his book *Imagined Communities*⁸⁰ Benedict Anderson proposes the following definition of a nation: 'it is an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign'. He goes on to comment:

It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.⁸¹

Schilten, as the use of a place name for the title would suggest, deals with an imagined community, an imagined community in a fictional work. However, if the nation is regarded as an imagined community and moreover one which, according to Anderson, owes its inception to the rise of the novel and the newspaper, and as such reveals itself ultimately as a fiction, then the question arises of exactly what status to accord the fictional world of *Schilten*. The fact that *Schilten* provokes this question points to its subversive role as a parody of the fiction of the nation. In *Schilten* Burger brings together a range of discourses which serve to create the dominant discourse of the nation. He examines the discourses of religion, the military,

⁷⁹ Bhabha, 'DissemiNation', p.294.

⁸⁰ B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, London, New York, 1991.

⁸¹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p.6.

medicine, education, economic history, communication networks amongst others. The form of the novel, twenty apparently unlinked 'Quarthefte', illustrates the disparate nature of these discourses which, nevertheless, coalesce into a powerful discourse which determines the fiction of the nation.

Burger does not deny the need for fiction as the basis of national identity. He would appear to accept Renan's point that the imagining of the nation requires the ability to forget the past; a selective, essentially fictional, history of the nation is necessary to call the nation into being.⁸² What Burger disputes is the legitimacy of a fiction which seeks to define the nation for all time. The established political process in Switzerland involves change based on shifts in the balance of power between the established power bases but precludes fundamental change. The dominant narrative established serves not only to determine the narrative of the nation but also to create a model, or *mentales Konstrukt*, which defines the reality within which individual members of the nation must define themselves.

The idea of *geistige Landesverteidigung* succinctly combines the idea of the spirit of the nation with its geographical delimitation. The space of the nation becomes one of 'compressed time' in which memory is fixed. As Harvey notes: '[Memories] are motionless, and the more securely they are fixed in space, the sounder they are'. The space in which they are fixed is associated with that of the house:

Being is already a value. Life begins well, it begins enclosed, protected, all warm in the bosom of the house... This is the environment in which the

⁸² E. Renan, 'What is a Nation?', trans. M Thom, in *Nation and Narration*, pp.8-22.

protective beings live. ... In this remote region, memory and imagination remain associated, each one working for their mutual deepening... ⁸³

The edifice of the house within which the fiction of the nation becomes entrenched and the manifestations of modernity, which claim time as their primary dimension, are locked out, is an appropriate metaphor for the representation of *Sonderfall Schweiz*. Fiction and imagination are seen as a means to underpin the national edifice by creating a language of beauty which freezes time in space: 'to create a beautiful object "is to link time and eternity" in such a way as to redeem us from time's tyranny'.⁸⁴ The consequence of this project is an aestheticisation of the political, manifested in an implicit appeal to the heroic myth at the heart of the Swiss state, and a retreat into the geopolitical space of the Swiss *Heimat*.

The challenge posed by contemporary writers to the fiction of the nation manifested itself in a questioning of the spatial and temporal authority of the nation. In *Stiller*, for example, the challenge posed by Stiller in his adoption of the pseudonym White is spatial to the extent that it posits the right of the individual to define his own personal space within that of the nation. In Hugo Loetscher's *Abwässer* the space of the sewer is regarded as politically crucial: the state cannot condone the existence of private, uncontrolled space. By rejecting a fixed schemata of spatial representation writers showed themselves to be aware of what Foucault considered to be a 'devaluation of space':

⁸³ Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, p.204.

⁸⁴ Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, p.206.

A critique could be carried out of this devaluation of space that has prevailed for generations. ...Space was treated as the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile. Time on the contrary, was richness, fecundity, life, dialectic.⁸⁵

Writers come to understand space as not simply 'natural', a neutral arena in which time unfolds, but as a social determinant. The organisation of space leads to the socialisation of individuals in specific roles: concepts of time and space influence the way individuals 'interpret and then act with respect to the world'. Consequently, and as Harvey notes:

The history of social change is in part captured by the history of the conceptions of space and time, and the ideological uses to which those conceptions might be put. Furthermore, any project to transform society must grasp the complex nettle of the transformation of spatial and temporal conceptions and practices.⁸⁶

In *Schilten*, as Spiegelberg has noted, concepts of time and space are central to an understanding of the novel. Spiegelberg considers that 'Zeit spielt für das Romangeschehen nicht nur eine untergeordnete Rolle, sie ist gar nicht vorhanden'. Time in *Schilten* 'wird erfahren als das ständig kreisende Gleichmass eines monotonen, nichts verändernden Alltags, der immer wieder an seinen eigenen Anfang zurückkehrt, enthoben jeder historisch-chronologischen Zeitlichkeit'.⁸⁷ The ahistorical time loop to which Spiegelberg refers represents the failure of the national

⁸⁵ M. Foucault, 'Questions on Geography'. in *Power/Knowledge*, edited by C. Gordon, New York, pp.63-77. Quoted in Boyarin, J., op.cit. p.7-8.

⁸⁶ D. Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, Oxford, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1989, p.218.

culture to acknowledge the possibility of alternative pasts. Stamelman in *Lost beyond Telling* poses the question 'If things did not disappear or die, ... if they were continuously enveloped in a never ending presence, ... would there be any need to struggle to recover them through images of artistic recuperation?'⁸⁸ The contemporary culture of Switzerland is characterised by the attempt to envelop the past in a 'never ending' and unchallengeable presence which imposes an authoritative interpretation of reality:

The failure to acknowledge loss leads to overconfidence in the human ability to interpret. If nothing is accepted as lost, then everything can ultimately be recovered by whatever means possible. There is in the will to interpretation a will to coherence and recuperation. Interpretation shuns absence; it lives in horror of the vacuum. ... In front of the ruins of loss, it builds an elegant Potemkin village of meaning and significance. ...Through interpretation one succeeds in neutralising the power of death.⁸⁹

The neutralisation of death results in circularity: progress, or forward movement, must culminate in death, if death is neutralised then progress becomes impossible. This exposes the fundamental conflict at the core of Swiss culture: the vacuum is covered with an interpretation so strong that artistic attempts at recuperation of a lost past are deemed as not only unnecessary but as attempts to subvert the national culture. Consequently, any attempts to engage with the history of the nation, or to rewrite it, are met with hostility.

⁸⁷ Spiegelberg, *Diskurs in der Leere*, p.18.

⁸⁸ R. Stamelman, *Lost beyond Telling*, Ithaca and London, 1990, p.x.

⁸⁹ Stamelman, *Lost beyond Telling*, p.31.

In *Schilten* two general concepts of time stand in opposition to each other. These may be termed *mechanical* time and *personal* time. The tension between these concepts is central to the development of the novel:

Die Estrichtraversierung ist sozusagen mein Schulweg, ein kurzer, gedeckter aber gefährlicher Schulweg. Wie eine Sanduhr mahnt mich das Werk daran, daß die Zeit im Sauseschritt davonläuft. ...Auf dem Weg zur Klasse leben uralte Dachbodenängste auf. Oft träume ich davon, die Uhr sprengte das Gehäuse und dehne sich zu einer gigantischen Maschine aus, so daß ich auf dem Schulweg durch Zahnräder und schmierige Ketten klettern müsse. Der Schiltener Schulhausestrich wirkt doppelt unheimlich durch die manns großen Sackpuppen, die im Halbdüster an den Streben und Seitenpfetten baumeln. Wiederkehr sagt, die Säcke stammten aus den Zweiten Weltkrieg als man hier Polen interniert habe. Internierte Polen, Herr Inspektor, das klingt wie Hornissen-Nester. (Sch, p.103)

Mechanical time is the movement of the clock which regulates life according to a prescribed routine. It is the rational time of civilisation which controls life, and contributes to the socialisation of individuals. Seen negatively, it demands conformity and culminates in 'Bevormundung'. In his subconscious fears Schildknecht associates mechanical time with the inanimate, *unheimliche* time of Thanatos, the death drive. The 'manns großen Sackpuppen', suggestive of cadavers, present a riddle of how a person can both occupy, yet not occupy the same space at the same time, be both a part of this world yet not part of it. They suggest a border at which Schildknecht finds himself. The border is between the mechanical time of the

clock which draws the individual unknowingly towards Thanatos and personal time which acknowledges death and posits activity and self-expression in response to it.

In *Schilten* mechanical time is presented as opposed to personal time.

Michael Butler makes a similar point in relation to *Homo Faber* and Walter Faber's desire to treat time 'as if [it] were merely a mechanical process of addition which, if need be, can be made to run backwards [...] is to ignore the central paradox of life: death. For death alone, rightly understood, can give meaning to life.'⁹⁰ Faber fails to make the essential distinction between 'time' and 'transience' of which Frisch speaks in his *Tagebuch 1946-1949*: 'Vielleicht müßte man unterscheiden zwischen Zeit und Vergängnis: Die Zeit, was die Uhren zeigen, und Vergängnis als unser Erlebnis davon, daß unserem Dasein stets ein anderes gegenübersteht, ein Nichtsein, das wir als Tod bezeichnen. ... erst aus dem Nichtsein, das wir ahnen, begreifen wir für Augenblicke, daß wir leben'.⁹¹

Personal time is predicated on an awareness of absence in the form of approaching death which requires not suppression of the knowledge of death, but action to justify life. When Spiegelberg comments that 'Die Leere der Zeit als existentielles Gefühl ist aber paradoxerweise übertrieben präsent. Ihr nichts verändernder Ablauf wird als Horror wahrgenommen'⁹² he highlights the difference between the timeless circularity of the time of the nation, and the existential awareness of the approach of death, which civilisation cannot entirely banish. The striking of the clock is perceived not as the passing of minutes or hours but as a sign that 'die Zeit im Sauseschritt davonläuft': Schildknecht's subjective perception of

⁹⁰ M. Butler, *The Novels of Max Frisch*, London, 1976. p.105

⁹¹ Frisch, *Tagebuch 1946-1949*, pp. 178-9.

time is one of an inexorable movement towards death. In Schildknecht's imagination the mechanism of time is seen as hindering his 'Schulweg'. Taken metaphorically the 'Schulweg' establishes a connection between personal time and school: the 'Schulweg' implies movement and development, an acknowledgement of the transience of life. Once again, 'Bildung' is associated with existential concerns; it asserts the priority of personal time and posits an idea of education and culture which should promote the idea of self-development, of becoming.

Mechanical time eschews the notion of becoming, it demands only presence; the question of what it means to be alive is not pertinent. Life is defined by absence: the absence of pain, of suffering, of death, and also of love, joy, and of striving. Human activity is frozen in a single eternal dimension: the discourse of the nation cannot grasp that it is, paradoxically, permanence that destroys because it prevents renewal. This leads to the further paradox that the discourses of the nation can be regarded as benevolent in their attempt to liberate mankind from the vagaries of life. Caught between mechanical and personal time, Schildknecht's response is to interrogate the nature of being and becoming expressed in his musings about 'Scheintod' and 'Scheinleben':

Der Scheintote wird während der Dauer seines Scheintodes für endgültig tot gehalten, lebt aber. Der Scheinlebendige wird äußerlich zu den Lebenden gezählt, während er innerlich abgestorben ist. Der Verschollene kann sowohl für tot gehalten werden und lebendig sein als auch lebend geglaubt werden und tot sein. Im Niemandsland zwischen Leben und Tod verkörpert er die

⁹² Spiegelberg, *Diskurs in der Leere*, p.18.

Synthese der Möglichkeiten des Scheintoten und des Scheinlebendigen. (Sch, pp.224-5)

The different states of being enunciated by Schildknecht represent possibilities which are not recognised as 'real' by the state. It is the very ambiguity of the condition of the 'Scheintote', the 'Scheinlebendige', and the 'Verschollene' which Schildknecht exploits to undermine the claims of rational discourse to determine the line between life and death, the real and the unreal.

Schildknecht wishes to admit back into social discourse that which has been excluded, and in doing so to bring about a thoroughgoing reconsideration of what is real. The radicalness of Schildknecht's project, and the inevitable opposition it creates, reveals the ambiguity of his own position - 'Im Niemandsland zwischen Leben und Tod'. His position is expressed more concretely in his location as a teacher within the village school, a representative of the timelessness of the cultural edifice, and his refusal to teach the prescribed curriculum in favour of teaching for life. He is neither wholly within nor wholly outside the cultural edifice; rather, he is on the cusp existing both inside and outside. The problem Schildknecht draws attention to is that such a position is not tenable:

Die Schwierigkeit einer exakten Schilderung der Schiltener Lehr- und Lernverhältnisse hängt damit zusammen, daß die Beschreibung des Schulhauses, in dessen Dachstock meine Wohnung eingebaut ist, nahtlos in die Darstellung meines Unterrichts übergehen sollte, Herr Inspektor. So wie ich hier hause, doziere ich auch. Die klare Trennung von Schulsphäre und Privatsphäre existiert nur in den dumpfen Köpfen der Eltern meiner Schüler. Ich will und kann nicht zwei Leben nebeneinander leben. Absonderlichkeiten des Schulhauses sind Absonderlichkeiten des Unterrichts. (Sch, p.5)

Schildknecht here illustrates an awareness of his position vis-à-vis his cultural environment. The concept of 'Innerlichkeit' as opposed to communal culture is rejected: there can be no clear division between public and private discourse. The problem Schildknecht confronts is how to reconcile the public with the private in an acceptable form. In this Schildknecht represents the position of many Swiss writers pushed by resistance to their work into the position of cultural critic in order to create the space in which the private and the public cease to be regarded as mutually exclusive.

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The wish of the school authorities and parents to maintain a distinction between the public and the private sphere gives a clear indication of the conflict between Stirner and society: he has failed to keep his personal existential concerns and his desire for self-expression out of the classroom. As a consequence, as the School Inspector reports, his 'Wahlfähigkeitszeugnis' (Sch, p.306) has been revoked. Rather than undergo psychiatric treatment, Stirner chooses to withdraw into the school house he has purchased, in order 'wie er schrieb, sich "in aller Ruhe und Zurückgezogenheit einer wissenschaftlichen Studie" widmen zu können' (Sch, p.306). The 'Schulbericht', the fruit of his labours, turns out, however, to be a parody of a 'wissenschaftliche Studie': there is no linear narrative, no clearly argued case, the twenty 'Quarthefte' are virtually interchangeable, and the exuberance of the language reveals the subjectivity of the approach.

The problem the report highlights is one of communication. Standard forms and normative modes of expression prove inadequate and restrictive when called

upon to express private concerns. Bruno Bolliger believes that *Schilten* is 'ein Buch der Meta-Kommunikation, indem Kommunikation selbst zum Gegenstand der Kommunikation wird'. He goes on to point out that a concern with meta-communication is particularly relevant where 'Kommunikationsstörungen auftreten'.⁹³ Such 'disturbances' in the process of communication are inherent in the constitution of national identity itself, where a distinction is drawn between those who conform to stereotypes of citizenship and those who do not. In a discussion of 'Nationale Identität als mentales Kunstprodukt' Hansjörg Siegenthaler points out that:

Nationale Identität als *mentales Konstrukt* nimmt auf eine *Sache* Bezug, auf die Nation nämlich, die nach dem Verständnis derjenigen, die vom mentalen Konstrukt beherrscht sind, kein mentales Konstrukt ist, sondern eine Sache, eben Realität, historische Realität. Und die Menschen, die dazu gelangen, sich mit zugeschriebenen Charakteristika ihrer Nation zu identifizieren, erleben den Prozess der *Intersubjektivierung* eines mentalen Konstruktes als einen *Lernprozess* wachsender Vertrautheit mit Realität. Sie werden klüger in diesem Lernprozess, gesicherter auch in ihrem Verständnis dessen, was alles genau ihre Nation ausmache, gewandter in ihrer Fähigkeit, Zweifel am Verständnis solcher Realität abzuwehren, vielleicht auch entschiedener im Kampf gegen diejenigen, die den Zweifel wecken. Natürlich gehört zur Stärkung des nationalen Selbstverständnisses die Abgrenzung gegenüber den Widersachern, die das Selbstverständnis nicht teilen wollen.⁹⁴

⁹³ B. Bolliger, 'Hermann Burgers erzählerische Redundanz' in *Salü, Hermann. In memoriam Hermann Burger*, edited by K. Isele, Eggingen, 1991, pp.146-155, p.147.

⁹⁴ H. Siegenthaler, 'Hirtenfolklore in der Industriegesellschaft: Nationale Identität als Gegenstand von Mentalitäts- und Sozialgeschichte' in *Erfundene Schweiz*, pp.23-36, pp.24-5.

The position of 'Widersacher' is precisely that in which Schildknecht finds himself. It is from this that his communication problems arise: because his view of reality is not consistent with the discourse of nationhood he finds himself being excluded from that discourse, being excluded from the construct of nationhood. Art and literature become part of the means whereby the 'mentales Konstrukt' develops into reality: art does not simply record; it constructs by mediating between the nation and the world around it.

That reality does not exist independently of its representation is an insight Schildknecht shares with Siegenthaler. Schildknecht is also alive to the role language plays in shaping reality and the relationship between language and the nation:

Human beings ... are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. ... The fact of the matter is that the 'real world' is to a large extent built up on the language habits of the group. No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds not merely the same world with different labels attached. ⁹⁵

The dilemma Schildknecht is confronted with is that to challenge reality it is necessary to use the language of reality. For Spiegelberg it appears as a dilemma Schildknecht is unable to resolve, as he stumbles around the labyrinthine structures

⁹⁵ E. Sapir, *Selected Writings in Language Culture and Personality*, edited by D.G. Mandelbaum, Berkeley, 1949, p.162.

of language. Spiegelberg believes that Schildknecht's sentences reflect the sense of entrapment he experiences: 'Die überladenen, aus Einschüben und der Summierung von Nebensätzen ersten, zweiten und dritten Grades sich ergebenden *hypotaktischen und konjunktivischen Satzlabirinthe* entsprechen aufs genaueste der Enge der räumlichen Verhältnisse'.⁹⁶ Schildknecht seems unable to make any progress, and strains just to complete a sentence. Spiegelberg remarks of Burger's 'Schachtelsätzen...', dass sie wohl einen Anfang haben, ihr Ende aber nur mit letzter Kraft erreichen. Manche Sätze gleichen einem Käfer, der, in die Enge getrieben, immer schneller geht und in Hoffnung auf einen Ausgang dauernd seine Richtung wechselt'.⁹⁷ Twisting and turning Schildknecht struggles in vain to escape from the labyrinth in which he finds himself. What ensues is not escape, but rage which culminates in a 'Syntax der Wut'. In the context of Spiegelberg's interpretation rage is an expression of impotence; Schildknecht 'wird ... wie einst Don Quijote zur Glosse seiner eigenen Machtlosigkeit'.⁹⁸

Spiegelberg finds further support for his interpretation in Schildknecht's use of the present tense:

Nur im Präsens zu schreiben hat weitestgehende Konsequenzen auf die Gestaltung des Romans. ... Eine durchwegs im Präsens gehaltene Figur kann bereits durch die erzählstrategische Anlage weder die Dimension der Vergangenheit noch die der Zukunft in sich haben. In der absoluten, flüchtig sich ausdehnenden Vergegenwärtigung der Zeit ist denn auch jegliche

⁹⁶ Spiegelberg, *Diskurs in der Leere*, p.25.

⁹⁷ Spiegelberg, *Diskurs in der Leere*, p.26.

⁹⁸ Spiegelberg, *Diskurs in der Leere*, p.21.

Dynamisierung des Romans durch Handlung, Entwicklung und Spannung undenkbar.⁹⁹

Form and content interact to produce a heightened sense of claustrophobia and ensnarement in a Kafkaesque world in which the individual is at the mercy of an intangible, and therefore unchallengeable, authority. The result is what Spiegelberg considers the 'wohl beengendste Raumsymbolik der aktuellen Schweizer Literatur'.¹⁰⁰ It would seem that caught in an incomprehensible and endless circularity Schildknecht is destined to share the same fate as his predecessor Haberstick whose 'Selbstmord war kein Freitod im wörtlichsten Sinn, sondern die logische Konsequenz von fünfundvierzig Wiederkäufer-Jahren' (Sch, p.115).

The novel does not, however, exist independently of a supportive temporal structure; Schildknecht is not completely trapped in a circular present, for, as Gerda Zeltner notes, the assertion that the novel is narrated wholly in the present tense is not completely accurate:

...es kommen vielmehr lange - und zudem enorm instruktive - Exkurse in die *Historie*, die *Prähistorie* vor, welche die Geschichte der Friedhofskultur, des Tals, der Landurbarmachung, der Schweizer Bauernsitten und vieles noch erforschen: Exkurse, die Wissensstoff transportieren und der Erzählgegenwart gerade durch ihre Vergangenheitsform ein besonderes Relief geben. Andere Stoffberichte, Harmoniumslehre, Grabsteinsortenkunde, Uhrenmechanismen, Architekturstile usf., das läßt sich im Präsens vortragen, wenn auch in einem ganz anderen, einem Sachbuchpräsens.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Spiegelberg, *Diskurs in der Leere*, pp.20-21.

¹⁰⁰ Spiegelberg, *Diskurs in der Leere*, p.17.

¹⁰¹ Zeltner, *Das Ich ohne Gewähr*, pp.182-83.

The scope and depth of these digressions suggest an almost epic totality which demonstrates Schildknecht's desire to question the range of discourses which constitute the fiction of the nation. By providing a degree of social and historical relief Schildknecht exposes the manner in which subjective, individual engagement with history has been supplanted by normative social models. That this is so serves, once again, to emphasise that the totality of the nation and its past is one of stasis within which the individual is enmeshed.

History appears frozen in time and language. There is here a hint of an ironic inversion, as the novel form which parodied the epic has now with its epic-like 'ritualistic reaffirmations of a people'¹⁰² become a parody of itself.¹⁰³ Just as history has ceased to be a dynamic for change so the contemporary novel has been enlisted in support of the fiction of the nation and has forfeited its power to innovate. Thus it is that Gerda Zeltner can claim that:

Wir erwarten einen Bericht von etwas, das sich zuvor in der Welt ereignet hat oder zumindest hätte ereignen können. In Burgers Präsens aber ist uns das liebe "Es war einmal" fortgenommen; nur im Schreiben selber entsteht von Augenblick zu Augenblick eine Wirklichkeit. Die Form spiegelt uns ein

¹⁰² T. Brennan, 'The national longing for form' in *Nation and Narration*, edited by H. Bhabha, London and New York. 1990, pp.44-70. p.50.

¹⁰³ Bolliger considers that 'Armin Schildknechts wiederholtes Abkommen vom Thema in Burgers "Schulbericht" unterscheidet sich grundsätzlich nicht von den bekannten Einschüben Homers'. In 'Hermann Burgers erzählerische Redundanz', p.147.

Unterwegssein vor, von dem vielleicht nicht einmal der Erzähler weiss, wohin es führt.¹⁰⁴

Zeltner, like Spiegelberg, is correct to point to the 'Enge' of the cultural space and the effect it has upon the narrative. Yet Zeltner's comments betray a degree of ambiguity: although detached from the past the notion of 'Unterwegssein' suggests forward movement into the future, even if the final destination is unsure. At the same time her argument that the creation of reality is coterminous with the act of writing, and that events in the novel do not relate to a past reality appear to be in contradiction with the assertion by the School Inspector that Stirner is writing a report after his dismissal. To avoid confusion it appears important to draw a distinction between the condition of being trapped in a constrictive space, and the performance of that entrapment.

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To return to the narratological terminology of Chapter Two, the *fabula* can be identified as Stirner's isolation and exclusion from society and his mental breakdown; the *story* relates to his attempts to give expression to these events, and to order them in a way which will both raise life by giving it meaning, and provide some insight into the reasons for his isolation. To tell the *story*, and establish distance from the *fabula*, Stirner adopts a pseudonym, Armin Schildknecht, who also functions as a character-bound focaliser, and creates the School Inspectors'

¹⁰⁴ G. Zeltner, 'Verfremdung ins Emotionslose: Eine Stilanalyse von Hermann Burgers "Schilten"' in *Salü, Hermann. In memoriam Hermann Burger*, edited by K. Isele, Eggingen, 1991, pp.183-185, p.183.

Conference as the recipient for his report. Stirner himself takes on the role of external focaliser looking back over past events and attempting to forge a *story* from them. Hagenbüchle argues that:

...dargestellt werden soll ... die Distanz der Reflexion des erzählenden Ichs und die Erlebniswelt des erlebenden Ichs. In Schilten nun nähern sich Erzählsubjekt und -Objekt, also erzählendes Ich und erlebendes Ich häufig deutlich an, ganz zur Deckung gelangen sie allerdings nie.¹⁰⁵

Schildknecht, as the 'erlebende Ich', approximates to the character-bound focaliser, whilst Stirner, as the 'erzählende Ich', fulfils the role of external focaliser. The distance between the two is precarious, as the reflective external focaliser and narrator, struggles to maintain distance from the character-bound focaliser. That the narration is, for the most part, in the present tense serves only to further obscure the boundary between Stirner and Schildknecht.

The motivation for the report lies in Stirner's pedagogical desire to convey not simply knowledge, but understanding: Stirner remains a teacher to the end. Schildknecht's performance is not a spontaneous act which could lead him anywhere, but a carefully crafted performance conceived as an indictment of those discourses who sought to exclude Stirner. Schildknecht, as a performer, follows the directions of Stirner, and, in the comments he makes about school, society, and teachers amongst others, he seeks to communicate the opinions and insights gained by Stirner:

¹⁰⁵ Hagenbüchle, *Narrative Strukturen in Literatur und Film*, p.130.

Ich habe für diese Studie, von der für mich Sein oder Nicht-Sein als Schulmeister von Schilten abhängt, das Verfahren gewählt, daß ich so engmaschig berichte, so konkret wie möglich - ein Berufsschreiber würde vermutlich sagen: so als gäbe es diesen Ort wirklich-, um Sie dann, wenn Sie einmal Boden unter den Füßen haben - freilich nur Friedhofboden-, immer tiefer in schilteske Verhältnisse hineinzulocken. Ich ahne zu Beginn noch ungefähr, wohin mich dieser Schulbericht führen könnte, werde wohl aber im Verlauf der Niederschrift die Übersicht mehr und mehr verlieren. (Sch, p.9)

The notion of 'Sein oder Nicht-Sein' is pregnant with irony. To be means to exist in the rational world, to be part of the social organisation of the nation and to acknowledge the primacy of public discourse. In contrast 'Nicht-Sein' is associated with the irrational, existential concern with death, and with a need for individual self-expression beyond that permitted in the public sphere. To be a teacher is to teach what is real, but what Schildknecht regards as meaningless; opposed to this is an attempt to teach what is perceived as 'unreal', but for Schildknecht is real.

The paradox Schildknecht must confront is that 'Die Tragik einer geistigen Existenz besteht in der absoluten Unvermittelbarkeit des wissenswerten Wissens' (Sch, p.64). The problem is one of communication: if it is not possible to express a subjective perception of reality in the public sphere, and if the language of the public sphere is bound to the 'reality' of the 'mentales Konstrukt', then how is it possible to communicate that which is worth knowing. The only way to overcome this problem is for Stirner to abandon normal didactic method, and to perform, rather than conceptualise, his own demise. Hence Stirner attempts to make his insights into what is worth knowing concrete and communicable through performance. To do so

he takes what is effectively a stage name, Armin Schildknecht, and performs upon an imaginary stage, Schilten, before an imaginary audience, the School Inspectors' Conference. His purpose, however, is clear: to present what is unreal and imaginary as concretely as possible, and to draw the reader, and his audience, into the real world of the 'unreal'.

From the outset Stirner, alias Schildknecht, has an 'Ahnung' of where the *story* will lead. By blurring the boundary between the character-bound focaliser and the external focaliser the logical causal framework within which Schildknecht operates becomes confused making it easier to draw the reader into the world of Schilten. The creation of a fictive narrator is a deliberate move to enable performance: '[the author] will cover up the time taken for his composition by creating the illusion of a unique performance or a series of unique performances by one or more narrators. He will endow them with the emotional, intellectual and linguistic faculties appropriate to the respective case'.¹⁰⁶ For the reader, the possibility that Schildknecht will achieve any real insight into his condition quickly vanishes. However, for Stirner this also appears to be the case: in order to draw the reader into the story and to subvert the distinction between the real and the unreal he must sacrifice the possibility of understanding. As he sets out essentially to relive the *fabula*, albeit in artistic form, there is every indication that he will become absorbed by it and the *story* will ultimately collapse, as the external focaliser loses the ability to shape the *fabula* into a *story*.

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¹⁰⁶ C. P. Casparis, *Tense without Time*, Bern, 1975, p.76.

The style of the novel is itself an ‘artistisches Nebenprodukt’ of his attempt to subvert the authority of language as a signifier of objective reality. Schildknecht’s struggle with language represents a move into the unknown, beyond the security of normative communications models. If language is one of the main means by which the individual can project his or her own deep-rooted existential concerns into the public domain and influence the reality of the nation; then the search for language capable of achieving this is of paramount importance. In one of his last lectures, Burger comments that ‘Der Schreibende ... ist naturgemäss ein “Utopist”, das heisst, er bricht ... auf nach dem Nirgendwo’.¹⁰⁷ There is a real sense in which Schildknecht too is in search of a utopia as he seeks to extend the boundaries of language and, thereby, the possibilities of imaginative expression. The use of the present tense to narrate is an innovative use of the novel form demanding a creative use of language.¹⁰⁸ Neologisms, such as ‘verschellen’, as the present indicative of ‘verschollen’, are used to express hitherto unheard of states of being: the historical condition of being lost, which within a condition of historical stasis is imbued with a sense of inevitability, is opposed by the active condition of becoming lost. Indeed, his creation of the many neologisms which appear, and his use of foreign words, testify to the search for a new vocabulary.¹⁰⁹ The use of foreign words seems

¹⁰⁷ H. Burger, ‘Ist die Schweiz tatsächlich utopieresistent?’, lecture to the 6. Ittinger Literaturtage, 1987, on the theme of ‘Fehlen uns Utopien’, (SLA), Bern.

¹⁰⁸ Many critics have considered the writing of a novel in the present tense to be either unfeasible or undesirable. See Spiegelberg, *Diskurs in der Leere*, p.20.

¹⁰⁹ Bolliger points to words such as “Schiltifizierung” oder “schiltifizieren” as ‘Wort-Generierungen im Burgerschen Sinne’, and goes on to point out that ‘Beliebig viele ähnliche Wortbildungen liessen sich hier anführen. Wir beschränken uns auf einige wenige Beispiele: Scholarch, ... Inspektions-Vakuum, Explorand der Inspektorenkonferenz, estrichifiziert, hibernal

especially appropriate as a means to break the confines of 'Enge' and to introduce different interpretations of the world, new concepts and ideas into the cultural space.

Burger regarded the 'üppige Sprachaufgebot' in the novel as originating in the monotony of the "'Raum" selbst'.¹¹⁰ Linguistic exuberance arises as a response to cultural 'Enge', and through its very exuberance it stands in opposition to ordinary language. In some respects the ecstatic nature of Schildknecht's language can even be seen to bring it close to lyric poetry. However, unlike lyric poetry, Schildknecht's language does not posit an idyllic state of nature, or of social being, but, rather, in its attempt to break the normative mould, it offers a profound sense of alienation and isolation. Insofar as Schildknecht is aware that his sense of alienation derives from the 'anaesthetic grip ... language maintains on our perceptions'¹¹¹, then his self-conscious use of language can be seen as part of his attempt to liberate himself through a reinvigoration of language, and thereby the novel form, by investing it with the imaginative power to undermine a stagnant, mimetic reality, which serves only to facilitate categorisation.

A distinction is often made between speech and writing: 'speech is seen as natural, direct communication and writing as an artificial and oblique representation of a representation. ... Speech is seen as in direct contact with meaning ... Writing, on the other hand, consists of physical marks that are divorced from the thought that may have produced them'.¹¹² In *Schilten* Burger plays with the notion that speech is

orientiertes Institut, telefonistisch, postalisch, cimiterisch, Noktabilität usw'. 'Hermann Burgers erzählerische Redundanz', p.152.

¹¹⁰ H. Burger, Brief an Herrn Oplatka, Küttingen, 29.1.1976, (SLA), Bern.

¹¹¹ T. Hawkes, *Structuralism and Semiotics*, London, 1977, p.70.

¹¹² J. Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism*, London, 1983, p.100.

in some way more authentic, less corrupted by society. The power of Schildknecht's speech derives in part from its performative aspect, and the association of performance with the oral tradition: "“for the oral poet the moment of composition is the performance. ...composition and performance are two aspects of the same moment”".¹¹³ And the language Schildknecht studies is the 'urchigen Schiltener Dialekt' which can be heard in the 'Friedhof' from those who have gathered to visit the dead, 'das ist ...nur in Schiltten möglich, Herr Inspektor: das Fenster aufreißen, und man hat die lebendige Sprachlehre'(Sch, p.184). The opposite of this is teaching using a 'Sprachbuch', 'Sprachverstümmelungs-Katechismen'(Sch, p.185). To oppose this and promote a 'gesunden Sprachverstand' Schildknecht uses a 'Sprach-Entziehungskur':

Wir buchstabieren die Wörter so lange vor uns hin, bis sie ihren Sinn verlieren. Hundertmal B-r-u-n-n-e-n, dann die Frage: Warum nicht Brinnen? Erst wenn man begriffen hat, daß die Beziehung zwischen dem Zeichen und dem Bezeichneten eine willkürliche, absolut beliebige ist, kann man auch etwas absolut Beliebigen mit den Wörtern ausdrücken. Entnamsen nennen wir diese Übung. Alles entnamsen und dann neu benamsen, das ist Spracherziehung. (Sch, p.186)

By problematising the relation of the signifier to the signified Schildknecht questions the notion that behind the sign there is something real and constant which is being represented. Language itself is performed as language: it does not signify anything

¹¹³ Casparis, *Tense without Time*, p.76.

but itself; freed from the constraints of its link to the signified it signifies itself as language. His critique seems aimed at a rational logocentric system which insists that a signifier can be reduced to a concept. Whilst Schildknecht may posit a contrast between speech and writing his exploitation of this, stylistically and thematically, is not as radical as might be expected: perhaps aware of the philosophical debate surrounding the issue he uses them to establish a metaphorical distinction between a living and a dead language.

Burger draws attention to the polysemic nature of language to undermine a conceptual world view in favour of free play of the imagination. Schildknecht's play with polysemy is particularly noticeable in relation to life and death. He continually exploits the gap between these ostensibly absolute conditions. It is in the gap between these that the freedom to play exists, and in the margins between life and death, the school and the graveyard, that the tyranny of the signified can be overcome and free play given to the imagination. Hence, Schildknecht's fondness for the 'Friedhof' which mediates between life and death, and his exploitation of the 'Friedhof' not as a place of rest, but as a source of anxiety and of power. 'Scheintot', 'Verschollenheit' and 'Scheinlebendig' are all deliberately ambiguous conditions which undermine the certainty of the link between signifier and signified, and demand imaginative as opposed to conceptual engagement.

Schilten itself can be seen to exist in the interstices between life and death, and it is into this world that Schildknecht draws the reader. As the representation of Schilten becomes increasingly 'engmaschig', so it performs the act of entrapment upon the reader which Schildknecht has experienced:

Um sich vorstellen zu können, wie und wo er [Schildknecht's 'privaten Rumpelkammer'] liegt, müssen Sie wissen, daß das Schulhaus aus zwei T-förmig aufeinanderstoßenden, rechteckigen Baukörpern besteht, aus dem Langhaus und dem Querhaus, beide von gleicher Firsthöhe. Im Dachgeschoss ... greifen also zwei je zweifachliegende Krüppelwalm-Pfettendachstühlen ineinander. (Sch, p.192)

In the exactitude of the description it is not Schildknecht's parlous hold on reality that is exposed, but his control over the language. Gerda Zeltner regards the 'Präzisionsorgien' as constituting 'eine Art Racheübung an der Inspektorenkonferenz'¹¹⁴; if it is revenge, then it lies in reversing the respective positions of Schildknecht and the dominant discourses the Inspectors' Conference represents.

For Schildknecht lures the inspectors away from a world of linguistic certainty into one where the relation of the signified to a signifier is problematised by the sheer number of signifiers that Schildknecht attaches to an object. As Schafroth and others have noted, despite the plethora of detail, the other world Schildknecht beckons the reader into offers no hold on reality.

Es [Das Buch] zieht ihn [den Leser] unter den Boden, dessen ursprüngliche Realität immer mehr in Auflösung gerät, in dem Masse, wie sich unter dem Boden eine andere Realität bildet: mit einer immer mehr sich festigenden Ordnung und mit einer Sprache, die in immer halsbrecherischen Eskapaden,

¹¹⁴ G. Zeltner, 'Verfremdung ins Emotionslose: Eine Stilanalyse von Hermann Burgers "Schilten"' in *Salü, Hermann. In memoriam Hermann Burger*, edited by K. Isele, Eggingen, 1991, pp.183-185, p.184.

dabei aber mit grimmiger Zielstrebigkeit der Erschliessung dieser neuen Realität dient.¹¹⁵

The extent to which the precision of Schildknecht's observations destroys the spatio-temporal system in which the objects he describes exist has been said to 'erinnern an den "objektalen" Flügel des Nouveau Roman'.¹¹⁶ On this level, Schildknecht is the dispassionate observer whose 'eye witness' report provides the reader with a precise inventory of what he sees around him. His 'glance limits itself... stops at the surface of objects, without trying to penetrate them, since there is nothing inside, and without pretending to address to them the least emotional appeal since they would not answer'.¹¹⁷ Yet Schildknecht differs from the *nouveau roman* narrator in his desire to challenge reality through his imaginative, and emotional, involvement with the world, and to penetrate beneath the surface of appearances to search for utopian 'Nirgendwo'.

Schildknecht's narrative appears, in some respects, to border on the surreal, which he seeks to introduce in his lessons. The almost hallucinatory anthropomorphisation of the school equipment is an example:

Ich kenne die depressiven Launen der Halle aus meiner langjährigen Schiltener Gefangenschaft, ich weiß, welche klingenden Register und Hilfszüge ich ihr verschreiben muß, damit die Geräte ihre Fassung verlieren. ... Ich schildere Ihnen das Beben, ...: die Kletterstangen vibrieren, die Reckträger schlockern, das Tau schlingert, die Sprossenwand ächzt, das

¹¹⁵ H. Schafroth, 'Anschreiben gegen die Friedhofsruhe', p.176.

¹¹⁶ G. Zeltner, 'Verfremdung ins Emotionslose', p.183.

¹¹⁷ Casparis, *Tense without Time*, p.53.

Lederpferd bockt, der Korbballständer wankt, die Hochsprunglatte klöttert, doch erst wenn sie fällt, die Barrenholme schwirren wie nach dem Abgang eines Kunstturners, der Schwebebalken quarrt, die Sprungmatratzen fauchen, die Schaukelringe klackern, und die Rundlaufspinne würde rotieren gäbe es hier eine Rundlaufspinne. (Sch, pp.26-7)

The breathless parataxis suggests a mind freed from conscious control attempting to reclaim part of the 'real' world through imagination. In this it could be drawing on Breton's *Manifeste du Surréalisme* (1924):

Perhaps the imagination is on the verge of recovering its rights. If the depths of our minds conceal strange forces capable of augmenting or conquering those on the surface, it is in our greatest interest to capture them; first to capture them and later to submit them, should the occasion arise to the control of reason. ¹¹⁸

What Schildknecht achieves is a blurring of the border between the 'irreal' and the real which in turn exposes the boundary between them as an artificial construct based on the supremacy of logic and rationalism which restricts experience:

Needless to say boundaries have been assigned even to experience. It revolves in a cage from which release is becoming increasingly difficult. It too depends upon immediate utility and is guarded by common sense. In the guise of civilization, under the pretext of progress, we have succeeded in dismissing from our minds anything that, rightly or wrongly, could be

¹¹⁸ A. Breton, *First Surrealist Manifesto*, in Waldberg, P. *Surrealism*, London, 1965, pp.66-72. p.66

regarded as superstition or myth; and we have proscribed every way of seeking the truth which does not conform to convention. ¹¹⁹

Schildknecht's narrative is not mere recording, but a conscious imaginative act designed to achieve an inversion of the real and the unreal: the 'real' appears itself to be 'irreal', a shadowy and insubstantial world of appearances, whilst the 'irreal' is expressed with such power and depth that it appears real. Surreal method breaks down conscious control; it by-passes the rational, and allows free play to the imagination, even if in a controlled manner. Chronological time gives way to the personal, psychological time of the individual and death, myth and superstition, the mystical, metaphysical elements of life, are recalled to mind and re-established as a part of life. Schildknecht's narrative shows profound insight into the nature of his experience and the political relevance of the act of narration itself: the dynamism of his personal narrative represents a challenge to the dominant narrative of the nation to reinvigorate and redefine itself, as any literature must do if it is to remain alive.

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Schildknecht recognises the tension between competing narratives, which may usefully be described as the pedagogical, asserting mechanical time, tradition and the representation of death as static, and the performative, asserting personal time, creativity and an existential awareness of death. Schildknecht as a teacher inverts his pedagogic function by introducing the performative in the place of the pedagogical. In doing so he inverts the relationship between art and life, and

¹¹⁹ Breton, *First Surrealist Manifesto*, p.66.

education and life through which meaning has been imposed upon life: life has been given an exchange value, an equivalence, based on conformity to models of citizenship. Life as a signifier is bound to a narrow, restrictive notion of life as a signified, which it serves only to reinforce in its present mode. The role of the teacher to undermine the link between life and its signification is hinted at in Schildknecht's philosophy of teaching expressed in his idea of a 'große Lehrer':

Der große Lehrer weiß: Es braucht Hunderte von Lebensstunden, um eine einzige Schulstunde zu überstehen. Jede Lektion muß mit dem Tausendfachen an Lebenserfahrung gedeckt sein. In Wirklichkeit ist es aber umgekehrt in unserem Beruf: Jede Erfahrung muß tausendfach ausgebeutet werden. (Sch, p.242)

Experience of life is seen as the basis for teaching as opposed to the imposition of dogma. It implies the encouragement of an individual view of reality unconstrained by a preconceived notion of reality and offering the freedom to challenge boundaries. This stands in contrast with what teaching has become - the inculcation of a deadening cultural tradition into the young.

Schildknecht views teachers as colluding in the 'methodische Verkrüppelung des Lehrgebiets, [...] [die] didaktische Entschärfung des Zündstoffs'(Sch, p.63). Its essence is to restrict the development of ideas; to contain the imagination within the bounds of the 'mentales Konstrukt':

Die schlimmste Seuche , von der ein Pädagoge befallen werden kann, ist die Zersetzung seines Erwachsenendenkens durch das Schülerdenken.
Unterrichten heißt gewöhnlich: Erwachsenenfragen in Schülerfragen transponieren. Darob verlernt der Lehrer, sich den wirklichen

Erwachsenenfragen zu stellen. Er bleibt zeitlebens ein Musterschüler, der nie den Sprung ins kalte Wasser gewagt hat. Das Leben kennt keine methodischen Kniffe und keine didaktischen Ziele, und erst recht nicht der Tod. Didaktik, Methodik: die Todfeinde alles Lebendigen. [...]
 Vorbildlichkeit ist eine schmerzlose, aber grausame Form des Selbstmordes, Herr Inspektor. Was die meisten Lehrer unerträglich macht: ihr besserwisserisches Strebertum, ihr fortwährendes Schielen nach Fleiß- und Leistungsnoten, ihr Bedürfnis zu zensurieren und zensuriert zu werden. ...
 Was gelehrt werden kann, ist meistens nicht wert, gelernt zu werden. (Sch, p.63-4)

Teachers are seen as trapped on a treadmill which forces them to internalise the concepts of reality they teach, to become its representatives, 'Vorbilder', in all they do. Not only do they internalise the concepts of reality, but also the boundaries of reality: they become self-censoring.

