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THE VISION OF GERMANY'S REBIRTH  
IN THE NOVELS OF  
GUSTAV FRENSSEN, GEORG VON OMPTEDA  
AND JAKOB WASSERMANN

by

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### Abstract

Through an examination of the vision of Germany's rebirth in the novels of Gustav Frenssen (1863-1945), Georg von Ompteda (1863-1932), and Jakob Wassermann (1873-1934), this study investigates the social, political and ethical goals of three widely read authors of the Wilhelminian era. The central problem of the novels is defined as the attitude towards the industrialization of Germany after 1870 and the way in which this attitude prevented the authors from facing up to the problems of industrial society, thereby contributing to the failure of German democracy and the rise of National Socialism.

The underlying common theme of all three authors is the necessity for national unity, both to put an end to social discord and to enable Germany to repel an attack by foreign enemies. In Frenssen's novels the aspects of social, political and religious reform contribute to the ideal of a state whose harmonious unity is secured by a framework of common goals based on a foundation of ethnic homogeneity. Georg von Ompteda's works concentrate on the problems of the Prussian aristocracy. Ompteda endeavours to demonstrate to the Junkers themselves the necessity of reform of certain aspects of the aristocratic code, such as the duel and the urgent problem of economic

decline due to the Junkers' refusal to accept employment outside the service of the state. Ompteda seeks to foster national unity by showing that the aristocracy performs a vital function as the source of military and civil administrators with an essential community of interest with the rest of the nation.

While Jakob Wassermann represents in some ways the antithesis of the other two in that he is anti-nationalist and anti-authoritarian, he too aspires to a unified national community, but on the basis of humanitarian idealism. His vision of a reborn society lacks the national orientation of the "Heimatsdichter" and his hope for social improvement through a revitalized humanitarian ethic gave way to despair after the collapse of the Weimar Republic. Ompteda similarly abandoned his vision of a stratified but harmonious state after the Revolution of 1918, and only Frenssen modified his vision to accommodate the Third Reich.

None of the three authors belongs aesthetically in the first rank: their novels are epigonal in style, rambling in structure, and generally far too long. Since they were not first-rate thinkers, they were unable to subject their vision of a reborn society to the kind of consistent, penetrating analysis which would have revealed their failure to find solutions to the problems of indus-



trial society. In consequence the novels retreat from the modern world into a mythical past where Germany was self-sufficient and the population lived in harmony on the land. For all his pretensions of belonging to the literary avant-garde, Wassermann's position is essentially analogous: his heroes all withdraw from the problems of industrial society into a sheltered and sharply limited sphere where they can engage in good works on an individual level.

Had there been no Third Reich, the "Heimatroman" would have been merely a transitory phenomenon of dubious literary merit, worthy of scant attention forty years after the last representative of the genre left the printing press. The justification for its retrospective analysis lies in the fact that millions of Germans read these novels over a period of forty years and found in Adolf Hitler's rejection of liberal parliamentary democracy a sympathetic and familiar echo of the "Heimatroman's" rural idyll.

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## Preface

The aim of this study is to examine the vision of Germany's rebirth as it appears in the novels of Gustav Frenssen, Georg von Ompfeda and Jakob Wassermann in order to evaluate the social, political and ethical goals of the "Heimatroman," a facet of the literature of the Wilhelminian era which has been totally neglected since 1945. Indeed, these three authors, despite the enormous numbers of their novels sold during their lifetimes, have received remarkably little scholarly attention. The secondary literature on Ompfeda is restricted to reviews of his novels in various periodicals, principally Das literarische Echo, while academic criticism of Frenssen has been restricted to specific aspects of his work. There has been no attempt to assess his work as a whole except from a National Socialist viewpoint. Wassermann has been the subject of two Swiss dissertations during the past twenty years, both of which likewise deal with particular aspects of his work.

While Wassermann's novels lack the nationalist and racial orientation which is one of the salient features of the "Heimatroman" and therefore does not properly fit into the category of "Heimatsdichter," his inclusion in the study is justified on two counts. Firstly, he thought of himself

as a "Volkserzieher" in the same way as Frenssen, and was bitterly disappointed when his novels were not accepted by the German public