The attitude teachers transmit to their pupils is deadening. Life and teaching are mutually exclusive: school engenders a form of obedience which is inimical to life, and leads to suicidal urges, as Schildknecht's advice to suicidal teachers expresses:

Ihr seid nicht lebensmüde, ihr seid schulmüde. Werft nicht ein Leben weg, das man gar nicht wegwerfen kann, weil es nie eines war! Schluß mit dem Windschattendasein, hinaus an die frische Lebensluft! Übt vorübergehend einen Beruf aus, der euch mit erwachsenen Menschen und Erwachsenenproblemen konfrontiert! (Sch, p.84)

Life is not life, because it is locked within the narrow conceptual boundaries of didactic method and a didactic language incapable of giving expression to life.

‘Schülerdenken’ characterises a state of ‘immaturity’, it debases the critical faculties and constitutes a form of self-abnegation in the acceptance of an external ‘mentales Konstrukt’ as the basis for individual identity.

The acceptance of an arbitrary model of reality is to accept the ‘zensurieren’ which is its inevitable corollary. In ‘What is Enlightenment?’¹²⁰ Foucault considers the essence of modernity to be an attitude opposed to an attitude of counter-modernity and that modern man is linked to the Enlightenment by an attitude which undertakes a ‘permanent critique of our historical era’. In this context immaturity is perceived as an absence of critical thought, an absence which allows for the substitution of external authority where reason is called for. The concept of ‘immaturity’ can be identified with the ‘Schülerfragen’ which seek answers from an authoritative voice rather than an individual use of reason. The way out of this condition, to ask ‘Erwachsenenfragen’, involves disobedience and rebellion as the system is designed to inhibit the asking of such questions: the state is seen as opposed to a modernist attitude and a ‘permanent critique of our historical era’.

Schildknecht’s predecessor, Paul Haberstick, as an exemplary ‘Vorbild’, epitomises the uncritical immaturity which pervades the institutions of the state. He was ‘ein leidenschaftlicher Präparator’ (Sch, p.55) whose pride and joy was his collection of stuffed ‘Tagraub- und Nachtraubvögel’. The goal he pursues is the re-creation of reality:

Das Ausstopfen besteht im wesentlichen darin,... daß man den
herausgebalgten Fleischkörper in einem geeigneten Material wie Moos,

¹²⁰ M. Foucault, ‘What is Enlightenment’ in *The Foucault Reader*, edited by P. Rabinow, Harmondsworth, 1991, pp.32-50.

Werg, Holzwolle oder Torf nachbildet. ...Je genauer das Studium am sogenannten Fleischkörper, desto naturgetreuer kann der Vogel zusammengestickt werden, und je naturgetreuer er wirken soll, desto künstlicher muß er gebildet sein. Je künstlicher er gebildet ist, desto vogelhafter sperbert er aus dem Glasschrank. Das Charakteristische aber kennt nach Haberstich nur, wer das Tier eigenhändig erlegt, aufgetrennt, gehäutet, vergiftet, gestopft, vernäht, geknickt und verrenkt hat. (Sch, p.58)

Taxidermy, as a means of acquiring knowledge, requires the death of the subject studied. Haberstich's taxidermy is a metaphor for a system of knowledge unable to engage with that which is alive. Schildknecht deduces from this that 'Vogelkenner sind Vogelmörder'. Knowledge is portrayed as a taxonomic activity which reduces living objects to names within an ornithological catalogue, thereby reducing what is alive and individual to the state of the dead and general. The studied subject is metaphorically disembowelled and replaced with a mimetic representation which claims to be more real than the subject it represents. In this manner life, critical and vital with the power of self-expression, is subordinated to a representation of reality which is regarded as immutable and permanent. To ensure the longevity of the representation and its mimetic power, and to extend the taxidermic metaphor, 'der Balg [wird] gänzlich mit Arsenikseife eingeschmiert'(Sch, p.58) to protect it against caterpillars, beetles and the like, which might expose it as lifeless. By excluding life, and even decay, from the object, Haberstich secures a an immutable connection between signified and signifier. The school constitutes the means by which a dead system of mimetic representation is inculcated into the new citizens before they take their place in society.

Schildknecht's alternative is to extol a method of critical engagement which dissects an object to the point where it becomes unrecognisable and the signified is freed from its signifier: 'Präparieren, sagte Haberstich, nicht zersetzen. Ich diktiere meinen Schülern: zersetzen, zersetzen, zersetzen. Schulmeister-Präparatoren zunichte machen, indem man ihren Lehrstoff Wort für Wort, Schnitt für Schnitt abbalgt' (Sch, p.57). Schildknecht seeks to overturn the carefully developed cultural edifice, hence his claim:

Unter Schildknecht ist die Vogelkunde in Schilten abgeschafft worden, wie überhaupt die Realien sukzessive durch Surrealien und Irrealien ersetzt worden sind. (Sch, p.55)

This signals a move away from the concept of a lifeless and mimetic 'Real' which posits an idea of objectivity towards a more subjective view which draws on life. The role of the school is subverted by juxtaposing its ostensible purpose, the development of the individual, against its concealed political purpose. Thus Schildknecht can legitimately claim to be acting in the best interests of his pupils and fulfilling his remit as a teacher whilst subverting the aims of the state.

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Burger extends this paradigm into the political sphere considering the artistic desire for self-expression coterminous with the democratic desire for political self-determination: the imposition of a fiction of the nation which demands conformity is as restrictive to political freedom as it is to artistic freedom. In political terms, Burger does not proclaim social or moral irresponsibility, but rather a commitment to

change based on a critical engagement with the self and the environment in which one lives. Schildknecht does not seek to stand outside the cultural framework of the nation, but to have a voice within it. Art should lead to reflection and questioning and therefore become a part of the wider cultural process of change. Art and literature are not perceived as being above politics, but as a part of it. Max Frisch viewed politics and art, high and low, as part of the cultural make-up of the land. Burger draws on the example of Frisch to elucidate his own idea of art as 'Opposition zum Bestehenden':

Wenn wir sagten, daß Frisch allem Fertigen gegenüber ironisch sei, so begreifen wir auch, weshalb er das Werdende so verehrt. Im Werdenden ist die schöpferische Energie am Werk. Gewiß offenbart sie sich auch im Gewordenen. Doch für den Künstler ist das Fertige oft zu schön, um wahr zu sein. Es hemmt ihn beim eigenen Gestalten. Er sieht lieber den Prozeß als das Produkt ... das Schaffen [sei] wichtiger als das Geschaffene, aus der subjektiven Perspektive des Schaffenden.¹²¹

The process of becoming is regarded as a necessary corrective to the narcissistic seduction of beauty, the presentation of the nation as the beautiful existing in a state of perfection.

Narrating is associated with becoming, for it is in the act of narrating, in its performance, that creative energy finds its expression. Consequently the process of narrating is used to oppose the notion of 'das Fertige', fixed representation, found

¹²¹ H. Burger, 'Architektur-Darstellung bei Max Frisch' in *Als Autor auf der Stör*, Frankfurt a.M., 1987, pp.217-218.

within the compass of the 'Friedhof', as the 'real' which is mapped out and incontrovertible:

Armin Schildknecht und seine Einheitsförderklasse wuchsen zu einer schreibenden Gefahrgemeinschaft zusammen, und der ganze Unterricht wurde unter die Frage gestellt: Gelingt es uns kraft unserer Überlegenheit an Heftvorräten, den totalen Einbruch des Schiltener Friedhofalltags in die Schulsphäre zu verhindern? Wir waren also von allem Anfang an in der Defensive. (Sch, p.74)

Schildknecht's method of resistance, in the spirit of the dictum - 'narration equals life: the absence of narration death', is to maintain a counter narrative which constantly resists the imposition of the dominant narrative. The defensive method adopted requires the maintenance of a constant flow of dictation which the pupils copy down:

Die Schiltener Schüler lernen [...] ausschließlich für den Lehrer, für das Werk Armin Schildknechts, und sie sind stolz darauf. Zu dem wenigen, was ich von meinen Unterrichtnehmern an Disziplin verlange, gehört, daß sie sich jederzeit, [...] meinem Diktierwillen unterziehen. [...] Und es ist keine Seltenheit, daß die Bande aus dem Schlaf geholt und zum Nachtdiktat aufgeboten wird. Meine Monologe sind Wort-Anfälle, Sprachschübe, apodiktische Kaskaden. Sich im Leben behaupten, [...] heißt, das Wort an sich reißen. Wer endlose Monologe zu halten versteht, [...] wer die anderen in Grund und Boden schnorrt, keinen Einspruch, keinen Widerspruch, kein Schweigen aufkommen läßt, hat alles gewonnen! Nicht sagen, was man denkt, sondern denken, und zwar ununterbrochen laut denken, was man sagen kann. Jedes Ohr, das sich euch entgegenrichtet, vollpflastern. (Sch, p.63)

Schildknecht, to a degree, parodies the attempt of the dominant discourses to achieve a total representation of life which will drown out all other voices. Nevertheless there still appears something monstrously egotistical about this, not to mention contradictory: how can pupils who are subjected to Schildknecht's manic 'Diktierwille' develop their own voice? This is one of the paradoxes of Schildknecht's position, which he himself acknowledges, and which, in some measure, parallels his own paradoxical relation to politics. The paradox Schildknecht faces is one addressed by Kleist in *Über das Marionettentheater*. Kleist's narrator knows exactly 'welche Unordnungen, in der natürlichen Grazie des Menschen, das Bewußtsein anrichtet'.¹²² Natural grace and activity are undermined by self-consciousness which leads to the paradox that any attempt to revitalise the human race through an artistic presentation of revitalisation promotes reflection at the expense of action; a philosophy of action is undermined by the self-consciousness it promotes.

Schildknecht appreciates that 'in dem Maaße, als, in der organischen Welt, die Reflexion dunkler und schwächer wird, die Grazie darin immer strahlender und herrschender hervortritt'.¹²³ The method Schildknecht adopts is similar to that of 'pure psychic automatism'¹²⁴ extolled by Breton in the *Manifeste du Surréalisme* (1924). This points to Schildknecht's desire to tap the resources of the subconscious and escape the censorship of the conscious mind. His idea of life is associated with the expression of the inner self through freedom of association, access to the

¹²² H. von Kleist, *Über das Marionettentheater*, in *Kleist's Aufsatz über das Marionettentheater*, edited by W. Müller-Seidel, Berlin, 1967, pp.9-16, p.13.

¹²³ H. von Kleist, *Über das Marionettentheater*, p.16.

subconscious and dreams, and the play of thought freed from external constraints.

The poetic self revealed is suggestive of the belief that this method might lead to the “language of the soul”, that is, the expression - stripped of all logical device - of the profound “me” in its nakedness¹²⁵ In this context, the claim that ‘Diktieren heißt narkotisieren’ is easier to understand. Through the process of ‘automatic writing’ the pupils are drawn into the world of the sub-conscious where they cease to be mere ‘Tintenkulis’, and, like Anselmus in *Der goldne Topf*, find their own voices; to the point even where ‘ein Schüler [übernimmt] die Rolle des Diktierenden, um Armin Schildknecht zu entlasten’(Sch, p.259).

Schildknecht exercises no control over his pupils. There is no ‘orthographischer Sadismus’ and ‘die Schüler [haben] keine Verbesserungen und keine Nachverbesserungen, keine Noten zu fürchten’ (Sch, p.69). Even the exercise books, delivered by Jordibeth, are specially prepared to allow artistic freedom:

Die Proportionen der Generalsudelhefte entsprechen den Grundrißmaßen der Turn- und Abdankungshalle, sie lassen sich mühelos auch am Engelhof ablesen. Ihre Papier hat eine hervorragende Qualität: Es ist nebelfest. Sie sind so raffiniert angefertigt, daß sie in jeder Lage, in jeder Richtung beschrieben werden können. ...Benutzt man es diagonal von links oben nach rechts unten, werden konzentrische Kreise sichtbar für die Gruppierung von Symbolen, in der anderen diagonale Spirallinien. ...Sie selber [die Schüler] müssen entscheiden, in welcher Notation und folglich auch in welcher Heftlage sie die einzelnen Sequenzen meiner Diktate festhalten wollen, ob am zweckmäßigsten mit einer Formel, mit Sätzen, mit konzentrischen

¹²⁴ P. Waldberg, *Surrealism*, London, 1965, p.11

¹²⁵ Waldberg, *Surrealism*, p.13

Stichworten, ...ein Klecksogramm oder selbst erfundene Hieroglyphen das adäquate Ausdrucksmittel seien. (Sch, p.66)

The proportions of the 'Generalsudelhefte' delimit the space of expression within the cultural edifice of the school. Yet the 'Heft' itself allows and encourages the pupils to transcend this space, and to be as creative and unorthodox as possible.

Schildknecht's pupils share in his project of dissecting language, and of freeing it from any attachment to an ordered system of thought, or to restrictive signifieds.

A part of the process of creative process is the constant variation in the position of the focalising subject to prevent any sense of completion. Ingold has noted that in *Schilten* 'Ein Standort wird gar nicht erst richtig bezogen, sondern wird immer zugunsten eines neuen aufgegeben. ...Seine [Schildknechts] Sicht ist durch eine merkwürdige Fluktuation geprägt'.¹²⁶ The constant movement of Schildknecht's position is indicative of the struggle to avoid the fixity of 'das Fertige', and to extend the boundaries of experience. An extreme example of changes in Schildknecht's position is offered by the 'Scheintoten-Praktikum'. Schildknecht comments that normally 'Alles, was den Tod betrifft erleben wir nur von oben'(Sch, p.101), with the result that the 'Grenzerfahrung' is lost. The 'Scheintoten-Praktikum' offers the chance the 'Erdeinsturz aus der Perspektive eines Beerdigten zu erleben'. Such a change in perspective, or 'Grenzerfahrung', enhances an understanding of personal time and subjective associations divorced from the prevailing logic of cause and effect. As noted earlier the 'Grenzerfahrung' opens up

¹²⁶ R. Ingold, *Der Erzähler in Hermann Burgers "Schilten": Ein Vergleich mit Grass' "Blechtrommel", Frischs "Homo faber" und Loetschers "Abwässer"*, Bern, 1984, p.46.

the possibility for play and the chance to subvert standard perspectives and the reality they claim to represent.

The recording of 'ein Friedhof-Journal ...[um] das statische Geschehen auf dem Friedhof hochdynamisch zu protokollieren'(Sch., p.176) serves to make the object of observation dynamic by virtue of the dynamism of the act of narrating itself; whilst at the same time ensuring that events do not become completely formless, and meaningless. Complete freedom is not an option. Constant narration implies constant observation, which, as Schildknecht notes, is 'immer schon eine Form der Interpretation'(Sch, p.179). Neither observation nor narration, therefore, can be considered as neutral and objective: both imply interpretation of some kind:

Wenn Sie nun den Obeliskenküsser und die Schneckenwitwe miteinander in Beziehung setzen, Herr Inspektor, haben Sie ein schönes Beispiel dafür, wie wir unsere Unterrichtsmotive von der Realität abziehen, indem wir zu dieser Realität nichts anderes beitragen als unsere Betrachtungsweise. Was heißt denn Ästhetik ursprünglich? Es heißt die Wissenschaft vom sinnlich Wahrnehmbaren. Und der Ästhet ist ein Wahrnehmender, der allerdings durch eine permanente Überdosierung der Sinneseindrücke zum Anästheten werden kann, zu einem Wahrnehmungsbetäubten. Nichts, sage ich, nichts tragen wir bei als unsere Perspektive. (Sch., p.181)

The association of the 'Obeliskenküsser' with the 'Schneckenwitwe' is part of a 'Theoriebildung' concerning 'Grabsteineinschmeckerei'(Sch, p.180).

Schildknecht's statement about perspective reflects that of the Kantian observer who is expected to 'regard aesthetic objects with *disinterested pleasure (interesseloses Wohlgefallen)* and to conceive of them as *purposiveness without purpose (Zweckmäßigkeit ohne Zweck)*. In other words, they ought to be considered as

autonomous with respect to economic, political or affective interests'.¹²⁷ The irony with which Schildknecht plays is that in professing disinterested observation he is consciously challenging the instrumentalisation of art by the dominant discourses. By promoting art which encourages thought and shapes observations into a coherent narrative without freezing them into a conceptual system, Schildknecht extols the notion of the autonomous work of art, whilst recognising it as a political act which situates the work of art in a particular referential structure; Schildknecht negotiates the fine line between poetic value and political engagement.

Curiously, it is Wiederkehr who draws attention to the political nature of the text, and the inevitable effect that even the act of representation has upon reality:

Gesunde, starke Naturen wie Wiederkehr meinen immer, ein solches Journal - wie überhaupt alles Schriftliche - verändere und verfälsche die Wirklichkeit. Allein die Tatsache, daß wir ein Journal führten, locke engelhoffeindliche, lichtscheue Elemente an, welche die Totenruhe störten. Sie meinen, die protokollarisch niedergelegten Fakten seien eine der Friedhofwirklichkeit aufoktroyierte Papierwirklichkeit, mächtig genug, eine solche Totengärtnerei aus den Angeln zu heben. (Sch., p.187)

Wiederkehr's natural strength and health are perceived as deriving from an almost spiritual communion with the past, presumably based on folklore passed down via the oral tradition, and uncontaminated by the written word. The assertion of belief in the 'purity' of tradition is deeply ironic, as Burger has by this stage made clear his opinion that such traditions have become absorbed by the fiction of the nation.

¹²⁷ P. Zima, *The Philosophy of Modern Literary Theory*, London and New Brunswick, 1999, p.4.

Indeed in this passage one of the central tropes of Schildknecht's own activity becomes apparent. The power of fiction to shape reality, as recognised by Wiederkehr, is the stimulus for Schildknecht's attempts to disrupt the fiction of the nation and redefine it. Although here the meagre power of Schildknecht's 'Papierwirklichkeit' is cruelly juxtaposed against that of the nation. Schildknecht here is an allegoric figure, representing the writer within Swiss society, wishing to instigate change, yet seeking to do so from within so as not to separate himself from the public he wishes to address.

Whilst the purpose of the 'Generalsudelhefte' is to subvert and challenge standard modes of representation, Schildknecht, nevertheless, perceives a need to make individual experience accessible to other readers; to reconcile the individual with the social. In this he expresses the fear of the writer or artist that his or her work will fail to find an audience in the public sphere. To overcome this the poetic imagination is subjected to the control of reason. To create his narrative from the 'Hefte' Schildknecht has to decipher them, to make them readable. This process of reflection takes place at night, as Armin Schildknecht:

...in nächtelanger Entzifferungsarbeit in der Sammlung dazu gezwungen wird, Ordnung in das Chaos zu bringen, das Durcheinander zu systematisieren. Gesetzmäßigkeiten herausfinden, das ist die ganze Kunst der Rückübersetzung seiner eigenen Person. Herausfinden und, was hinzukommt, der Konferenz plausibel machen. (Sch, p.69)

The 'Berichterstatter' becomes, of necessity, his own critic distilling meaning from an 'Urfassung', which in turn emanates from a creative 'Urquell'. The concept of

'Rückübersetzung' implies that the 'Urquell' is not sufficient in itself to establish identity, or to give artistic expression to that identity.

The concept of the insane, alienated, artist communicating directly with the public is implicitly rejected. Reason, attributed a secondary role in Surrealist theory, is seen as a crucial element in Schildknecht's method. The insane artist is one unable to shape consciously his or her material and consequently unable to use it as a means of self-reflection leading to greater self-awareness. The creative process itself is being thematised. Descent into the realm of the night, of free association, has to be balanced by a self-awareness which precludes abandonment of the self to the forces of the unconscious: artistic activity requires a mature sense of self, predicated on the willingness to reason independently.

The Inspectors' Conference is associated with the rational world of the day where plausibility is the main criterion. But to appreciate the world of Schilten which 'beginnt erst in der Dunkelheit zu phosphoreszieren' it is necessary to leave the objective world of the day:

die Inspektorenkonferenz täte gut daran, sich zu einer Nachtsitzung zu entschließen, um die Noktabilität dieser Papiere gerecht zu werden. Nachtwahrheiten sind nicht Tageswahrheiten. Nachts wacht der Mensch, während er tagsüber, als Scheinwacher, schläft. ... Objektivität ist ja gerade nicht der Vorzug nächtlicher Spekulationen. (Sch, p.71)

The work of art cannot be bound by preconceived ideas of form. Consequently, to be appreciated, it requires a reader prepared to free him- or herself from the control of rational concepts of form, and to experience the struggle for form for him- or herself. Schildknecht attempts to draw the School Inspectors' Conference into his world so

that they too can experience his struggle, and reflect upon their own epistemological status.

Schildknecht is here positing ideas about the creation and reception of art, and the conflict between the static notion of being in a state of perfection and the dynamic notion of becoming through constant self-reflection which, while characteristic of cultural 'Enge', transcends national borders to address some of the central issues of modernism. Harvey perceives a fundamental contradiction between the progress modernism extols, which 'entails the conquest of space, the tearing down of all spatial barriers, and the ultimate annihilation of space through time'¹²⁸, and a theory of aesthetics which 'seeks out the rules that allow eternal and immutable truths to be conveyed in the midst of the maelstrom of flux and change'.¹²⁹ An analysis of *Schilten* does not show Burger to be in favour of the progress of modernism, especially insofar as modernity is a capitalist phenomenon, however he does show an awareness of the paradox associated with trying to give literary expression to the notion of becoming that 'Any system of representation, ... is a spatialisation of sorts which automatically freezes the flow of experience and in so doing distorts what it strives to represent'.¹³⁰ The problem Burger confronts in *Schilten* is thus framed in the context of Switzerland, and its representation in terms of a single originary metaphor, in which the history of the nation and time become frozen, but his desire to oppose this with a notion of becoming raises wider issues concerning the representation of time and space in the novel. Switzerland in this context, far from being an anti-modern state, embodies what Harvey identifies as one

¹²⁸ Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, p.205.

¹²⁹ Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, p.205.

of the central paradoxes of modernism: the modernist aesthetic seeks to mitigate the iconoclastic effects of progress which modernism entails.

*

An awareness of the problems associated with a modernist aesthetic is apparent in the portrayal of Schloß Trunz, which goes to the heart of the cultural debate in Switzerland. Schildknecht notes:

Wir sind ein schloß- und burgenreicher Kanton, Herr Inspektor, an Feudalbauten fast ebenso reich wie an Schulen, Irrenanstalten und Gefängnissen. ... Ehrfürchtig blicken wir auf zu unseren Schlössern, weil sie nicht in musealer Mittelalterlichkeit dahindämmern, sondern vom Kanton und von Stiftungen eifrig für kulturelle Zwecke genutzt werden. (Sch, p.238)

The role of castles in society is ambiguous: they serve both to repel and resist invaders and to subdue and control the indigenous population. The conscription of castles into the service of the state calls to attention the attempt by the state to control and define culture whilst claiming to promote it. In this context Schildknecht's apparent praise of the conservation and use of old castles shows itself to be somewhat ironic. Culture instead of being regarded as the totality of the manifold expressions of Swissness is regarded as a construct supported by the modern day castles: 'Schulen, Irrenanstalten und Gefängnissen'. Whilst such institutions signify the benevolent desire of the state to educate, cure and protect its citizens they also facilitate control through indoctrination and exclusion.

¹³⁰ Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, p.206.

The word 'Ehrfurcht' expresses the ambiguous mix of respect and fear with which modern 'castles' and the original 'Schlösser', as manifestations of contemporary culture, are still regarded. A degree of continuity between feudalism and the modern state is exposed which the modern state is keen to conceal. The link between feudalism and the contemporary state is not lost on Schildknecht, the absorption of castles into the fiction of the nation means that the space of the nation is, almost literally, dominated by symbols of the Swiss national fiction:

Man hat im Kulturkanton eine spezielle Technik entwickelt, die alte Raubritterromantik in die aktuelle Problemstellung einzubeziehen. Zugbrücke, Söller, Wehrgang, Schießscharte und Pechnase, das sind bei uns längst Symbole für unseren Mut geworden, ein schwieriges Thema wie eine Bastion zu stürmen. ... Kurz: es gibt keinen animierenden Ort, ein Rechtfertigungsgesuch zu behandeln, eine Lanze zu brechen, als eine Burg oder ein Schloß. Und weshalb sollte ein Lehrer, der sich mit einer Einheitsförderklasse abrackert, nicht ausnahmsweise einmal zur Kultur gezählt werden? Der Reliefsaal im kniestockartig zusammengedrückten Dachuntergeschoß auf Trunz ... ist ja ein imposantes Beispiel kultureller Integrationsbemühungen. (Sch, p.238-9)

The castle as a representation of heroic resistance has superseded the representation of the castle as the bastion of the feudal overlord and, as such, is used to quell the spirit of rebellion it once invoked. The ambiguity at the heart of all institutions of state is laid bare: beneath the benevolent guise they adopt they seek to control and define cultural expression to conform with a predefined view of national identity.

Trunz as a 'Beispiel kultureller Integrationsbemühungen' represents a model of cultural integration founded on the acceptance of cultural diversity, which

transcends the narrow perspectivism imposed by the dominant discourses of the nation. The 'Riesenrelief des Kantons Aargau' in Trunz portrays all the 'Einrichtungen' from 'Kindergärten' to 'Kellerbühnen' to 'Ruinen' and 'Aussichtspunkte' that combine to form the cultural landscape of the canton. The cultural vision Trunz propounds is one of almost epic totality in which the nation comes to be defined, and continually redefined, by the range of expression within it. The anthropomorphisation of Trunz, its 'Trunzschen Wucht', suggests that the space of the castle is alive, a living part of the cultural landscape which resents its reduction to a symbol of a narrow historiography.

The spirit of Trunz is to be found in its 'alemannische Bausteine': '...die Alemannen [rechneten] ihre Gebäude zu den Mobilien, nicht zu den Immobilien ... Sie durften gar nicht niet- und nagelfest sein' (Sch, p.262). Trunz, as an eclectic mix of architectural styles, offers no single fixed perspective or concept of space; rather it posits the possibility of a non-linear historiography which has space for many styles and many viewpoints. It embodies an ideal, if not utopian, condition of 'Perspektivenlosigkeit' in which the imagination has free play. The concrete architectural contours of Trunz give way to the formless contours of the senses:

Ich sehe diese Architektur nicht nur, ich höre sie, als ob sie von einem Meister des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts eigens für Armin Schildknecht vertont worden wäre. Ich höre spindeldürre Cembalo-Klänge, wie ich sie trotz Perkussionsmechanik auf dem Harmonium nie herausbringen würde. Ich muß genau sein. Zwar beginnt die Trunz-Musik wie eine Bachsche Fuge, wird aber mehr und mehr verzerrt und endet in einem atonalen Tohuwabohu von Cembalo-Phrasen. Und so lange ich Trunz so klar sehe und höre oben

auf der Putschebene, wo der Bise mit scharfen Klingen die Haut schneidet, gibt es für mich keinen Zweifel, daß die Konferenz stattfinden muß, und zwar auf dem zum Departement des Innern gehörenden Schloß. (Sch, p.236)

Music gains in expressivity until it becomes an atonal chaos. The structure of music gives way to sound freed of any type of conceptual definition. It is here in Trunz that the signifier can be said to have freed itself totally from the hold of the signified. In Trunz the work of art becomes autonomous, divorced from the world beyond itself. The 'Putschebene' is a plane on which space gives way to the movement of music, and structure is replaced with atonal anarchy.

As Schildknecht withdraws from the space of the nation into the world of Trunz so his pupils are withdrawn from the school. The consequence is that Schildknecht believes he has 'keine andere Wahl mehr, als alle noch bestehenden Brücken zur Basis abzurechen und uns vollkommen auf die Konferenz zu konzentrieren, das heißt, den Fehler, den wir bisher gemacht haben, zum Prinzip, zum Rettungsversuch zu erheben'(Sch, p.260). The error Schildknecht points to is a neglect of the 'Basis', a concentration on the work of art at the expense of an engagement with the people of Schilten themselves: an over-concentration on art at the expense of life. His final chance to prove how unjust 'der spöttische Ausdruck "absurde Umtriebe" in jenem Schreiben war, mit dem ich ins Dauerprovisorium versetzt wurde'(Sch, p.237) lies in the self-conscious abandonment of reality in favour of the work of art.

Trunz thus represents a last, desperate attempt by Schildknecht to lure the Inspectors into the world of his report, the work of art, and '[sie] methodisch und didaktisch zu entsichern'(Sch, p.265). Deprived of the referential certainties of a

political, social and economic reality as the basis of their 'engstirnige Pedanterie' (Sch, p.266) the Inspectors will be compelled to judge Schildknecht's report by other criteria. Schildknecht is slowly taking the ground from beneath the Inspectors' feet, and his initial plan to lure them into 'schilteske Verhältnisse' comes to fruition in Trunz:

Die Inspektoren nach Trunz locken, sie dem Trunzschen Vakuum aussetzen, seiner absoluten Talherrschaft ..., und dann den Schulbericht in der Stille des Linden- und Kastanienhains zur Detonation bringen. (Sch, p.238)

The 'Trunzschen Vakuum' demands that the 'Erwachsenenfragen' be confronted, which essentially means that life must be addressed without recourse to protective, and restrictive, models of reality. The Inspectors will be required to judge Schildknecht, and by implication themselves, according to the criteria of Trunz. Trunz becomes 'ein Symbol des Rechts' where, for Schildknecht, nothing can be decided, 'was nicht in meinem Sinn und Geist wäre'. (Sch, p.237) The concepts of 'Sinn' and 'Geist' become important aesthetic criteria in judging the value of a work: the aesthetic value of the work is regarded as residing in the creative 'Geist' which inspired it, and its attempt at genuine self-expression. In the atonal anarchy of Trunz the work of art has detached itself from its referential framework and demands to be judged as an aesthetic expression of the life it expresses, namely as an expression of itself. In this sense, no decision can go against Schildknecht for, despite the self-criticisms of his method, the criteria are tautological. Slowly Schildknecht is becoming enmeshed in the spaceless world of the imagination.

Schildknecht directs the staging of his encounter with the School Inspectors without reference to anything but his own imagination. He imagines the 'außerordentliche Inspektorenkonferenz mit Armin Schildknecht als Haupttraktandum als Galaempfang' (Sch, p.266). The central event is to be the reading of his report:

Satz für Satz, Seite für Seite, Heft um Heft, ohne Pause bis in den Morgen hinein. Wir müssen, alle Rhythmuswechsel einbezogen, mit einer Rezitationsdauer von zwölf Stunden rechnen, es wäre also gut, wenn der Empfang um 18.00 beginnen könnte. ... Mit zunehmender Schläfrigkeit der Zuhörer steigert der Schauspieler auch die Monotonie. Jede Rezitation ist ja eine Folter, aber dies wird die Rezitationsfolter schlechthin sein. Und je länger die Tortur dauert, desto nachgiebiger werden die Herren Inspektoren. (Sch, p.267-8)

The purpose of the conference is to draw the inspectors into the night world of Schildknecht's imagination, and to invert the relations between them so that it is the Inspectors' Conference that 'seine Existenz und seine Tätigkeit vor Armin Schildknecht rechtfertigen muß' (Sch, p.269). This is Schildknecht's moment of triumph.

But it is a pyrrhic victory: it has been achieved at the cost of a complete break with reality. Just at the moment Schildknecht imagines victory, reality intrudes to deprive him of his pupils and initiate his suspension:

Damit hat dieser Prozeß gegen die hohe Inspektorenkonferenz - dies war es wohl von Anfang an - eine für mich unerwartete Wendung genommen. Man

könnte auch sagen, das Manöver mußte vorzeitig abgebrochen werden. Just in dem Augenblick, in dem Armin Schildknecht über die Instanz zu triumphieren glaubte, der er sich schreibend unterwarf, sind ihm die Gehilfen, die Sekretäre abspenstig gemacht worden, hat man seinen Schulberichtsapparat mutwillig zerstört. Ich habe nichts mehr zu hoffen und nichts mehr zu fürchten von der Konferenz, infolgedessen kann ich sie auch nicht mehr ironisieren. (Sch, p.272)

The fundamental mistake Schildknecht made, as he acknowledges, was to concentrate on the work of art at the expense of a direct engagement with the political and social reality. As a consequence his pupils, his putative audience, have been taken from him and his hopes of creating an audience of free thinkers for his work are crushed. The attempt to turn life into art has resulted only in complete isolation, and solipsism.

The creation of the report was an attempt to create a space on the margins of society in which to challenge the dominant discourses. That Schildknecht has been forced increasingly into the space of the text, and away from the world outside the text, cannot be seen simply as a mistake on his part: it is also a response to the absence of dialogue between the individual and the dominant discourses.

Schildknecht sought to reinvigorate the traditions of the nation, and to reclaim the right of the individual to challenge tradition:

The 'right' to signify from the periphery of authorised power and privilege does not depend on the persistence of tradition; it is resourced by the power of tradition to be reinscribed through the conditions of contingency and contradictoriness that attends upon the lives of those who are 'in the minority'. The recognition that tradition bestows is a partial form of

identification. In restaging the past it introduces other, incommensurable cultural temporalities into the invention of tradition.¹³¹

Schildknecht draws upon what Bhabha here terms the power of tradition, a power which lies in the acknowledgement that tradition can never be complete.

Schildknecht engages in a process of redefinition which, as Bhabha puts it, 'estranges any immediate access to an originary identity or a 'received' tradition'.¹³² which must evoke a counter reaction on the part of those who derive their power from such an 'originary identity'.

Just such a response comes in the withdrawal of Schildknecht's pupils and the revocation of his 'Wahlfähigkeitszeugnis'. These responses represent the re-occupation of the space at the margins by the centre and the squeezing out of dissident voices to ever more distant 'marginal' spaces. It is at this point that Schildknecht faces his most critical decision. Should he wish to continue to teach, then he must submit himself to the power of the dominant discourse:

Und wenn diese Gründe, die zur Entlassung geführt haben, in einem gestörten Einvernehmen zwischen Friedhof und Schulhaus bestehen, muß Gewähr geboten sein, daß sich die Schule dem Friedhof freiwillig unterstellt. Folglich muß bei der Wiedererteilung der Wahlfähigkeit auch darauf geachtet werden, ob es das Interesse des Friedhofs erlaube. (Sch, p.273)

Any burgeoning new discourses must be in accordance with the interests of the 'Friedhof': they must not pose the 'Erwachsenenfragen' or promote independent

¹³¹ H.K.Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London/ New York, 1994, p.2.

¹³² Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p.2.

thought. The individual must either submit to the dominant fiction, or be exiled into the marginal space of his or her own imagination: a position of complete isolation.

The stark choice Schildknecht faces is expressed in terms of his relation to the village band who invade the sanctuary of the school, to practise for the annual concert:

Beim Jahreskonzert kann die Schiltener Concordia beweisen, daß sie die Stücke, welche bereits an der vorjährigen Darbietung zum besten gegeben wurden, noch nicht verlernt hat, daß aus dem Verein in der Zwischenzeit keine Misericordia geworden ist. In Schilten werden indessen nicht Männer mit Instrumenten versehen, sondern Instrumente bemannt... (Sch, p.281)

The search for originality and self-expression which Schildknecht sought to promote on his Harmonium is drowned out by the 'Blechmusik' of the village band determined to rehash the same tunes over and over. An analogy can be seen between the role of the teacher and that of the band member; both are expected to adhere slavishly to the same tunes, to the same traditions to the point where they become themselves the instruments upon which the national fiction is played. Tradition and communal belonging become self-perpetuating: 'Schilten hat wie alle Dörfer seiner Art ein unerschöpfliches Reservoir an Blaswilligen. Die Stärke einer Blechmusik drückt sich nie in der Qualität der Stücke, sondern immer in der Zahl der Aktiv- und Passivmitglieder aus'. (Sch, p.281-2) A climate is created in which new and original stories cannot be told, and in which the individual must subordinate him- or herself to the majority view.

Schildknecht is fully aware of his 'verpfushtes Lehrerleben' (Sch, p.275), and of the absurdity of his vain calls to the rows of empty seats. The question is of his response to the insight he appears to have gained from his narration. The choice is between 'Passivmitgliedschaft' and rehabilitation, or 'Entlassung', abandonment of the school house and total exclusion. The latter brings a move 'aus der inneren in die äußere Verschollenheit' (Sch, p.271):

Alle, so muß er sagen, wenn er, von der Blechsintflut vertrieben, in der Landschaft umher irrt, haben ein Recht, das Schulhaus in Beschlag zu nehmen, nur er nicht. Am besten, ich kapituliere, ich übergebe Wiederkehr meine Schlüssel und sage: Da, Ihre Leichenhalle, von der Sie schon so lange träumen, eine Leichenhalle, die sich bestens für Vereinszwecke eignet. (Sch, p.284)

Schildknecht is essentially being driven out of the school house. His position is analogous to that of the writer who must decide between the demands of his or her readership, and those of the referential cultural framework, and the personal dictates of the creative imagination for personal expression. To choose the former is to conform, whereas the latter implies exclusion from society and absorption in private fantasy. It is at this point that the narrative time of the novel coincides with the real time of its writing. Crisis point is reached as Schildknecht becomes unable to distinguish between the fiction he has invoked as a response to his exclusion and the real world the fiction was created as a response to:

Armin Schildknecht wagt es in seinem kotznüchternen Zustand nicht mehr zu verifizieren. Ausverifiziert, Herr Inspector, ausverifiziert! Wenn Armin Schildknecht nicht mehr unterscheiden kann zwischen Wirklichkeit und

Wahn, wenn er zu einer reinen Existenzhypothese geworden ist, muß er vorwärtswaten mit bleischweren Sohlen und versuchen, irgendwo außerhalb des Schulhauses festen Boden unter die Füße zu bekommen, sich an Land zu retten. (Sch, p.288)

As the novel approaches the point of its inception -Stirner's exclusion from society- the always fragile narrative division between Stirner and Schildknecht breaks down: the external narrator ceases to have any distance from the character-bound focaliser he has created for the purpose of attacking those who have forced him to this point. Stirner, alias Schildknecht, must decide whether to remain within the autonomous frame of the novel itself, as Schildknecht, or move back into the world of reality, as Stirner.

Yet at this juncture, Stirner seems unable to exert any control over his creation; the distinction between the experiencing and the reflecting consciousness breaks down and the novel itself, without a reflective consciousness to shape it, threatens to develop into an endless monologue, as Schildknecht appears to develop a life of his own: 'Das Harmonium spielt ohne Balgtreter'.(Sch, p.302). What proceeds from this is a struggle for the 'festen Boden' of reality, as Stirner seeks to free himself from his own construct. Schildknecht shows no inclination to head for land. He continues to address the fictional Inspectors whom he situates 'hinter dem Wald, den ich immer gemieden, den ich immer als natürliche Grenze des Schilttals, des Denk- und Vorstellbaren gemieden habe'(Sch, p.289). It is now towards this realm, the 'Enklave Wiggers', that Schildknecht makes his way with the knowledge that 'Ich habe mich Ihrer korrekten Sprache, Ihrem Schulschriftdeutsch angepaßt, statt das Wiggersche Rotwelsch zu lernen'(Sch, p.290). The threat is that Schildknecht will abandon reality and retreat into the private world of the novel. The

problem Stirner faces is that he has become absorbed in the fictional presentation of his life and by the pseudonym he called into being to distance himself from his material. Schildknecht's earlier claim that he 'will und kann nicht zwei Leben nebeneinander leben' (Sch, p.5) now echoes ironically in terms of the relationship between Stirner and Schildknecht.

That Stirner is still able to maintain some control is apparent in his recognition that Schildknecht is unable to distinguish between reality and madness.¹³³

As Schildknecht stumbles forwards:

unerachtet der Ungewißheit, ob es noch ein Vorwärts gebe. Man müßte jetzt über einen Kompaß verfügen, der Wahn und Wirklichkeit anzeigt. Man müßte jetzt in letzter Minute noch auf eine Realität einigen können, gleichviel welche. (Sch, p.294)

As the Walpurgisnacht develops, Schildknecht becomes aware that 'er hinter, unter die Bühne muß' (Sch, p.296). The mask he wears has become a 'Totenmaske', there is an acceptance that he must leave the stage. For life to begin again and the process of becoming to continue, it is necessary for Stirner to abandon Schildknecht. Were he not to do so art would take over from life: Stirner would be trapped in his own artistic creation unable to engage with life beyond it. It thus becomes crucial for

¹³³ Großpietsch writes: 'Als Schildknecht bemerkt, daß er nicht mehr zwischen Wirklichkeit und Wahn unterscheiden kann, macht er sich auf den Weg zur Enklave Wiggers...' in *Zwischen Arena und Totenacker*, p.77. This begs the question of how someone who is no longer able to distinguish between 'Wahn' and 'Wirklichkeit' can be aware that they are no longer able to make this distinction. Her position highlights the problems which arise when no distinction is made between the narrative positions of Stirner and Schildknecht.

Schildknecht to accept his own demise and to free Stirner in order that he may continue to give expression to life through art:

Gnade heißt, daß uns wenigstens im Tod, da wir den Kampf gegen alle anrufbaren Instanzen verloren haben, unser Recht widerfährt. Und Recht heißt, daß wir ausgelöscht werden, ausradiert, niedergemäht. Ich will als Armin Schildknecht keine Sekunde weiterexistieren. ...dieser Armin Schildknecht, der mir zum Hals heraushängt, [soll] für immer begraben sein, und ich werde mich nach einer neuen Existenzmöglichkeit umsehen. Das Verfluchte ist nur, daß dies alles verdammt Schildknechtsche Gedanken sind, die den Verdacht aufkommen lassen, der Lehrer von Schilten werde sich überleben, werde sich keine Ruhe finden im Grab und als Nachzehrer herumgeistern. ... Wäre jemand, der anständig und unkomödiantisch stürbe, denn fähig, dieses bedeutendste Experiment seines Lebens nahtlos in einen Schulbericht zuhanden der Inspektorenkonferenz zu integrieren? Solange Armin Schildknecht diese verkorkste Rechenschaftsgesuchs-Sprache spricht, bleibt sein Tod eine Utopie, eine verbale Fehlkonstruktion. (Sch, p.301).

Stirner recognises that the shedding of the fictional 'self' is not unproblematic. The fiction has become part of his own reality, and he in turn has become part of the fiction. The symbiotic relationship which exists between fiction and reality is one which will continue to inspire and trouble him.

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Burger's novel, as the present analysis seeks to show, may be read as a complex allegory of the attempt of writers, effectively banished to the margins of society, to make their voice heard. Education of the young, as a possible audience, is part of the attempt to subvert a system which sustains itself through the power of

cultural representation. The work of art, as Schildknecht understands it, is at once both educative and destructive: the insight new perspectives bring must be at the expense of the security offered by existing ones. Thus, the work of art becomes a form of opposition to normative modes of reality, enforced through normative language.

A conflict arises between 'reality' and the imaginative work of art in which compromise does not appear possible: the writer must either disappear into the work of art or accept the dictates of reality: Stirner, we learn, 'muß umgehend interniert werden, die Behandlung seines "Gemütleidens" wird ...Jahre dauern' (Sch, p.307). The space of the school within the novel is a metaphor for the novel itself, a small 'heterotopia' which both resists and challenges the fictional construct of the nation which seeks to repress it, before it is reappropriated by the nation. In this context the Nachwort des Inspektors is bitterly ironic:

An einer außerordentlichen Sitzung des Erziehungsrates wurde im Einvernehmen mit dem Patienten beschlossen, diesen Bericht einer breiten Öffentlichkeit zugänglich zu machen. Er richtet sich an eine Instanz und diese Instanz sind wir alle. Nebst vielen kritischen Anregungen zur problematischen Stellung des Lehrers in der Gesellschaft ziehe ich, der vormalige Inspektor Peter Stirners, die bittere Lehre daraus, daß ein Mitmensch, wenn unsere humane Aufmerksamkeit auch nur eine Sekunde nachläßt, in dieser Sekunde zu Grunde gehen kann. (Sch, p.307)

It is not entirely clear what lessons the Inspector has drawn from the report. His comments suggest a degree of patriarchal sympathy associated with an uncritical acceptance of the role of the teacher. The publication of the report will serve as a reminder that teachers should not be allowed too much freedom, it will serve to

increase the 'Aufmerksamkeit' of the public and the authorities. By doing so another small space within the nation is reclaimed by the state, and the possibilities for art to arise at the margins is reduced.

It is a further unfortunate irony that so many critics have taken the inspector at his word and sought the meaning of the novel in the life of the writer not in the text itself, and the relationship between writer and society it thematises. As Schildknecht notes, people do not notice the loss of self entailed in the subsumation of the individual narrative in the general narrative, the 'innere Verschollenheit': 'Die Mitmenschen merken nichts davon, sie brauchen immer wieder ein außerordentliches Ereignis, einen novellistischen Höhepunkt in einer Biographie' (Sch, p.220). Yet in *Schilten* Burger does succeed in challenging the state and undermining the dominant discourses of the nation. In doing so, he addresses wider issues of art and representation. A defining feature of art is indeed seen to be its oppositional quality, its ability to challenge that which exists. In this art is seen as the art of becoming, not of being. It must constantly challenge and oppose itself if it is to fulfil its function as art and raise the possibilities of life.

CHAPTER FOUR: DIABELLI: ERZÄHLUNGEN

*Diabelli*¹ is a volume of three short stories, each of which is presented as a letter to a higher instance or authority. Of the three stories, this chapter will draw on two, 'Der Orchesterdiener' and 'Diabelli', which are particularly relevant in tracing a development from the more direct confrontation between the individual and the dominant discourse found in *Schilten*, to the greater self-awareness and concern with the self explored in *Die Künstliche Mutter*. Both stories are linked thematically by the dissatisfaction experienced by the writer with the cultural framework and the concept of art promoted by it; all three stories thematise the question: what is art? Although both 'Der Orchesterdiener' and 'Diabelli' represent challenges to the power of authoritative discourse to restrict artistic expression, they differ from each other in terms of the narrative position from which the problem of the relationship of the individual to the dominant culture is addressed.

The monologic form which each letter takes indicates, as in *Schilten*, the isolated position of the writer. In the opening story, 'Der Orchesterdiener', Schramm's letter of application for the position of 'Orchesterdiener' turns into an attack on the cultural role of the orchestra which is seen as merely offering affirmation of existent culture. Just as Schildknecht's report demonstrated his unsuitability as a teacher, so Schramm's application expresses his manifest unsuitability for the position of 'Orchesterdiener'. Indeed, by simply applying for the job, he exposes, and reinforces his own cultural isolation. As in *Schilten*, however,

¹ H. Burger, *Diabelli*, Frankfurt a. M., 1979. Subsequent references to *Diabelli* (D.) are given in parentheses after quotations in the text.

the isolation of the narrative voice serves to highlight the restrictive nature of national culture.

In contrast to Schramm, Diabelli, the eponymous hero of the title story, wishes to escape from the stage he bestrides as a magician. Thus, although related formally and thematically to 'Der Orchesterdiener', the tone changes in 'Diabelli': it is more reflective, and exhibits a greater concern with the self. Diabelli explores the reasons for his dissatisfaction with himself as a magician, a performer of entertaining tricks. He realises that he has himself become no more than a hollow signifier, and seeks a more meaningful form for the representation of the self. Culture is perceived as superficial, and an obstacle to the discovery of new forms. 'Diabelli' thus signals a move away from a direct engagement with the dominant culture towards a desire to overcome it. The struggle to do so is represented allegorically as an attempt by Diabelli to bypass the mother, and to discover himself through the restaging of his birth. A quest which is to form the basis of Burger's next novel *Die Künstliche Mutter*.

The problem of language as a means of self-expression raised in *Schilten* is again thematised in *Diabelli*. Critical distance from language and the objects it represents, including the self, is seen as fundamental to the notion of literature as a 'Lebens-Übersetzungskunst'. Language, as a pre-existent *corpus*, is regarded as conferring a power of expression which is seductive yet ultimately deceptive: it does no more than reaffirm the 'reality' which it itself represents. Language is not neutral, as Bakhtin has observed:

As a living, socio-ideological concrete thing, as heteroglot opinion, language, for the individual consciousness, lies on the border between oneself and the other. The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes "one's own"

only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language ..., but rather it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions.²

The danger perceived by Burger is that the individual will be defined by other people's language, and never find the language with which to assert his or her own originality. In *Diabelli* language is associated with the cultural edifice, and more specifically with the subsumation of the individual within the culture of the nation.

Both 'Der Orchesterdiener' and 'Diabelli' signal an attempt to gain distance from the dominant cultural discourse in order to find 'one's own voice'. Distance enables the writer 'einen Gegenstand anzupacken, drehen und wenden, bis er sein anderes, sein wahres Gesicht zeigt.' This is the essence of Burger's method, the so called 'Verfremdung zur Kenntlichkeit', to make the familiar unfamiliar, to confuse the real with the unreal:

Nie bin ich glücklicher, als wenn es mir gelingt, das Verrückte dank vorgetäuschter Recherchen als wirklich und die bare, aus irgendeinem Jahrbuch herauskopierte Realität als verrückt erscheinen zu lassen.³

Burger seeks to blur boundaries and to find the space in which the individual can find his or her own voice. Inversion of the 'real' and the 'irreal' undermines the claims of

² M. Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel' in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. C. Emerson and M. Holquist, edited by M. Holquist, Austin, Texas, 1981.

³ H. Burger, *Die allmähliche Verfertigung der Idee beim Schreiben*, Frankfurt a.M., 1990, p.11.

the dominant cultural discourse to mediate between the individual and the world, and opens the way for public expression of private thoughts, and the possibility to extend the language to take account of the private.

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The opening story of *Diabelli*, 'Der Orchesterdiener', is, as are all three stories in this volume, a monologue. The basis of the monologue is August Schramm's application for the job of 'Orchesterdiener', a position made vacant by the death of Urfer, the previous holder of the position. As in *Schilten* the monologue is directed at a recipient, in this case the 'Generalmusikdirektor', without any clue being given that he is listening, or even existent:

Ich, ja ich, Herr Generalmusikdirektor, bin - wenn es nach meiner Wenigkeit ginge, bräuchten Sie gar keine weiteren Bewerbungen mehr, die ja nur Störkandidaturen sein können, abzuwarten - zweifelsohne der richtige, ohne Zweifel der seit langem gesuchte Mann für den vakanten, um nicht zu sagen verwaisten, nach dem Tod des legendären Urfer recht eigentlich verwaisten Posten eines Orchesterdieners bei der städtischen Philharmonie. (D, p.9)

Ostensibly Schramm seeks access to the cultural sphere of the nation. Self-deprecating references to himself as a 'Wenigkeit' suggest obsequiousness; the tone and rather breathless rhythm provide further pointers to the anxiety of the narrator, as he strives to project himself into the space of the text, and beyond. His doubts are expressed in the repetition of the first person pronoun, and in the repetition of 'zweifelsohne', 'ohne Zweifel'. The very act of saying 'I' causes him to reflect upon it, thereby necessitating its repetition, as does the assertion of lack of doubt. It is part of the irony of the text that every act of assertion carries within it its own possibility

for negation; even the application carries within it the thought of a 'Demissionsschreiben' (D, p.24). Only the Philharmonic seems to be above doubt, and it seems to be precisely this that attracts Schramm to it. Schramm's attempt to undermine normative modes of expression through his exposition of a view of art as ironic, and self-reflexive derives its power from its opposition to the complacency of established culture.

Although conceived as a letter of application, 'Der Orchesterdiener' does not conform to epistolary conventions, indeed, as Gerda Zeltner has noted in relation to *Schilten*, the form of address serves to disconcert the reader:

Denn wenn der Platz des Adressaten anderswie besetzt ist, wird uns eine altvertraute Leserolle weggenommen; und in dem Mass, als wir keine feste Rolle mehr haben, sind wir dem Text auch wehrloser ausgeliefert.⁴

Zeltner here posits a concept of the reader as a figure with clear cultural assumptions about his or her role as reader. Barthes' distinction between the *lisible* and the *scriptible*⁵ offers a means to define Zeltner's 'Leserolle' more clearly. The reader who is 'dem Text ...wehrlos[.] ausgeliefert' is one who believes literature should be *lisible*: he or she seeks affirmation of established reality in literature and is unable, or unwilling, to engage with the challenge posed by the *scriptible*. The reader in this case must either close the book or recuperate meaning through a biographical exegesis of the text; in both cases there is a failure to 'read' or engage with the text.

⁴ See G. Zeltner, 'Verfremdung ins Emotionslose' in *Salü, Hermann: In memoriam Hermann Burger*, edited by K. Isele, Eggingen, 1991, pp.183-185, p.183.

The alternative, to 'join in', requires the reader to leave the secure cultural space of the *lisible* and conceive of a text as open, unbounded in which there are no limits to the imagination. Burger's texts seek to unsettle and challenge the reader to participate in the imaginative world of the text.

Even within the terms of his application, the job Schramm applies for cannot be said definitely to exist. In addition, by contrasting his own qualities and view of art with that of Urfer, the previous 'Orchesterdiener', Schramm asserts his complete unsuitability for the position. Whereas the value of Urfer lay in the fact 'daß er als symphonischer Abwart die Musikweltliteratur und alle denkbaren Werkinterpretationen in eine Partitur der Servilität übersetzte'(D, p.14), Schramm belongs 'auf die Nachtseite der Kunst'(D, p.15). His main qualifications are his deafness and his 'musikalisches Analphabetentum'(D, p.13). Schramm flaunts his unsuitability for the post; his application mocks its own lack of purpose as an application. In doing so it also mocks the reader who attempts to read it as an application. It thus quite self-consciously requires the reader to engage with it from an entirely different perspective.

Schramm's application is, on one level, a satire of national culture. He recognises that 'Gehör ist nicht ...erforderlich für diesen Posten'(D, p.12), the appropriate qualification is that 'er bringt ... eine ganz präzise Vorstellung mit, wie er in die Hierarchie einer Gesellschaft wie der Ambrosiahallengesellschaft einzugliedern ist'(D, p.15). Hierarchy implies order, a world in which everything has its place, and the chaos of life has been moulded into form. Art as representative of

⁵ J. Culler, *On Deconstruction*, London, 1987, p.32. The *lisible* is 'that which accords with the codes and which we know how to read, the *scriptible* that which resists reading and can only be written'.

the cultural space from which it derives gives expression to the order of society, it shapes the way a society sees itself. Art serves as a social tool to reinforce normative concepts of reality; with its evocation of an image of cultural, and spiritual, perfection the orchestra is able to lull the audience into a 'Vollkommenheitsbetäubung' (D, p.22).

In the face of such complacency satire is inadequate and Schramm's reaction goes beyond satire: he wishes to invert the hierarchy, to stand it on its head. The juxtaposition of the 'pointless' application with the great classic masterpieces does not demean the classics, but seeks to undermine the complacency with which they are consumed. Schramm is appalled by the applause that rings out from the audience:

kniet ... in seinem Reich am Boden vor der Mauer und schlägt sich die Stirn blütig, als ob er dergestalt mit dem Kopf durch jene Wand könnte, die ihn von aller Kunst trennt. (D, p.22)

The wall that divides Schramm from the world of art is not a result of deafness, for the reader discovers later that 'Sein Gehörschaden ist ein innerster' (D, p.27), but a cultural divide. The nature of this dividing line is expressed in the difference between Urfer and Schramm: 'Kongenialität strebte Urfer an, Kontragenialität Schramm' (D, p.22). Schramm is fighting for art which rejects the *lisibile* and inaugurates the *scriptible*.

Hence, the importance Schramm attributes to the position of 'Orchesterdiener', who must 'sowohl die Ruhe selbst als auch die Gerechtigkeit in Person sein' (D, p.16). The 'Orchesterdiener' threatens to usurp the power of the conductor by moving the focus of the performance away from the audience to the

spaces behind and beneath the stage, the 'Pufferzone zwischen Kunst und Chaos' (D, p.20). Metaphorically, the struggle is presented as between heaviness and lightness. Schramm is banished from the public space of the stage:

...das Podest würde seinem Körperdruck nicht standhalten. So bleischwer ist Schramm geworden von der seinen Adern abgezapften Symphonie, daß er wie ein Elefant die Holzquader durchstampfen würde. Wie das? Ausgerechnet ihn sollte das Gerüst, für das er verantwortlich ist, nicht tragen. Und sechzig Musikausübende sind kein Gewicht? Der Künstler ist schwerelos, er gießt sich in sein Instrument um. (D, p.23)

The symphony is brought to life by the intensity of Schramm's engagement with it; he identifies himself as the true audience for the music. 'Kontragenialität' implies a process of interaction with art, a dialogical relationship from which art derives its vitality and its efficacy. Heaviness, as a metaphor for participation, threatens the cultural framework within which art is passively consumed, and within which art is held in check by culture. The musicians are light as they retain no critical distance from their instruments, they have 'sich in ihre Sphäre hinübergerettet'; music has no connection with life, it is part of a system of 'perfekten Kultursymmetrie' (D, p.19) in which the orchestra and the audience 'philharmonieren miteinander'. The purpose of Schramm's application is to bring art back to earth, to re-establish a connection between art and life, between chaos and the attempt to give it form.

The choice of an application as the form through which to challenge the cosy world of cultural consensus contains within itself a fundamental irony: the application conceives of itself as art, and as such posits a concept of art as ironic and self-reflexive completely at odds with that practised in the concert hall which posits

its own rejection. The text juxtaposes subtle modulations of tone, between bold assertion and doubt, and the problematisation of the relation of the narrative to its audience with the complacent relationship between the audience and the orchestra and the absence of any self-reflection or ironic self-awareness inspired by the music on any of the participants.

Irony is perceived as being incompatible with what Rorty describes as 'a sense of human solidarity' or a 'universalistic ethics',⁶ namely with the concept of the nation so fiercely promoted by the dominant discourses in Switzerland: the audience desires a performance which provides 'social glue'. Consequently the 'pursuit of private perfection'⁷ with which irony is associated is absent. In this context the purpose of art is social cohesion not individual development. Art is reduced to artifice, and artists to performers by the refusal of the audience to acknowledge the dark, visceral side of art crucial to the creative process. The lack of participation in the work of art by the audience, the desire to find in art a reaffirmation of the myths and images of the nation, is characterised as 'Kongentialität'.

That Schramm opposes 'Kongentialität' with such vigour is a sign of the increasing power and confidence of the narrative voice in Burger's work. This confidence is expressed in the vitality of the language Schramm uses and in his refusal to be driven into silence and solipsistic self-contemplation. The difference between 'Der Orchesterdiener' and *Schilten* is that the narration does not break

⁶ R. Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, Cambridge, 1989, pp.87-8

⁷ Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, p.94

down, the narrator is not rescued and rehabilitated by society, instead he affirms himself in his opposition to and rejection of the sterility of the dominant culture.

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Diabelli, the magician of the title story, appears to be trapped on the stage, destined to perform endlessly before an audience interested only in 'Kongenialität'. The subsequent crisis he experiences is caused by an awareness of his position, combined with an apparent inability to see a way out. The specific occasion for the 'letzte Hokuspokuskrise' which Diabelli fears he will not survive is Baron Kesselring's letter inquiring into Diabelli's 'Ergehen als Künstler und Mensch'(D, p.31). This distinction between 'Mensch' and 'Künstler' is the basis of the crisis experienced by Diabelli. In a diagnosis of his own situation Diabelli acknowledges his fading power and identifies the source of his problem:

...lediglich aus Anlaß ihres Jubelfestes meine Melancholie abzustreifen respektive in eine vollbengalische umzuwandeln, liegt, so paradox dies aus dem Mund eines Zauberers klingen mag, außerhalb meiner Macht-; nein, ich stehe, wenn die Diagnose nicht täuscht, vor dem Bankrott meines Innersten ...; nicht von vorne kam die Attacke, ich selbst, der unsterbliche Diabelli - in Wirklichkeit geisterte ich schon längst nur noch als scheinotter Artist durch die Varietes Europas - habe den Blick hinter die eigenen Kulissen nicht mehr ertragen... (D, p.32)

The moment of insight is an epiphanous recognition by the 'ich' of an 'ich' who is not Diabelli: Diabelli is an artistic pseudonym identified by his ability to perform tricks; he does not exist as an 'ich', as a 'Mensch'. What Diabelli views behind the backdrop is the emptiness of Diabelli as a signifier of 'Menschlichkeit'. That the

attack comes from within highlights not only the duality of the self, but the disparity between the inner private self, and the public self.

Diabelli traces this disparity back to his childhood: 'Der Ursprung meiner Zauberkarriere war meine Einzelkindsituation und die [daraus] resultierende Sucht nach Originalität' (D, p.68). Burger makes great play of the disjunctive relationship between origin and originality. 'Ursprung' should lead to an original and unique expression of the life brought into being: the desire for originality should relate to the search for expression of the individual life, or nature. In 'Diabelli', however, the relationship between nature and art breaks down at an early stage:

Mich hat in meiner Kindheit als Zauberer immer alles Künstliche, Gemimte, Supponierte, Imitierte, Spiegelbildliche, Vexatorische, Halluzinatorische, Phantasmagorische fasziniert, nie die Realität und insonderheit nie die Natur.
(D, p.44)

The subject of art becomes art itself. It is an imitation of the instrument in the hope of being able to play an original tune. Diabelli was fascinated with that which was not real, but, as Burger notes, 'imitieren kann man nur was echt ist'.⁸ Nature is regarded as genuine, individual nature, the inner self, art should seek to imitate nature, to give expression to life; it is in this that the originality of art is to be found.

Burger thematises the relationship between art and nature in an earlier story 'Das Circensische und ich' (1980).⁹ In this story the narrator, a glaciologist, expounds his love for Frau Knie, a circus performer:

⁸ H. Burger, 'Zauberei und Sprache' in *Ein Mann aus Wörtern*, Frankfurt a.M., 1983, pp.71-78, p.75

⁹ H. Burger, 'Das Circensische und ich' in *Ein Mann aus Wörtern*, pp.9-21.

Wir zwei, wir müssen wieder zusammengesetzt werden. Sie sind ein Puzzlestück, ich eins, mit vielen Zungen. Man hat uns aus der Figur geworfen, verlegt; nun geht es darum, daß unsere Positiv- und Negativformen wieder ineinandergreifen. (D, p.14)

Art and nature appear intertwined: the world of the circus, and the world of nature complement each other: 'Seit je hat der Circus die Natur durch höchste Artefaktizität herausgefordert und hat die Natur mit Blitz und Hagelschlag darauf geantwortet' (MaW, p.12) Interaction between the world of the circus and nature is necessary if they are not to stagnate.

The disjunction between art and nature in 'Diabelli' is associated with the death of Diabelli's mother and his upbringing by a stepmother. Burger's representation of the relationship of mother and child would appear to allude to the view of Pestalozzi that 'ein reines Mutterherz nicht durch irgendein fremdes Menschenherz ersetzt werden [kann]'. Should this be the case, should the mother show more interest in the world than her child then 'Das Kind muß seine Unschuld, seinen offenen Sinn und seine unbefangene Geradheit verlieren'.¹⁰ Maternal love is the crucial element in the upbringing of the child, yet it is precisely love that Diabelli lacks.

The stepmother, 'die ja dazu angestellt war, mich zu erziehen, nicht mich zu lieben' (D. p.48) interposes herself between the 'Kinderwelt', and the child to impose boundaries. The love of the child for the circus clown's harmonica is forbidden, 'weil es, wie sie sich ausdrückte, ein erniedrigendes Instrument sei, ein Bettler-,

¹⁰ J.H. Pestalozzi, 'Weltweib und Mutter' in *Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi: Texte für die Gegenwart*, edited by H. Roth, Band 3, Zug, 1978, pp.29-30, p.30.

allenfalls Gaukler-, allenfalls Bajazzo Instrument'(D, p.69). There is no symbiosis between step-mother and child, only the repression of the child's natural instincts. The step-mother is transposed between the 'Ursprung', or the natural mother, and the child: she is the mediating consciousness who usurps the position of the mother and imposes a restrictive, because unnatural, system of language and meaning upon the child.

In Burger's work the transposition of individual with instrument is frequently used as a metaphor for the subsumation of life in artifice. Xaver, the young Diabelli, denied the chance to master (beherrschen) the accordion, cuts it open 'in der Hoffnung, wenigstens zu erfahren, woher die zauberhafte Musik komme.' His hope is predictably dashed:

Ich sah, als ich den Balg schnaufen hörte: sie kam nirgendswoher, wie ich, Xaver, genau genommen, nirgendswoher kam, kein mütterliches Fundament hatte. Darum die Originalität, die lebenslängliche, aber als Eklektiker. Als das erste Mal das Wort originell an meine Ohren drang - was für ein originelles Kind! - narkotisierte es mich dermaßen, daß ich mich entschlossen haben muß, ihm mit meiner Karriere, gleichviel in welcher Richtung, eine einmalige Füllung zu verleihen. (D, p.71)

The tranquillising effect of the word 'originell' lies in its power to conceal the absence of 'Ursprung', of a 'mütterliches Fundament'. Yet, the term original is a pleonasm: the narcotic effect of the word, the need to demonstrate originality to an appreciative audience militates against any form of originality. Originality is nothing but the performance of originality, a tautology which hinders the search for the self. At the same time the performance of originality requires the assertion of origin, the

reality upon which the performance is to be based to be able successfully to conceal emptiness and absence.

It is in the assertion of origin that the magician distances himself from the genuine artist. Burger considered the relationship between the magician and the artist, and the mutual attraction between literature and magic in his essay 'Zauberei und Sprache' (1983).¹¹ He draws on Novalis to illustrate the similarity:

...wer das Leben anders als eine "sich selbst vernichtende Illusion" ansehe, sei im Leben befangen, das doch kein vorgegebener, sondern "eins von uns gemachter Roman" sein solle. Kurz darauf die Definition: "Der Zauberer ist Poet." Läßt sich der Satz auch umkehren? ¹²

The destruction of the illusion is central to the creative process, and every illusion must contain within it the seeds of its own destruction. But this is where Burger identifies a fundamental difference between the poet and the magician. Whilst both proceed from a dissatisfaction with reality the latter 'verwendet den Konjunktiv permanent als Indikativ. Der Prestidigitateur erklärt: Da ist....'.¹³ Ultimately the magician seeks to preserve the illusion in order to conceal the artifice. So that 'Während der Schriftsteller von erfundenen Prämissen vordringt zu seiner Realität, seiner Wahrheit, gelangt der Zauberer von unumstößlich scheinenden Tatsachen zu miraculösen Ergebnissen'.¹⁴ The magician does not seek to question first premises, and subsequently goes to ever greater lengths to conceal the falsehood on which his trick is based.

¹¹ H. Burger, 'Zauberei und Sprache' in *Ein Mann aus Wörtern*, pp.71-78.

¹² Burger, 'Zauberei und Sprache', p.71.

¹³ Burger, 'Zauberei und Sprache', p.77.

In contrast the writer can expose the artifice of his work, and self-consciously engage with it as he or she 'hat außer seinem Text kein Geheimnis preiszugeben. Der Schein, den er erzeugt, darf verwirren, aber letztlich nie trügen'.¹⁵ Diabelli was seduced by the artifice of magic, the belief that the illusion could be endlessly repeated and that the perpetuation of the illusion through the development of new tricks constituted an originality which could lead to 'Ursprung'. The emerging 'ich' now seeks to expose the hollowness of artifice, and to break down the illusion of Diabelli the great artist, in order to facilitate his emergence as a genuine artist, who 'lenkt nicht bewußt vom Eigentlichen ab, sondern unbewußt darauf hin'.¹⁶

The insight gained by Diabelli is that the private self has been drawn into the incestuous domain of art and emptied of meaning. He must confront the knowledge that he has become the instrument of a culture which wishes to engage in self-deception, and that he has himself been deceived by a narcissistic belief in his own cleverness and originality:

Das Ich muß zum Reflexivpronomen werden, die Trickhandlung zur rückbezüglichen. Ich düpiere mich, ich werde von mir dupiert; es dupiert sich in mir, jetzt wird sich dupiert! So viel zur engeren Grammatik des Spiegellehrgangs. Der Zauberer ist ein Mensch, der im Profil gar nicht gesehen werden kann. (D, p.50)

The 'Spiegellehrgang' is an exercise in self-deception. The magician exists as a performer of tricks, there is no sense in which the trick gives expression to the life of

¹⁴ Burger, 'Zauberei und Sprache', pp.77-78.

¹⁵ Burger, 'Zauberei und Sprache', p.78.

¹⁶ Burger, 'Zauberei und Sprache', p.77.

the magician. The image of the mirror serves to emphasise the disjunction between the performance and the performer: in the mirror the trick appears real, the magician becomes convinced of his ability to shape reality. The deception practised by the magician is actively reinforced by the participation of the audience, who see in the power of the magician a reflection of their own power. However, Diabelli is left only with 'den Kater nach verebbtem Applaus'(D,p.37). He perceives that the reality he presents is only one-dimensional: it is not possible to go beyond it.

The trick is a mechanical act which demonstrates control over the world. It satisfies a hubristic belief in the power of artifice and a desire for control which extends as far as death:

Die Invalidität, und sie ist ja nur ein Zeichen für die innere Verstümmelung, der ich mich radebrechend annäherte, hinderte dieses Subjekt nicht daran, mit ihren zweifelhaften Künsten sogar dem Tod ein Schnippchen schlagen zu wollen. (D, p.76)

To attempt to dispel the spectre of death is to suppress the ambiguity of literature. Critchley writes that 'Death is ...the most fundamental possibility of the Subject... Death is a civilising power and the condition of possibility for freedom, projection and authentic existence'.¹⁷ Denied the freedom offered by death Diabelli is caught in a spiral of self-mutilation expressed in an endless reflection of the self, 'das Ich vervielfachen ...bis ins Unendliche'(D, p.45).¹⁸ The engagement with life necessary

¹⁷ S. Critchley, *Very Little... Almost Nothing: Death, Philosophy, Literature*, London, 1997, p.66.

¹⁸ Diabelli's position vis-a-vis death may be compared to that of Schildknecht. See Chapter 3, pages for a fuller discussion of death and the individual.

to produce art is lost: Diabelli has no critical distance from the narrative and his embeddedness within it gives it the appearance of reality which negates the possibility of development.

The cultural space is characterised by sterility, the absence of love and a feeling for 'Harmonie und Schönheit'. That the two aspects exist in a state of tension is demonstrated by Diabelli's search for 'Ursprung' which culminates in his attempt to locate his origin within himself. This results in Masturbanni's variation of the 'zersägte Jungfrau', the 'Kaiserschnitt mit der Kreissäge' (p.66), an attempt to simulate an artificial birth. Following the performance Masturbanni, a pseudonym adopted by Diabelli for the performance, considers it his duty:

das Weib, das ich ohne Schutz und ohne Abdeckung zerstückelt hatte, notdürftig, was wörtlich zu verstehen ist, zusammenzuflicken, ...Aufgebockt und glotzend lag sie da, wenn das Geschlechtswerkzeug in sie eindrang... Wäre sie gravid geworden, wäre es aus mit der Illusion vom ausgeschnittenen Bauch, daher immer bei allen Kopulationen nach der letzten Vorstellung die doppelte Verhütung, weiblicherseits durch das Pessar, männlicherseits durch den Kondom. Gummi stieß auf Gummi, Herr Baron, ebensogut hätte man von der mechanischen Vereinigung zweier Trickautomaten sprechen können....., Fickautomaten. (D, p.67)

The caesarean section, an intrusion into the process of birth, appropriates the power of birth from the mother. The feminine, the 'mütterliche Fundament' is destroyed, its function usurped by a rationalist, logocentric intrusion into nature. Such an act smacks of the hubris of a society which believes in its power to beget itself. The form of narcissism this engenders is indicated in the reference to masturbation and images of sexual and emotional sterility. Burger's vision is that of the brave new world of a self-replicating culture. In this culture we encounter the paradox of a child

born of sterility, and inculcated into it. The sterility of the culture lies in its inability to renew itself: the child symbolises a new beginning, development, but without a nurturing basis this is not possible.

The irony of Diabelli's expressed fear that the 'I' may not be recoverable is that Diabelli is no longer present. The narration as a reflective act signals the absence of Diabelli the unreflective performer of tricks. At the moment Diabelli wishes to make himself vanish he has already disappeared, that is the nature of the trick: 'Wenn Sie glauben, meine Damen und Herren, jetzt tue er etwas Entscheidendes, ist es bereits geschehen' (D, p.52). Diabelli signifies only emptiness, the absent signifier is filled by a new expression of an 'ich' which as yet remains unnamed.

Through the narration the unnamed 'ich' appears not only to free himself from his pseudonym but in so doing 'den Traum aller großen Fluchtillusionisten zu verwirklichen: ...mich in Nichts aufzulösen.' (D, p.35) This is an ontological impossibility. Burger notes in 'Der Zauberbaron': 'Das Illusionsproblem verfolgt uns über den Tod hinaus. Wir können uns die Welt nicht denken, wenn wir uns von ihr abstrahieren.'¹⁹ To think oneself out of the world one must be in it. For the 'ich' to make Diabelli vanish he must have separated himself from his pseudonym, the paradox is, however, that it is Diabelli who continues to exist as a signifier: the 'ich' has yet to give itself form, to signify itself other than as not-Diabelli.

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¹⁹ H. Burger, 'Der Zauberbaron' in *Als Autor auf der Stör*, Frankfurt a.M., 1987, pp.37-43, p.43.

The self which is not Diabelli can only develop by reflecting upon itself without a 'final signified content': the 'ich' must free itself from the text and begin to write itself again, in the knowledge that no expression of the self can ever be complete, and that the 'ich' is destined to repeat the same process over and over. Burger further shows his awareness of this in relation to *Schilten*: 'Es ist ja in Wirklichkeit ein Paradoxon: die Figur muß beseitigt werden, damit sie im Text ihr Eigenleben führt. Der Autor zieht seine Hand aus der Puppe zurück, und siehe, sie tanzt!'²⁰

The final irony is that the narrative 'ich' proceeds not from the assertion of his own existence, but from the invented premise of his existence. The assertion of the 'I' arises from the rejection of Diabelli. Diabelli appears as a mephistophelian character, who would lure the 'ich' into the banal world of appearances, and self-satisfaction.²¹ Hence, the difference between the 'I' and his alter ego can be seen to lie in the degree of self-reflexivity: the 'I' is aware of itself as a creation, whereas Diabelli is not. Paradoxically, awareness of the invention, or of the lie, enables progress towards the 'I'. In 'Diabelli' the 'lie' in the text is that the mother of the narrator died in child birth, a lie which is necessary if Burger is to find his way towards 'das Eigentliche':

Nun hatte ich aber gelogen: meine Mutter war an meiner Geburt nicht gestorben, sie lebte noch zur Zeit des *Diabelli*. ...die Lüge ist eine Form der Allegorie - was heißt: das Andersreden - und somit der Beschwörung. Der

²⁰ Burger, *Die allmähliche Verfertigung der Idee beim Schreiben*, p.40.

²¹ See Chapter 3, page 115, and Chapter 5, pages 226-31, and pages 267-72, for further examples of the use Burger makes of mephistophelian characters in his work.

innere Damm war durch diese Not-Lüge im wörtlichsten Sinn gebrochen, und ein neues Thema wurde frei, meine Mutterbeziehung, verarbeitet im Roman *Die Künstliche Mutter*.²²

The lie leads towards the truth so long as it is not held to as an immutable truth. The creative imagination leads towards the 'wahres Gesicht', the origin of the 'I' in the knowledge that to reach one's own origin would in fact be to seek to perform the ultimate, and impossible, vanishing trick. Yet it is this trick which Burger seeks to perform, and which will be considered in the next chapter in relation to *Die Künstliche Mutter*.

²² Burger, *Die allmähliche Verfertigung der Idee beim Schreiben*, p.71.

CHAPTER FIVE: DIE KÜNSTLICHE MUTTER

In *Die Künstliche Mutter*¹ the desire to overcome the cultural limits placed on imaginative self-expression, themes introduced in *Diabelli* and *Schilten*, are developed further. Schöllkopf's quest for rebirth presents a radical challenge to the oppressive representations of nationhood, and the demands of national culture experienced by Schildknecht and Diabelli. In a simple geographic sense, Schöllkopf transcends the narrow confines of the village schoolhouse and the theatre, to engage with the central metaphor of the nation, the Gotthard. The rebirth Schöllkopf seeks in the 'Heilstollen der Künstlichen Mutter' takes Diabelli's concern with the lack of a 'mütterliches Fundament' a stage further by seeking to provide a new maternal basis for life, but one located in the individual. This is not to suggest that Burger advocates a form of idealism in *Die Künstliche Mutter*; rather that he seeks to locate the authority for the story of the nation in the individual personalities which make up the nation. The model for such a move is, paradoxically, the Swiss model of direct democracy, which Burger views as having been appropriated by the dominant discourses of the nation opposed to change.

In *Die Künstliche Mutter*, the impetus for Schöllkopf's search is provided by what he regards as his unfair removal from his post at the 'Eidgenössische Technische Universität', due to the intrigues of some of his colleagues. His response is to consider suicide, but before he can commit the act he suffers a heart attack. Whilst recovering he reminisces about his relationship with Flavia Soguel, who led

¹ H. Burger, *Die Künstliche Mutter*, Frankfurt a.M., 1982. All future textual references will be given as KM after quotations in the text.

him to break his promise to his mother never to sleep with a woman before marriage. Schöllkopf now reflects upon the conflict he experienced as a result of the emotional coldness and sexual inhibitions inculcated in him by his mother and the passion he felt for Flavia which led, in some degree, to Flavia's own suicide fifteen years earlier. Thus begins a journey, which parallels that of Faust, as Schöllkopf seeks to overcome the barriers to a renewed figuration of the self and enter the 'Heilstollen' in the Gotthard, where rebirth is possible. His attempt to enter the Gotthard and to reach the south can be read allegorically as the writer's quest for imaginative expression. But to achieve his goal he must first navigate a course through the labyrinthine structures of the nation, and resist the blandishments offered to him through a range of discourses which each function as an attempt to deflect him from this path.

The warmth of the south becomes a metaphor for love and creativity, which have been suppressed in the north. Both love and creativity are seen as arising from the union of feminine and masculine which is inhibited in a north by the dominance of the male *ratio*, and its concomitant control over and suppression of the feminine. Central to the clash between masculine and feminine modes of representation is the position of the mother. Schöllkopf's mother is portrayed as cold-hearted and inhibited, a woman who has betrayed her femininity and the responsibility of motherhood. Such a mother is in essence a conduit for masculine values; she conforms to male representations of the feminine, in which the body is recognised as a site of power, and inculcates these values into her son; as a result of this maternal education Schöllkopf feels alienated from his own body.

Reich-Ranicki regards Schöllkopf as 'das Opfer einer Erziehung, die ihm zu suggieren vermochte, "daß alles, was auch nur entfernt mit Zeugung zu tun habe,

schmützig sei””.² By stigmatising everything that has to do with procreation the dominant masculine discourses employed in education tend to impose a division between male and female which goes far beyond the sexual. Within Burger’s paradigm of creativity, the feminine is the source of inspiration for masculine reason; therefore, to create a barrier between the two is to destroy the possibility of creative engagement with the world, and to confine the individual within the pre-existing structures of reality. Consequently, Schöllkopf’s problems do not arise from the physical mother alone. Strässle points out in a review of the novel that ‘der psychogenitale Schaden, die impotentia generandi, ist von vielen Müttern verursacht worden, auch von der Mutter Helvetia’.³ Strässle suggests that the figure of the mother should not be interpreted too narrowly; the mother is a composite figure embodying a range of discourses.

In this chapter it will be argued that the figure of the mother, as an allegory of Mother Helvetia, is, like the Gotthard massif in which Schöllkopf hopes to find a cure, a symbol of nationhood which has been appropriated by the dominant discourses of the nation in order to exert control over the nation. The ‘trial’ of the mother is, thus, to be interpreted as a critique of the narrow definition of reality which the dominant masculine discourses seek to impose on Switzerland. This chapter will go on to consider the importance attributed to representations of the feminine, and the conflict which arises between a masculine discourse which seeks to control them, and the creative individual for whom the feminine remains an important source of inspiration. The fundamental opposition between male and

² M. Reich-Ranicki, ‘Der verlorene Sohn sucht den Frauenkontinent’, *FAZ*, 5.10.1982.

³ U. Strässle, ‘Die wilde Poesie der Krankheit’ in *literatur+kunst, Aargauer*

female is the defining model for a range of oppositions in the text: between the conscious and the unconscious; the rational and the imaginative; the real and the 'irreal'; being and becoming. In considering this not unproblematic representation of the feminine, this chapter will draw on contemporary feminist theory, in particular the work of Cixous who offers a model of hermaphroditism, or union of the sexes which is apposite as a basis for an analysis of the representations of masculine and feminine, and of the possibilities for a refiguration of male/female relations such as is posited by Burger.

In considering the complexity of Burger's ideas about national identity, cultural representation, the relationship of the sexes, and the strategies adopted to present the struggle between the dominant social discourses and the individual, *Die Künstliche Mutter* will be examined in terms of the clash between what may be broadly considered as Realism and Modernism. A basic distinction, in this respect, will be drawn between metonymy and metaphor: the former referring to contiguous relations which remain superficial, whilst the latter refers to the ability to disrupt normative modes of seeing to establish unusual and original connections. It will therefore be argued that Schöllkopf's quest is for the liberty to figure himself in terms of his own freely created, and personal, metaphors, rather than in terms of standard metonymic images of the self controlled by the dominant discourses.

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The principal accusation levelled against the mother is emotional coldness, maternal neglect in favour of a principle. The mother is associated with the archetypal mother - the Virgin Mary:

Da oben verreckte ihr uneheliches Kind, und diese Nutte praktizierte die christliche Übernächstenliebe: zuerst Gott, dann die Menschen. Immer der gotische Blick nach oben, die Vertikale, damit man die Augen verschließen kann vor dem Unrecht in unmittelbarer Nähe. Maria, die Bittere, die Herbe, die Unfruchtbare. Verflucht sei die Furcht vor deinem Leibe! Schöllkopfs leibliche Mutter: eine Marienskulptur, eine Mater Dolorosa, nicht schuld, aber verantwortlich dafür mit ihrem Reinheitskult, daß nun sein Schwanz mit rostigen Nägeln an den Körper geschlagen wurde. (KM, p.62)

The criticism of the mother is that she allows a dogma, a religious discourse, to interpose itself between herself and her son. The love represented in the Bible as archetypal is perceived as inimical to the expression of natural emotions and the development of the bond between mother and son. The Virgin Mary is a cultural construction designed to stand between the sexes; her sexual frigidity is perceived as unnatural and her concern with the other-worldly points to an ultimately narcissistic and static, because infertile, obsession with representation of the self as embodying physical purity.

The description of Mary as a 'Nutte' suggests not only the view that submission to an abstract ideal is a form of prostitution of individual humanity, but points more directly to the paradox of the 'christliche Übernächstenliebe' which Horkheimer and Adorno draw attention to:

Der Versuch des Christentums, die Unterdrückung des Geschlechts ideologisch durch die Ehrfurcht vor dem Weibe zu kompensieren und so die

Erinnerung ans Archaische zu veredeln anstatt bloß zu verdrängen, wird durch die Rancune gegen das erhöhte Weib und gegen die theoretisch emanzipierte Lust quitiert. Der Affekt, der zur Praxis der Unterdrückung paßt, ist Verachtung, nicht Verehrung, und stets hat in den christlichen Jahrhunderten hinter der Nächstenliebe der verbotene zwanghaft gewordene Haß gegen das Objekt gelauert, durch das die vergebliche Anstrengung stets wieder in Erinnerung gerufen ward: das Weib. Es hat für den Madonnenkult durch den Hexenwahn gebüßt.⁴

Schöllkopf's relation to his mother serves to demonstrate the move from 'Verehrung' to 'Verachtung'. Schöllkopf attempts to overcome the 'christliche Übernächstenliebe' by rejecting the unnatural representation of the feminine presented by the Virgin Mary, as the true mother, in favour of her pagan opposite, Eve: 'Eva heißt im Hebräischen Leben. Sie, die Urmutter alles Lebendigen, hatte Ja gesagt zum Körper, zur Sexualität, zur Liebe, zum Penis, sie war Demeter und Aphrodite, der Quell des Schöpferischen' (KM, p.62-3). Eve is considered to be natural, concerned to give expression to her natural desires, therefore, as a model, she is creative and dynamic.

The binary opposition which arises is between natural and unnatural. Schöllkopf's move towards Eve provides the motivation for the narrative: his search for creative self-expression. However the problem he faces is that the representation of Eve is grounded in contempt for the feminine based on self-contempt and self-hate inspired by the notion of sin implicit in the representation of the Virgin Mary. As a consequence, any move towards Eve is a move towards a cliché of male fantasy expressed in vamps and divas, not towards 'Ursprung' associated with Eve, the

⁴ M. Horkheimer and T.W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung: Philosophische Fragmente in Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. 3, Frankfurt a.M., 1981, p.131.

natural 'Urmutter'. The opposition which finally results is between the representation of the female as virgin and as whore, which corresponds to notions of discipline and control, and their absence.

The problem of art and life, the desire of the observer to make the object conform to his or her subjective experience of it, was addressed in relation to 'Bork', in Chapter Two. The narrator, bound within the house, is distanced from the figure of Bork and, as a consequence, is unable to give expression to his existence until he is dead, at which point the narrator reduces his life to kitsch. Schöllkopf too is bound, both metaphorically and literally, within the house of his mother, and by the promise exacted from him by her:

... nie ...mit einer anderen als die angetrauten Frau zu koitieren - auch nicht zu onanieren, denn Selbstbefriedigung sei Kommunismus. Es war eine schrecklich gute Mutter, immer Tränen in den Augen, immer im Halbdunkel liegend, eine Migräne und Eismutter. (KM, p.25)

The effect of the vow of chastity is to sublimate the sexual drive, and to divert the sublimated energy, into the service of a system centred on 'christliche Übernächstenliebe'. The binary nature of the ideological divide introduced is apparent: Christianity and, by implication, Capitalism represent culture and control, whilst Communism is defined by absence of control and 'Selbstbefriedigung'. The form of representation demanded by the former is rigidly schematic and designed to set the boundaries of permitted experience, in essence to define the cultural framework of the Swiss 'house'. Kitsch of the kind exposed in 'Bork' must be the result. Art has no link to life, as the use of the impersonal 'es' suggests. There is no clear view of the 'immer im Halbdunkel liegende' mother, rather she appears as a

mouthpiece for a variety of abstract social discourses, here anti-communism and a puritanical ethic.

The prime accusation levelled against the mother is that of 'Lebensuntauglichkeit'. The charge of 'Lebensuntauglichkeit' is based on the exaltation of system, and representations of life, over life itself. Hence, the mother herself is represented as incomplete, little more than a physical spectre, yet one which, precisely because of her distance and lack of clear contours, is difficult to overcome. Schöllkopf's response, to attack the mother and to attribute the cause of his illness to her, is in a similar vein to that of Fritz Zorn's *Mars* where the 'Lebensuntauglichkeit' of the mother leads to the 'Lebensuntauglichkeit' of the son and his subsequent death.

Juxtaposed against the figure of the mother stands Flavia, the only woman Schöllkopf could have married. Flavia, as the Italianate name suggests, is ready to help Schöllkopf negate the promise to his mother:

...die sonnenstarke, flammende Flavia hatte diesen verbrecherischen Unsinn buchstäblich hinweggeliebt, du bist zwar eine Kohlhaasnatur, hatte sie gesagt, aber ich bin Anwältin, also Fürsprecherin, und gehe für dich nicht nur durchs Feuer, sondern vor die höchste Instanz, wenn es sein muß, bis vors Bundesgericht in diesem Mutterschaftsprozeß. Töte sie, indem du mich liebst, wir schaffen sie gemeinsam beiseite in unseren Liebesnächten. (KM, p.25)

Schöllkopf's description of Flavia exposes an ambiguity in her position: she is a representative of the law, who tempts Schöllkopf to transgress the law. The law evoked is, however, that of passion, nature and life: the crime is perceived to reside in the promise extracted by the mother, a crime against nature, against love. The

traditional role of law, to control and subdue passion, is inverted: passion and love become the law which is now used to indict Schöllkopf's mother.

Schöllkopf first encounters Flavia whilst presenting a paper on two poems by Ingeborg Bachmann: 'Erklär mir, Liebe' and 'An die Sonne'. It is productive to consider the representation of Flavia and the dichotomy between her and the mother more deeply in the context offered by the work of Bachmann. The references to fire have resonances of the final lines of the poem 'Erklär mir, Liebe!': 'Erklär mir nichts. Ich seh den Salamander/ durch jedes Feuer gehen./ Kein Schauer jagt ihn, und es schmerzt ihn nichts'.⁵ These lines, again, suggest unreflective abandonment in the passions.

Yet, as Karen Leeder points out, it is not sufficient to go through fire unhurt, one must experience the pain, the dark side, of fire, as well as the other elements, in order to be able to love and produce poetry.⁶ Flavia's willingness 'vor die höchste Instanz' and 'durchs Feuer zu gehen' implies the possibility of crossing boundaries without perishing. Burger himself draws attention to the notion of 'zum Denken befeuert' in Bachmann's work: "wenn ich befeuert bin in der Nacht/ knisterts im dunklen Bestand,/ und ich schlage den Funken aus mir."⁷ To be inspired by fire is not a painless process, it involves the crossing of a boundary, the contemplation of the unknown.

⁵ I. Bachmann, 'Erklär mir, Liebe!' in *Ingeborg Bachmann*, München, 1964, pp.41-2, p.42.

⁶ K. Leeder, 'Dunkles zu Sagen: Die Sprache der Liebe in der Lyrik Ingeborg Bachmanns' in *Kritische Wege der Landnahme*, Londoner Symposium 1993 zum 20. Todestag der Dichterin, edited by R. Pilch, and A. Stillmark, Wien, 1994. pp.11-20, p.19.

⁷ H. Burger, 'Undine bleibt' in *Ein Mann aus Wörtern*, Frankfurt a.M., 1983, pp.56-70, p.56.

Burger quotes Bachmann to characterise the new state as "Ohnmächtig bei vollem Bewußtsein", damit ist der Denker überwunden ("Er hatte seine Kapazität zu denken überschritten") und der Dichter geboren'.⁸ Flavia seeks to tempt Schöllkopf over the border, to fulfil the potential of his 'Kohlhaasnatur', the essence of which, for Helen Cixous, is located in his passion and willingness to transgress:

...Kohlhaas is wonderful, going off to war against the moral and social universe, ...against the state because of a tariff barrier. For a tariff barrier is enough to prevent any life that thinks it is beyond being a subjugated human. One gets beyond everything with Kleist and it is not called transgression. Because passion suddenly flares up in the world where that idea does not exist.⁹

What stands between Schöllkopf and his 'Kohlhaasnatur' is a culturally inculcated notion of transgression made manifest by the promise to his mother. The conflict which evolves is between the natural and the cultural, between Flavia and the mother for possession of Schöllkopf. Flavia is portrayed, as are many of the feminine figures, as an Undine figure. The figure of Flavia is not, however, to be identified with Fouqué's Undine as much as with Bachmann's Undine in *Undine geht*, and a comparison with Bachmann's Undine and Flavia provides useful clues to the symbolic patterning of the novel.

The 'Erzählung' *Undine geht* 'beinhaltet die Anklage einer Frau gegen die Verdinglichungsverhältnisse einer unmenschlichen Gesellschaft, die sich

⁸ Burger, 'Undine bleibt', p.57.

⁹ H. Cixous, 'Sorties' in *The Newly Born Woman*, trans. B. Wing, Minneapolis and London, 1986, p.99.

vornehmlich in pervertierten Geschlechterverhältnissen niedergeschlagen [haben]'.¹⁰ Schuscheng points to the gendering of socio-political positions within society, and conceptualises the different positions in terms of Fromm's concepts of *Haben* and *Sein*. *Haben*, 'das allgemeine Instrumentalisierungs- und Verwertungsdenken' is contrasted with the more human mode of *Sein*, 'nämlich "Tätigsein, Geburt, Erneuerung, Ausfließen, Verströmen"'¹¹ attributed by Schuscheng to the feminine.

The 'Habenmodus' inspires a social system which suppresses the thought of death through possession and leads to a form of self-imposed confinement. Undine, as an outsider, offers liberation from 'masculinist' ideology. In so doing she reveals herself as far removed from the 'ungebändigtes Naturkind' of Fouqué's novel, she is rather, as Erika Swales points out, 'die literarisierte Version einer literarischen Figur, sich selbst Idol wie Goethes Helena'.¹² Undine is aware of herself as a male muse: '...vergeßt nicht, daß ihr mich gerufen habt in die Welt'. It is this self-awareness which makes her such a perceptive critic of society, and of the absence of love within it.

Flavia assumes the mantle of the Undine figure; she embodies a belief in love as 'die stärkste Macht der Welt'. Love for her is not a utilitarian notion based on possession, but a celebration of life. Flavia is engaged to an engineer, yet she shows no sense of transgression in her relationship to Schöllkopf; rather, she is an 'Abgrund an Unbekümmertheit'. Flavia's 'Unbekümmertheit', and her lust for life, can be seen to derive from an awareness of death:

¹⁰ D. Schuscheng, *Arbeit am Mythos Frau*, Frankfurt a.M, Bern, New York, Paris, 1987. p.98.

¹¹ Schuscheng, *Arbeit am Mythos Frau*, p.104

¹² E. Swales, 'Die Fälle binärer Oppositionen' in *Kritische Wege der Landnahme*, pp.67-79, p.67.

Die Menschen, konnte sie sagen, begreifen nicht, daß sie sterblich sind, sonst ließen sie keinen Tag ohne Sonne, keine Nacht ohne Liebe verstreichen; und ich, ich hatte plötzlich Sprache ... es sprudelte aus unerschöpflichen Quellen aus mir hervor, ich konnte meiner Geliebten alles zeigen, benennen, in ihrem Sonnenspiegel entzündete sich die Welt. (KM, p.26)

Life, death, love and language are seen to be inextricably linked in this passage. The fulfilment of the potential of language is associated with love which is transgressive, in the sense that it is able to move between life and death. This is the position of Flavia, a lawyer, able to move between the realm of love and sensuality and the realm of law. Flavia, like Undine, is a 'Grenzgängerin': she obscures the boundary between life and death, and offers the possibility for union of the sexes in love.

The basis for the partnership between Flavia and Schöllkopf is an awareness of the truth of life, an awareness of what has been characterised as the dark side, death. As Schöllkopf speaks 'von der Wahrheit, die dem Menschen zumutbar sei' (KM, p.22) his gaze is fixed upon Flavia. In this context a passage from Bachmann's 'Die Wahrheit ist dem Menschen zumutbar' illustrates the relationship between writer and reader, the ideal of which appears to inspire Schöllkopf with love for Flavia:

Wie der Schriftsteller die anderen zur Wahrheit zu ermutigen versucht durch Darstellung, so ermutigen ihn die anderen, wenn sie ihm, durch Lob und Tadel, zu verstehen geben, daß sie die Wahrheit von ihm fordern und in den Stand kommen wollen, wo ihnen die Augen aufgehen. Die Wahrheit nämlich ist dem Menschen zumutbar. ¹³

¹³ I. Bachmann, 'Die Wahrheit ist dem Menschen zumutbar' in *Ingeborg Bachmann*, München, 1964, pp.294-7, p.296.

Truth appears less as an absolute, than as a process of self-exploration and realisation. The process of arriving at the truth clearly implies a move away from the cold, cultural sterility of the north towards the sun and the south. When 'die Augen aufgehen' they do so to the world in all 'ihrer farbigen Pracht'¹⁴, to the world of the sun which Flavia symbolises.

Indeed Schöllkopf characterises Flavia in terms of the central line of Bachmann's poem 'An die Sonne', "...Nichts Schöneres unter der Sonne als unter der Sonne zu sein..." (KM, p.22). Hans Höller points out that 'Ein Dasein um seiner selbst willen spricht aus der tautologischen Struktur'¹⁵ of this line. It is the sheer sense of being in nature free from the need to justify existence objectively or through possessions that attracts Schöllkopf to Flavia; for in this 'Utopie einer menschlich geformten Welt und der ihr entsprechenden Wahrnehmung gehen die religiösen Vorstellungen einer beschützten, umsorgten, mit Sinn und Fülle versehenen Welt ein, ohne daß an Gott appelliert würde'.¹⁶ The utopian dimension of the poem and of the notion of fulfilment through love do not imply an unreflective state of being, it is rather a counter to the awareness of the 'unabwendbaren Verlust meiner Augen', the acknowledgement that death will put an end to everything, even love.

From this a form of dialogue arises, between life and death, between physical desire and spiritual desire, between male and female, within which the potential for an unfolding of life in art resides. The realisation Schöllkopf experiences is one Bachmann considered central to the development of modern literature, namely the

¹⁴ K. Kohl, "Formeln im Gedächtnis" Die Lyrik von Ingeborg Bachmann und Christine Lavant', in *Kritische Wege der Landnahme*, pp.51-66, p.57.

¹⁵ H. Höller, *Ingeborg Bachmann*, Frankfurt a.M., 1987, p.67.

“Veränderung, die das Ich erfahren hat, ist, daß es sich nicht mehr *in* der Geschichte aufhält, sondern daß sich neuerdings die Geschichte *im* Ich aufhält”.¹⁷ The relationship of the individual to the culture in which s/he lives is thus fundamentally altered, a change which ultimately motivates Schöllkopf’s search for ‘die Künstliche Mutter’.

Flavia’s sun, however, burns too brightly for the young Schöllkopf, and Flavia, like Undine, is destined to be betrayed. This betrayal of Flavia is presaged by Schöllkopf’s inability to engage in dialogue with her. He quotes from Shakespeare and in particular from Kafka, and for his ‘Liebeserklärung’ resorts to the absurdly comic gesture of passing her a cigarette packet with the ‘Sonnenblume’ as advertising logo upon which he had underlined ‘was er Flavia Soguel sagen wollte..., die Wörter naturrein, nicht gepudert, feinste Mischung, Blond und Söhne-AG’.(KM, p.23) Quoting Kafka, Schöllkopf makes the more serious point regarding art “Was ich geleistet habe, ist nur ein Erfolg des Alleinseins.”(KM, p.27) The response from Flavia is predictable:

Die Liebe, Wollfram, ist die stärkste Macht der Welt. Deine Aufgabe ist nicht Kafka zu verstehen und, über ihn dissertierend, vor lauter Verständnis zugrunde zu gehen, du sollst mich in deine Arme schließen, dann wirst du nicht ein Leben lang vor dem Lichtspalt des Gesetzes sitzen... Deine Bestimmung ist es nicht... als Daumenlutscher dich vom bösen Schneider kastrieren zu lassen, nur weil deine Mutter befiehlt: ich bin krank, und du bleibst da.... Denn ich breite meinen Ozean aus für dich, krebse nicht zurück, stürz dich ins Wasser und schwimm mir entgegen! (KM, p.27-8)

¹⁶ Höller, *Ingeborg Bachmann*, p.67.

¹⁷ Höller, *Ingeborg Bachmann*, p.46.

It is significant that Flavia holds the traditional fear of castration up before Schöllkopf to tempt him away from the law into her ocean. The law together with the threat of castration is associated not with the father, but the mother. Castration, especially as transmitted by children's books, is a metaphor for entrapment within the realm of the law, and the cultural construct it protects. Law provides the power to understand and interpret, nevertheless it creates a distance from literature which will forever inhibit the birth of the poet. The law seeks to conceal the truth, and insight into the self, and to maintain the male/female dichotomy and thereby hinder any challenge to the cultural construct by literature.

Ultimately Schöllkopf dare not transgress the boundaries set by his mother and reaffirms the power of her law by returning:

zurückgekrebst war er in die elterliche Villa am Schloßberg, statt Flavia Soguel an jenem Ersten August keine Sekunde aus den Augen und aus den Armen zu lassen, er hatte nicht gemerkt, daß sie, gerade weil sie keinen Menschen, kein Tier, keine Blume, keine Kreatur leiden sehen konnte, in ein schreckliches Dilemma geraten war, auch sie entzweigerissen in die Liebe zu Schöllkopf und in das Mitleid mit ihrem Verlobten... (KM, p.35)

The use of the verb 'zurückkriechen' to describe his return, sideways, as opposed to forward movement, suggests his submissiveness to the mother, whilst deliberately echoing Flavia's earlier injunction: 'kriech nicht zurück'. That Flavia should commit suicide on Swiss national day, August 1., gives ironic emphasis to the power of the nation. Flavia does not draw Schöllkopf to his death, instead she crosses the boundary between life and death to save him; love is stronger than death.

Yet, as in *Undine geht*, the possibility remains that Schöllkopf could follow Flavia, and plunge into the water. Such a possibility is reinforced by the narrative

structure. In the above passage Schöllkopf is referred to in the third person as 'er', thereby stressing the distance between the focalisation of Schöllkopf the young man and Schöllkopf the external narrator viewing events with hindsight. The act of recollection proves to hide a desire to reverse time and indeed follow Flavia, to leave the mother and move into the sun. At the same time the references to Bachmann provide an ironic frame through which to view the perceptions of the character narrator Schöllkopf.

Just as Undine is aware that she is conjured up as a muse by men, so it becomes clear that Flavia is the product of Schöllkopf's imagination and his admiration for Bachmann as he views Flavia and 'der Genius Ingeborg Bachmann verschmolzen zu einem Bild'(KM, p..23). Flavia like Undine 'ist Schöpferin und Bild in einem: Da sie kein Selbstbildnis und kein Bild des Anderen braucht..., geht die Grenzlinie mitten durch sie selbst. Sie ist Subjekt und Objekt, sie ist gegen die Ordnung und kann sogar aus der Zeit austreten, doch als weiblich semantisiertes Bild für die Kunst fällt sie in den Objektstatus zurück'.¹⁸ Ultimately the power relations which seek to divide masculine and feminine remain in place and in a paradoxical sense are reaffirmed by the characterisation of Flavia.

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Schöllkopf proves unable to express himself without objectifying Flavia as his muse: he shows himself incapable of overcoming his education, and he remains bound by cultural representations of the feminine. With the death of Flavia the mother is seen to triumph at least in so far as:

¹⁸ R. Svandrlik, 'Der Umgang mit Bildern', in *Kritische Wege der Landnahme*, pp.81-96, pp.83-4.

ihr keine Flavia Soguel ihren Stiefsohn geraubt hatte. Der Eid war gebrochen, das schon, doch was es gekostet hatte, stand als Denkmal auf dem Friedhof.... Der Preis ließ sich öffentlich vorzeigen....., daß man nicht ungestraft den Versuch wagt, ein Mensch zu werden, der körperliche Liebe braucht wie die tägliche Nahrung, wie Brot und Wein. (KM, p.35)

The triumph represents a pyrrhic victory: Flavia's voice has remained with Schöllkopf, a constant reminder of the disunity of the self, of the division between thinker and poet. The cost of the broken oath serves to assert the power of the original oath, the birth of the nation as an 'Eidgenossenschaft' on August 1; nonetheless, Schöllkopf's present attempt to recuperate Flavia illustrates his attempt to atone for his earlier betrayal and provides the impetus for his engagement with the figure of the mother.

Flavia, as a transgressor, can be regarded as a victim of the national myth of a culture predicated on control of nature, and consequently of the feminine:

Die Frau ...wurde zur Verkörperung der biologischen Funktion, zum Bild der Natur, in deren Unterdrückung der Ruhmestitel dieser Zivilisation bestand. Grenzenlos Natur zu beherrschen, den Kosmos in ein unendliches Jagdgebiet zu verwandeln, war der Wunschtraum der Jahrtausende. ... Wo Beherrschung der Natur das wahre Ziel ist, bleibt biologische Unterlegenheit das Stigma schlechthin, die von Natur geprägte Schwäche zur Gewalttat herausforderndes Mal. ¹⁹

Burger follows Horkheimer and Adorno in viewing the subjugation of the feminine as indicative of the alienation of the male from his feminine side and the exclusion of

¹⁹ Horkheimer, and Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, p.285-6.

the feminine from the cultural sphere once the opposition of civilisation and culture to nature is introduced. It is not only Flavia who is controlled, but also the mother who is reduced to a mouthpiece for male ideology founded on binary opposition the effect of which is to exclude the possibility of dialogue. From this follows the impossibility of dialogue or compromise between Flavia and the mother, and the result that Schöllkopf, as Schildknecht before him, is driven to engage in solitary monologue.

The representation of the mother is of particular significance for the way it illustrates the extent to which the physical, loving mother has been eradicated by a representation of her. Cixous considers that the mother is unnecessary in society: 'No need for a mother, as long as there is some motherliness: and it is the father, then, who acts the part, who is the mother'.²⁰ The exclusion of the mother, or the appropriation of the motherly by a patriarchal authority, forces Schöllkopf to find alternative representations of the mother. It is in this context that the 'Sinn des Mutterschaftsprozesses... der leiblichen Mutter das Recht wegzujurisdictieren, ihn, Wollfram Schoeller, geboren zu haben. Dieses Recht einer künstlichen Wahlmutter zu[zu]billigen'.²¹ is to be understood: it is the search for a more authentic representation of the mother.

However, the jurisdiction of the mother is socially pervasive. Indeed the mother-son relationship becomes a metaphor for Schöllkopf's relationship to the institutions of state. One of the first examples of this is expressed in his hostility to the University:

²⁰ Cixous, "Sorties", p.64.

²¹ H. Burger, *Studienblatt Dadmar*, Konferenz Hamburg, 7/8 Dezember 1981, Schweizerisches Literaturarchiv, (SLA), Bern. Schoeller was the name of the

Was für eine Schreckensmutter, diese Alma Mater Helvetica, von nähren konnte weder im pekuniären noch im übertragenen Sinn die Rede sein, eher von akademischem Liebesentzug. (KM, p.14)

The Alma Mater as the 'eidgenössische', or national as opposed to cantonal, university is associated with Switzerland and the mother Helvetia. The role of the Alma Mater, bountiful mother, is inverted into that of a parsimonious, uncaring mother. The University is a part of Schöllkopf's 'Mutter-Trauma' which is threefold: 'der Alma mater-Komplex, die von mütterlicher Kälte verseuchte Biographie, und als drittes kommt die Prägung durch eine militärisch, heldenmännisch orientierte Schweiz hinzu, das Helvetia-Syndrom'(KM, p.77). The three are inextricably interwoven.

As in *Schilten* the relation of the protagonist to the space in which he exists is a central metaphor for the relation of the individual to society. In *Die Künstliche Mutter* the University has replaced the School; the reader encounters Schöllkopf in the university standing:

an der Toggenbalustrade des dritten Stockwerks, zwischen den Marmorbüsten der Schulpräsidenten... Zu Häupten die Kassettendecke, tief unter ihm die Mosaikfliesen des von den Großauditorien umgebenen Pausenhofs, der Gullschen Halle, auch Ehrenhalle genannt, gegenüber der östliche Triumphbogen, der sich über die Estrade vor dem Auditorium Maximum wölbte... (KM, p.9)

main character in early drafts of the novel.

The chicanery and power of the institution is reflected in the labyrinthine monumentality of its architecture.²² The University building reflects the ethos of the society: the 'Ehrenhalle' and the 'Triumphbogen' evoke a military rather than an educational aspect, and the marble busts reinforce the weight of tradition, just as the building is representative of the entire social structure and the 'mentales Konstrukt' of the nation, oppressing Schöllkopf.

However, at the centre of the nation, both literally and metaphorically, stands the Gotthard. The identity of the nation, the entire social system, is bound together with the representation of the Gotthard:

Es gab ja in der Tat hoch interessante Parallelen zwischen dem Fort Réduit im Gotthard und dem über und über rustizierten Semper-Gullschen Hochschulsackbahnhof...: hier biß man auf Granit, dort würde man auf Granit beißen; hienieden ein undurchschaubares Labyrinth von Auditorien, Sammlungen, ...- dort ,wenn man dem Gerücht über die Existenz einer Heilstollenklinik Glauben schenken durfte, ein nicht minder verwirrendes Carceri-system; der heilige Godehard war sozusagen die Natur gewordene ETU ...ein zum Polytechnikum aufgefächertes Gebirgsmassiv; in Göschenen wie hier herrschte permanente Geistesdämmerung.... (KM, pp.14-5)

The parallels between the University and the clinic highlight the importance of the representation of the Gotthard in the 'semantischen Grammatik' of the nation. The Gotthard has become an adjunct of the ETU; it is 'die Natur gewordene ETU'.

²² In *Die allmähliche Verfertigung der Idee beim Schreiben*, (AV), p.95. Burger draws attention to the labyrinthine qualities of the architecture and the way in which the novel is structured so that each part is represented by a 'zentale Bauwerk': 'Dem Labyrinth der Lehrsäle und Stichtonnengewölbe der Eidgenössischen Technischen Universität im Anfangskapitel entspricht der Heilstollenkomplex im vierten Teil, dort Granit, hier Granit'.

Nature has been tamed by society which is now in a position to determine the form as well as the meaning of nature. 'Auf Granit beißen' is a metaphor to express the frustration Schöllkopf experiences at his inability to effect any change in the representation of the Gotthard, which has been anthropomorphised in the discourse of the ETU.

An analysis of Schöllkopf's position as 'Privatdozent für neuere deutsche Literatur und Glaziologie' in the 'Abteilung für Geistes- und Militärwissenschaften der Eidgenössischen Technischen Universität' helps to establish the critical, and subversive nature of his position vis-a-vis the state. In *Die Künstliche Mutter* Schöllkopf aligns himself with a move 'in der neueren Schweizer Literatur... die erstarrten Packeisfronten in den Alpen von unten her zu schmelzen':

Die militärwissenschaftliche Hälfte der Abteilung XIII sah es ungern, daß die Gletscher als topographische Bestandteile des Reduit-Verteidigungskonzeptes der Schweizer Armee von der jüngsten Literatur dieses Landes vereinnahmt und damit in ihrer erdgeschichtlich-strategischen Lage quasi ans Ausland, also an den Feind verraten wurden...

Diese subversiven Literaten, so mochte es geheißen haben, unterwühlen nicht nur das Gesellschaftssystem, sondern rühren ans Heiligste: an die Naturabwehrkräfte, die Seine Eminenz, der Liebe Gott persönlich, nach dem ja das Zentrum unseres Zentralalpenmassivs, der Gotthard, benannt ist, anlässlich der Erschaffung von Himmel und Erde für die künftige Eidgenossenschaft reserviert hat, exklusiv, streng geheim und vertraulich.
(KM, pp.10-11)

This passage, a parody of the military attitude, illustrates that for Burger the issue of *Sonderfall Schweiz* and attitudes associated with *geistige Landesverteidigung* were still very much alive. The glaciers and the Gotthard, as the fundament of the social

system, are represented by the dominant discourses of the nation as unchangeable and timeless: the act of creation, the word of God is fixed in its original manifestation. Nature is controlled by the nation through the offices of the military.

The danger Burger identifies is that the creative spirit of the nation has become frozen beneath the glaciers. Within this symbolic pattern the function of the military becomes that of asserting the timelessness of the nation and protecting its natural immutability against the attempts of contemporary literature, with which the novel itself identifies in an act of ironic self-referentiality, to problematise the dominant discourses of the nation by asserting the temporality and changeability of nature and the natural symbols of nationhood from which it draws its power. The irony, to which Burger draws attention, is that control of nature has become a metaphor for Swissness, and that the metaphor is defended at the cost of the nation itself:

Réduit bedeute, so ein Historiker, "viel Wichtiges zu opfern, um wenigstens das Wesentliche zu retten". Die Vorstellung, dass dieses "Wesentliche" die Alpen und die Soldaten gewesen wären und dass der Bundesrat von einer Gotthardkasematte aus das verlorene Flachland regiert hätte, kann heute nur grotesk anmuten.²³

The final sentence contains a bitter irony, as it appears clear that in Burger's opinion the definition of 'das Wesentliche' has changed little. The Réduit mentality is reflected in the labyrinthine structures of the University which are designed to

²³ H. Burger, 'Roman-Kur im Gasteiner Tal' in *literatur +kunst, Aargauer Tagblatt*, 23.10.1982. The Reduit mentality to which Burger refers is based on the plan during World War Two to abandon the 'Flachland', and retreat into the mountains and the Gotthard, if the country were to be invaded by the Germans.

perpetuate 'das Wesentliche' in Swiss identity, namely the notion of the 'Gesinnungsschweizer'.

The essence of Swiss identity is based on a paradigm of alterity which categorises 'Ausland' as the enemy; 'Ausland' being a catch-all term for the other. The paradigm of alterity invoked is codified 'in einer zeit- und kulturbedingten semantischen Grammatik'²⁴ which in turn leads to a semiotic system which seeks 'das Bedeutende, das Bild, nach den semantischen Regeln immer weiter ausbauen, um dem Bedeuteten, der gedachten Identität, immer mehr Profil zu verleihen'.²⁵ Marchal goes on to point out:

Zu bestimmenden Hauptbedeutungsfeldern dieses Zeichensystems sind dabei ohne Zweifel "mittelalterliche Geschichte" und "Alpen" geworden. ...Sie operieren vor allem mit dem Gotthard, dem Berg der Trennung und der Verbindung...²⁶

The Gotthard has become the truth of which Nietzsche spoke:

Ein bewegliches Heer von Metaphern, Metonymien, Anthropomorphismen, kurz eine Summe von menschlichen Relationen, die, poetisch und rhetorisch gesteigert, übertragen, geschmückt wurden und die nach langem Gebrauch einem Volke fest, kanonisch und verbindlich dünken: die Wahrheiten sind Illusionen, von denen man vergessen hat, daß sie welche sind, Metaphern, die abgenutzt und sinnlich kraftlos geworden sind...²⁷

²⁴ G. Marchal, 'Das "Schweizeralpenland" eine imagologische Bastelei' in *Erfundene Schweiz*, edited by G. Marchal and A. Mattioli, Zürich, 1992, pp.37-49. p.38.

²⁵ G. Marchal, 'Das "Schweizeralpenland"', p.42. See also Chapter 3, page97, for a further discussion of these issues.

²⁶ G. Marchal, 'Das "Schweizeralpenland"', p.47.

²⁷ F. Nietzsche, *Über Wahrheit und Lüge im außermoralischen Sinn*, in

To uphold the truth value of such metaphors becomes part of the moral duty of each citizen of the nation; a position particularly apposite in a 'Willensnation'. For this reason the Gotthard is 'exklusiv, streng geheim und vertraulich'. The guardians of the Gotthard are represented by the discourses - Military, Church, Education - encountered previously in *Schilten*. In their role as guardians of the nation the dominant discourses conspire to create a linguistic labyrinth to deny access to the centre of the nation which could provide the basis for decoding and a subsequent recoding of the nation.

The enormity of the task facing Schöllkopf is symbolised in the diagnosis: 'Das Muttermal bedeckt den ganzen Körper'(KM, p.47). The ideological representation of the mother is inscribed upon the body. The central accusation against the mother in 'Brief an die Mutter' is that she has forced Schöllkopf to practise the physical control, and physical purity attributed to the Virgin Mary, whilst his sister is free to fulfil her desires. For Schöllkopf the body has been confiscated by the law which turns him into a criminal: 'Ich verspürte einen Trieb, der Trieb war ungehörig, verboten, also war ich ein Triebverbrecher, und in der Art von cleveren Delinquenten ...suchte ich von Genitalcrimen abzulenken durch ein Vergehen: ich wurde zum Dieb'(KM, p..148). The male figure is forced to conform to the practice of control that masculine ideologies demand; maternal concern for the body of the child is seen as a crucial part of a 'korrekte Erziehung'(KM, p.136):

...the body is ... directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs. This political investment of the body is bound up, in accordance with complex reciprocal relations, with its economic uses... ²⁸

The body thus expresses its potency in social and economic relations: sexual potency is associated with economic power. That the mark of potency should be ascribed to the control of desire and its sublimation is a sign of the subtle manner in which disciplinary mechanisms repress natural desires.

In many respects, the military takes over to complete the work begun by the mother. The primary power relation continually evoked in Burger's work is that between individual and the military. The body is forced into the service of the military to defend not the nation, but an ideological construct of nationhood based on masculine control of nature; the body is pressed into a defence of that from which it seeks to escape resulting in a form of schizophrenia in which the self is at war with the self. This is the paradox that Schöllkopf seeks to overcome: that he is both an opponent and a defender of the nation. In order to overcome the duality of his position he must loosen the grip of the military, and the dominant discourses, who seek to perpetuate an image of nationhood inimical to individual development.

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The path Schöllkopf must take to achieve a redefinition of the nation takes him to the heart of the nation, the Gotthard. In *Die Künstliche Mutter* the reader

²⁸ M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. A. Sheridan, Harmondsworth, 1991, p.25.

once again encounters the realm of the *parareal* in which Burger seeks to decode and recode the fiction of the nation by exploiting the link between fact and fiction. Here Burger goes beyond satire to replicate, or mirror, the position of the citizen caught in the bewildering array of military and social rituals, myths and traditions which define contemporary society. As Schöllkopf moves from the labyrinthine structures of the University to the more modest surroundings of the 'Bahnhofbuffet Göschenen, Ernst Zahn-Gedenkhalle....eine archetypische Höhle helvetischer Gastronomie' (KM, p.53), he moves away from the theoretical representation of the nation towards its heart, where he encounters authentic Swiss archetypes: the reification of the 'mentales Konstrukt'.

In the 'Bahnhofbuffet' he views the 'Vor- und Urbild' of 'Schalterhallen- und Buffet-Dekorationen.... 'Die Wiege der Eidgenossenschaft', der im Nationalratsaal des Berner Bundeshauses den Parlamentariern in Erinnerung ruft, wofür - nicht von wem - sie gewählt worden sind' (KM, p.55). That he should view this in the Ernst Zahn-Gedankhalle points to the degree to which the image of Switzerland, as defined by *Heimatliteratur*, is interwoven with the function of government, which is seen to lie in the preservation of *Heimat* from contamination by the 'Ausland'. Zahn (1867-1952), to whom constant reference is made, was author of many novels, including one referred to specifically in *Die Künstliche Mutter, Lukas Hochstraßers Haus* (1907), a novel based on:

den für die Heimatliteratur typischen Gegensätzen: schlechte Stadt - gutes Dorf/Land; unfreier Arbeiter (Knechtseele) - freier Bauer (Herr);

oberflächliches fahrendes Volk - ordentliche Seßhafte: abtrünnige Söhne -
gütige Väter.²⁹

The image of Switzerland Schöllkopf encounters is anchored in what Ermatinger termed 'Schollenliteratur'.³⁰ The roots of 'Schollenliteratur' were to be found in the topography of Switzerland which provided protection from decadent modern ideas. Keller and Gotthelf were regarded as providing role models. Yet the true model was more likely to be found in the mould of Johanna Spyri with her tale of Heidi in which:

verfestigt sich das mythisierte Bild der Schweiz zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts im Kontext einer konservativen Zivilisationskritik, die sich in der Gegenüberstellung von verdorbener Zivilisation und gesunder Natur, von moralischem Zerfall und intakter Gemeinschaft gegen die Moderne stellt. Die Schweiz präsentiert sich als inselhafter Naturraum und grenzt sich darin von einer grossstädtischen Zivilisation ab.³¹

The presentation of Switzerland as a 'Naturraum' is centred upon the Gotthard. High above the cities of the plain, the Gotthard is elevated to an emblem of natural purity endangered by the corruption of the cities below.

It is here in the mountains that Schöllkopf seeks the key to his rebirth in the 'Heilstollen'. As he searches for an entrance to the Gotthard, he appears to have succeeded when the hand of 'die blonde Heidelore' pulls him:

²⁹ K. Pezold, (ed.), *Geschichte der deutschsprachigen Schweizer Literatur im 20. Jahrhundert*, Berlin, 1991, p.28.

³⁰ E. Ermatinger, *Dichtung und Geistesleben der deutschen Schweiz*, Munich, 1933.

³¹ U. Amrain, 'Der Mythos von der unversehrten Schweiz' in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, Nr. 217, 19/20 September 1998.

in einen euterwarmen Höhlenraum, in dem es nach Äther und also Spital roch, vielmehr, wie mir schien, nach einer Frau, die sich mit Äther parfümierte, und bevor ich den Schmerz ...vorzeigen konnte als einzige Legitimation, schlang das Weib seine Arme um meinen Hals und küßte mich nieder in einer glutenden Raserei, ...die fremde Schwester wütete in mich mit immer neuen Lippenbissen in die Narkose. (KM, p.43-4)

The space into which Schöllkopf is drawn is ambiguous. The 'nature' of the 'Höhlenraum', as entrance to mother earth and as return to the womb, is balanced by the smell of the hospital and ether. The power of nature appears to be usurped by technology and medicine. Feminine fertility is controlled by male technology. Heidelore herself embodies this ambiguity. The name Heidelore is a compound of Heidi and Loreley: images of *Heimat* are conflated with the siren songs of the Loreley. The resultant conflation is a synthesis of male stereotypes of the feminine: purity and temptation, the virgin and the whore.

Heidi has forfeited her purity; she is regarded as corrupted by her associations with the dominant discourse. Even nature itself is regarded as ideologically tainted. Consequently there is little hope that Schöllkopf's nature will be re-awakened by Heidelore's kiss. Rather, Heidelore represents the stereotypical representation of the feminine as a vamp, and exposes the limits of Schöllkopf's imagination to progress beyond clichés. The 'Heilstollen' stand for the freedom of the imagination, yet Schöllkopf remains bound to a distinctly physical world. As he awakens from the kiss, he finds himself in 'einem Stahlrohrbett im Mannschaftsraum einer Gotthardskasematte, zugedeckt mit einer Armeewoldecke' (KM, p.45). The sheer physicality of the description highlights the limits of Schöllkopf's imagination to conceive of the 'Heilstollen' in anything other than physical and political terms: he is

still very much bound within the referential framework of the nation. Unable to make an imaginative leap into the 'Heilstollen', Schöllkopf soon finds himself back in the real world of Göschenen, where he is attended by the 'Sanitätsgefreite Abgottspon' (KM, p.48).

Abgottspon, as a mephistophelian figure, encourages Schöllkopf to accept the reality of the physical world, and seeks to divert him from his search for the 'Heilstollen'. Parallels may be drawn here between Schöllkopf's desire to break out of the narrow confines of restrictive discourse, and of a world limited by its metaphorical patterning, and Goethe's *Faust*.³² Burger uses the Faustian model to explore, and satirise, the array of myth, ritual and tradition at the heart of the nation which together coalesce into the concept of *Heimat*. Faust is a creature of time and the world who dares to transgress in the belief that life and beauty are to be found in the experience of life not in a fixed system. The play becomes a vehicle, a metaphor for life, with which to challenge and explode the restrictive framework of life. *Die Künstliche Mutter* reveals a similar intention. Schöllkopf, like Faust, is unaware of the direction he must take, striving without a clear goal, and within this paradigm Abgottspon seeks to divert Schöllkopf, and subvert his quest, in the same manner that Mephistopheles seeks to divert Faust.

Abgottspon leads Schöllkopf a merry dance through Swiss society which parallels his earlier odyssey from 'Sprechzimmer zu Sprechzimmer'.³³ The first

³² Burger draws attention to the parallels in a letter to Thomas Beckermann and Frau Schölller, Badgastein, 24.8.81, Schweizerisches Literaturarchiv, Bern: 'Da der Patient mit einer "infausten Prognose" (Prognose der Aussichtslosigkeit) nach Göschenen - Kaltbad am Gotthard kommt, ist eine entfernte Parallele zu "Faust" (Dr. Infaustus) gegeben, vor allem mit meiner "Helena" - Szene.'

³³ Abgottspon may be compared with the figure of *Wiederkehr* in *Schilten* who

station stop is an encounter with the 'Altherren einer Schlagenden
Studentenverbindung aus Luzern':

Schöllkopf hielt nichts mehr in dieser Kaschemme und Bierschwemme, lauter Eunuchen und Karenzler, deren Frauen als graue Witwen zu Hause saßen, mit einer Stickerie vor einem dritten Programm. Es ging ja längst auf keine Kuhhaut mehr, was unser Geschlecht der Gegenpartei an permanenten Demütigungen und Schmierfinkereien antat, das begann in der Schule, bezeichnenderweise im militärischen Marschtakt.... Das setzte sich fort im Gymnasium.... Zote um Zote ein Landesverrat an der Weltweiblichkeit.... Das war das Durchschnittsniveau unserer Ärzte und Juristen, Redaktoren und Nationalökonomien. (KM, p.58)

Schöllkopf views the antics of the 'Altherren' with the same disdain that Faust views those in Auerbachs Keller. Yet, rather than distracting Schöllkopf, it leads him to condemn the institutionalised sexism and the betrayal of the feminine. The reference to the upper echelons of society as eunuchs points to the degree to which impotence is a social problem caused by the divisive representation of women as either lascivious temptresses or 'graue Witwen' which leads to their objectification and exclusion from society. Schöllkopf's search for the 'Künstliche Mutter' becomes a response to sterile representations of the feminine: an attempt to create a positive representation which leads to union not exclusion.

Despite his increasing awareness, Schöllkopf still conceives of entry into the 'Heilstollen' in distinctly social and political terms: to enter he believes he needs the permission of the army, which is, of course, denied. Abgottspon naturally encourages him in this belief, and suggests that a possible solution may be offered by

represents the endless repetition of life in Switzerland.

the 'Patientsparlament'(KM, p.97). The 'Patientenparlament' is convened in the 'Modellsaal', so named because it contains a model of 'das Gotthardmassiv, Maßstab eins zu zehntausend'(KM, p..103). Models are a recurring motif in *Die Künstliche Mutter*. The model is a representation of the whole which serves to define the whole. The model is a simulacrum, in the platonic sense, expressing a deep truth of nationhood. The world Schöllkopf encounters in the 'Kur in Göschenen' is Switzerland in miniature:

Sollten wir Verpackungsmaterial von Medikamenten bei Ihnen auffinden - und diese Weisung wird ebenso streng gehandhabt wie der sogenannte Munitionsbefehl der Schweizer Armee - sind Sie fristlos entlassen. Bilden Sie nicht allzu viel ein auf Ihren Stellenwert als Krankengut und halten Sie sich immer vor Augen, daß Sie von uns abhängig sind, nicht wir von Ihnen. ...Die folgenden Paragraphen erläutern Ihnen im einzelnen, wie sich der Patient in Göschenen zu benehmen hat. Einmal wöchentlich versammeln sich die Kurgäste im Modellsaal ... und bilden das Patientenparlament.... (KM, p.51)

In Göschenen the individual is reduced to the position of a depersonalised 'Krankengut'. The paradox is that through the offices of the 'Patientenparlament' the patients vote for the creation of rules, thereby legitimising their own depersonalisation.

What arises is a model of cause and effect which is perceived as democratic and consensual in which the state derives its power from the people. However in Göschenen, under the motto 'Sie [sind] von uns abhängig, nicht wir von Ihnen', the normal relationship between state and individual is inverted. The 'Patientenparlament' which should decide upon the need for rules is bound within a

model which states that its existence is dependent on the control of nature and the existence of rules to underpin such control. In this manner the military is elevated to the apotheosis of nationhood and the apparent freedom of democracy is constrained by the representation of the nation as nation: the maintenance of the myth of origin of the nation becomes the function of the parliament.

The parliament is led by Diriwächter who opens it with a long historical digression designed to establish its authority in history and the tradition represented by the Gotthard. His speech, reminiscent of the ritualistic reaffirmations of a people found in epic, reveres the link between the noble founders of the nation and the present. The 'Patientenparlament' parodies the Swiss democratic tradition. In Burger's model, citizens are transformed into patients by the sickness that radiates from the heart of the nation. Through the gridlike system of metonymic associations deriving from the centre, sickness is dispersed throughout the nation. To complement the parliament in Wassen is 'in der Kirche von Wassen, eine Märklin-Gotthardanlage..., auf der sämtliche Züge nach unserem Willen hin und her manövriert werden können'(KM, p.104). The transport and postal system is seen, as it is in Schilten, as a pivot in the transmission of the power of the Gotthard, as a frozen metaphor, to other parts of the nation.

In addition, the amplitude of the rail network diverts attention away from the depths of the nation: 'Solange Ihnen die Linienführung der Gotthardbahn, der unbestrittenen Königin unter den Alpenbahnen ... nicht vertraut ist, hat es keinen Sinn, in die Tiefe zu gehen'(KM, p.50). The distinction between the topographical breadth of the nation and a descent into its concealed depths can be compared with the distinction between metonymy and metaphor. This distinction is an important one: according to Jakobson metonymy and metaphor are opposed:

The development of a discourse may take place along two different semantic lines: one topic may lead to another either through their similarity or their contiguity. The metaphorical way would be the more appropriate term for the first case and the metonymic for the second, since they find their most condensed expression in metaphor and metonymy respectively.³⁴

The distinction between metaphor and metonymy is seen to correspond to the binary opposition between *langue* and *parole*, *paradigm* and *syntagm*. Jakobson developed the series of opposition to include that between Romanticism and Symbolism, and Realism. Lodge develops this as he considers the distinction between metaphor and metonymy an effective means of 'distinguishing between the language of modernist and anti-modernist fiction'.³⁵ In an analysis of Burger's fiction such a distinction is useful as it provides the basis to distinguish between literature, be it *Heimatliteratur* or other contemporary Swiss literature, which relies on metonymic relations to impose an image of Switzerland upon the Swiss, and modernist Swiss literature, which uses metaphor to defamiliarise and disrupt the link between the identity of Switzerland and nature. This is not to suggest that 'anti-modernist' literature is wholly metonymic, but that metaphor is controlled in the sense that it tends to be allegorical:

in the metonymic text, metaphorical substitution is in a highly sensitive relation to context or contiguity. The greater the distance (existentially, conceptually, affectively) between the tenor (which is part of the context) and

³⁴ R. Jakobson, 'Two aspects of Language and Two Types of Linguistic Disturbances' in Jakobson and M. Halle, *Fundamentals of Language*, The Hague, 1956, p.59. Quoted in D. Lodge, *The Modes of Modern Writing*, London, 1977, p.79.

the vehicle of the metaphor, the more powerful will be the semantic effect of the metaphor, but the greater, also, will be the disturbance to the relationships of contiguity between items in the discourse and therefore to realistic illusion.³⁶

Allegorical texts, such as *Heidi*, seek to reduce the distance between tenor and vehicle to the point where no defamiliarisation occurs. Man, or woman, and nature live as one; the only disruption to this idyllic condition arises from the intrusion of the modern world, and from modern writers with disruptive metaphors.

Inset into .Burger's narrative are two exemplary tales of the relationship of man to nature, the 'Sage von Tittituntsch' and the 'Sage vom Bau der Teufelsbrücke', narrated by the 'steinfaltiges Mütterchen', whom Schöllkopf encounters in Göschenen. The tales are related insofar as they demonstrate different attitudes to nature. The 'Sage von Tittituntsch' tells the tale of 'ein Senn, ein Hirte und ein Zubub' who decide one day 'es müsse ein Weibervolk her'. They make a straw model which they christen Maria and then proceed to satisfy their 'tierischen Gelüste an ihr ..., an der unbefleckten Mutter Gottes, notabene, bis das Ditti läbig geworden sei' (KM, p.88). The 'lebendig gewordene' Maria reveals herself as the devil and claims the life of one of the miscreants as payment. The 'Sage vom Bau der Teufelsbrücke' also concerns the devil, but this time the manner in which he is outwitted. In exchange for building a bridge over the 'Untiefe der Reusschlucht' the devil demands the life of the 'erschüt Bescht' to cross it; the cunning builder sends over a billy goat. In his rage, the devil attempts to smash the bridge with a huge

³⁵ D. Lodge, *The Modes of Modern Writing*, p.x.

³⁶ Lodge, *The Modes of Modern Writing*, p.75.

rock, but is prevented from doing so by the action of an 'altes Mütterchen' who scratches a cross into the rock rendering him powerless.

The juxtaposing of the two tales points to two opposing representations of man and nature. In the first tale the devil is invested with power by the uncontrolled lust of the men; in the second tale, as the ability of Swiss men to control nature is asserted, he becomes something of a mephistophelian joke figure. The 'Sage von Tittituntsch' serves as an exemplary warning of the danger inherent in the feminine as the 'Madonnakult' is transformed into 'Hexenwahn'. The 'Sage vom Bau der Teufelsbrücke' is exemplary in illustrating control of nature, in which the pure mother figure is almost casually represented. The 'Teufelsbrücke' and the tales surrounding it represent a significant hurdle for Schöllkopf: they represent, literally and metaphorically, the bridge Schöllkopf must cross if he is to overcome allegories of nationhood and reach the south.

Given the importance of tales and legends, it comes as no surprise that it is upon the 'Teufelsstein' that during World War II two directors of Sprüngli, on active service, on 'einer Erstaugustnacht ein Schweizerfähnchen auf dem Granitblock hißten, als Symbol unseres Widerstandes'(KM, p.91). The flag upon the rock represents the mythical Switzerland extolled by the conservative 'Zivilisationskritik'. It represents continuity and the development of the heroic spirit which has subdued nature, and transformed wild mountains into mountain pastures. The narrative of the nation is presented as linear, moving naturally through history. Such line images are pervasive in *Die Künstliche Mutter*; the family line which binds Schöllkopf to the mother and which establishes a continuum between past and present is a poignant example. The logocentric line image is a concomitant of the suppression of the feminine in the Gotthard. As Hillis-Miller notes:

The model of the line is a powerful part of the traditional metaphysical terminology. ...Narrative event follows narrative event in a purely metonymic line, but the series tends to organize itself or to be organized into a causal chain. The chase has a beast in view. The end of the story is the retrospective revelation of the law of the whole. That law is an underlying "truth" that ties all together in an inevitable sequence... The image of the line tends always to imply the norm of one external organizing principle.³⁷

The law that arises from linear narrative is the law of the father: ratio. The 'underlying "truth"' is the power of masculine values to control nature and create a 'Willensnation' from sterile rock. The linear narrative seeks only the affirmation of itself. This leads to the paradox that the linear narrative results in circularity. In Switzerland the story begins and ends with the Gotthard. The Gotthard functions as a mirror at the centre of the nation which reflects back upon the nation an image of heroism and control over nature which it has itself been signified as representing. The process of mirroring results in political power structures, the transformation of "history into nature",³⁸ the establishment of boundaries and laws which serve not only to conceal the mirror, but to invest metonymy with the definitional power of metaphor.

Metonymic contiguity leads, if not without a degree of irony, from the Gotthard to the 'Teufelsstein'. The importance of the 'Teufelsstein' becomes clearer in the discussion about its position:

³⁷ J. Hillis-Miller, *Ariadne's Thread*, New Haven and London, 1992, p.18.

³⁸ R. DuPlessis, *Writing beyond the Ending*, Bloomington, 1985, p.107.

...es gehe um die Erhaltung eines Denkmals für ein Denkmal, ereiferten die Teufelssteinsektierer..., denn dieses Petrefakt unseres Zentralalpenmassivs und heroischen Widerstandswillen sei ein Symbol für den Gotthard und erinnere die schön an Göschenen vorbeischnaubenden Automobilisten an Goethes Wort in den Briefen aus der Schweiz: "Der Gotthard ist zwar nicht das höchste Gebirg der Schweiz ...; doch behauptet er den Rang eines königlichen Gebirges über alle andere, weil die größten Gebirgsketten bei ihm zusammenlaufen und sich an ihn lehnen" (KM, p.108-9)

The conflict between modernity and the traditions of Switzerland are made apparent in this passage. The 'Teufelsstein', a 'Petrefakt', symbolises permanence and the timelessness of *Heimat* in which the 'Teufelsteinsektierer' live; the juxtaposition with the passing drivers, who appear unaware of the history of the nation or the significance of the Gotthard, invokes the opposition found in Zahn's work.

The 'Symbol' of the 'Teufelssteinsektierer' is not a symbol at all, but a 'Petrefakt' in which the concept of Swissness is petrified; the power and significance of the Gotthard is usurped by the Teufelsstein. For Goethe the Teufelsstein cannot be considered a symbol in the sense that he formulates the notion of the symbolic:

Die Symbolik verwandelt die Erscheinung in Idee, die Idee in ein Bild und so daß die Idee im Bild immer unendlich wirksam und erreichbar bleibt, und selbst in allen Sprachen ausgesprochen doch unaussprechlich bliebe.³⁹

The tale of the Teufelsstein and its physical manifestation is to be seen as an attempt to speak the unspeakable, to prevent the development of the idea and freeze it in time. The 'Teufelsstein' is part of a reductive cycle: the nation is represented by the

³⁹ J.W. Goethe, *Maximen und Reflexionen*, No. 1113, in *Goethe Sämtliche Werke*, vol 17, edited by K. Richter, Münchner Ausgabe, München, 1991,

Gotthard, and the Gotthard by the 'Teufelsstein'. The 'Teufelsstein' is a reductive synecdoche which when reversed confines the nation within a narrow sectarian vision of nationhood.

From the desire to control nature a temporal and semantic system is developed. In temporal terms, it offers a natural continuity between past, present and future to the point where the entire process of becoming is bound within a natural, and unchanging, condition of being. Semantically it offers a view of nature as providing a universal order; a place where the true Swiss, the guardian of the spirit of the nation, resides, vigorously defended by the nation. Wellbery points out that 'all the movements and relations it [nature] encompasses obey a *law* and an *economy*. Thus, it is easy to see why idyllic Nature is well suited for encoding behavioural norms; its lawlike rationality functions as a paradigm for rational-virtuous conduct'.⁴⁰ The resultant aesthetic is static. What Schöllkopf encounters is a series of literary pictures, a montage of Swiss life, which provides a model for being which is immutable and changeless.

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The development of the Gotthard as a metaphor for Swissness based on heroic male virtue and the subsequent metonymic patterning of the nation which derive from it places the military at the heart of the nation. The military defends its position, and the 'mentales Konstrukt' of nationhood, by denying access to the Gotthard; thereby, forcing any would be explorer to follow the well-worn paths across and around the nation rather than allow him or her to explore its depths. The

pp.715-908, p.904.

⁴⁰ D. E. Wellbery, *The Specular Moment*, Stanford, 1996, p.15.

nation becomes a labyrinth which enmeshes the individual in the process of *Intersubjektivierung*, and thereby seeks to stifle the creative individual expression which could challenge it.

The labyrinth as a motif is prevalent throughout *Die Künstliche Mutter*, and will be briefly considered here. The term labyrinthine is often applied to the structures of state, the University or the military. In a mythical context the labyrinth was designed to conceal the progeny of Pasiphae's 'unnatural passion'.⁴¹ Bestial, feminine lust is contained within the formal pattern of patriarchal power. In Ovid we learn that Daedalus 'constructed the maze, confusing the usual marks of direction, and leading the eye of the beholder astray by devious paths winding in different directions'.⁴² The original labyrinth may be compared to that Schöllkopf encounters within Switzerland: a system of gridlike metonymies in which all parts of the nation are interlinked; it stretches out to every corner of the nation: it becomes a surface network of interrelations without depth of which the post and railway, as in *Schilten*, are emblematic.⁴³ The labyrinth fulfils a dual function and may be compared with the function of a house:

a labyrinthine house or city protects its inhabitants by hiding them in a defensive labyrinth of walls - by causing the enemy to take a journey. A labyrinthine house confronts intruders with characteristics of the forest, and in the same way that intruders may be trapped outside its walls its inhabitants may be trapped inside, as well as protected. Gaston Bachelard notes the

⁴¹ R. Graves, *The Greek Myths*, Harmondsworth, 1992, p.293.

⁴² Ovid., *Metamorphoses*, trans. M. Innes, Harmondsworth, 1955

⁴³ See Chapter 3, pages 115-17.

ambivalence in such a protective structure: the house is "not only a hiding place but also a prison cell." ⁴⁴

The use of the house as a metaphor for Switzerland has already been noted. The ambiguous function of the military and the University may also be interpreted in the light of the function of the house. Both military and University seek to protect by embracing the individual in a structure which provides order and security.

The basis of the security is the repression of the feminine, control over nature. In this context the labyrinth represents a:

progression from nature to culture, from cave to palace, ... and more recently, out of the unconscious to the overly conscious, ...the masculinization of a feminine form ... the formal structure of the labyrinth represents the world of conscious articulation, the traditionally male world of order and intellect. ⁴⁵

The motif of the labyrinth reinforces one of the central themes of the novel: the suppression of the feminine. The resultant sublimation culminates in illness, and in Schöllkopf's impotence. At the same time, however, it leads to art, to the writing of the novel. Schöllkopf's growing awareness of the restrictive formality of the masculine ratio, and the representation of the nation as a male labyrinth anticipates his later attempt to refigure the labyrinth in the 'Heilstollen' as leading into the depths of the earth and the imagination.

The novel becomes an attempt to enter the labyrinth and to inaugurate the traditional feminine symbolism of the labyrinth as linking the origin and destiny of man with the earth, the universal mother: man originates from the earth and returns

⁴⁴ W. Faris, *Labyrinths of Language*, Baltimore and London, 1988, p.8.

to her at death. Entrance to the labyrinth, and into the earth, offers the possibility of rebirth. Knight points out that this 'belief is most clearly expressed in the famous mystic formula ..."I have entered beneath the lap of the queen of the earth below." It means that the initiate is qualified for spiritual rebirth'.⁴⁶ Interestingly, Knight goes on to point out that in Greek civil law 'when a man was wrongly supposed dead, he had to go through the movements of physical birth before he could be officially readmitted to life'.⁴⁷ Such a process is apposite for Schöllkopf, who seeks to overcome 'Scheintod' and pass through the Gotthard on his journey from the north to the south.

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To refigure the labyrinth Schöllkopf strives for a more sophisticated model which allows for the union of the male and the female. Such a union was posited in Burger's story 'Das Circensische und ich'⁴⁸ where the narrator, a glaciologist, seeks a union with a circus performer. The union is not sexual, but rather a union of siblings. The nature of the union Burger envisions is hermaphroditic:

...der Schriftsteller muss innerlich zum Hermaphrodite, zum Transvestiten werden, um der weiblichen Wahrheit seines Produktes gerecht zu werden.
...Das Wissenwollen entspringt männlicher Ratio... Die Vision ist

⁴⁵ Faris, *Labyrinths of Language*, p.191.

⁴⁶ Faris, *Labyrinths of Language*, p.181.

⁴⁷ Faris, *Labyrinths of Language*, p.181.

⁴⁸ H. Burger, 'Das Circensische und ich' in *Ein Mann aus Wörtern*, Frankfurt a.M., 1983, pp.9-21. See also Chapter 4, page 188-9 for a discussion of this in relation to *Diabelli*.

hermaphroditischer Natur. Sie steigt aus der Tiefe des Weiblichen und erreicht durch meinen Zugriff männlichen Zuschnitt. ⁴⁹

Burger's concept of creativity based on union and the search for the mother may be linked with the ideas of Helen Cixous on bisexuality. For Cixous the terms masculine and feminine are 'unanalyzable in their complexity' and to use them is to become 'trapped within an ideological theater'. To escape from the 'theatre' requires writing which breaks down the opposition between masculine and feminine: 'there is no invention possible... without there being in the inventing subject an abundance of the other, of variety'.⁵⁰

This leads Cixous to an assertion of the value of *bisexuality*: 'that is to say the location within one single self of the presence of both sexes, evident and insistent in different ways according to the individual, the nonexclusion of difference or of a sex.'⁵¹ Cixous opposes her definition of bisexuality to that which perceives the bisexual as neuter, 'Bisexuality as a fantasy of a complete being, which replaces the fear of castration and veils sexual difference'.⁵² Within Schöllkopf's scheme of representation Flavia's 'ocean' is a form of monosexuality. Bisexuality rejects the binary opposition between male and female and in the search for an acknowledgement and acceptance of difference seeks to undermine the dominance of a hierarchical and patriarchal social order.

⁴⁹ H. Burger, 'Die Bilder der Seele sind weiblich', Schweizerisches Literaturarchiv (SLA), Bern, pp.3-4

⁵⁰ Cixous, "Sorties", p.84

⁵¹ Cixous, "Sorties", p.85

⁵² Cixous, "Sorties", p.84

The division between male and female and the attempt at union can be compared with the basic distinction made by Thomas Mann between 'Kunst' and 'Leben'. Such a comparison is appropriate in relation to *Die Künstliche Mutter*, not least, because Burger's direct references to *Tonio Kröger* place the issue of the relationship between art and life within the framework of Mann's ideas. The antitheses between 'Kunst' and 'Leben', north and south in *Tonio Kröger* are to be found in *Die Künstliche Mutter*, as is the basic problematic of *Diabelli* that the magician represents *Geist* as he 'zerlegt ein ihm voraufgehendes Irrationales in seine Bestandteile und macht es so einer rationalen Manipulation verfügbar':⁵³ he merely manipulates his audience. Diabelli represents a condition of decadence:

Dekadenz ist ein Zustand, in dem die ursprüngliche Lebenskraft eines Volkes durch Überreflexivität zugrundegegangen ist. Der Künstler der Dekadenz kennt kein ursprüngliches Gefühl mehr, nur noch ein alles umfassendes, gelangweiltes déjà vu. ⁵⁴

The process of trying to overcome the absence of genuine feeling is one which can be identified with Schöllkopf's search for the hermaphroditic. The bisexual becomes associated with the move towards life and nature and away from *Geist*. Yet the text anticipates its final section 'Tod in Lugano', and reveals an ironic awareness of the end of the quest that 'Es ist aus mit dem Künstler, sobald er Mensch wird und zu empfinden beginnt'.⁵⁵ In the context of Schöllkopf's quest the suggestion is that a

⁵³ H. Kurzke, *Thomas Mann: Epoche-Werk-Wirkung*, München, 1985, p.87.

⁵⁴ Kurzke, *Thomas Mann: Epoche-Werk-Wirkung*, p.88.

⁵⁵ T. Mann, *Tonio Kröger*, edited by E.M. Wilkinson, Oxford, 1963, p.38

cure is impossible: to be cured is to cease to reflect upon life and to lose the ability to create art.

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The modern literature of Switzerland, within which category *Die Künstliche Mutter* places itself, challenges the metonymic patterns of *Heimatliteratur* through the introduction of disruptive, because defamiliarising, metaphors which explore the notion of origin. The use of metaphor becomes a self-referential statement, itself to be read metaphorically as opposition to the control of metaphor, and hence of individual creativity, exerted by the desire for an art of verisimilitude. Valentine Cunningham states of metaphor that:

it's written to undermine the literal, the factual, the metonymic, the purely worldly way of reading the world, and to urge in place of any such harsh vision or practice the counter-importance of the fanciful, the figurative, the metaphoric, the fictional mode of seeing.⁵⁶

Die Künstliche Mutter is, in many of its aspects, a celebration of the fanciful and the figurative. Yet the figurative exists in a state of uneasy tension with a 'worldly way of seeing the world'. The importance of the tension created is that it challenges, and exposes, the causal scheme which links contemporary Switzerland with the myth of Tell. Culler, after Nietzsche, points out that 'The causal scheme is produced by a metonymy or metalepsis (substitution of cause for effect); it is not an indubitable foundation but the product of a tropological operation'.⁵⁷ The tropological operation

⁵⁶ V. Cunningham, *In the Reading Gaol*, Oxford and Cambridge, Mass., 1994, p.133.

⁵⁷ J. Culler, *On Deconstruction*, London, 1982, p.87.

performed in Switzerland is that referred to by Bichsel: to locate the spirit of Switzerland in the myth of 1291 and Tell rather than in the concrete political achievements of 1848.

The fiction of the origin of the nation can also be regarded as an effect: the cause being the predominance of male values, exemplified by the military. As Culler points out:

If the effect is what causes the cause to become a cause, the effect, not the cause, should be treated as the origin. By showing that the argument which elevates cause can be used to favor effect, one uncovers and undoes the rhetorical operation responsible for the hierarchization and one produces a significant displacement. If either the cause or effect can occupy the position of origin, the origin is no longer originary: it loses its metaphysical privilege.⁵⁸

The effect which Burger achieves is to undermine the originary metaphors of the nation and to challenge the hierarchies which derive from them. As DuPlessis points out 'a realignment that puts the last first and the first last has always ruptured conventional morality, politics, and narrative'.⁵⁹ Narrative displacement is a necessary precondition for rewriting the myths of nationhood: it creates a space in which the dissident writer, previously suppressed can operate.

The process of narrative displacement points to the hollowness at the centre of the nation: the narrative of nationhood is a labyrinth without a centre. There is no originary meaning only figuration. The natural world of geographic space and the world of language and metaphor are interwoven to the degree that they become

⁵⁸ Culler, *On Deconstruction*, p.88.

indistinguishable. Burger attempts in *Die Künstliche Mutter* to disentangle the figure from the literal:

Identification of the root metaphor identifies the figurative transfer that was necessary to develop the conceptual term for the entity in question. ...What was originally a synecdoche, ...or a metonymy, contingent visible element as sign for a secret adjacent element, in a complex which must be assumed to be homogeneous for the figure to work, gradually comes to be the "literal" name for what it used only to figure.⁶⁰

By identifying the root metaphor of the nation and the necessity of the process of 'figurative transfer' Burger opens up the possibility of a recoding of the nation which should lead to a healthier society:

...diese Abschreckungsphilosophie [der Armee] dürfe doch nicht so weit führen, daß sie den Chronischkranken zum infausten Dasein verdamme und daran hindere, im Gotthard nicht etwas anderes zu sehen und zu suchen als ein Synonym für Schweiz und Schweizerischen Widerstands- und Freiheitswillen. Wie so oft in der soldatischen Praxis komme es zum Konflikt zwischen dem Kollektiv und dem Einzelnen, und wenn nun dieser Einzelne ...,sein Heil nur noch in der vorübergehenden Eroberung der Alpenfestung ...sehen könne, ...dürfe man sich nicht hinter einer Präzedenzfalltheorie verschanzen, sondern müsse Menschlichkeit walten lassen und einen anderen Auftrag der Armee in den Vordergrund stellen, die Pflicht, zur Verwirklichung der Menschenrechte beizutragen... (KM, p.94-5)

Schöllkopf does not reject the need for figuration but claims the right to refigure the nation in accordance with his own needs, to be included within the grid of national

⁵⁹ Culler, *On Deconstruction*, p.88.

discourse. Schöllkopf seeks to reinstate the distinction between part and whole to enable a broader concept of the whole to be developed which in turn will extend the function of the part. In this example the function of the army is broadened to include a concern with human rights and 'Menschlichkeit'. Burger's concept of 'Menschlichkeit' would appear to embrace the idea of hermaphroditism and the need for space for the feminine.

The above passage provides a clear statement of the purpose of the novel itself: to overcome the myth of the Gotthard and to create out of it more than simply a 'Synonym für Schweiz und Schweizerischen Widerstands- und Freiheitswillen'. The manner in which it does so refers back again to the central paradox of the novel: to overcome art in order to discover life, art must be used. Thus it is that to circumvent the military and the labyrinthine structures which map the nation. Schöllkopf adopts the trick employed by the Hauptmann von Köpenick; it would be the ultimate irony if the trick 'ausgerechnet in der Schweiz, wo die Uniform bekanntlich alle Türen öffnet, nicht zu wiederholen wäre, zumal nicht anzunehmen ist, daß eine Gotthardwache Zuckmayers Stück kennt, Dienst ist Dienst und Literatur ist Literatur' (KM, p.116). The division between duty and literature is a fundamental one, and goes to the heart of Schöllkopf's own dilemma: he is caught between his own sense of duty, of adherence to masculine norms, and his desire for literary expression. It is significant that to make the jump from the 'real' world in which he finds himself into the imaginative world of the 'Heilstollen' he must resort to literature: Zuckmayer's play provides the impetus for his own creative development, and his move beyond a merely political, or satiric, engagement with the military.

⁶⁰ Hillis-Miller, *Ariadne's Thread*, p.32.

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One final step is necessary before Schöllkopf can move into the 'Heilstollen' and the therapy of 'Die Künstliche Mutter': a reckoning with the physical mother. This is the subject of the section 'Brief an die Mutter', which comes after 'Göschchen' and before 'Heilstollen'. The central accusation against the mother in 'Brief an die Mutter' is that she has forced Schöllkopf into the role of Mary, the male figure of control: Schöllkopf has not come into the world 'Schönheit und Licht zu trinken' but 'als Musterschüler und Gesellenstück einer korrekten Erziehung zu verkommen'. The sister is perceived as complicit in the imposition of the educational straitjacket: it guarantees her freedom: 'Ihre Sexualität war Natur, meine eine Laune derselben. ... Ihre Gesundheit florierte auf Kosten der meinigen'. (KM, p.147) The sister, Klärli, is the natural Eve figure, able to indulge her sexuality, 'sich der Sonne zuwenden' (KM, p.146), at the expense of her opposite, Maria. Brother and Sister, as diametrically opposed figurations of the self, are symbiotically linked:

Es gehört zur Verrücktheit dieses Schreibens, daß schlechterdings alles, was dem verhängnisvollen, maternell-sororialen Konkubinat zur Last gelegt werden muß, vice versa gegen mich verwendet werden kann. Es gibt also immerhin noch eine grammatikalische Verwandtschaft zwischen uns, insofern als wir in einem syntaktischen Gefüge unterzubringen sind. (KM, p.143)

Schöllkopf recognises that he stands at the opposite pole to his sister, and, therefore, she could equally well accuse him of responsibility for her unstated banishment in the role of Eve.

Schöllkopf, in his position of 'Privatdozent' and 'Enzyklopädie absturzreifer Weisheiten' (KM, p.173), embraced the male role envisaged for him thereby affirming the values underpinning his education which lead to the polarisation of the sexes in conformity with Adorno's analysis: 'Es hat für den Madonnenkult durch den Hexenwahn gebüßt'. The link is made apparent by Schöllkopf:

So wurde aus der Nabelfrau, die mich im dampfenden Wurzelreich an ihren brötigen Leib drückte, in Kot und Urin wickelte, allmählich eine entfernte Tante, zynischerweise eine Zeugin Jehovas, tolle Figur, knallroter Mund, lackierte Krallen, welche mir im laszivblau gekachelten Badezimmer erlaubte, zwar nicht den Torso, nicht die Büste, aber doch das Torselet, die Fruchtschalen zu berühren. Und aus der Tante wurde der Vamp ..., der gesichtslose, flimmernde Zelluloid-Sexappeal, welcher sich in ein Grobrastergestöber auflöst, sobald man näher an die Leinwand tritt. ... Sie gaben uns die Illusion, genau so zu sein, wie die Männerphantasie, ein Produkt weiblicher Erziehung, sich das wünschte. (KM, p.151)

The gestatory process of the vamp involves the substitution of physical contact with the mother by an untouchable illusion of femininity. The loss of contact with his own body is reflected in Schöllkopf's need for the unattainable vamp, a desire which can never be consummated.

The parts which he desires can never replace the whole. The 'Brief an die Mutter' signifies a reflective awareness of the illusory nature of the 'self' which he has become and a radical challenge by Schöllkopf to his status as metonym. The move into the 'Stollen' signals a desire to reverse the move from 'Nabelfrau' to 'Vamp':

... wir, der Gotthard und ich, [werden] diese Geburt annullieren, mit einer amtlichen Ungültigkeitserklärung besiegeln, aus der Irreversibilität herausoperieren. Wir werden noch einmal, und zwar lustvoll, zur Welt kommen. (KM, p.154)

As the Gotthard represents the means by which, and the history within which, he has been defined, to enter the Gotthard and to redefine it represents Schöllkopf's relocation of history within himself, his rebirth as an individual capable of creating his own metaphors of being, rather than being bound by the dead metaphor of the Gotthard and the myriad metonyms which derive from it. 'Brief an die Mutter' signals a major change in direction in the novel away from a concern with the 'real', physical world of Göschenen and the mother into the surreal world of the imagination figured in the 'Heilstollen'.

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The 'Heilstollen' thus becomes Schöllkopf's personal metaphor for self-discovery and creativity. Consequently the epistemological status of the 'Stollen' is unclear. The move into the 'Stollen' is a move into an uncharted world of surreal dreams, a world in which fiction and reality become indistinguishable, and which offers a 'Gang zu den Müttern'. The world of the 'Stollen' can be located within the world of the nation: a hypodiegetic world one level down within a recursive structure. As such it represents a *mise-en-abyme*, what McHale refers to as 'a nested/embedded representation occupying an inferior narrative level to the main diegetic narrative world: it must resemble something of the primary world and this something must be salient and continuous enough to be considered to reproduce or

duplicate primary representation'.⁶¹ The 'Stollen', as a *mise-en-abyme*, resembles the primary world sufficiently for it to be recognisable, but Burger distorts it through his introduction of the parareal. The uncertainty engendered by the parareal disrupts the epistemological status of the primary world.

That the world of the 'Stollen' occupies an inferior narrative level is de facto correct. It has the status of a lower level of reality. In this respect it represents the unconscious, the feminine which needs to be controlled. The work of Cixous is again particularly relevant in this context, as she offers a conception of the plurality of voice in narrative. Two terms appropriate here are the *Imaginary* and the *Symbolic Order*. The 'Imaginary' corresponds to the pre-Oedipal period when the child believes itself to be a part of the mother, and perceives no separation between itself and the world. The Oedipal crisis 'represents the entry into the Symbolic Order. This entry is also linked to the acquisition of language. ...The phallus, representing the Law of the Father (or the threat of castration), thus comes to signify separation and loss to the child'.⁶² The Symbolic Order can be broadly classified as representing the primary world, whilst the Imaginary represents the secondary, or inferior narrative level.

The division between the two worlds, primary and secondary, symbolic and imaginary, corresponds to another oppositional pairing, between the notion of real and unreal space. The process at work in relation to the Gotthard has served to naturalise the metaphor, to make it real and concrete. The Gotthard comes to occupy a fixed, real geographical space at the heart of the nation as opposed to a

⁶¹ B. McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, London and New York, 1987, pp.124-5.

⁶² T. Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory*, London & New York, 1985, p.99.

metaphorical space, which is unreal. The opposition invoked can be easily translated into the opposition between male and female:

As with so many binary accounts of difference, the difference between ...real and non-real spaces is constructed through the terms of sexual difference. The real is simultaneously concrete and dynamic, yet both these qualities signify the masculine; the non-real is simultaneously fluid and imprisoning, but always engendered as feminine. Material real space could thus be re-described as the effect of masculinist power, its very materiality also its particular masculinity; but non-real space is also the effect of masculinist power, its lack of reality the sign of feminization. The instabilities between and within these efforts to define real and non-real space are symptomatic of, indeed are constitutive of, a compulsive fixing of sexual difference.⁶³

The distinction between real and unreal space, the natural and the imaginary, between feminine and masculine are precisely those which Burger seeks to collapse by demonstrating the inextricable intermeshing of fiction and reality. In doing so he challenges male authority predicated on binary oppositions by using the secondary world to undermine the primary. As will be shown in the following sections the conflict, and interaction, between the primary and secondary world forms a basic paradigm for Schöllkopf's quest.

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The challenge to the dominant discourses occurs on two, related, planes. Firstly the history of the nation is refigured, and an alternative history is posited. The 'Aueraplalisch' clinic, which offers the treatment 'die Künstliche Mutter', is

⁶³ G. Rose, 'Masculinist Theory and Feminist Masquerade' in *Bodyspace*, edited by N. Duncan, London and New York, 1996, pp.56-74, p.59.

located in the Gotthard, but in an Austrian enclave, 'welche noch älter ist als die Alte Eidgenossenschaft'. (KM, p.181) This subverts the history of the nation imported from Weimar based on brotherhood, 'Wir wollen sein ein einzig Volk von Brüdern. Einig sind sich Brüder in solchen Situationen meistens, das wäre ein Pleonasmus; aber einzig ist ein Volk ... nur selten'(KM, pp.179-80). The concept of unity is predicated on the equation of brotherhood with people: a clear indication of the exclusion of the feminine.

Burger undercuts Schiller's fictionalisation of the birth of the nation with the irony that the 'vermeintliche Feind klammheimlich im Innersten des Labyrinths hockte'(KM, p.180); the stout defenders of the nation were succouring a 'Kuckucksei' which now, with Schöllkopf's help, threatens to hatch and change the figuration of the alpine bastion from within:

auf eine derartige Nutzung unserer Alpen wären wir Schweizer nie gekommen, wir gehen immer davon aus, daß in unserem Land von Staates wegen alles kerngesund ist, und haben nur die Abschreckung und Uneinnehmbarkeit im Kopf. (KM, p.168-9)

The hope derived from the cure is that the brotherly oath can be extended to encompass all sections of the nation, which implies dialogue between masculine and feminine, and an acknowledgement of the sickness caused by the exclusion of the latter. The erstwhile labyrinth which has served as defence now serves as a 'Labyrinth des Heißluftemanatoriums' and offers passage to health: 'Wir fahren Sie krank ein und möchten Sie gesund herausbringen'(KM.,p.162).

The labyrinth as a masculine construction imposing law and *logos* upon the world, a labyrinth which Schöllkopf, as an academic, has been complicit in maintaining must give way to a concern with the body and soul:

Wir stellen dich vor die Alternative: Metastasen oder Metamorphose! Tritt, wenn es nicht ohnehin zu spät ist, den Rückzug an, vom hohen Gelahrtentum des Dozentissimus und Patientissimus zur privaten Verantwortung für deinen Leib, für seine Seele. Sei ein Mensch mit seinem Widerspruch und keine Enzyklopädie absturzreifer Weisheiten. (KM, p.173)

To be 'ein Mensch mit seinem Widerspruch'⁶⁴ is to accept what Cixous describes as the unmanageable part that the unconscious plays in speech, and to be open to the unconscious. It signals a move away from a coherent linear narrative and linear images which bind the individual within the national process of *Intersubjektivierung*. For Schöllkopf it means to step outside the law, the symbolic order. In so doing Schöllkopf highlights the absence of a correlation between the primary world and the world of the imagination, the public and the private world. The move into the private world of the 'Stollen' constitutes a step into the liminal spaces of society: an area which cannot be accommodated within either the temporal or semantic grammar of the nation, or the symbolic space of the primary world.

The second challenge to the dominant discourses is posed by Schöllkopf's transgression of the border - the forbidden step into the 'Ozean'. The means by which Schöllkopf crosses the boundary may be described as dialogic:

⁶⁴ This may be seen as a reference to Meyer's *Huttens letzte Tage*, where Hutten has the role of an exemplary, but rebellious and uncompromising hero, preserving both sides of his personality; his final exile on the Ufenau might even be seen as a parallel to the descent into the private world of the 'Stollen' by Schöllkopf.

den Propheten zum Berg zu locken; das Stichwort, das ich erfand - alles muß man ja selber leisten... -, war Unterleibsmigräne, eine Frauenkrankheit..., den Propheten... zum Berg zu locken und mich dann erdrutschartig auf ihn zuzubewegen - und er meldete sich. (KM, p.41)

A dialogue ensues between the prophet and Schöllkopf. More precisely a dialogue arises within Schöllkopf between the conformist 'Dozent', or thinker, and the 'Dichter'. The prophet symbolises an attempt on the part of Schöllkopf to transgress the bounds of thought and move into the world of the imagination, to create his own metaphors. In calling to himself as prophet Schöllkopf points to the fundamental duality of the self: between 'ich' and 'er', and also between 'Geist' and 'Kunst'. The representation of the move into the 'Heilstollen' is an act of conscious artistry in which Schöllkopf, as narrator, is both explorer and designer; the ambivalence of his narrative position accounts for the narrative complexity of the novel, as the narrator has no overview of events.

As has been argued in this thesis, the *Die Künstliche Mutter* is concerned, like Burger's earlier work, with origins, and particularly with narrative presentation of origin. The narrative of the nation is linear, or logocentric, in its assertion of the nation as a unified whole. The individual narrative becomes subsumed within the national narrative; the concept of unified wholeness which defines the 'Volk' becomes a compulsory model for the individual narrative imposing a unitary sense of selfhood. In *Die Künstliche Mutter* the link between national narrative and individual narrative is problematised. Burger takes up Bergmann's motto and locates history in the individual and not vice versa. With this he works from the inside out, rather than from the outside in. He turns the hierarchical discourse of the nation on

its head, and asserts the disunity of the nation. Disunity follows on two levels: firstly each individual will have a different history which will need to be incorporated within the national culture, and secondly within each individual a dialogue takes place. For society to reflect the plurality of voices in the individual and the plurality of individual voices it must become dialogic. The individual must provide the model for society not vice versa.

The 'Stollen' represent a descent into the self predicated on an awareness of the duality of the self, in search of genuine metaphors which figure the multiplicity of self. Nietzsche considered that the body 'may be inhabited by multiple selves. Nietzsche's figure for this "dialogism" (in the sense of submission to more than one logos) is a dynamic, physical one. The inner world acts like an enclosed collocation of matter and energy'.⁶⁵ Hillis-Miller regards Nietzsche's concept of 'dialogism' as a 'powerful lever to displace our traditional "logocentrism"' and one which is necessary for man's self-preservation.

The dialogic aspect of the text is emphasised in a further passage highlighting the interaction between the primary and secondary worlds:

[ich] muß ...Ihnen gestehen, daß wir Ihnen ...etwas anboten, was es bis dato gar nicht gibt. Wir, die Auer-Aplanalpsche Heilstollengesellschaft..., hatten es mit lauter Unbekannten zu tun, einem X für den Krankheitserreger, einem Y für den Krankheitsträger und einem Z für die psychosomatischen Metaphern, die zwischen X und Y ausgetauscht werden. ...Mit anderen Worten: die Künstliche Mutter, der Sie sich bereits unterzogen zu haben glauben, muß erst noch kreierte werden. Nur Sie, Schöllkopf, Ihr einmaliges Autorenkollektiv von Körper und Seele konnte diese Krankheit erfinden und

⁶⁵ Hillis-Miller, *Ariadne's Thread*, p.50

mittels spastischer Krämpfe beschreiben, also sind Sie auch der Entdecker der auf Sie zugeschnittenen Therapie, der Künstlichen Mutter. Die ganze Schul- und Paramedizin steht sprachlos vor Ihrer Originalität.... Das einzige Problem war, Sie in den Stollen zu locken. (KM, p.190-1)

Not only the cure, but the illness is unique to Schöllkopf. He has figured the cause of his own dilemma in terms of physical impotence and the desire for the 'freie Mutterwahl'. Metaphor, in this context, reveals its power to establish connections which would not otherwise be acknowledged.

The problem is to get Schöllkopf to believe in the power of his own metaphor, to lure him into the world of his imagination, created by his imagination. The self is not a unified whole, but an 'Autorenkollektiv' of body and soul. The body, as a site of ideological control, is alienated from the soul. Helene Cixous considers that the body is confiscated:

replaced with a disturbing stranger, sick or dead, who so often is a bad influence, the cause and the place of inhibitions. By censoring the body, breath and speech are censored at the same time. ... Write yourself: your body must make itself heard. Then the huge resources of the unconscious will burst out.⁶⁶

In addressing the problems of his body, Schöllkopf forges a union between body and soul which culminates in an original voice, the creative voice of the novel. The failure of the 'Schulmedizin' to respond to Schöllkopf's originality is an inevitable consequence of its narrow conceptual framework.

⁶⁶ Cixous, "Sorties", p.97.

Schöllkopf's originality, and the resultant 'Sprachlosigkeit' it engenders, signals a move beyond the boundary of social 'Intersubjektivierung'. Schöllkopf shifts the focus onto the body and once again reverses the standard power relations:

das Recht, mich Wollfram Schöllkopf, geboren zu haben, in der Stollentherapie... dem Rekursverfahren unterworfen würde, daß mein ganzer Körper unter Berufung auf die Zeugnisprotokolle der einzelnen Organe, zumal des von der Unterleibsmigräne heimgesuchten Gemähtes, Nichtigkeitsbeschwerde einlegt. (KM, p.135)

Schöllkopf locates the law within the body, within his body. Ideological inscription of the body is seen as a desperate attempt on the part of the state to ensure that the individual conforms to the stereotype of the citizen and thereby guarantees the continued existence of the state, and the perpetuation of the vicious circle in which Schöllkopf finds himself.

Schöllkopf claims the right to refigure his own body, to uncensor his body and live with its demands. The self is regarded as a figure: it cannot be named or perceived directly, therefore it must be figured. The problem arises that the figure becomes literalised, as in the model of the 'Gesinnungsschweizer', as essential to the fiction of nationhood and the existence of society; the individual is then perceived as duty bound to perform the figure, each generation must reaffirm the figuration of the self. The freedom offered by liberation of the body is a freedom from the constraints of an imposed concept of selfhood. It is at the same time a liberation from the concept of unitary selfhood which can be linked with the breakdown of linear narrative: 'the terminology defining selfhood is tied to the network of linear terms for

narrative'.⁶⁷ Opening up the notion of selfhood offers not just freedom, but a view of the abyss of human existence. For, as Hillis-Miller points out:

to live without the illusion of selfhood, to feel one's selfhood doubled, tripled, dissolved ... to live in the nakedness of truth, were such a thing possible, would be another kind of madness. To be human is to live precariously balanced between madness and madness, between extremes both extremely dangerous. The function of the novel in the economy of modern bourgeois society ... has been the paradoxical one of reinforcing, to some degree even creating, the linguistic error of a belief in unitary selfhood, while at the same time putting that belief in question, demystifying in one way or another the error.

The cure is an allegory of the creative process. In this creative process the Auer-Aplanalp clinic represents a 'Künstliche Mutter' offering the freedom to create. The position Schöllkopf finds himself in is indicative of that of the writer who creates a labyrinth in the hope of discovering the centre, the hidden secret at the heart of the labyrinth, yet is threatened with the danger of loss of self. The narrative voice is only one of many, it must struggle to exert control over the narrative if the very sense of self is not to be lost: he must remain careful to leave a thread which can be retraced.

As Schöllkopf enters the labyrinth of the novel, he moves away from ordered narrative patterns into a confusing narrative where time and space are no longer clearly delineated. Such a move offers the possibility of artistic freedom, yet it brings with it an anxiety that there may be no centre, only a void, or perpetual wandering. On this level, as Schöllkopf steps outside the cultural certitude offered

⁶⁷ Hillis-Miller, *Ariadne's Thread*, p.31.

by the house, it represents a jump into the unknown. The anxiety engendered is reflected in the self-reflective focus on the narrative itself and the concern with language, with the power of language to find a path through the labyrinth. Charting a path through the labyrinth is, in some respects, analogous to the writing of the novel.⁶⁸ Questions are raised by the novel to which it does not itself have answers; at times, it even problematises its ability to put the question. Burger draws attention to this in his own writing:

Literatur eignet sich schlecht als Vehikel für eindimensionale Überzeugungen. Wer sich schreibend an eine Öffentlichkeit wendet, glaubt nicht an Antwort-Rezepte. Er hat im Gegenteil die Notwendigkeit eingesehen, die Spannung von Fragen auszuhalten. Wäre unsere Dasein tatsächlich nur ein Handvoll theologischer, psychologischer oder philosophischer Antworten wert, hätte die Literatur längst ausgespielt.⁶⁹

Literature is concerned with uncertainty and questioning. Literature opens up the labyrinth without any guarantee of finding a way either to the centre or a way out. It threatens to plunge both reader and writer into a state of existential uncertainty.

Burger's labyrinth is juxtaposed with the certainty offered by the metonymic maze of religious and cultural discourse. Faris points out:

⁶⁸ Burger points to this aspect of the novel in letters to Thomas Beckermann: 'Es liegt in der Natur dieses Romans, dass er von den Zipfeln her fertig wird, mosaikartig, wie ein Puzzle...' Küttingen, 16.11.1981, (SLA), Bern. This point is reiterated in a later letter: 'Es steht kein ausgeklügelter Mensch dahinter, drum darfs, meine ich, ein Buch mit seinem Widerspruch sein'. Küttingen, 12.3.1982, (SLA), Bern.

⁶⁹ H. Burger, 'Schreiben in der Ich-Form' Sonderabdruck aus *Schweizer Monatshefte*, 53, Heft 1, April 1973, p.49.

...Todorov opposes the uncertainty of the outcome of the ordeals and obstacles in profane narrative logic to the foretold conclusion of ritual, religious logic, opposing, we could say, decentered to centered narrative labyrinths.⁷⁰

A decentred narrative labyrinth offers no certainty that the goal, in Schöllkopf's case love, a union of masculine and feminine, and the completion of the novel itself, will ever be reached. Rather, the labyrinth serves to frustrate the fulfilment of the quest, 'The convolutions of the discourse remove the quester/lover/reader from the object of his desire. The lack of a single central point denies the satisfaction of a climactic possession of meaning, or at least postpones it, requiring it to take place in the realm of interpretation'.⁷¹ The denial of meaning, of epistemological certitude problematises the relationship of language and literature to meaning.

As a consequence, the narrative is forced to engage with its own process of narration, the narrator is compelled to reaffirm his own existence in a self-reflective manner which could be described as narcissistic. Ironically, the self reflexivity of the text serves not to provide affirmation, but to problematise even further the epistemological status of the narrative and the narrator, and thereby to increase the imperative for a resolution to the dilemma whilst exacerbating the distance between the narrator and the object of the quest. It also involves the reader in the process of interpretation, as he or she also seeks meaning and certainty.⁷² In doing so it represents an unwelcome challenge to the dominant discourses and the fiction of the nation: meaning is regarded as fixed, the hierarchy established as natural.

⁷⁰ Faris, *Labyrinths of Language*, p.172.

⁷¹ Faris, *Labyrinths of Language*, p.176.

⁷² This may be compared with the use made of Barthes notion of the *lisible* in

The position Schöllkopf adopts is a politically charged one: he seeks to refigure the external world of the nation in terms of his own inner dialogue between masculine and feminine. He does not abandon his links with the Mater Dolorosa, but seeks to use the female figures to enable him to cross the boundary without losing hold of reality:

Denn das Autogene Gletschertraining wird komplementär ergänzt durch eine Daunendecke, durch einen Femme-fragile -wie -fatale-Teppich an sexuell indefiniten Gutenachtküssen, dein feuermalversengter Privatdozenten-Brestnam wird Zentimeter um Zentimeter warm geküßt ... Du schließt nun caro Armando, die Augen und redest dir suggestiv ein: Gletscher kalt, kälter, eiskalt; Monica - mit C geschrieben wie Circus - warm, wärmer, glutheiß.
(KM, p..172)

The awakening of the body is a gentle process associated with the opening up of the unconscious through autogenic training. The process is a balanced one, glacier and circus in a certain harmony. The move into the unconscious is not an unmediated one. Autogenic training implies a controlling voice calling up the unconscious. As Schöllkopf enters the feminine world of imagination, so he rediscovers his potency as a male. The reawakening of the masculine is seen as a necessary complement to an engagement with the feminine. The implication is of a more authentic expression of femininity and masculinity acting dialogically to achieve a higher level of representation.

The cure within the 'Stollen' documents a shift in Schöllkopf's perception away from an overconcentration on the superficiality of appearance towards an appreciation of the depth of love:

Zwischen den Polen Engel und Teufelsweib pendelt sich Ihr Idealbild ein. ... Beides verbietet die Erosklinik des Heilstollens, die Angel- und die Vamp-Droge. (KM, p.194)

The virgin-whore dichotomy is part of the vicious circle in which Schöllkopf is trapped. Sexual desire, associated with a stream of beautiful, but interchangeable, feminine figures, is seen as inimical to the development, and discovery, of the deeper emotional aspect of the self. Schöllkopf perceives himself as a 'Fehlfarbe', a term derived from cigar connoisseurship suggesting that a cigar is spoiled if the 'Deckblatt' is not pure, regardless of the content, who, capable of love, has become infatuated with 'das Prinzip der Uneinnehmbarkeit'.

The move beyond stereotypical representations is an attempt to move beyond forms such as the 'Goldene Ring über Uri':

diese geschlossene Form, welche einerseits das Numen bannt, andererseits durch den Frevel gesprengt werden kann wie in den verschiedenen Sagen des Dittitollgs. ... Das Tabu, das uns verbietet, mit jenen Frauen zu schlafen, die uns verwandtschaftlich am nächsten stehen, uns somit am ehesten par coeur verstehen müßten, ist ein sittliches, also künstliches; wollen wir es entmachten, wenden wir die Formel künstlich mal künstlich gleich natürlich an. Der Frauen-Spektral-Ring unter Uri ist kein Circulus vitiosus, wie uns die Moralin-Brunnenvergifter einreden wollen, sondern ein Circulus vitalis. (KM, p.197)

The 'Numen' is banished yet there remains the possibility of breaking the rigid form through sacrilegious tales which flout sexual taboos and disregard authoritative metaphors. Burger plays with the incest taboo as a means of overcoming the division of the sexes, the virgin-whore polarity.

Burger's use of the word 'verwandtschaftlich' is ambiguous, as it plays on the difference between kinship and affinity. Kinship reflects the gridlike structure of intersubjective relations; it provides a system whereby each person within the system can identify his or her relationship with every other person. Kinship is associated with the ancestral line, an image of linearity, a line going back to the Gotthard which serves to define intersubjective relations. Schöllkopf does not conceive of himself as a self-defining entity independent of those around him; he is part of the line which links every man and woman to every other man and woman. Yet paradoxically kinship, as an arbitrary system of figuration, serves to exclude the person closest to Schöllkopf as the untouchable other: it proves to be inimical to the constitution of the self. The system of kinship as 'künstlich' is balanced by another 'künstliches' System, the substitution of the 'künstliche' mother, sister, daughter for the natural mother, sister, daughter. The artificial, or artful, enactment of incest transgresses the rigid system of kinship to inaugurate the 'Circulus vitalis'.

The principle of love changes the status of women and implies a fundamental shift in Schöllkopf's attitude away from 'das Prinzip der Uneinnehmbarkeit'. In the short story 'Bork' the narrator looked out fearfully at life from a house which was not his own; Schöllkopf acts to appropriate the space of the house. He recognises that the house, the source of protection and home of the mother, was never able to exclude the spectre of the witch who occupies an intermediate position between

nature and culture. The mother, as a construct, is not powerful enough to banish the witch:

... immer nur wußte ich von den nächtlichen Hexenverfolgungen zu berichten, von dieser gichtgekrümmten Jordibeth mit dem Feuertuch, welche schon im finsternen Schloßgraben vor dem Gartentor lauerte, wenn ich in Panik die ... Treppenhalle hinunterstürzte, um alles zu verriegeln ... und wenn ich alles schloß- und riegelfest gemacht zu haben glaubte ... [verrieten] mir die Windstöße aus dem Vestibül..., daß alles Verbarrikadieren nichts genützt hatte, daß mir die Hexe schon auf den Fersen war. Mit der Gewißheit, von ihr gepackt, verschleppt, einverleibt, gebrandmarkt zu werden, endete der Traum... (KM., p.164-65)

That which was believed to be firmly excluded is seen once again to exist within. Consequently the house is not a sanctuary, but a prison. The dream world is always present as is the witch, the figure who exists in the interstices of the primary and secondary systems. It is impossible to exclude, or suppress, the secondary world of the subconscious, but if the house is to be anything other than a prison in which the prisoner lives in perpetual fear of his or her subconscious then the concept of the house must be extended.

The harmony of inside and outside, the ability to give physical expression to the inner self, represents a conjunction of the primary and secondary worlds and a triumph of the inner world over the external forces which seek to suppress it. In the 'Venus-Grotte' of the 'Heilstollen' Schöllkopf experiences his liberating vision: 'Hier wurde das Bild wahr, das ich in meinen schlimmsten Kreuzigungsnächten dem Buch "Noces" von Albert Camus entlehnt hatte' (KM., p.200) The vision of Camus is replaced by Schöllkopf's own vision:

... die Hexe Jordibeth ... aus meinen Kinderheimträumen, sie kommt, um mich zu nehmen, aber auf andere, ältere Art. Ich hielt die Augen geschlossen, auf der Netzhaut entbrannte das Bild nur um so schärfer: ... Man konnte das Ineinanderschälen von Mann und Frau nicht Koitus nennen, vielmehr wurde meine glaziale Gehirngfrömi durchfeuchtet und durchglutet, die lustvolle Rücknahme der Geburt durch eine Göttin, ohne den kategorischer Imperativ sexueller Leistung ... Ein steriler himmlischer Hitler sorgte dafür, daß die natürlichste Sprache des Körpers in babylonischer Verwirrung zur Fremdsprache der Pathologie verkam, daß die Menschen ja nie befriedigt wurden und die Bibel doch recht behielt. ...lauter Ismen-Ismen-Ismen, nur ja nichts Anständiges, Normales, Gesundes. Diese sonnenschwarze Göttin aber war keine Stella maris, sondern la mer und la mère, welche den Sündenfall rückgängig machte und sagte: du bist mein Sohn und sitzt nicht zur Rechten Gottes, sondern liegst in der Mitte deiner Göttin. Ich lehre dich lieben, es soll ein Gebet des Fleisches wie der Seele sein und nicht der Lebens- und Todesfurcht'. (KM, p.201-2)

The inversion which Schöllkopf's imagination creates is central to the purpose of the novel. The exterior discourses, inimical to self-development, which were absorbed into the body, 'subkutan aufgenommen'(KM., p.201), to create shame and illness are rejected as the inner needs of the body are folded outward to create a new exterior discourse. The natural language of the body, of desire, love, hunger is externalised as genuine language; body and soul combine in harmony to create a more complete expression of the individual.

The rewriting of the body is an act of liberation. The surface reflects what is within, the body figures the soul. The inversion of nature and knowledge is figured in the relationship of Schöllkopf to the 'Nameless' the glacier of which it was impossible to tell 'ob er im Begriff war abzustürzen oder vorzustößen'. (KM, p.203)

In the case of the 'Nameless' the relationship of Schöllkopf to nature is reversed:

'hier war mein Privatdozentenstatus das Forschungsgebiet, war die Natur die wissenschaftliche Instanz'(KM, p.203). The opening up of the self to nature is a final step in the dismantling of the cultural construct represented by the house: the failure to name the glacier, to impose language and meaning upon it implies a realisation of the inadequacy of language to figure what is unknown.

Burger's analysis of Celan's *Gespräch im Gebirg*, whilst admittedly belonging in a different context, sheds some light upon the conflict he perceives between the appropriation of nature, and nature itself, and the link between nature and the creativity of the writer:

Der Gletscher ist ... nicht tot, er wandert, schiebt sich unendlich langsam vor oder zurück, so wie sich die vergessenen Erlebnisse im Dichter ohne sein Dazutun verändern. ... Wenn wir die Gleichung "...das ist die Sprache, die hier gilt...", die Celan nicht explicit ausgesprochen haben möchte, trotzdem weiterführen, stoßen wir auf eine Sprache, deren Wurzeln zurückreichen bis in die Anfänge einer imaginären 'Ursprache'. Es gibt keinen älteren Traum eines Dichters ...als denjenigen vom schöpferischen Urwort, das die Welt nicht nur abbildet, sondern neu entwirft. ... Die Natur hier oben in der äußersten Einsamkeit Sprache geworden, gültige, absolute Sprache. ⁷³

Nature is perceived as being in a state of constant flux, as is the imagination of the poet. Should the mind of the poet be open to nature then it is possible to return to the union between language and nature, to fulfil the dream of the poet and refigure language in a more authentic manner. As Burger recognised in relation to Celan such a union of word and thing is impossible: language like birth is irreversible. This is the irony at the heart of Schöllkopf's descent into the 'Stollen': he realises the

⁷³ H. Burger, *Paul Celan*, Frankfurt a.M., 1989, p.24.

impossibility of the annulment of his birth, and he understands the extent to which his identity is rooted in the cultural construct of the nation. Such an awareness does not preclude the attempt to break down the barrier which Schöllkopf perceives as having arisen between language and life.

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Once Schöllkopf is 'gestärkt genug' (KM, p..204) he is allowed a vertical descent to the level of the 'Fundus der klassischen und antiken Tragödien', where the 'Schöllkopf betreffenden Urszenen vorgespielt werden sollten'. (KM, p..205). The Faustian theme continues as Schöllkopf encounters Faust, from *Faust II*; he moves straight to the lines from the scene 'zu den Müttern' which is regarded as the 'Kernszene' (KM, p..205):

"ungern entdeck ich höheres Geheimnis- / Göttinnen thronen hehr in
Einsamkeit,/ Um sie kein Ort, noch weniger eine Zeit/ Von ihnen sprechen ist
Verlegenheit/ Die Mütter sind es" ... Faust: "Wohin der Weg?" Mephisto:
"Kein Weg! Ins Unbetretene,/ ... Nicht Schlösser sind, nicht Riegel
wegzuschieben,/ Von Einsamkeit wirst umhergetrieben./ Hast du Begriff von
Öd und Einsamkeit?" (KM, p.205)

The question 'Wohin der Weg?' echoes Schöllkopf's own question as he searches for the creative 'Urwort'. Schöllkopf's need to draw on *Faust II* at this advanced stage if he is to proceed further was prefigured in his need to draw on Zuckmeyer's play in order to enter the 'Heilstollen'. Faust leads Schöllkopf towards the realm of 'Die Mütter', a realm outside of time and space, in which the answer is believed to lie. Nonetheless, the danger posed by Mephistopheles is still very much present and threatens to end Schöllkopf's quest in a moment of awe by drawing him into the

drama itself; thereby, destroying his detachment from the work of art and his ability to draw upon it to produce his own work. Burger has always warned of the danger of being overwhelmed by the literature of the past, of losing one's own voice, and there is a threat that Schöllkopf's voice will be lost in the labyrinth of literature that constitutes the cultural framework in which he lives.

Significantly, as Schöllkopf prepares to experience a new level of 'Öd' and 'Einsamkeit', he does not leave the house, but he descends to its very foundations. As he does so he moves beyond the reach of masculine rationality and the law. Schöllkopf, like Faust, moves from the restrictive love of Gretchen to the transcendent love of Helen. Helen is ungraspable, yet not illusory, she is a pure form, a product of the deepest imaginative yearning. She represents the power offered by the Mothers, the opportunity to shape the world through art.

The Mothers stand outside time and space, yet it is within them that time and space are grounded: they represent the source of forms, a realm of 'Gestaltung und Umgestaltung'.⁷⁴ The shape given to the Mothers is transitory, it cannot be claimed for eternity by a symbolic order seeking to impose a structure upon the world. The Mothers offer the power to shape reality anew. To reach this power, as Schöllkopf seeks to do, he must delve deep into the earth and history to move back beyond Christianity, and its appropriation of the power of the Mothers. In search of the Mothers and the 'Künstliche Mutter' Schöllkopf turns naturally to Faust:

⁷⁴ Goethe's view of nature and 'die Mütter' may be compared with Burger's view of nature expressed in the introduction to *Schriftbilder der Natur*, Aarau, 1985: 'Der deutsche Mystiker Jakob Böhme sagt: "Ein jedes Ding hat seinen Mund zur Offenbarung." Sie [die Bilder und Texte] sind dazu angetan, die verborgenen Schönheiten der Natur zu entdecken. Über die Signatur der Jahrringe im Querschnitt eines Baumstammes oder die Struktur eines Felsenbandes ... stoßen wir zum Kern der Dinge vor, der uns von den

Insgesamt ... offenbart uns das Faust-Mysterium in der Schau des Mutter-Göttlichen eine numinose Instanz, die über das einseitig aufgefaßte Vater-Göttliche hinausführt, namentlich über den unfaßlichen *Deus absconditus*, den verborgenen Gott einer in der Neuzeit dominierenden monotheistischen Vaterreligion. ... Diese Entwicklung ... hat ... zu einer starren Trennung zwischen Menschlichem und Göttlichem geführt. Sie hat den Verlust eines unmittelbaren Wissens von geistigen Wirklichkeiten und von den letzten Dingen wesentlich mitverschuldet... Gegen diese verfälschende Perspektive eines *einseitigen Vatergöttlichen* stellt Goethe die Erfahrung von göttlichen 'Müttern' und von der Mütterlichkeit eines Göttlichen, das sich dem Menschen in vielfachen Offenbarungen zuwendet.⁷⁵

If the numinous is to be rediscovered the one-dimensional world of the 'Vatergöttlichen' must be transcended. The wish to inaugurate a new dialogue between 'Menschlichem und Göttlichem' can be linked with Schöllkopf's quest for love, love being shorthand for a utopian vision of a world in which it is possible to give expression to the unlimited creative potential of life. Paradoxically, however, creative expression is only possible if love is balanced by death. Pure love is unreflective; it gives the dynamic impetus to creative expression only when balanced by an awareness of death, as suggested by earlier references to Bachmann.

Burger's introduction of Faust, as part of the final stage of Schöllkopf's development, highlights the importance of the pagan, and of a time uncontaminated by the 'Vatergöttlichen', in the relocation of the divine within the individual. The invocation of *Faust II* has a broader significance as it signifies a wish to reach back to the 'Urbilder' in an attempt to overcome the controlled form of reality in favour of

Errungenschaften der Zivilisation allzu oft verstellt wird'.

new forms shaped by the artistic imagination: it is an attempt to break out of a metonymic cultural framework. Implicit in this project is the desire to rewrite history:

Soll dem Vergangenen eine Art von Existenz, wenngleich um die ehemalige Realität vermindert, in der Gegenwart eingeräumt werden, so muß es vom Modus der Wirklichkeit in den der Möglichkeit übergehen. Daher führt *Faust II* die Antike als Panorama von Möglichkeiten vor, in dem die vieldeutige Unentschiedenheit der Mythen neben den eindeutigen Entscheidungen der Geschichte zugelassen ist - obwohl am Ende jene diesen weichen müssen. ... Das Reich der Mütter umfaßt ...neben dem Archiv der Vergangenheit auch den Vorrat mythischer Bilder, aus dem noch die moderne Poesie schöpfen zu können glaubt. ⁷⁶

Schöllkopf welcomes the indeterminacy of myth as a balance to the rigidity of history. The past offers a store of tales which relativise the authoritative story of the nation, and posit the possibility of alternative histories. It is in the storehouse of myth that the original drive for creative expression is to be found, and it is from this source that Schöllkopf hopes to draw as he seeks the Mothers.

Nevertheless, the danger arises that, rather than aid creativity, the past will emasculate creativity in the present. The influence of the past and past literature is a pertinent one in relation to *Die Künstliche Mutter*, although the broad topic of intertextuality in Burger's work will not be considered in any depth in this thesis. The last stages of Schöllkopf's therapy seem to warn particularly against the fate of

⁷⁵ R. Eppelheimer, *Goethes Faust*, Stuttgart, 1982, p.241.

⁷⁶ H. Schlaffer, *Faust Zweiter Teil*, Stuttgart, 1981, p.107.

the 'Büchernarr'. The engagement with Faust becomes a dialogue in which Schöllkopf is addressed directly and sees:

emsige Maulwurfshände, lehmig verkrustete Damenpranken mit fünf Ringfingern wühlten einen Grabhügel auf, um den Körper des Gelahrten hinunterzuzerren. ... Ich hatte beides unterschätzt: den "Faust II" und die Übertragungsmöglichkeiten, die in den einzelnen Szenen steckten. (KM, p..206)

Performance invites participation, and as in the *Oresteia*, discussed below, Schöllkopf is encouraged to take on a role. The words he speaks are not his own, and there seems to be the danger that Schöllkopf will indeed be drawn into the drama and become lost within it.

Schöllkopf must find his own Helen if he is to relocate history within himself. For, in addition to beauty and spirit, Helen represents the beginning of history.⁷⁷ She is formless and must be shaped by each generation anew if the disappointment experienced by Faust is to be avoided:

Faust, der ausgezogen war, die Antike wieder "ins Leben" zu rufen, entdeckt die enttäuschende Wahrheit, daß er sogar im Schein der Erfüllung in ein bloß historisches Verhältnis zu seinem Wunsche geraten ist. Der mißlingende Rückgriff auf das Vergangene läßt den Verdacht zurück, daß die Poesie selbst vergangen sei. Denn in die Antike war sie ausgewichen, weil ihr die Gegenwart keinen würdigen, schönen Gegenstand bieten konnte.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ cf. J.K. Brown, *Goethe's Faust*, Ithaca and London, 1986, p.168: 'It is not just that our literary tradition begins with the story of Paris and Helen, but that our entire history begins with the equivalent story...'

⁷⁸ Schlaffer, *Faust Zweiter Teil*, p.108.

The fact that Schöllkopf's encounter with the antiquity is mediated through Goethe suggests that he is already aware of the irony of his search for the Mothers.

Inspiration may be sought in the past but past forms of its expression cannot be made present without destroying the original spirit: new form for the creative spirit must be sought in the present. The question whether Schöllkopf will be able to find form for his own creative spirit is hinted at by the final lines from *Faust II* heard by Schöllkopf: 'Dein Wesen strebe nieder!// Versinke stampfend, stampfend steigst du wieder' (KM, p..206). Within *Faust II*, these lines are ironically qualified by Mephistopheles' unheard remark 'Neugierig bin ich, ob er wiederkommt'.⁷⁹ The labyrinth in which Schöllkopf finds himself 'übertraf alles' (KM, p..207), and as he continues his 'Horrorfahrt durch das Bühnengeisterhaus' (KM, p.206) the crucial question is whether indeed Schöllkopf will find his way out.

The next stop for Schöllkopf is a meeting with Clytemnestra. Here he is encouraged by Mephistopheles to take on the role of Orestes in the encounter between mother and son: 'Kannst du deinen Text? ... So sprich und handle!' (KM, p..207). With such an injunction Mephistopheles seeks to disenfranchise Schöllkopf, to entrap him within a text and force him to murder the mother. Schöllkopf is unable to remember the text, he has to be prompted by Mephistopheles until finally he can say 'Jetzt, verspätet, der Examensstupor, erinnerte ich mich an den Text und fiel ein "Die du mich gebarst, verstoßen hast du mich ins Weh!"' (KM, p..207) A tension arises between the lines drawn from his education, Mephistopheles' injunction to act, and his awareness that the scene with Clytemnestra is 'unvollständig' (KM, p.208),

⁷⁹ J.W. Goethe, *Faust II*, Stuttgart, 1986, p.49, line 6306.

as Electra, whose presence alone could mitigate the matricide, is missing. Ultimately his hesitation saves him and the *coup de grace* falls to Mephistopheles:

Während der letzten Verse war die Beule im weißen Beintrikot meines Mitakteurs immer mehr angeschwollen. Nun sprang ein Schwert anstelle des Gliedes aus der Lende. Mephisto-Orestes preßte das verruchte Weib ... an sich und schlitzte es zwischen den Schenkeln auf... (KM, p..208)

The death of Clytemnestra is portrayed as a distinctly male act. The emphasis on the link between penis and sword, which replaces the axe that was the murder weapon according to the myth, supports the idea that the Oresteia signals the usurpation of the power of the maternal by the paternal. That Burger should have Mephistopheles commit the final act serves to stress this point. Mephistopheles seeks to freeze the moment in eternity, he has no understanding of the non-historical, imaginative world his striving is to turn 'das All' of the Mothers into a 'Nichts', and to affirm the power of the 'Vaterreligion'.

The danger for Schöllkopf is that should he support Mephistopheles' action and destroy his feminine side then the problem he faces, 'die leibliche Mutter loszuwerden ohne den weiblichen Schöpfungsgrund (Gang zu den Müttern) zu zerstören'⁸⁰, would not be resolved. It is in this context that the paradox of Schöllkopf's treatment is to be understood:

⁸⁰ H. Burger, Letter to Thomas Beckermann and Fr. Schöller, Badgastein, 24.8.81, (SLA), Bern. This may be compared with a letter sent to Dagmar Berghoff, 14.8.81., (SLA), Bern, where Burger states: '...für mich heißt zu den Müttern gehen, die ganze Oresteia nachvollziehen, die eigene Klytimestra erschlagen und dennoch das "ewig Weibliche", das unsere Produktion hinaufgebiert ans Licht, retten aus dem Blutbad des Infernos'.

Unser Problem ist, Armando, daß wir einerseits aktiv gegen deine Mutter vorgehen müssen, andererseits passiv an ihr zu leiden haben, im Klartext: Wir müssen sie umbringen und an ihr sterben. Dabei darfst du deine weibliche Seele, diese Nixe, ..., nicht verletzen. (KM, p.174-5)

To kill the mother would be an act which would result in an affirmation of masculinity of the most brutal kind: it would destroy the possibility of dialogue. To destroy the Mater Dolorosa would do nothing to alter the representation of the feminine by the masculine; indeed, it would fix such a representation in death, and hinder the search for a positive representation of motherhood:

Als schöpferischer Mensch ... bist du darauf angewiesen, daß die beiden Zonen wie Kommunizierende Gefäße funktionieren und du am ganzen Kreis des Weiblichen teilhast, den die Todesmutter, so katastrophal sie sich als Dominante auswirken mag, ist auch Triebfeder, nach der Guten Mutter zu streben. (KM, p.175-6)

By desisting from the act of matricide Schöllkopf appears to have grasped the need for balance between love and death, masculine and feminine: a creative dynamic is only possible in dialogue.

The descent into the realm of classical and antique tragedy offers a warning against betrayal if a new era is to be inaugurated whilst highlighting that at the root of patriarchal society stands the betrayal of the feminine which could ultimately result in a fight to the death if not addressed. The insight Schöllkopf gains is:

erstens die Wirksamkeit des Theaters als moralische Anstalt, zweitens, daß es ohne Schwester-Verankerung in der Realität nicht geht. Sie konnten die Fahrt zu den Müttern gar nicht bestehen, weil uns fehlt, was Faust II hervorbringt: eine Helena. Das zeigt der Akt der Opfernden aus der

“Orestie”. Da haben wir, um das Loch bewußt zu machen, die Begegnung Orests mit Elektra am Grab Agamemnons weggelassen. (KM, p.209)

The figure of Electra, as Schöllkopf suspected earlier, changes the whole nature of the scene. With the presence of Electra the murder of the mother ceases to be an overtly male act inaugurating the patriarchal era, and instead demonstrates a reconciliation of the sexes. Electra offers the house to Orestes: “‘Der Kraft vertrauend, nimmst du rück dein Vaterhaus.’” (KM.p.209) The hope is that Orestes will put an end to the conflict between masculine and feminine. In Elektra the three ‘Primärfrauen’ are united in one and she offers the possibility of harmony, of multiple incest, to Orestes: ‘vierfach hast du teil an mir: als stellvertretender Vater, als doppelter Bruder und als adoptierter Sohn’. (KM, p.210) This is the union which will justify Orestes act and protect him from its consequences.

The danger, and the warning to Schöllkopf, is that the Helen figure he creates for himself will find herself betrayed just as Orestes betrays the chance offered him by Electra:

...the reign of the paternal brother. Recognized by the sister, therefore without the fight to the death that sexual difference always risks triggering, having been careful to rule out the incestuous complications that a raving Electra might have awakened, Orestes, tranquillizing and anaesthetic, imposes the law.⁸¹

The price of reconciliation, the achievement of the bisexual, is the dominance of the masculine. As Clement notes: ‘There has always been bisexuality. But it is always dominated by masculinity, always coming back to the same. ...It all comes back to

man who goes through woman to reach immortality'.⁸² Clement's analysis of male/female relations goes to the core of *Die Künstliche Mutter* and, whilst illustrating an admonition to respect the feminine, anticipates a criticism directed at the novel itself: ultimately it too legitimates male superiority.

Beatrice von Matt, a critic sympathetic to Burger, believes that he begins to give in to 'der hemmungslosen Verwirklichung üppiger Männerphantasien'⁸³, while Monika Großpietsch holds that:

Frauen werden nicht als selbstständige, lebendige Partnerinnen anerkannt, sondern dienen dem Narziß als benutzbares Material und haben sich auf ihn zu beziehen, ... Sie sind reduziert auf ihre unterschwellig oder offenkundig sexuelle Bedeutung für die Protagonisten.⁸⁴

There can be little doubt that Burger's treatment of female characters is problematic: they are indeed secondary figures in Schöllkopf's quest. Such criticism, nevertheless, appears to overlook the allegorical importance of the text, in the tradition of *Faust*, and underestimates the socio-political dimension of the novel and the degree of irony implicit in the self-reflexivity of the narrative in relation to its use of stereotypes. More crucially in the immediate context of the novel is that neither von Matt nor Großpietsch address the question of whether Schöllkopf does betray his own Helen figure.

⁸¹ Cixous, "Sorties", p.112.

⁸² C. Clement, 'The Guilty One' in *The Newly Born Woman*, pp.1-62, pp.55-6.

⁸³ B. von Matt, 'Die Künstliche Mutter' in *Antworten*, edited by B. von Matt, Zürich, 1991, p.66.

⁸⁴ M. Großpeitsch, *Zwischen Arena und Totenacker*, Würzburg, 1994, p.154.

The figure of Helen is of central symbolic importance: she is the woman who remains unconquered by patriarchal law, the

...last Great Woman, whose days are numbered; she is the one no man could "keep," the age-less eloper ... inalterable Helen. The combined efforts of the new phalocrats ... do not succeed in robbing her of life. Final, infinite, a seducing leader forever sublimated, she takes off - indomitable but banished by name throughout the centuries. ⁸⁵

Helen mediates between the primary and secondary worlds without being bound by either. Schöllkopf needs her if he is to return from the realm of the Mothers. A parallel can be drawn between the position of Schöllkopf seeking a way out of the labyrinth and that of the author seeking a way out of the text he has created. Helen must be created to lead Schöllkopf back to the primary world without abandoning the secondary. The question which arises is of whether she will remain 'inalterable', and 'indomitable', or whether Schöllkopf will succeed in robbing her of life.

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The figure Schöllkopf imbues with the qualities of Helen is Dagmar Dom, a newsreader from Hamburg. Passing through Switzerland on her way to a circus festival, Dagmar Dom unites the world of imagination, Schöllkopf's fantasy world, with the primary world. She is a parareal figure, providing a window onto the primary world; she is a 'Frau Welt' with the 'angeborene Realitätssinn der Frauen'. (KM, p.219), whilst remaining a figure of Schöllkopf's imagination. Dagmar Dom, the 'nordische Helena', is a 'Frauengestalt von axiomatischer

⁸⁵ Cixous, "Sorties", p.105.

Schönheit, ...eine Antimaria' (KM, p.215) In this sense Dagmar Dom is 'inalterable' and above the law: she embodies her own law. The inversion Schöllkopf seeks is made manifest in Dagmar Dom; law derives from within, rather than being imposed from without.

Consequently to engage with her Schöllkopf must abandon his 'auswendig gelernten Sätzen' and his attempt at 'Erpressung durch Leiden'. Dagmar Dom exists beyond the labyrinth. She offers Schöllkopf the thread which will lead him out of the centre of the labyrinth; a thread he creates for himself, but which, nevertheless, remains beyond his control. The thread is located within him, he must be prepared to follow his own law, and to abandon pre-given forms if he is to escape from the labyrinth. The implication is that he must escape from his own fiction. Schöllkopf, as narrator, is author of his own life as fiction, just as Switzerland is author of its own fiction, yet if he is to develop he must move beyond it.⁸⁶ In the 'Bahnhof Buffet Göschenen', juxtaposed against the images of 'Heimat', Dagmar Dom, offers Schöllkopf the opportunity to move outside the house, to discard the masks he has felt obliged to wear:

...Frau Welt auf der Durchreise nach Monte Carlo, vis-a-vis eine rekonvaleszierende Kettenreaktion, Mamamnese, Katamnese, Dominostein Schöllkopf stößt den Privatdozenten um, der Akademiker die Malefizenz, letztere Adjutantunteroffizier Tschour, ...bis nur noch - oder endlich einmal - der Privatmensch übrigbleibt an Leib und Seele einer norddeutschen Schwester bedürftig... (KM, p.221)

⁸⁶ This may be compared with Stirner's need to abandon his pseudonym, Schildknecht, in order to progress.

That Dagmar Dom is passing through emphasises a central aspect of her being, namely her transitoriness, her refusal to be bound by given forms. Movement and change are integral parts of individual development which lead to the emergence of the 'Privatmensch'. The notion of the 'Privatmensch' draws on earlier notions of 'Menschlichkeit' and the conflict between the collective and the individual in which the individual is repressed as being nothing more than a part of a greater whole.⁸⁷

Schöllkopf posits a concept of 'Menschlichkeit, welche das Haß-Ich überwindet, das Individuum durch die Persönlichkeit ersetzt; sein Weg führt ... zu einer Freiheit, die das Sein höher wertet als das Haben, das Teilen dem Besitzen vorzieht'. (KM, p.212) An opposition is developed between personality and 'das Sein', and individual and 'das Haben'. Personality is associated with the feminine and the 'Gesamtheit aller Wesenszüge, Verhaltensweisen, Äußerungen u. bes. Eigenarten eines Menschen'⁸⁸, whilst the latter is associated with masculine hierarchy based on the primacy of possession based on a narrow legalistic concept of individuality founded on property rights and social duty.

The change which Dagmar Dom effects, a move from a 'Gretchen' love to a 'Helena' love, signals the rejection of the narrow horizons of a limited social world for the endless vistas offered by Helen, and his 'Geliebte, die deutsche Sprache, in ihrer wärmsten Intonierung'. (KM, p..227) Love and language go together; Schöllkopf feels himself empowered to re-appropriate language as a tool of personal expression from the dominant discourses. In the immediate context of Göschenen and the visit of Dagmar Dom it signals a triumph over the 'sogenannten

⁸⁷ This may be compared with the notion of 'Menschlichkeit' on page 243.

⁸⁸ *Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*, Wahrig, Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, Munich, 1978.

Männertugenden' (KM, p.223) as Schöllkopf is 'von Ihrer Dagmarschen Doppeltraktion mitgezogen' and 'durch den Berg geschleppt'.

This move is framed within the the context of astrological signs; Dagmar Dom is an aquarian:

...Der Wassermann steht für Wahlverwandschaft, Brüderlichkeit, Schwesterlichkeit. Dieses ... Luftzeichen umfaßt die Polarität von Ich und Wir und öffnet den Weg zur großen Liebe, auf die es freilich nach Doktor Ladislaus Wasserfallen... im Leben gerade nicht ankommt. Die große Liebe, sagt Doktor Wasserfallen, ist stets der Feind der erlebbaren Liebe'. (KM, p.212)

Burger's introduction of astrological signs serves to distinguish the possible pairings of man and woman. Aquarius is the preferred sign, primarily as it is inclusive and does allow for the possibility of dialogue and reconciliation between primary and secondary worlds. Dr. Wasserfallen states the opposite case: the irreconciliability of the world of the imagination and the primary world of everyday reality. The tension generated is necessary for Schöllkopf's survival and points to the presence of a Romantic irony at the heart of the text: without the self-conscious striving for perfection which is destined always to fail nothing can be achieved.

The final motto, 'das Zauberwort, das den San Gottardo seit je umflorte, heißt nicht Endstation, sondern Transit'(KM, pp.238-9), as Schöllkopf invokes a tradition of Swissness which reflects the spirit of 1848, as opposed to that of 1291 and the legend of Tell:

Alle, die sich je mit diesem königlichen Gebirge einließen, der Herzog von Mailand, ... die Ürner, denen mit Hilfe des Teufels der Brückenschlag über die Reuss gelang, Krethi und Plethi, ... Louis Favre... hatten immer nur ein

Ziel: den Gotthard zu passieren, zu durchstoßen, hinter sich zu bringen. ... Es gibt auf der ganzen Welt nur eine Institution, die den Gotthard als letzte Zufluchtstätte mißbraucht: die Schweizer Armee. (KM, p.239)

Now that his journey is complete Schöllkopf regards himself as cured, and liberated: he has overcome the disenfranchising discourses, and voices, which divert from self-expression and self-development. The wider political implications point again to the need for a truly democratic structure which reflects the concerns of the individuals within the society and provides a structure within which the totality of the individual personality can find expression. He has overcome the army and is now in a position to look back and reflect on his experience, and the lessons he has learned.

The insight he has gained is expressed in his attitude to Dagmar Dom. He does not attempt to hold on to her or to objectify her as his muse, as he did with Flavia; he is aware that he has called Dagmar Dom into being, and allows her to be:

Ich mußte unten in Hamburg Anlauf nehmen, um die Lehre des Gletschers zu verstehn: Bewege, verändere dich! Die nordische Helena ... hat mich, ohne viel zu sagen, eingeschlossen in das Gebet ihrer Schönheit, ihrer weibliche Evidenz. ...Und nun müßt ihr begreifen, daß jeder von euch diese Chance hat, sofern er die krankheitserregenden Wasserfallens und Auer-Aplanalps stürzt und seine eigene, seine Ego-Paramedizin inthronisiert. Mein Weg war der Gang zu den Müttern, der eure führt in andere Verliese... Doch habt immer vor Augen: Raus aus dem Loch, zurück ins Leben, weg von den Ersatzgouvernanten und Psychotechnikern der Heilstollengesellschaft. (KM, pp.239-40)

Narration as a self-conscious act provides Schöllkopf with insight into the nature of life; everything is transitory, even glaciers change. The novel itself, as a 'künstliche Mutter', must be seen as a transitional form, which has served its purpose and should

be discarded in favour of a return to life if the protagonist is not to succumb to the very thing he sets out to criticise: to fix the self within its own representation. But the danger that follows is that having found the Mothers, Schöllkopf will abandon the reflective world of the imagination in favour of a tautological state of being wrapped within the 'weibliche Evidenz' of his 'nordische Helena'.

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When Schöllkopf emerges in Ticino, in the south of Switzerland, as the double figure gli Amando, the hope engendered in the 'Stollen' is dissipated. Schöllkopf appears to have left the 'Stollen' too early, a danger the clinic warned of 'er könnte uns wie eine Feuerwerksonne aus der manischen Depression in die manische Euphorie entgleiten und nur noch hemmungslos abbrennen wollen'. (KM, p.228) The threat is figured in terms of mental illness, yet euphoria as the opposite of depression can be interpreted as part of the symbolic pattern of the novel as representing the relation of the individual to the primary and secondary worlds respectively. Both instances imply an imbalance. In the case of euphoria Schöllkopf is overwhelmed by the utopian vision and plunges unprepared into the warmth of the south. Gli Amando arrives in the south having shed his reflective self and abandoned himself to the Dionysian world of pleasure:

Wir haben nulla und niente an Gepäck, vor allem keine Bücher, keine geistige Garderobe. Das ist, als träte man zum ersten Mal splitternackt unter die Menschen! Was wir brauchen, ist ein eiserner Vorrat an Brissagos und Havannas... (KM, p.245)

Schöllkopf is born again in the south; he has left behind him the cultural baggage which hindered his enjoyment of life. Naked and unmarked by the 'Muttermal', he

can bask in the pleasure of simply being in the world unencumbered by the burden of culture and history. Yet, to exist in the present in this state is to live in a 'Geisterschweiz', in which pleasure must be immediate for it to be pleasurable, because taken unreflectively.

Outside the cultural framework there is a vacuum, a vegetative existence beyond time in which the purpose of existence becomes to simply to be: to stand still and avoid the decisions which life demands:

...Rot oder Schwarz, Pair oder Impair... Dieses Problem kennen Gli Amando, Lebens- und Todesartisten, nicht: der eine belegt rouge, der andere noir. Nur gegen die numero cinque ist kein Kraut gewachsen. Doch wir erklären, die Fünf gibt es nicht. Der eine kassiert, der andere speist die Bank, am Schluß bleibt der Gewinn, einen Abend lang nicht verloren zu haben. Was will man mehr? (KM, p..253)

In this condition Schöllkopf has already lost. To attempt not to lose, 'einfach da zu sein', to withdraw into a solipsistic world of timeless pleasure, is to lose. The 'echte Selbst'⁸⁹ which Burger speaks of is not to be found in the realm of sense impressions unmediated by culture or history.

Schöllkopf's immersion in the world brings to mind the earlier use of Bachmann's poem to characterise Flavia: "Nichts Schönres unter der Sonne als unter der Sonne zu sein"⁹⁰. The tautological existence Schöllkopf emerges to,

⁸⁹ Burger regarded depression as preventing access to the 'echte selbst': '...in beiden Zuständen [die Depression und die Euphorie] verfügt man nicht über das echte Selbst, sondern trägt eine Maske, schiebt ein Ersatz-Ich vor'. *Die allmähliche Verfälschung*, p.94. See also p.96.

⁹⁰ see page 210 of this Chapter.

without the reflective insight expected from his transgression, appears to frustrate the reader's expectations. For Beatrice von Matt:

Das ist nun das Irritierende von Burgers Botschaft, dass die Arbeit an der Befreiung von Ängsten, Zwängen, Leiden nichts als einen todähnlichen Zustand bringt. ... Eine als südlich definierte, völlig über- oder ausserindividuelle Existenzform ersetzt die gefühlverzerrte nordalpine Individualitätspsyche. Ohne Leidens- und Liebeszentrum im Innern seiner selbst beginnt Schöllkopf - gleichsam ein schönes Menschending - den übrigen schönen Dingen zu gleichen, mit denen er nun da ist in voller Gegenwärtigkeit, ohne Vergangenheits- und Zukunftsperspektive. Die Heilung ist vertrakt. ... Der Totenmaske des Helden am Schluss von 'Schilten' entspricht hier die Glättung zu ewiger Schönheit oder Klassizität.

91

The problem von Matt identifies is that Schöllkopf appears trapped in his own 'Evidenz'. The search for truth has been abandoned and, within the context of the Faustian quest, Schöllkopf does indeed appear to have lost the wager with Mephistopheles:

Kannst du mich schmeichelnd je belügen
 Das ich mir selbst gefallen mag,
 Kannst du mich mit Genuß betrügen,
 Das sei für mich der letzte Tag! ⁹²

⁹¹ B. von Matt, 'Die Künstliche Mutter' in *Antworten*, pp.68-9.

⁹² J. W. Goethe, *Faust*, edited by E. Trunz, Munich, 1999, p.57, lines 1694-1697.

All desire for progress and expression seems to have given way to momentary pleasure. As von Matt remarks, Schöllkopf does indeed appear to be little more than a 'schönes Menschding'. Yet there still remains a sense in which he is not fooled by the pleasures he enjoys; this is to be found in his reflective awareness of his own condition.

As Schöllkopf drives south in the Alfa Romeo of his childhood dreams to recover from his 'verschleppten Existenz', he asks 'Fragt sich nun, wie lange wir die Schmerzfreiheit ertragen in der abgöttischen Hitze dieses Nachsommers'. (KM, p.244) The condition of 'Schmerzfreiheit' confirms the vegetative nature of Schöllkopf's existence, and it is in this unreflective state people behave 'als ob das Leben eine Ewigkeit und nicht nur eine Schrecksekunde dauere' (KM, p..250). Yet in these observations the critical voice resurfaces and the tension between the character-bound focaliser, lost in the present moment, and the external narrator is manifest. The nagging voice within that led to the quest refuses to be silenced, and suggests that despite the pleasures of the sun Schöllkopf is still dissatisfied with himself.

The ontological status of gli Amando is ambiguous. A plural article before a singular subject reflects the tension within the subject. The passive voice of being-in-the-world, the voice of the character-bound focaliser, is contradicted by the critical narrative voice of the external narrator, who stands above and demands reasons:

Hat der Gekreuzigte auch nur entfernt geahnt, wofür er stirbt, Armando?
 Man kann doch immer nur in totaler Opposition in den Totenkampf gehen,
 als Terrorist und Extremist. In der Agonie werden sogar unsere Freunde von
 der FKK-Partei, die Freisinnig-Kirchlich-Konservativen zu
 Systemveränderern. (KM, p.250)

Death demands explanations, it demands action and reflection and consequently destroys the passive existence of gli Amando. Even in those most devoted to seeking consolation in religion, death demands a response which involves reflection upon life, which in its turn must bring about a desire for change.

Ultimately the inner dialogue, the ever-present awareness of death, is too persistent and too powerful for Schöllkopf to exist solely in the present, to become frozen in the kiss of classical antiquity. Gli Amando encounters:

...die Büste einer heidnischen Göttin... Wir knien nieder, küssen die Diva auf den Mund, und die eingekitschte Antike küßt zurück. Seit je haben wir uns in Parkgöttinnen verliebt, Armando, welche uns in ihre Taxusgemächer lockten. (KM, p..255)

The encounter with the pagan goddess offers the possibility of closure with Schöllkopf frozen in timeless art, imprisoned in pagan nature, devoid of life, in the manner of Fortunato in Eichendorff's *Das Marmorbild*. Such an ending would signify the ultimate failure of Schöllkopf's quest, the triumph of the designer over the explorer and justify von Matt's irritation.

Burger rejects this possibility for closure. Rather, closure is postponed by the injunction: 'gegeben ist unser Tod, bitte finden Sie die Lebensursache heraus'. (KM, p..261) Life looks to death, but death returns the gaze and demands answers from the viewer. Answers are not to be found in religious doctrine or rational discourses which seek to banish death, but in deeds, and in self-expression. The final irony is apparent as the hospital has no interest in such a question. Instead Schöllkopf is left alone to construct fantasies of his own death, fantasies which are:

...Phantasien der Lebenden, die in Gedanken hinter den Vorhang gucken. Für uns galt immer die inverse Faszination: aus der Deckung der Kulissen in den Zuschauerraum blicken und beobachten, wie, was hinten geschieht, vorne wirkt. Leider sind wir zum Schluß gezwungen: es wirkt überhaupt nicht. (KM, p.262)

The narrator anticipates the reaction to his narrative within the theatre of the nation. The rather sad and pessimistic conclusion appears to be, however, that art is irrelevant, and that life will continue to be lived within the framework of the metaphor of nationhood in which death is frozen.

Finally in the novel, perhaps in one last desperate attempt to engage the reader in dialogue, Schöllkopf addresses him or her directly:

Oft, wenn ihr ein Buch aus der Hand legt, fragt ihr euch...: Mußte es denn geschrieben werden? Ihr habt euch kaum überlegt, daß auch das Buch zu fragen das Recht hat: Mußte der Leser gelebt haben? Die Antwort lautet beide Male: Nichts Seiendes muß müssen. (KM, p.262)

This appears as a final plea for art against the rigidity and fixity of the metaphors of rational control. A plea for art which attempts to engage with the transitory nature of life. As in *Schilten* Burger rails against the unreflective attitude to art and life: life demands action, life demands art. Nothing must be, everything is open to question.

At the end there is no closure, no final resolution, only a question. The tourist must decide between the two mountains which dominate Lugano, the Monte Brè and Salvatore: 'Ist es denn nicht zum Totlachen, dieses Menschenleben voller Entscheidungen? Warum nicht Brè und Salvatore? Beide sind mit einem knallroten Funicolare zu erreichen, beide'(KM, p.263). In a perfect world everything is attainable and no decisions need to be made, but in the face of death time is limited

and decisions must be made. Decisions which nevertheless cause most tourists to 'scheitern', and move on to the 'Swissminiatur' (KM, p.263) where everything can be covered in a day, and decisions avoided. The power to make decisions, the desire for expression based on self-reflection these are the goals Schöllkopf has sought. The crucial point is that the power of the individual to decide for him- or herself, to give expression to his or her own life is re-affirmed:

Es wurde argumentiert, die Begegnung mit der nordischen Helena ... bleibe folgenlos, sie bewirke nichts. Da musste ich widersprechen. Selbst wenn es nur eine Placebo-Therapie wäre, hat das Geschenk der Schwester aus Hamburg eben doch zur Folge, dass die Illusion der Genesung aufrecht erhalten, das Leben zuende gelebt wird.⁹³

The quest Schöllkopf began can continue as long as the illusion of the possibility of a cure is maintained. In *Die Künstliche Mutter* Burger restates the Faustian model of human striving as central to human existence. Reflection and self-conscious striving are part of the human condition, and art, as an expression of this, is an essential part of any society.

The cure of the 'Künstliche Mutter' has enabled Schöllkopf to overcome the dominant discourses of the nation which sought to divert him into unproductive, because superficial, paths. He has descended into the depths of the nation, and refigured himself in terms of himself without succumbing to hollow narcissism. In the process he has also sought to refigure the nation so that its image derives from the individual personalities within it, rather than being imposed upon them by narrow representations of nationhood in the service of the dominant discourses. The novel

⁹³ H. Burger, *Brief an Dagmar Berghoff*, Brunegg, 3. März, 1983, (SLA), Bern.

itself attests to Schöllkopf's success, however he has not resolved the issues he addressed. The need for a cultural and historical framework for the nation remains, and as it seems clear that Burger accepts the concept of nationhood, and assents to the need for a story of the nation, the question is what form this story should take. Burger does not answer this question, beyond asserting that the story of the nation should not exclude the feminine, and consequently remain fluid. Ultimately *Die Künstliche Mutter* is a novel about the creation of stories, about the story-telling as an endlessly creative process which must never end if a nation is to remain alive and fulfil its potential as a nation of individuals.

CHAPTER SIX: - BRENNER ERSTER BAND: BRUNSLEBEN

Brenner: Brunsleben (1989)¹ was conceived as the first part of the Brenner tetralogy, but was the only part to be completed. The second part, *Menzenmang*, was published as an unfinished fragment in 1992. Although there are seven years between the publication of *Die Künstliche Mutter* and *Brunslieben*, the position of Brenner, the narrator, in the latter shows a degree of detachment from society which can be attributed to the insight gained during the quest for rebirth in *Die Künstliche Mutter*. Thematic similarities between *Brunslieben* and Burger's previous two novels are also apparent. In broad terms, the clash between the primary world of rational objectivity, and the secondary world of the imagination will provide a continuing model for the conflict between the self-conscious narrative experimentation of the creative writer and the more restrictive forms of self-expression considered socially acceptable.

The change of tone signalled by *Brunslieben* has been commented on by a number of critics. Malcolm Pender points out that the narrative detachment from events is 'as if, after the "Demontage der früheren Autoritäten" in previous books, he [Burger] is able, as he feels that escape has become impossible for him, to view the events of his life in a less charged, almost elegiac fashion'.² Other critics have also pointed to the conciliatory, because detached, tone of the narrative. Whereas some critics view this change as positive, Malcolm Pender's observation that it occurs only once Brenner feels that escape is impossible suggests that resignation would be a

¹ H. Burger, *Brenner: Brunsleben*, Frankfurt a.M., 1989. Future references, abbreviated as Br, are given after quotations in the text.

more apposite term for the tone of the novel, and explains some of the negative reviews highlighting the lack of creative invention. In this regard, Isenschmid's assertion is typical: 'was das Buch an existentieller Wahrheit gewinnt, verliert es an künstlerischer'.³ The suggestion is of a waning of creative power, yet, while some of the anger and passion felt in earlier novels might have dissipated, the struggle for creative expression continues: the desire for *Pneuma* in *Brunslieben* is redolent of the search for the Mothers in *Die Künstliche Mutter*.

In this chapter the increased narrative detachment, and the move away from exuberant parody will be considered as a response to previous failure to initiate dialogue, and an attempt to advance from the marginal position of social outsider in order to initiate a dialogue as an alternative to aesthetic withdrawal. An attempt accompanied, nonetheless, by an ironic awareness that change is possible only from the margins. What the reader encounters in *Brunslieben* is a series of dialogic levels: references to the self in the third person illustrate dialogue between a social self, grounded in language, and a deeper imaginative self which strives for expression in language; dialogue between the narrator and characters within the novel; dialogue between the narrator and the implied reader; dialogue between the narrator and the dominant discourses inherent in the parody of those discourses. These broad dialogic categories form the basis of the following analysis of the novel. They are interpreted

² M. Pender, *Contemporary Images of Death and Sickness*, p.223.

³ A. Isenschmid, 'Viel Cigarrendunst' *Die Zeit*, 24.3.89. Harsher still, though in relation to *Menzenmang*, is Martin Dean's assertion that 'Die Kraft zur Fiktionalisierung ... ist dahin, die Spannung zwischen dem Realen und Irrealen wird nicht mehr innovativ. Es wimmelt von klapprigen Kalauern und minderen Sprachspielen. Nur noch strikte Selbstironie hülfe dem Text über eine endlos dahingeplauderte Krankengeschichte hinaus'. 'Burgers Fragment' *Aargauer Tagblatt*, Nr. 214, 12.9.92.

as forming the basis of an open-ended and fundamentally democratic aesthetic method in opposition to closed and authoritarian modes of representation. In this context Bakhtin's consideration of 'dialogic exchange' provides an interesting theoretical model with which to underpin Burger's own ideas about the importance of dialogue for the development of art and society.

Myth and magic also represent important artistic paradigms. They are regarded as introducing a relativity, and self-awareness, lacking in the myth of *logos* which pervades the dominant discourse. Myth and magic involve the transformation of what is mysterious, and beyond language, into language, whilst acknowledging the inexplicable mystery that inheres in it. Language is affirmed as the means by which we know and define ourselves, yet the limits of language to define reality are simultaneously re-affirmed in the original affirmation. For Brenner the self lies not only in language, but also beyond it, and must strive for expression within it: the self must discover itself in language. If it is to do so, the power of the imagination, the subjective realm of the unconscious beyond the world of objective reality must be allowed to break into the realm of the 'real' in order to redefine it. In this way the world of the imagination and that of objective reality are perceived as engaged in a process of dialogue which constantly extends the bounds of reality. It is in the midst of this debate that the novel situates itself; for Burger art should not re-affirm what is, but pose the question 'was wäre wenn?', and *Brunslieben* seeks not only to challenge the view of reality imposed by the dominant discourses, but to thematise the role of art in society.

In *Brunslieben* reflection takes place in the smoke-filled rooms of the 'Gut Brunsleben auf dem Chaistenberg' where an intimate group of friends gather to discuss art, life and identity. The structure of the novel reflects the concern with

dialogue. It is divided into 25 sections, each section approximates to the time needed to smoke a cigar: a standard pack of cigars is 25. It is conceivable that for each cigar a dialogue between the assembled guests was envisaged. Increasingly, however, Brenner, comes to feel himself excluded from the dialogue within the text, and believing his life to be drawing to a close, drifts into reflective reminiscences of his childhood, in the manner of the narrator in Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*, which he shares with the reader. Reminiscence, in this sense, implies a dialogue with the self, a reflective examination of the past. It is indeed the case that looking back at the experiences of childhood and shaping them artistically in the present provides a model, for Brenner, which enables him to redefine himself in terms of himself, as opposed to in terms of the collective memory. Personal memory becomes a basis for dialogue with the collective memory of the nation, and a basis for personal and social development.

That dialogue is not easy to initiate is shown by the difficulties which arise even within the small, and select, social group of the novel: a genuine and productive exchange of views proves difficult. Dialogic development within society, whilst still wished for, appears to become a receding hope; there appears to be a correlation between the subdued nature of the social criticism and the belief that self-development through the dynamic of dialogic exchange within society is increasingly unlikely. In a review of *Brunslieben*⁴ Beatrice von Matt points out that 'Ein richtiger Roman hat sich nicht an unserer Ästhetik zu messen, sondern an seiner eigenen. Die Ästhetik des flüchtigen Rauchs und der darin hängenden sperrig kantigen Wirklichkeitsreste ist in "Brenner. Brunslieben" richtig. Darum ist das ein

⁴ von Matt, B. "Husch! da fällt's in Asche ab", *NZZ*, 1.4.89.

bedeutender Roman'. In her comments von Matt recognises the need for society, for readers, to play their respective parts in the dialogue, and implicitly acknowledges the failure of society to participate in the dialogic process. In this chapter the dialogic, and polyphonic, nature of the text will be considered, as an aspect of the continuing thematisation of the struggle to develop an individual voice within a social framework.

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In the opening lines of the novel the narrator introduces himself:

Mein Name ist Hermann Arbogast Brenner, ich bin ein Abkömmling der berühmten Cigarren-Dynastie Brenner Söhne AG im Aargauischen Stumpfenland. (Br, p.7)

In proclaiming his name Brenner asserts his identity in a clearly delineated time and space, as part of a dynasty specific to the 'Aargauischen Stumpfenland'. As a descendant of a famous dynasty, Brenner is expected to provide continuity and carry on the family tradition: security is balanced by duty. Time, space and language appear to offer existential certainty, yet as the reader progresses so the element of disquiet, and even bluff, expressed in the terseness of the opening statement becomes clearer. The actual name Hermann Brenner creates an extra-textual reference to the author, which again encourages an allegorical, as opposed to a biographical, approach to the text, as Brenner reflects the position of the creative writer in society. In this context, the extra-textual reference creates a link between Schildknecht's

struggle for self-expression, Schöllkopf's quest for rebirth, and Brenner's current position: bound by a name within a cultural framework.⁵

The apparent lack of progress this signals can certainly be seen as one reason for the resigned tone of the novel; on the other hand, the search for dialogue in *Brenner: Brunsleben* appears as a consequence of the insight gained at the end of *Die Künstliche Mutter*: creative self-expression must take place within a cultural and historical framework. Concealed in Brenner's assertion of identity, however, is an element of parody of the dominant discourse: it mimics the authoritarian nature of such a discourse. The essence of the authoritarian discourse or word lies in its exclusivity, its failure to acknowledge any voice other than its own. For Bakhtin, such a voice was considered to be monologic or *single-voiced*. The *single-voiced* word or utterance concentrates exclusively on the object of speech; it recognises 'only the direct unmediated orientation of discourse toward its referential object, without taking into account anyone else's discourse or any second context'.⁶ The single-voiced word or discourse is 'indissolubly fused with its authority - with political power, an institution, a person - and it stands and falls together with that authority... It is by its very nature incapable of being double voiced... If completely deprived of its authority it becomes simply an object, a *relic*, a *thing*'.⁷ The language of the dominant discourse in *Brunslieben* is perceived, as it is in all Burger's work, as eschewing any engagement with the life of the individual. Brenner is, thus, defined by his name as existing within the material sphere; he becomes a named object

⁵ The topic of extratextuality will be developed later. See pages 325-8.

⁶ M.M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p.186.

within it: there is no dialogue, or negotiation, between the inner world of the individual and the material world of the nation.

In *Brunslieben* the question arises of how to oppose a *single-voiced*, authoritarian discourse which is deaf to any voice other than its own without resorting to a competing monologue. The answer for Brenner lies in parody: to use the language of the discourse in a manner which is contrary to its intent, and which demonstrates the degree to which it suppresses the development of individual identity. Once the element of parody is recognised the immediate emphasis upon the name suggests the power imbued in a name as a signifier of identity imposed from without which conveys an impression of entrapment. Such an impression is reinforced by the choice of middle name: Arbogast means 'der von seinem Erbe getrennte' (Br, pp.37-8). The name Hermann Arbogast Brenner serves to locate him in a specific time and space, but suggests that he is disinherited, denied access to his heritage. By introducing the notion of disinheritance Burger foregrounds one of the central themes of his work: the disinheritance, or disenfranchisement of the individual by the dominant discourses. The form this takes is precisely through the imposition of an identity, which fails to acknowledge, and situates the individual within the material world of the nation.

Disinheritance involves the imposition of a form of normality based on objective reality; the validity of the secondary world of the imagination, and the spirit of myth is denied by a contemporary insistence on logos. The space within which normative patterns of reality are imposed is reminiscent of the narrow confines of the

⁷ M.M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, edited by M. Holquist, trans. C. Emerson, and M. Holquist, Austin, Texas, 1981, p.343-44.

Swiss house. That Brenner lives in the 'Schloßgut Brunsleben' and the acts of remembrance occur in small smoke-filled rooms within the village of Brunsleben serves to emphasise the restricted nature of the space in which remembrance and dialogue takes place. Whilst the motif of the Swiss house is not introduced directly, resonances of the image of Switzerland as a house which offers protection from the outside and sets boundaries can be perceived in *Brunslieben*.

This view of the Swiss house may be contrasted with the view Malcolm Pender advances in his article concerning the motif of the house in Swiss literature. Pender notes that Pestalozzi believed that "Die Wohnstube des Volkes ist gleichsam der Mittelpunkt, worin sich alles Göttliche, was in den Bildungskräften der Menschennatur liegt, vereinigt". He goes on to point out, 'the home and community are interdependent in that if the "Wohnstube" does not fulfil its essential function, 'da ist keine wirkliche Volkskultur da'".⁸ These words, as Malcolm Pender shows, were echoed by Gotthelf who extolled the virtues of self-sufficiency and community and was able 'in a sentence which has virtually attained proverbial status, to localize Pestalozzi's general statement in a Swiss context: "Im Haus muß beginnen, was leuchten soll im Vaterlande."⁹ These statements preceded the constitution of 1848 and the founding of the modern state; the house they envisage is dynamic, open to myth and the numinous in a way that contemporary society is not. The house in which dialogue takes place within the novel contains 'das Göttliche', but in terms of

⁸ M. Pender, 'Du musst das Haus abtragen': The Motif of the House in Recent Swiss-German Fiction.', in *Modern Language Review*, no.88, 1993, pp.687-705, p.687.

⁹ Pender, 'Du musst das Haus abtragen', p.688.

the power relation between individual and state Gotthelf's aphorism appears to have been inverted.

Bakhtin considered that the individual is formed through a process of 'dialogic exchange' and that any concept of the self, and of individualism, 'depends crucially on a firm sense of oneself as part of a particular community... Our sense of self depends upon the confidence we do or do not possess about our role within the wider community'.¹⁰ Brenner, as is the case with all of Burger's central characters, has no real sense of himself as part of a community; rather, he perceives himself as occupying a marginal, or liminal, position. Referring to his marginalisation Brenner says 'Dies bin ich bis auf meine späten Tage in Brunsleben geblieben, ein qualmender Fremdling, ein gescheiterter Tabakkaufmann, in Menzenmang auf erbrechtlich korrekte Weise enteignet' (Br. p.231) In narratological terms, the focalisation of Brenner's position highlights the duality that is experienced between the social self and the 'inner' self. The focalisation is that of Hermann Arbogast Brenner, the named social being, who views himself through the eyes of society, suggesting that as a 'Fremdling' he is both a stranger to society and to himself. It is clear, in the context of the novel, that Brenner does not in fact regard himself as a failed tobacco salesman at all; the notion that, because he acknowledges the legality of his disinheritance, he accepts its general validity is to ignore the parody of the social self whose being is quantifiable in terms of economic usefulness: the critical irony of the novel derives from the adoption of a normative perspective to highlight the exclusion of the inner self.

¹⁰ L. Pearce, *Reading Dialogics*, London, New York, Melbourne, Auckland, 1994, p.41.

The recuperation of the self is through reflection and memory, in particular the evocation of the 'unermeßliche Gebäude der Erinnerung' (Br, p.53) through the reflective medium of cigar smoke. Memory, as containing a sense of self, is juxtaposed against the Swiss house, which imposes a collective memory upon the individual. So it is that Brenner turns to childhood to express his own individuality. Childhood represents the basis by which to refigure the self in personal terms. What distinguishes Brenner from Burger's other main characters is the degree of ironic detachment with which he is able to undertake this process. Brenner almost casually undermines his own authority by references to himself as the 'Unbelesensten' (Br, p.15) of the group, and mockery of his own style: 'Spätestens hier wird mir der geneigte Leser die Gefolgschaft aufkündigen und einwenden: Das kann gar nicht sein, dieser Hermann Arbogast Brenner stilisiert sich zum Wunderkind. Ich gebe ihm recht' (Br, p.104). Brenner's engagement with his own childhood through the reflective medium of cigar smoke is based on the acknowledgement 'daß es kein Erinnern ohne Fiktion, kein Gedächtnis ohne Erfindung gibt' (Br, p.109). Brenner feels able to play with the past: he is no longer bound by the experiences of childhood, but able to shape them into fiction through the imagination. He appears to have gained sufficient detachment from his childhood to be able to shape it into art, and to self-consciously enjoy the reflective act associated with the pleasure of cigar smoking.

Self-reflexivity becomes a pleasure in itself. Brenner views himself both within and without the cultural sphere. He is able to use his own imagination to shape his past and project it through language into the cultural sphere, in the knowledge that he is promoting cigar smoking and helping the family business, whilst at the same time doing so to undermine the hold on reality exerted by the

dominant discourses. He is shaping his own life by reflecting upon his childhood and giving form to it: he ceases to be a 'Chronist' of life and becomes an 'Erfinder' (Br, p.259). At the same time Brenner is extolling a process of representation through which reflection and life combine to create art. It is in the act of reflection that experience can be freed from the 'Zufall' of life and shaped into art. Nevertheless, representation is never final because it never claims authority as a mirror of reality; it acknowledges its status as invention. Brenner's own ironic self-mockery of his prowess as a writer and a reader shows him reflecting upon himself reflecting upon his work in a manner which invites further comment, from outside or inside the novel. As he looks back over his childhood, and gives form to it, questions still arise as to the manner in which this should be done:

Es geht um den Bann, den man aufzubrechen versucht, indem man dem Ausgeliefertsein von damals die Orientierung, der Sprachlosigkeit das präzise Wort, den ungeordneten die geordneten Bilder gegenüberstellt. ...die heikle Frage, was denn besser sei, seine Eindrücke so zu schildern, wie man sie wirklich erlebt hat, oder sie ständig auf die Gegenwart und die Zukunft zu beziehen, nur von echten Romanciers, also etwa von Bert May zufriedenstellend beantwortet werden könnte, weshalb ich dem geneigten Leser verspreche, beim nächsten Besuch in Gormund auf diese Crux zurückzukommen. (Br, p.102)

The process of reflection is extended beyond the present into an endless dialogue, which includes not just those present within the novel, but also the reader outside. In this context the process of representation can be said to dialogic. Such a process of dialogic interaction functions on many levels, each of which serves to relativise the

other, and to undermine the imposition of an authoritative representation which claims finality.

The problem which arises is a familiar one in Burger's work: the individual is unable to figure him- or herself in terms of his or her inner, or true, self. Despite Brenner's recognition that his name is inadequate signification of the self, he cannot refute it; rather, the process that must be undertaken is one of negotiation:

I cannot manage without another, I cannot become myself without another; I must find myself in another by finding another in myself (in mutual reflection and mutual acceptance). Justification cannot be *self*-justification, recognition cannot be *self*-recognition. I receive my name from others, and it exists for others (*self*-nomination is imposture). ¹¹

Brenner must accept, as he seems to, that he is perceived, by others, as existing in the objective world of time and space: his existence is *de facto* a social one. Against this is set Brenner's own notion of himself which incorporates the inner world of the self. The task Brenner undertakes is to project his inner world outwards, to build a bridge between the inner and outer world. Such a task implies a disruption to the external world of time and space as the self seeks to project itself into that world, to get the world to recognise the inner psychic world of the self; in effect to negotiate identity between the subjective world of the self and the objective world of time and space. The individual can only develop if the 'other' is prepared to engage in dialogue. Thus dialogue becomes a precondition for individual, and Burger would argue, social development.

That dialogue relies on language is a tautology, but one which goes to the heart of Burger's dilemma: how is it possible to represent the inner self in a language fixed in the logocentric space of the nation whose basis is rational and material. Brenner's concern with the deterministic power of language to define is illustrated in an apparent digression. The family business is on the verge of 'Kladderadatsch', bankruptcy, a term taken as a title by 'einer renommierten satirischen Zeitschrift..., welche 1848 aus der Taufe gehoben wurde und 1944 die stehende Wendung "nomen est omen" wahr machte' (Br, p.8). The dates here are not insignificant: 1848 symbolising the introduction of the new liberal constitution, the 'true' birth of the nation, and 1944 pointing to the era of *geistige Landesverteidigung* that was to follow the war.¹²

Satire was originally conceived of as possessing a magical power to kill or injure those who were its object. As magic, satire is itself a power discourse; 'Magic is always, even etymologically associated with Macht; ...Magic seeks control - over people, animals, the weather, the stars'.¹³ The power magic exerts is the power of language: the power to utter words which will command nature and the spirits. A link can be established between the desire to control magic and a desire to control literature, and the rise of religion so heartily resented in Burger's novels.

¹¹ M.M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. C. Emerson, Manchester, 1984, pp.287-8.

¹² This may be compared with Bichsel's remarks in Chapter 1, pages 24-5.

¹³ G.S. Williams, *Defining Dominion: The Discourses of Magic and Witchcraft in Early Modern France and Germany*, Michigan, 1995, p.14.

Attempts to distinguish between magic and religion have proved difficult, and no such attempt will be made here, yet for Burger the distinction in broad terms appears to be relatively simple. Magic may seek to control nature, but it is not governed by dogma and therefore encourages imaginative exploration of the world. Religion, in contrast, is perceived as the subordination of nature to a dogmatic, and authoritarian, world view which precludes exploration and imaginative engagement, except within narrow ideological confines. Magic is essentially a performative act: without the magical word or act there can be no magic. At the same time magic seeks to transcend limits, to know the unknowable:

Magical discourse ... was a unifying symbol for the indulgence of the senses and the enjoyment of worldly beauty, a sign of the quest for wealth and political power, for the attainment of infinite knowledge. It could lead the virtuous, ceaselessly searching, and solitary magus to the very height of divine illumination. And it could pit the discourse of an irrational and uncontrollable femininity against the rational discourses of masculinity.¹⁴

Magical discourse is perceived as inclusive: within the discourse there exists a tension between the irrational and the rational, but this is conceived as productive. The triumph of religion and the banishment of magic is a triumph of the logocentric, rational discourses of masculinity. This is especially true in the context of Swiss Protestantism in which the Word, Logos, is programmatically dominant at the expense of visual images. Brenner plays on this association in his admiration for the artistic method of his father: 'Mein Vater ließ die Bilder sprechen und verzichtete wo

¹⁴ Williams, *Defining Dominion*, p.14.

immer es ging, auf Schrift' (Br, p.276). The word serves to banish the sensual and the mysterious, and to bind the object, the signified, to its signifier: to objectify the world and to exclude the immaterial. As has been noted in relation to *Schilten* and *Die Künstliche Mutter* Burger is highly critical of the myths of nationhood, and of religion, which have sought to define Switzerland, precisely because they exclude the irrational, and promote a one-sided notion of nationhood.

The end of a satirical journal symbolises the end of the magical power of language to challenge and destroy. The presumed end of satire serves to emphasise the confidence felt by post-war Swiss society and the triumph of reason over magic and myth. William Righter points out that 'the word "myth" itself has become a palimpsest. At least in terms of its accumulated associations if not through the continuity of its history, and we have in it now the newest surface on a palimpsestic ground - probably the most plastic and adaptable form of an ancient concept reworked to modern ends'.¹⁵ Myth is malleable, and Righter's comments suggest that modern societies can indeed rework myth for their own ends. In contemporary Switzerland, Burger's work suggests, the magical element of myth has been suppressed and myth itself has become a myth of its own logos:

Der Logos kommt mithin als des Mythos eigener Logos zur Welt. Er ist von Geburt Mytho-logie, in einem der Tod und die Verinnerung des Mythos. Mächtig ist er als überwindendes Eingedenken seiner Abkunft. Doch ist ihm bestimmt, selbst in Gestalt des Mythos zu existieren, sobald er diesen Zusammenhang vergißt.¹⁶

¹⁵ W. Righter, *Myth and Literature*, London and Boston, 1975, p.9.

¹⁶ M. Frank, 'Die Dichtung als "Neue Mythologie"' in *Mythos und Moderne*, edited by K.H. Bohrer, Frankfurt a.M., 1993, pp.15-40, p.17.

Unknowingly bound within the myth of its own logos society exhibits a misplaced confidence in its own power, misplaced because it lacks the numinous. Without magic, with an exclusion of the spiritual and immaterial, language becomes authoritarian and a tool of the dominant discourse.

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Social usefulness, for Brenner, is a far broader and more inclusive concept than that implied by the dominant discourse, characterised by asceticism, an absence of reflection and the attempt to erect a barrier between art and life. Brenner's wish to break down this border, and to actualise the inner world of the self in the objective world of the nation is shown by his attitude to the failing cigar company Brenner Söhne AG. With bankruptcy a real possibility, Brenner seeks to assert the superiority of the cigar over the cigarette: the promotion of a reflective aesthetic to stem the 'ständig sinkende Produktionshöhe' becomes a political imperative linked to the continued existence, and prosperity, of the company. Cigar smoking represents the future, as Brenner points out to his cousin:

Ich werde mit diesen bescheidenen Blättern ... dazu beitragen, daß man ... just in unserer schnellebigen Zeit erkennt, wie himmelweit der Unterschied zwischen einem reflexartig aus dem Päckchen gezogenen Glimmstengel und einer Por Larranga ist, vom Sucht- zum kontemplativen Genußverhalten, das dürfte die Devise sein... Das, lieber Johann Caspar Brenner, ist die Zukunft, der Havanna-Import in der Schweiz stieg von 3,8 Millionen Stück in den siebziger Jahren bis 1988 auf 5,6 Millionen, unser Land weist den weltweit höchsten Pro-Kopf-Verbrauch auf... Die Kopfcigarre, dies mein Werbevorschlag, für Köpfe, eine Montecristo Nummer I mit Brandende und

handgeformter Kuppe ist eine Sache des Geistes und des Sentiments und nicht des hektischen Verbrauchs. (Br, p.9-10)

Cigar smoking represents the future precisely because it promotes dialogue and reflection. An aesthetic which seeks to advance feeling and the spirit into the material sphere of commerce is one which seeks the mutual interaction of life and art. The conflict that develops is between an aesthetic which seeks dialogue and one which resists dialogue, namely *Heimatliteratur*, and, as will be discussed later, forms of lyric poetry. Absence of reflection is portrayed as a feature of contemporary society, and expressed metaphorically as cigarette smoking. It is in relation to an aesthetic founded on cigarette smoking that an authoritarian discourse can arise, a discourse addicted to its own authority. The promotion of a cigar smoking aesthetic presents a clear challenge to *single-voiced* authoritarian discourse in seeking a language in which meaning is flexible: the word is not unambiguously linked to its object. Art is the world in which signs become objects of play and are brought into question with the effect that the notion of an objective reality is undermined by subjective use of language. It is at the point where the two meet that negotiation of meaning, and in Brenner's case of identity occur.

The purpose of Brenner's narrative is to reinvigorate the discourses of the nation, and in particular breathe life into the myths of the nation; for Brenner magic and myth are related as both offer a means to transcend normative modes of perception. Brenner comments that 'wir alle kommen aus dem Mythos und streben danach' (Br. p.222). Myth becomes a metaphor for a mode of engagement with the world which modern civilisation has forfeited with possible deadly consequences: 'Ist die Pfeife einmal vergessen, wird unser Volk ohne Mitte sein und verderben' (Br,

p.257). The lost centre is associated not only with the absence of myth, but with the ossification of the spirit of the people which finds expression in the creation of myth. The pipe is forgotten in a society in which *haben* is placed above *sein*, and asceticism is regarded as a virtue:

Der Geizhals ist eben nicht nur ein Pfennigfuchser, wenn es ums Schenken und Spenden geht, er gönnt vor allem sich selber nichts. Er huldigt der irrigen Meinung, es sei ein im himmlischen Notenbüchlein vermerktes Verdienst, bei Reformhaus-Kost hundert Jahre alt geworden zu sein. Alles Elend dieser Welt stammt von den Zukurzgekommenen. Hitler mußte Millionen umbringen, um seine nie erfüllten Wünsche zu kompensieren. Hätte er wie Churchill die Havanna zu schätzen gewußt, hätte es nie einen Zweiten Weltkrieg gegeben. (Br, p.293)

The criticism that society suppresses creativity and the productive tension between the masculine and the feminine is similar to that found in *Die Künstliche Mutter*, and it should be noted that *Brunslieben* draws on the themes and motifs of previous work to a far greater extent than any of Burger's previous works, even to the point of being repetitious. Religion is identified as the primary force behind the promotion of an ascetic morality, and in this it stands in opposition to myth. The political dimension is starkly highlighted by the reference to Hitler and the association made between asceticism and Nazism. Such an association may appear historically and politically simplified, even when taken as ironic overstatement; it does nevertheless establish a fundamental link between aesthetics and politics in *Brunslieben* itself. The abuse of myth by the Nazis is well documented, and Burger seems to be suggesting that the appropriation of myth by the dominant discourses of Switzerland to establish a realist aesthetic based on *Heimatliteratur* is analogous to the appropriation of myth by the

Nazis. The rediscovery of the spirit of myth-making is thus of crucial importance to the survival and development of the nation.

Health and myth are inextricably linked with consequences not just for the individual, but also for society as a whole. Religion, which is portrayed as false myth, leads to normative modes of behaviour and notions of health which are unhealthy:

Wer freiwillig darauf verzichtet, mit den Göttern über die köstlichen Düfte der Havanna-, Sumatra-, Java-, Domingo- und Brasil-Blättter Zwiesprache zu halten, hat auf das falsche Pferd gesetzt, auf ein Dasein ohne Mythen, auf eine Gesundheitsreligion ohne Pnuma. Freilich kann nur, wer auch gelitten hat, deklarieren, die Gesundheit sei der Güter höchstes nicht. (Br, p.320)

The normative concept of health is based on suppression of the unconscious associated with masculine rationality. Brenner's criticism is familiar to readers of Burger's previous novels: the failure on the part of society to engage in a dialogue with the secondary world of the imagination. Sickness in this context becomes an ambiguous concept; to be open to *pnuma* is to struggle for self-expression and suffer the concomitant exclusion from social dialogue; to deny an engagement with the 'Gods' is to suffer an incomplete existence which could culminate in self-destruction and self-loathing. Sickness is thus a product of modern society. The irony is that it is only from the perspective of the outsider that such an insight is possible. An insistence on the validity of normative modes of health precludes any engagement with notions of health and illness:

Die Analyse, und das ist das Schädliche an der Methode, beraubt uns unserer Mythen. Sie setzt ein Begriff der Gesundheit voraus, der mit den gesellschaftlichen Klischees der Normalität harmoniert. (Br, p.319-20)

The central point which Brenner alludes to is that to engage with myth analytically is to destroy it. It becomes impossible for modern society to jump over its own shadow and therefore it is destined to remain trapped within its own image of itself. Illness presents a way out of this conundrum: it situates the 'sick' individual in the liminal spaces of society, neither wholly within nor wholly without. Magic, myth and metaphor are all constituent features of a liminal condition: they are symptoms of sickness because they represent a challenge to normative reality.

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The novel seeks to promote a cigar smoking aesthetic as a remedy to the perceived hollowness of contemporary myth. In doing so it links the modern individual with his or her forefathers:

Das Rauchen führt uns zu den ersten Spuren der Menschheit zurück. Mag der moderne Mensch, wenn er vergessen den ausgepafften Wolken nachhängt, vom Kultischen auch kaum mehr angeruht werden, so versetzt ihn eine Romeo y Julieta Churchill nach wie vor in den eigentümlichen Schwebezustand zwischen Verflüchtigung und Verfestigung der Gedanken, in jene zunächst noch harmlose Entrückung, welche Rauschgiftsüchtige mehr und mehr vom Leben abzieht. Das Kalumet der Indianer vermag das ganze Weltall in die Pfeife zu bannen, deshalb ist sein Rauch dem feurigen Hauch des Pneumas vergleichbar, und solange die Friedenspfeife in Gebrauch ist, lebt das Volk. (Br. p.254)

Cigar smoking offers access to the realm of unselfconscious spontaneity offered by primitive people, and the cultic engagement with pagan ritual from which present day enjoyment of cigar smoking is seen to descend. Elements of *Zivilisationskritik* are apparent in the elevation of the spontaneous over the self-reflecting consciousness of modern man and the lust for power inherent in modern society. In this context a broad contrast can be made between the references to sects made in previous novels, and the reference to cultic practices and pneuma in *Brunslieben*. The former are portrayed as representing narrow sectarian interests and creating myths of nationhood to sustain their own hold on power: ultimately their influence is destructive and divisive. As opposed to this the latter is universal in outlook and seeks to unite the people; hence the assertion that 'solange die Friedenspfeife in Gebrauch ist, lebt das Volk'. The Indians possess the magical power to hold the world within the peace pipe, to exist in a 'Schwebezustand' between the inner and outer worlds. The recovery of this magical power embodies for Brenner, to paraphrase Thomas Mann, who himself exploited the metaphor of cigar-smoking in *Der Zauberberg*, the recovery of a part of the primitive self which modern society has strived not only to transcend, but to banish.

The problem Burger encounters in the use of primitive cultures as a model is a general problem of modernist writers who have sought to re-mythify modern culture. This problem and its consequences are identified by Manfred Frank:

Solange nämlich der Geist der Analyse unkontrolliert und ungebrochen die zwischenmenschlichen Beziehungen diktiert, ist die emanzipatorische Phantasie auch in der Dichtung dazu verurteilt, das Erbe der Vergangenheit anzugreifen. ... die Vergangenheit [muß] eine fortwährende Herausforderung darstellen, solange ihre Erbschaft von der Gegenwart nicht nur nicht

angetreten, sondern geradezu verleugnet wird, um fortan als ein Mangel an ihr aufzuscheinen. Der volle Begriff des Logos ist ... das aufhebende Eingedenken der Vergangenheit. Hinter ihm bleibt die analytische Vernunft in Theorie und Politik zurück und enthüllt sich als eine defizitäre Ausprägung von Rationalität. Ihre Armut setzt - im Gegenzug - eine am Vergangenen sich entzündende poetische Phantasie in Nahrung: und was diese bei ihrer rückwärtsgewandten Zukunftsschau gewahrt, ist die Utopie ... aus der universellen Idee des Absoluten selbst legitimierten europäischen Gesellschaft...¹⁷

The fine line Brenner attempts to traverse is between the subjective invigoration of myth, magic and metaphor, and an objective engagement with the world in the hope that it will prove possible to reawaken the spirit of mythic engagement with the world in modern man. Such a position is similar to the 'conjuring act' which Michael Bell regards Thomas Mann as performing. For Bell, Mann wishes to 'suggest philosophical issues while evading conventional philosophical criteria'¹⁸, and consequently straddles a line, stylistically and thematically, between the objectivity of science and the subjectivity of myth so as to explore the ambivalence of man's creation: 'Man is mysteriously created, he is not his own originator, and yet as part of the whole process he comes in some measure to define and create himself'.¹⁹ The process of self-creation and self-definition are associated with the imposition of a world view upon the world; through the process of ordering and defining the world man comes to define himself and his position within it. Brenner's remark that 'alles hängt von der Entscheidung ab, ob wir die Chronisten oder die Erfinder unseres

¹⁷ Frank, 'Die Dichtung als "Neue Mythologie"', p.31.

¹⁸ M. Bell, (ed.) *1900-1930*, London, 1980, p.22.

¹⁹ Bell, *1900-1930*, p.26.

Lebens sein wollen' (Br. p.259) is to be understood in this context. The distinction between 'Chronist' and 'Erfinder' is based on an understanding of the frames through which life is viewed and the self-conscious imposition of a subjective frame within which to view one's own life. Brenner seeks to avert the danger associated with the use of the past to inspire the future; he accepts that no utopian state existed, or can exist; he realises, nevertheless, that such a state must still be posited to inspire action in the present - a Romantic irony.

The novel is opposed to an unreflective, unironic aesthetic. The challenge which the use of myth poses to the dominant discourses is characteristic of modernist mythopoeia. Michael Bell believes that 'doubleness is the special quality of modernist mythopoeia; sometimes felt as a running conflict between the spirit of dogmatic authority and the relativity of values and convictions'.²⁰ By 'doubleness' Bell refers to the need to hold a firm belief, and show conviction notwithstanding the knowledge that such a belief or conviction is itself an ambiguous construction which can never be absolute; for Bell to 'live in the gap between its meanings, is the literary, and therefore the *critical*, dimension of conscious mythopoeia'.

A representative of the modern state within the novel is Johann Caspar Brenner. He is associated with a realist aesthetic, and, unlike Hermann Arbogast Brenner, his personality is represented objectively as existing firmly within a given milieu; there is no sense in which Johann Caspar is a product of his own consciousness. He is modelled on Burger's cousin Kaspar Villiger, to whom the novel is dedicated. As well as managing the family business Johann Caspar pursues a political career:

²⁰ M. Bell, *Literature, modernism and myth*, Cambridge, 1997, p.3.

...seit vergangenem Herbst als Ständerat eine glänzende politische Karriere teils vor, teils hinter sich hat, und es ist nicht ausgeschlossen, daß er noch den Sprung in den Bundesrat schafft. Ein Brenner unter den sieben Landesvätern, vielleicht als Vorsteher des Volkswirtschafts-Departements, zweifellos der Höhepunkt unserer Familiengeschichte. (Br. p.7)

The family history reaches its highpoint within the socio-political framework of the nation and the historical tradition upon which it draws. At the same time, the development of the nation is associated with individual action: the sense of historical origin and of collective memory is qualified by the analogy between nation and family, similar to that between nation and house, which personalises history. The development of the nation is seen to be not the consequence of a predetermined metanarrative but of individual actions within a flexible framework.

Kaspar Villiger did indeed become a member of the Bundesrat, and his inclusion in the novel in the guise of Johann Caspar positions it within a wider social and political context; Johann Caspar exists in the world outside and beyond the novel, and as an extra-textual reference is underpinned in the text by the shared initials of the main character and the author.²¹ As such he is not a character within the novel, but rather an addressee, a representative of a world which the novel seeks to engage in dialogue. Johann Caspar remains outside the novel even as Brenner tries to draw him in; to make him participate in the fictionalisation of the world. He

²¹ Monika Großpietsch, *Zwischen Arena und Totenacker*, p.206, discusses the manner in which Burger's friendship with Villiger was exploited for commercial purposes by Burger and his agent. She reports, anecdotally, that 'Burger hoffte möglicherweise auf ein publicityträchtiges Engagement als Berater Villigers nach dem Vorbild der Zusammenarbeit des früheren Bundesrats Ritschard mit dem Schriftsteller Peter Bichsel'.

has moved too far away from the world of family and the original spirit of the Swiss house, and consequently has become locked within the *logos* of the nation at the expense of 'das Göttliche'. The purpose of the dialogue which Hermann Arbogast seeks with his cousin is to demonstrate the compatibility of the two worlds. It becomes clear that if Johann Caspar is to rebuild the family business, and by implication the country, he must grasp the need to redress the imbalance between the material world of commerce and economics and the reflective world of the imagination.

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For Bakhtin 'Language lives only in the dialogic interaction of those who make use of it'.²² Death of language follows from the deterministic power of the dominant discourses and forces Brenner into an isolated and solipsistic position. It becomes the purpose of the novel itself to initiate dialogue, and enliven language. In so doing it makes the intermingling of artistic and 'real-life' discourses with the authoritarian dominant discourses the object of the novel:

The plot itself is subordinated to the task of co-ordinating and exposing languages to each other.... What is realized in the novel is the process of coming to know one's own language as it is perceived by someone else's language, coming to know one's own belief system in someone else's system.

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²² Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, p.183.

²³ Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, p.365.

It becomes the task of the novel to gain an understanding of the self within a system which is not that of the self, within a language and sign system which predates the self. The novel thus becomes a search for the self in language, a search for the expression of the individual life of the narrating subject: 'Discourse in the novel is structured on an uninterrupted mutual interaction with the discourse of life'.²⁴

The language within the text opposes the *single-voicedness* of the dominant discourse with its own *double-voicedness* within which its dialogic nature becomes discernible. *Double-voicedness* is a term formulated by Bakhtin to describe discourse that has a 'twofold direction - it is directed both toward the referential object of speech, as in ordinary discourse, and toward *another's discourse*, toward *someone else's speech*'.²⁵ The most important categories of double-voicedness are stylization, parody, skaz, dialogue, and hidden polemic. In relation to parody Bakhtin states:

Here, as in stylization, the author again speaks in someone else's discourse, but in contrast to stylization parody introduces into that discourse a semantic intention that is directly opposed to the original one. The second voice, once having made its home in the other's discourse, clashes hostilely with its primordial host and forces him to serve directly opposing aims. Discourse becomes an arena of battle between two voices. In parody, therefore, there cannot be that fusion of voices possible in stylization or in the narration of a narrator ...; the voices are not only isolated from one another, separated by a distance, but are also hostilely opposed.²⁶

²⁴ Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, p.383.

²⁵ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p.185.

²⁶ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p.193.

The hostile clash of voices is apparent in a range of reference to the military, health and religion which seeks to expose the higher values such institutions claim to embody as fulfilling an alibi function for the accretion of material power, and the concealment of spiritual values.

A more subtle parody is to be found in Brenner's relation with his cousin Johann Caspar. Johann Caspar Brenner is 'ein geheimer Connaisseur der schönen Literatur' (Br, p.7). His reference point is Mann's realist novel *Buddenbrooks*; his attitude to Hermann Arbogast is therefore influenced by the decline of the *Buddenbrooks* business in the hands of 'creative' individuals incapable of engagement with the world. Johann Caspar perceives his cousin 'auf dem Chaistenberg im Schloßgut Brunsleben' where, as he puts it, he can 'inspiriert vom Pneuma der Cohiba, manufakturistisch [seinen] Kindheits- und Stumpenroman her[stellen], [und] genüßlich beschreiben, worum wir täglich kämpfen müssen' (Br., p.8). His comparison of novel writing with the manufacturing process reveals a rather disdainful attitude towards the creative process, suggesting that he perceives creative activity in the manner of a technical process, and that he remains oblivious to any link between creativity and the market for cigars. Johann Caspar's attitude to life and nature appears to reflect that of modern societies who 'regeln ihr Verhältnis zur äußeren Natur durch technische Ausbeutung und haben auch die innere Natur des Menschen zunehmender Reglementierung unterworfen'.²⁷ Despite their friendly relationship the voices of Johann Caspar and Hermann Arbogast Brenner are locked in a struggle not simply concerning the purpose and meaning of art, but to define

²⁷ P. Bürger, 'Über den Umgang mit dem andern der Vernunft' in *Mythos und Moderne*, edited by K.H. Bohrer, Frankfurt a.M., 1983, pp.41-51, p.41.

reality, and extend the concept of society and nation to include the spiritual, non-material dimension.

As Brenner is unable to convince Johann Caspar directly he seeks to parody the discourse he represents. In parody the discourse of the other is largely considered to be passive: the author can use the discourse of the other as s/he pleases. In Brenner's case often the discourse he seeks to parody is not passive, but active: it is a powerful discourse which shapes society and the identity of the narrator: there is a real sense in which Brenner is unable to use the dominant discourse for his own purposes, and must instead battle with it to make his own voice heard. Bakhtin coined the term *hidden polemic* to describe the active nature of the engagement with the dominant discourses:

In a hidden polemic the author's discourse is directed toward its own referential object, as is any other discourse, but at the same time every statement about the object is constructed in such a way that, apart from its referential meaning, a polemical blow is struck at the other's discourse on the same theme, at the other's statement about the same object. A word, directed towards its referential object, clashes with another's word within the very object itself. The other's discourse is not itself reproduced, it is merely implied, but the entire structure of speech would be completely different if there were not this reaction to another person's implied words. ... In hidden polemic ... the other's words are treated antagonistically, and this antagonism, no less than the very topic being discussed, is what determines the author's discourse. ²⁸

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Bakhtin, M., *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p.195.

The narrative discourse anticipates a hostile reaction and to some extent pre-empted it by responding to it in the original utterance.

This would account for the occasional bitterness of tone and polemical thrust of Brenner's narrative. On the death of his father in a motor accident Hermann Arbogast launches into a polemic against bureaucracy:

Auf deinem Führerausweis ... steht unter a) Leichte Motorwagen in Stempelschrift "Ungültig"..., alles 'Ungültig', deine ganze Existenz, aber nicht für deinen erstgeborenen Sohn Hermann Arbogast, er wird dich immer und immer wieder in der Du-Form anreden in seinen Tabakblättern, die hiermit den Kampf aufnehmen gegen alle Stempel dieser Welt, wo irgendwelche Beamte kraft ihrer zufälligen Inauguration irgendwelche Gummibuchstaben in Dokumente knallen, ist, was ich zu sagen habe, keinem "Gummibegriff" zu subsumieren. (Br, p.94)

Behind the word 'Ungültig' lies an entire materialistic discourse with which Brenner is in conflict. Virtually every referential object becomes the site of conflict, as an objective, materialistic discourse excludes the immaterial and the subjective. The treatment of Brenner's father signals his status as a material object: once he is dead he ceases to exist. Death as an event has little or no spiritual significance for a rationalist discourse; its response to death is to obliterate the memory of the past life. For Brenner the life continues in memory; the father will continue to be addressed, and will continue to exist within the novel. Memory itself becomes a site of conflict, and in asserting the validity of remembrance Brenner is always casting a 'sideways glance' at the bureaucrats who would subsume memory within their own world view.

Memory is central to the notion of the self and to understanding of the self as anything other than a material object. Cigar smoking in *Brunsenleben* opens up access to the past just as the sensation of the 'madeleine' does in *À la recherche du temps perdu*. Proust's novel is a search for truth and meaning; memory is a means to facilitate the search; it is not an end in itself. Once access to memory is gained 'then the sign's meaning appears, yielding to us the concealed object - Combray for the madeleine', but, as Deleuze notes, the process does not end there 'At the end of the Search, the interpreter understands what had escaped him in the madeleine...: that the material meaning is nothing without an ideal essence which it incarnates'.²⁹ The meaning of signs is not restricted to one realm alone, but traverses many dimensions, in particular it should incorporate the realm of the imagination which goes beyond the literal linking of word with object. To go beyond the sign should be the purpose of literature:

A literature is disappointing if it interprets signs by referring them to objects that can be designated (observation and description), if it surrounds itself with pseudo-objective guarantees of evidence and communication ("causerie", investigation), and if it confuses meaning with intelligible, explicit, and formulated signification (major subjects). The hero of the search is always alien to this conception of art and literature.³⁰

Literature should be capable of making imaginative leaps which transcend metonymic relations and embrace the possibility of metaphor. Brenner identifies himself with the Proustian project, and some of the characters in the novel appear

²⁹ G. Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*, trans. R. Howard, London, 1972, p.11.

³⁰ Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*, p.32.

capable of making an imaginative leap exploiting the potential of art to challenge reality. Jerome von Castelmur-Bondo '[hat] Leonzburg als eine helvetische Replik zu Prousts Provinzstädtchen bezeichnet' (Br, p.12) Even as a historian he cannot explain the association:

Es isch sssso, ich kann es Ihnen en détail weder erklären noch irgendwie begründen, glaube nur zu wissen - merken Sie, ein Wissenschaftler verwendet das Verb "glauben" -, daß es bei solchen Übertragungen mehr auf das Atmosphärische als auf das Topographische ankommt. (Br, p.13)

Cause and effect are not applicable here, no scientific proof is needed, it is a matter of the imagination which Castelmur-Bondo invites Brenner and the other interlocutors to share, an imaginative world stimulated by Proust.

Just as Proust seeks to draw the reader into sharing not simply the world of the novel and Combray, but also a world of remembrance, and to join in his or her own search, so Castelmur-Bondo provides the dialogic stimulation for Brenner to enter the world of fiction:

über das Verhältnis zwischen dem romanhaften und dem wirklichen Erleben ..., er sagt da in etwa... ,daß bei intensiver Vertiefung in ein Buch jede unserer Emotionen verzehnfacht würde, weshalb uns ein großes Werk der *littera-tuur* wie ein Traum erschüttere. ... Die Erschütterung muß damit zusammenhängen, daß wir erfundene Figuren, Handlungen, Landschaften und Gespräche als wahrer empfinden als die realen; wahrer, weil sie unter dem Gesetz des Dichters - und nun hob er [Castelmur-Bondo] warnend den Zeigefinger, *erschüt dieses dich-ters* - stehen und vom Zufall befreit sind, er spricht fast wie ein Physiker von den unfaßlichen Teilen der Seele, welche der Romancier durch ein Äquivalent von unmateriellen Teilen ersetze, so daß es zur Osmose... kommen kann. (Br, p.14)

The verb 'erschüttern' suggests the violent shaking which 'reality' receives at the hands of a work of fiction. The process of 'Erschütterung' is dual; it requires intense engagement on the part of the reader as well as the power to challenge the world beyond itself by drawing the reader into the world of the novel.

The everyday world of signifiers is ruptured to the point where the disjunction between the sign and the object it purports to represent becomes apparent and impetus is given for the search for truth:

..truth is never the product of a prior disposition but the result of a violence in thought. ...Truth depends on an encounter with something which forces us to think, and to seek the truth.³¹

The search for truth constitutes the 'Gesetz des Dichters', and should be construed as an artistic imperative, in contrast to the law of the land whose function is to maintain existing power relations. The bond of trust which arises between reader and writer is dependent upon the integrity and honesty of the writer in respecting the power literature can exert over the reader. The danger Castelmur-Bondo alludes to is that the reader can be seduced by signs which purport to explore different worlds, yet which seek only to hypnotise in the manner of Cipolla in *Mario und der Zauberer*, to achieve an 'oberflächliche Erlösung und Erledigung der Gefühle' in a mephistophelian fashion. When Brenner states 'nie verrate ich meine Kunst'(Br.p.18) he refers not simply to the magic oath, but to the integrity required of the artist not to misuse his or her art, by hindering an engagement with reality:

³¹ Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*, p.15.

Da liegt er [Hombre] unter dem Kotzen, den glattrasierten Schädel mit den Beulen, Warzen und Muttermalen in die Ellenbeuge gedrückt ... und ich denke, nur wer schildern könnte, was in einem solchen Gemüt vorgeht, verdiente den Namen Dichter, denn auf seinem Brackwasser ... schwimmen die Trümmer der leichten Schiffe, die Lyrikerinnen durch die Nacht segeln lassen, vielleicht... sind alle die hochgezüchteten Rilkes und Georges nur möglich auf einer Basis tiefer Unmenschlichkeit, was ihnen durch den Herzraum wandelt, muß von den Hombres geerdet werden... Und darum ist dieses Kunstgewerbe zutiefst unehrlich, denn das Publikum sieht nur den Diamantenglanz und nicht die abzeittiefen Schächte, in denen das kostbare Gestein von den Niggern gebrochen wurde, ja Lyrik ist ein Apartheidgeschäft. (Br, p.253)

The essence of the criticism of lyric poetry is that it portrays one world at the expense of another. The figure of Hombre, the servant, is reminiscent of Bork, the embodiment of the dark subterranean forces of life, myth, magic and superstition, abhorred by the civilised world. The inhumanity of lyric poetry lies in its exclusion of the 'Urmenschlich' which, nevertheless, always threatens to break in through the unconscious realm of dreams.

Brenner's reference to the dichotomy between life and lyric alerts the reader to the political nature of the problem, and the varied uses to which literature may be put. Apartheid as a concept has political overtones which cannot be ignored, and which play on the divisions in society between those who seek to conceal and those who seek to expose: a conflict analogous to that between the artist in search of truth and dominant discourses who seek to suppress it. A poet, such as Rilke, 'erschließt ... den Urschrei und Urklang der Spezies Mensch, der Dichter ist dann ... nur noch der Verstärker und Übersetzer, denn das schönste und reinste Gedicht... ist nur die

vollkommenste Variation zu dem von der Welt begrenzten Thema'(Br, p.131). The best lyric poetry can achieve is to extend the variety of symbols and 'die Sinnes-Ausschnitte ihrer Breite nach zu gebrauchen, und ... jeden einzelnen so weit als möglich auszudehnen'(Br, p.129). For Brenner the problem is that the poet remains anchored within the world of the senses, which can exalt the sensual without challenging the relationship between object and sign, thereby threatening the poet as well as the reader with absorption in the physical world in the manner of Eichendorff's 'Marmor-Venus'(Br, p.123).

Such a criticism of lyric poetry echoes that of Adorno, a view reinforced by references within the text to Hitler and the NSDAP. Lyric poetry can lure the reader into a world which is unreflective, and consequently undialogic. The issue which arises is the uses to which lyricisation of the world can be put, one of which is to make the false myths of nationhood palatable. Lyric poetry seduces the reader into an acceptance of a beautified view of reality which makes implicit claims to encompass the spiritual, the true, when in fact the effect it has is to promote an acceptance of what is at the expense of what could be. In this context there is no dialogic engagement with the reader, and it fulfils, no matter how innocently, the purposes of the state:

Was verstehen wir ... unter der verstaatlichten Einheitsphantasie, die so kraftlos ist wie Fidel Castros Siboney? Dichter, wenn sie Romane schreiben, pflegen so zu tun, als säßen sie an den Schalthebeln der Macht, als wüßten sie über das Innen- und Außenleben ihrer Figuren mehr als die Götter, denen sie opfern wie die Maya-Priester mit ihren Cohiba-Rollen, über sie, die Erzähler. Und auch die in Mode gekommene Unart, das Geschilderte durch Variations- und Verunsicherungsformeln zu relativieren, dem Leser illusionistisch vorzugaukeln, es hätte ganz anders sein können, ... ist nur eine ungezogene

Abart der auktorialen Diktatur, Sozialismus der Einbildungskraft, der nirgendwo auf der Welt funktioniert. (Br, p.324)

A correlation arises between poets and writers who do not respect the independence of their characters, who claim omniscience, and those who do not respect the independence of their readers. Lack of respect culminates in 'Sozialismus der Einbildungskraft', the imposition of a collective imagination at the expense of the individual imagination. Literature of this type, as the verb 'vorgaukeln' suggests, raises false hopes, the net result of which is a form of deceit practised upon the reader, which Brenner considers a breach of trust.

Such literature, be it 'Heimatliteratur' or lyric poetry, is in essence unidirectional and undialogic, and restricts the space of the individual imagination to a given space and time - the present. A contrast is drawn between this type of literature and that which the narrator is creating:

...weiß ich immerhin ... eines, daß es sich bei unserer Knochenarbeit um Archäologie der Seele handelt, daß es kein Erinnern ohne Fiktion, kein Gedächtnis ohne Erfindung gibt, daß die wahren Dichter, zu denen sich ein verhinderter Tabakkaufmann natürlich nie zählt, jene sind, die im wörtlichsten Sinn "wie gedruckt lügen" können ..., daß heißt, wir stellen in Abrede, wie es wirklich war, und verführen den geneigten Leser dazu, uns dahin zu folgen, wo der Konjunktiv das Geschehen registriert, wie es hätte gewesen sein können, wir bedienen uns der Metapher, griechisch "metapherein", nach Bert May, anderswohin tragen, wir versuchen zur Stimmigkeit zu bringen, was sich so gar nicht abgespielt haben kann, denn das Leben ist ein Würfelspiel, ...und genau darum dürfte die hohe Kunst der Schöpfung überlegen sein, weil der Skribent die Reihenfolge der Kugeln nicht dem Zufall überläßt... Nun wird mein Freund Adam Nautilus Rauch entrüstet einwenden, daß auch die Welt ihre Gesetze habe.... (Br, p.109)

The power of art lies in its ability to bring order to life, to raise it to a new 'Wirklichkeitsgrad'.³² Only art can overcome the chance nature of the world and give it form; art fulfils the same function as myth. It is precisely for this reason that art should be self-reflexive, and open-ended. What makes literature hard work is its function as 'Opposition zum Bestehenden'; Brenner makes a distinction between a superficial affirmation of reality, and the exploration of the soul and the world in which it lives, which the reader encounters in *Brunslieben*.

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The distinction is not simply aesthetic; it affirms the moral imperative of literature to challenge reality and honestly to explore the world of the individual. The difficulty Brenner encounters lies in the attempt to create a personal space, to explore the time and space of the self, and to assert the subjective 'I' against the collective 'you'. Personal memory and invention are contrasted with history, or rather historiography: history does not exist independently of its representation. An attempt is made to cut through the confusing maze of history and restore a sense of order and meaning to the individual life which takes account of the subterranean darkness of the human psyche. In this Brenner can again be seen to be following in Proust's footsteps:

Things come to have meaning when the I of the writer rediscovers the sensations underlying them, which are always linked together in at least a series of two... Time is this bringing together of two sensations which gush out from the signs and signal themselves to me. But since bringing things

³² See Chapter 2, p.52.

together is a *metaphor*, and sensation implies a body, Proustian time which brings together the sensations imprinted in signs, is a *metamorphosis*. ... Proust uses time as his intermediary in the search ... for an embodied imagination: that is to say, for a space, where words and their dark, unconscious manifestations contribute to the weaving of the world's unbroken flesh, of which I is a part. I as writer; I as reader; I living, loving, and dying. ³³

Time in *Brunslieben* fulfils a similar function. Sensual pleasures, cigar smoking, eating and drinking, allow time for reflection; it brings signs and sensations together in new, individual metaphors which link past and present; it creates the space in which the individual can allow the subterranean world to surface and link it to language in the present. In this the cigar smoking aesthetic clashes with that of cigarette smoking; cigar smoking opens up the path to myth and magic which dominant rationalist discourses have sought to suppress.

If individual imagination is thematically lauded, it must also be allowed structurally. *Brenner: Brunslieben* is a novel about dialogue and communication, and consequently the assembled company in the novel must be allowed a voice. The assembled company comprises the emeritus professor Jerome von Castelmur-Bondo, the literary critic Adam Nautilus Rauch, the composer and painter Edmond de Mog, the poets Irlande von Elbstein-Bruyere and Bert May. Monika Großpietsch points out that 'Burger plante ursprünglich eine ungezwungene Stechlinsche Gesprächskultur, die Unterredungen in *Brunslieben* sind jedoch formal streng eingeengt und vorgeplant... Sie verlaufen tendenziell monologisch, wobei es in

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J. Kristeva, *Proust and the Sense of Time*, trans. S. Benn, London, 1993, p.5.

diesem Werk der Protagonist ist, der meist nicht zu Wort kommt'.³⁴ To suggest that the conversations are not 'ungezwungen', and are 'monologisch' is not to undermine the position of Brenner as a facilitator of dialogue. It contains perhaps an implied criticism of those present. Indeed part of Brenner's contract with his 'Logis- und Brotgeber Jerome von Castelmur-Bondo'(Br.p.10) is that he:

nicht die Lektüre im einzelnen mit dem so literaturbewanderten Historiker zu teilen [hat], ...aber doch "ansprechbar zu sein auf des Vermieters Lieblingsthemen", so der juristische Wortlaut, denn in der Tat, es ist ein zweischneidiges Schwert. Wer sich, um in die Magie des Traums zu sinken, einem bestimmten Schriftsteller intensiv widmet, befindet sich einerseits in einem Kommunikationsreichtum sondergleichen, er wird auf allen Antennen zugleich bespielt, andererseits aber auch in einer dialogischen Armut, die pathologische Züge annehmen kann... (Br, p.16)

Implicitly Burger seems to be satirising the assembled company who, learned as they are, appear incapable of engaging with each other in 'ungezwungene' conversation. The notion that Brenner must be 'ansprechbar' suggests the one-sided nature of the conversation. But it ignores the important function Brenner performs: he doesn't just speak, he listens, as does Dubslav von Stechlin. By doing so the narrator is able to shape the individual monologues into a dialogue; the novel itself is Brenner's response to the characters within it who will not allow him to speak. Brenner opens up the possibility for dialogue by rescuing not only his interlocutors, but also the readers, from the threat of 'dialogischer Armut'.

³⁴ Großpietsch, *Zwischen Arena und Totenacker*, pp.237-8.

The narration creates a space for reflection, and a space in which the individual can share the magical dreamworld of literature. The narrator thus creates a bridge between the imaginative, yet solipsistic, world of literature and the social world of political and economic engagement. Such a bridge is necessary if the reader, and by implication the writer, is not to become trapped in a fictional world, and succumb to illness. The novel provides a forum for the characters' voices, allows them a consciousness independent of the narrator, and confirms its own polyphonic nature:

The consciousness of the creator of a polyphonic novel is constantly and everywhere present in the novel, and is active in it to the highest degree. But the function of this consciousness and the forms of its activity ... does not transform others' consciousnesses (that is, the consciousnesses of the characters) into objects, and does not give them second-hand and finalizing definitions. Alongside and in front of itself it senses others' equally valid consciousnesses, just as infinite and open-ended as itself. ... The consciousnesses of other people cannot be perceived, analyzed, defined as objects or as things - one can only *relate to them dialogically*. To think about them means to *talk with them; otherwise they immediately turn to us their objectivized side*: they fall silent, close up, and congeal into finished, objectivized images.³⁵

The extent of the polyphony in the novel extends to voices which appear hostile to the project of the novel itself. Literature which explores an individual life, which becomes 'Detektiv in eigener Sache' (Br, p.157) cannot be judged by standard criteria:

³⁵ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p.68.

...weil wir, vom leeren Blatt ausgehend, keine Art von Perfektion im Sinne haben, noch weniger hilft uns das berüchtigte "Wie" der Kritiker und Literaturkenner, weil im Grunde kein Skribent vom anderen lernen kann ... aufhorchen könnten wir erst dann, wenn uns Adam Nautilus Rauch mit Hermann Arbogast Brenner vergleichen würde ..., wie kann der Kritiker, der ohnehin mit Wertungsproblemen zu kämpfen hat, einen Maßstab anlegen, den er nicht kennt, und genau darin liegt der Grund für die immer wieder leidenschaftlich von mir gesuchte Unfruchtbarkeit des Gesprächs mit Literaturfachleuten, denn wir, die Schreiber, haben das zu leisten, was ihnen unmöglich scheint, zwischen beiden steht eine undurchdringbare Wand, ...der Kritiker hat es nur mit einer Variablen zu tun, mit seinem Eindruck und Urteil, nennen wir sie U, der Zweikampf mit dem Buch... beschränkt sich darauf, U aus X, Y und Z abzuleiten, beispielsweise die Form ist dem Plot nicht angemessen oder Y gleich. (Br, p.192)

The fundamental difference between writer and critic is that the critic does not begin with an empty sheet; the question 'was wäre wenn' is not relevant. The critic does not plunge into the dark world of the creative unconscious, with no real idea of where the journey will lead. What he or she does demand is that the novel should conform to familiar criteria, which can be reduced to the level of an algebraic equation, and that the life represented in the work should relate to lives and works which have gone before. The voice of the critic intrudes into the novel imposing criteria which derive from tradition, and the critic's own position vis-à-vis that tradition. These anticipated views of the critic are responded to within the novel, and in their turn demand a response on the part of the critic. The novel demands that the critic, as Beatrice von Matt recognised, engage with the novel on its own terms, according to the life it represents and the aesthetic criteria it sets for literature. It is of course impossible for the novel to be judged independently of what has gone before, but this

does not free the critic from the task of balancing the novel in hand with the tradition in which it exists; the contemporary writer must be viewed within the framework of a living tradition, one open to re-interpretation which allows for innovation in the present.

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By instituting a discussion about the novel within the novel, the narrator calls for a reply from outside the novel. Monika Großpietsch points out that the 'Vorbilder der Figuren ... metatextuell anhand ihrer Texte entschlüsselbar [sind]'.³⁶ The possible identification of figures within the text with figures outside the text posits the possibility of a continuing dialogue with the voices outside the text, thus avoiding closure. A voice which is both within and without the text is that of the 'geneigte Leser'. The 'geneigte Leser' is frequently addressed in the novel, his or her objections are anticipated and reacted to.³⁷ The language of the text cannot be interpreted solely within the text, the language itself is a reaction to the anticipated response of the reader to what is being read. In this sense it avoids closure as it leaves a *loophole*:

A loophole is the retention for oneself of the possibility for altering the ultimate, final meaning of one's own words. ... This potential other meaning ... accompanies the word like a shadow. Judged by its meaning alone, the word with a loophole should be an ultimate word and does present itself as such, but in fact it is only the penultimate word and places after itself only a conditional, not a final, period.

³⁶ Großpietsch, *Zwischen Arena und Totenacker*, p.234.

³⁷ Further examples are to be found in *Brunslieben* on pages 104 and 288-9.

For example, the confessional self-definition with a loophole ... is judging by its meaning, an ultimate word about oneself, a final definition of oneself, but in fact it is forever taking into account internally the responsive, contrary evaluation of oneself made by another. ... Condemning himself, he [the hero] wants and demands that the other person dispute this self-definition, and he leaves himself a loophole in case the other person should suddenly in fact agree with ... his self-condemnation, and not make use of his privilege as the other.³⁸

Dialogue itself is seen as a process of becoming which, by its nature, precludes closure. The location of characters both within and outside the novel is an important device for maintaining the open-ended nature of the novel. No word can be final, as it is always subject to a possible retort from without.

At one remove from the characters within the novel is the 'geneigte Leser' who reinforces the notion that the meaning of the text is not to be found solely in the text itself. The implied reader is assumed to share many of Brenner's concerns, to grasp the nature, and the causes, of his illness. However, the reader, well disposed as he or she is, has an existence outside the text and consequently places demands on the narrator to engage with that world and not to become absorbed in the text, as Brenner recognises:

Wenn es ... Brenner auch fernliegt, den geneigten Leser im Rahmen dieser Aufzeichnungen mit dem Schicksal Depressionsgeplagter zu verdüstern, o ja, diese Lektion habe ich begriffen, daß es eine Taktlosigkeit ist, von seinen gesammelten Leiden zu reden und die unheilbar Gesunden im Ernst des Lebensgenusses zu behindern... (Br, pp.288-9)

38

Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p.233.

What the narrator acknowledges is the boundary the text should not cross. It should not seek to impose the narrator's suffering upon the reader. To do so would be to defeat the purpose of the text; it would draw the reader into the text, compromise his or her independence, and hinder any interaction between the healthy and the sick. There is a degree of irony in this passage: the 'geneigte Leser' must experience similar symptoms to the narrator to sympathise with his sufferings:

Wir, der geneigte Leser unbekannter Provenienz und der verhinderte Tabakkaufmann Hermann Arbogast Brenner, sind uns zufällig begegnet mit jener Frage ...: Haben Sie Feuer? ... Er und ich, wir überliessen uns beide den Solnazeen, den troststiftenden Pneumaspändern, und ich darf annehmen, es beruhe auf Gegenseitigkeit, wenn ich sage, wir hätten Gefallen an unserer Gesellschaft gefunden. Vielleicht erstaunt es ihn aber doch, von Hermann Arbogast Brenner ... zu hören, daß der Erzähler einer wie immer gearteten Geschichte mehr über den Leser weiß als er über den Packer dieser Tabakblätter, denn Sprache zieht Sprache an. Auch er, der sich scheinbar stumm über diese Seiten beugte, hat unentwegt zum Haupt- und Mittelgut gesprochen, und zwischen den Rippen blieben die Spreiten seines Lebens hängen. Keine Angst ich werde nicht ausplaudern, was er mir anvertraut hat, intimere Dinge oft ... (Br, p.324)

What the writer has written has always been set in relation to a reader or interlocutor. With the characters in the novel, and the dominant discourse, the dialogue has involved parody or some response to views expressed. Power relations represented in the novel between characters were unequal; Brenner is often peripheral in discussion, and his own remembrances are shared not with characters in the novel, but with the 'geneigte Leser'. The location of the reader outside the text, together with his or her anonymity, provides a final loophole: anyone can take the role of

'geneigte Leser', anyone can engage in the dialogue. The dialogue remains open-ended, with every new reader it begins again.

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The 'geneigte Leser' is an ideal reader: he or she engages with the narrator on the basis of equality and mutuality. Yet for all the sympathy the reader may have for the narrator, Bakhtin stresses the need for a reader or interlocutor to remain distinct and independent:

What would I gain were another to fuse with me? He would see and know only what I already see and know, he would only repeat in himself the inescapable closed circle of my own life; let him rather remain outside me. ³⁹

For this reason alone it serves the purposes of the narrator to keep the reader at a distance. The narrator achieves a sense of self by engaging with the reader as other. Without the other the writer would be trapped in his own I, unable to project himself into the external world. The process is one of 'Gegenseitigkeit'; the reader too, finding consolation in the world of cigars, has his or her inner world validated by the narrator in the novel. Ultimately both reader and writer come to understand themselves and their positions in the world better.

Whilst maintaining that writer and reader must remain distinct, the dialogic process means that the writer is both writer and reader, and, by the same token, the reader is both reader and writer. The novel becomes the shared space in which reader and writer can meet and give form to the inner world of the other. Kristeva

comments, in relation to *À la recherche du temps perdu*, that Proust was 'concerned to establish a world in which his readers can come and communicate...: a world in which they can discover a coherence between time and space and their dreams can be realised, a place which is sadly lacking in modern reality'.⁴⁰ This describes the project Burger set for himself in the novel, and explains why the novel should be considered as subversive. The creation of the 'psychic' space of the novel challenges the objective time and space of the dominant discourses. In projecting itself into the external world the novel seeks to extend the bounds of the objective world to include the inner world of the self by provoking a response.

The irony is that an authoritarian discourse cannot provide any other response than silence without fatally undermining itself. The promotion of a dialogic aesthetic exposes the inner contradictions of an ostensibly democratic state in which power has been appropriated by *single-voiced* rationalist discourses, which leads to the fundamental contradiction that democracy is practised from the top down rather than from the 'Wohnstube' up. A more unfortunate irony is that even those voices in the novel friendly to the narrator tend to drown him out. The comfortable surroundings, the apparently objective detachment, and self-deprecation, with which the narrator observes himself, conceal a very real sense of isolation on the part of the narrator which in many ways runs deeper than in *Schilten* or *Die Künstliche Mutter*. The text avoids closure, but the creative voice appears weaker, as does the hope that the creative voice will be able to break out of its isolation.

³⁹ M. Bakhtin, 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity' in *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics*, trans. Morson, G. S., and Emerson, C., Stanford, 1990, pp.53-4.

⁴⁰ Kristeva, *Proust and the Sense of Time*, p.5.

CONCLUSION

Hermann Burger remains a writer about whom opinions diverge. For many he was a self-publicist; a man egotistically obsessed with his own suffering, which he allowed to become the main theme of his work. Others view him as a great talent who tragically failed to fulfil his potential. Many others consider his work to be amongst the best of contemporary Swiss writing. That Burger's work is deeply personal is indisputable; he does not hesitate to turn his gaze upon himself and to make himself the subject of his art. Yet, as this thesis argues, Burger was a far more complex writer than some critics have given him credit for. He was a highly self-conscious writer who struggled continually to shape life into art. It is from his dissatisfaction with life that his linguistic exuberance and his experimentation with form arise.

Burger sought to elevate life through the medium of art. In this sense it is possible to regard the search for new forms and new language as an end in itself. But whilst Burger may be seen as an advocate of *l'art pour l'art*, the playfulness of art must be seen within the context of the opposition to established normative modes of representation which Burger envisaged for it. The self-reflective aesthetic Burger promotes in his work is reminiscent of Romantic irony in that it strives for a complete representation of the self, in the knowledge that such representation is impossible. Burger's blunt acceptance of this is emblematic of his uncompromising search for truth. He does not retreat from the uncomfortable and disturbing insights his work provides. His view of the position of the individual in society is keenly differentiated, and he offers profound insights into inter-related issues of national

identity; national culture; Art; nature; literature and representational strategies; art and life. Yet the at times dark, pessimistic tone of his work is balanced by humour and comedy, and, more importantly, by an almost utopian belief in the power of art to change reality.

This thesis argues that in his desire to change reality Burger follows a distinguished line of Swiss writers in opposing a notion of Switzerland, and of Swissness, which they perceived not only as outmoded, but also as repressive. Underpinning the argument of this thesis is the belief that Burger's concern with Switzerland is political in its origins and in its intent; he regards art as de facto oppositional. Therefore, the politicisation of literature is not only unnecessary, it is ultimately counterproductive. Burger proceeds from the basic premise that no form of representation can ever be regarded as complete. He believes that the function of art is to challenge existing representations of reality and to go beyond them. Burger operates, as do his characters, at the margins of society where he, and they, seek to renegotiate personal identity and notions of the real.

In his work, Burger critiques a concept of nationhood which is diametrically opposed to individual creative development, and is perceived as fundamentally undemocratic. Switzerland in Burger's novels is represented as holding an unassailable belief in its own perfection. This thesis demonstrates that control over forms of representation and language is a crucial mechanism for the exertion of social control. The manner in which challenges to the representation of the nation are suppressed is introduced in *Bork* and remains thematically central in all his subsequent novels. In his novels, Burger identifies what he considers to be the dominant discourses in Switzerland. These are most frequently associated with education, religion, and the military. The insight Burger offers into the influence of

the dominant discourses goes beyond a recognition of the overt power they wield to illustrate how that power is located in the control of representations of the nation, and of the individual within the nation.

Thus in Burger's work one of the main hindrances to new forms of representation is the cultural framework of the nation itself, often portrayed metaphorically as the Swiss house situated at the heart of the nation. It is from the notional centre, be it the house in *Bork*, the schoolhouse in *Schilten* or the Gotthard in *Die Künstliche Mutter*, that the restrictive modes of representation associated with 'Enge' emanate. Burger's response is not to abandon the house or to tear down the cultural edifice, but to demonstrate the inadequacies of the cultural framework as a basis for representation, and to expose the disjunction which exists between reality and its representation. It is into the liminal space where Burger identifies this disjunction, that he projects his own creative vision in order to demonstrate the manifold possibilities offered by alternative representations of the self and the nation. Thus Burger's work is not satirical, but constructive in its attempt to expose 'reality' as a fiction wholly inadequate as a representation of nation.

The basis for representation in Burger's work becomes the individual: the authority of the nation is regarded as deriving from the individuals who constitute it, not from dogmatic ideologies. In representing the possibilities of selfhood, Burger draws, almost of necessity, on his own experience. Indeed he is merciless and unremitting in his self-representation. This has frequently been interpreted as egotism and narcissism, however it is from the struggle to maintain narrative control over the intense feelings evoked by the desire for self-expression that the imaginative force of his work derives. As this thesis shows, it is important to view Burger's self-representation within the context of his desire to project private emotions and

creative aspirations into the public sphere. As was noted earlier, Burger is iconoclastic only in his attempt to destroy false icons. It is clear in all three novels that Burger does not intend to dismantle Switzerland itself as a fictional construct. Instead he seeks to redefine the nation in a manner which is more democratic, and more accepting of the idea that the public, or official reality, should reflect that of the individual.

In his work the magical, the parareal, and the surreal, all become 'real': it becomes impossible to distinguish one from the other. Personal identity previously moulded within a framework that excluded, or suppressed that which did not conform, now requires a far greater range of expression for its representation. The limits imposed upon the self, through its representation as a conscious rational self, are exposed as restrictive and oppressive. What begins as an attempt to subvert the fiction of nationhood by positing a suppressed national spirit in *Schilten*, develops into a quest for language and form capable of expressing the self. This manifests itself in the search for the Mothers in *Die Künstliche Mutter* and for the numinous in *Brenner: Brunsleben*.

What develops is a basic clash between two representational models: one considered as being based on broadly realist aesthetic, and the other based on a modernist aesthetic. The former emphasises the literal, a rational concordance between signifier and signified, the factual, and that which is objectively verifiable; the self is regarded as a unitary whole and life is portrayed as a unidirectional, linear narrative. The emotional and imaginative side of the individual is suppressed in favour of a notion of the true Swiss which extols the virtues of industry and endeavour, and regards the individual as a political and economic unit whose duty it is to fulfil the functions attributed to him or her within that system. The latter, on the

other hand, acknowledges the unconscious as a legitimate aspect of the self, and problematises the epistemological certainty of language as a means to represent reality. The individual self is regarded as a plural entity which can best be expressed through the use of the figurative, the metaphoric and the secondary world of the imagination. Burger's play with form and language, his blurring of the boundaries between the real, the unreal and the surreal, is an attempt to figure the multiplicity of the self, and free it from the imposition of a normative concept of selfhood.

By reclaiming the right of the individual to refigure him- or herself through the development of a range of narrative and representational strategies which encompass the multiplicity of the self, Burger imbues the individual with a new authority which undermines that of the dominant discourses, and explicitly rejects models of masculine logocentrism. This is a major theme of *Die Künstliche Mutter*. Overcoming the artificial division between masculine and feminine is regarded as a crucial step along the path towards a more complete expression of the totality of human existence. As has been argued here in relation to *Die Künstliche Mutter*, this can be seen as a form of hermaphroditism: an acceptance that each individual is a complex mixture of so-called masculine and feminine characteristics. Although figured in a manner which reaffirms stereotypes, Burger's desire for union suggests that he does indeed regard the masculine/feminine division as false dichotomy which needs to be overcome.

The insight which Schöllkopf gains in *Die Künstliche Mutter* is that individual self-expression must take place within a social, cultural and historical framework. The problem of the frame within which representation is to take place remains. Burger's answer to this dilemma is to be found in his own artistic method. Implicit in Burger's project is the wish to extend the possibilities of language, and the

possibilities of constructing stories, to include that which was previously excluded, without, however, repudiating the need of frames through which to view and order life.

The aesthetic which Burger promotes in his art is self-critically reflective. His self-conscious experimentation with language and form always incorporates an ironic self-awareness of itself as art, and of its own unattainable desire for completeness. Writing and representation are considered by Burger as open-ended dialogues, an idea which is developed most fully in *Brenner: Brunsleben*. No representation can ever be complete without killing that which it represents. Switzerland, Burger suggests, is in danger of killing itself, of being trapped in its own representation of itself. Given that the charge of narcissistic self-contemplation is one often levelled at Burger, it is ironic that in his work it is the nation itself which is entranced by its own reflection, and it is Burger's narrative creations who seek to break the mirror and free the nation from the false God it worships. Ironic detachment from the work of art, from the story of the nation, is, therefore, regarded as an absolute necessity if art, and the nation, is to avoid ossification.

The eclecticism of Burger's work reveals itself as one of its main strengths. Burger refused to be bound by any single form, controlling idea or theory; he remained open to new ideas, new representational and narrative strategies. This openness points to one of the central aspects of Burger's work - the determination to avoid closure and to maintain the possibility of dialogue. What arises is a desire for dialogue, but dialogue is not forthcoming, and, as a result, Burger's narrators are left isolated and desperate, on the verge of insanity. As such they are allegorical figures who symbolise the position of the writer in society, banished to the margins, unheeded and unheard. Frequently dialogue is only possible within the self; hence

the division of the narrative subject, and the tendency to monologue. Yet no matter to what extent isolation threatens to result in insanity and solipsism in Burger's novels, he continually averts this danger by positing the possibility of dialogue, the possibility of a reply from outside the self, from beyond the novel.

Often the search for dialogue takes Burger outside the nation. Indeed it is commensurate with Burger's desire to extend the representational possibilities within the cultural framework of Switzerland that he should seek to introduce new ideas and innovations into it. It is appropriate, therefore, that it is in his desire to make Swiss literature relevant in the wider context of European literature that Burger presents his most profound challenge to the dominant discourses of the nation. For, by introducing new representational strategies and innovative forms, Burger undermines the intellectual legitimacy of the dominant discourses, and exposes the ideological bias of their representational strategies. This thesis shows that Burger's thematisation of regional issues is compatible with the creation of literature which is innovative and relevant in a wider European context. Indeed in its profound questioning of concepts of reality and nationhood; of the relation between art and life; the struggle for form and language which will enable self-expression, Burger's work transcends national boundaries.

Ultimately, it is possible to trace a development in Burger's novels from the powerful resentment of restrictive social forms in *Schilten*, to the more subtle, but no less powerful, attempts to undermine the dominant discourses in *Die Künstliche Mutter*. This is followed in *Brenner:Brunsleben* by a more detached and ironic observation of the frames controlling representations of reality. Nevertheless Burger offers little hope of compromise or resolution in the conflict between an authoritarian view of 'reality' and the imaginative work of art: the writer appears bound either to

accept the dictates of reality or lose him or herself in solipsistic contemplation. This finally pessimistic message is disavowed, however, by Burger's continuing attempts to instigate dialogue, and his refusal to retreat into the dark spaces of the self. Rather his novels represent small 'heterotopias' which offer the space for creative and constructive engagement with the world, a shared space in which the possibilities for the self as individual and as part of a collective can be imaginatively explored.

On August 1 1988, seven months before his suicide, Burger made a speech in which he addressed the relationship of Switzerland to its army:

[man] muss ... die Frage stellen, ob es nicht die einzig mögliche Heldentat im Sinne Tells wäre, heute, die Armee abzuschaffen. Erschrecken Sie bitte nicht, ich wohnte nicht lieber in Moskau... Aber gerade weil ich eine so hohe Meinung von der Schweiz habe, wünschte ich ihr für die 90er Jahre über die CH-91 hinaus eine bahnbrechende, eine revolutionäre Tat. ¹

It is an unfortunate irony that only months after Burger's death in 1989 Switzerland experienced a caesura in its history which continues to resonate today. On 26. November 1989 1,052,218 (35.6%) Swiss, including a majority in favour in the cantons of Jura and Geneva, voted 'für eine Schweiz ohne Armee und für eine umfassende Friedenspolitik'. The turnout at 68.5% was the highest for twenty years. Although the *Armeeabschaffungsinitiative* was defeated, the number who voted in favour demonstrated a hitherto unsuspected, or unacknowledged, willingness to

¹ H. Burger, 'Was wäre wenn die Schweiz abgeschafft würde?', Rede zum 1. August, 1988 in Brunegg, *Schweizerische Literaturarchiv*, (SLA), Bern.

debate 'eine Kernfrage Schweizerischen Selbstverständnisses'.² Suddenly the dominant image of Swiss manhood, and the values Switzerland represented in a changing world, were being contested and reconsidered. A new and vital expression of the Swiss spirit seemed to be emerging, and the dialogue Burger despaired of achieving suddenly seemed a possibility, as the Swiss were forced to engage in the process of self-reflection. Nevertheless the fact that Burger's work remains largely neglected, despite his vision of Switzerland as a creative land which has the possibility to build on its virtues, would suggest that the nation is still reluctant to return Burger's unrelenting gaze, and to respond to the challenge his work presents.

² *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, Nr.276, 26. November, 1999.

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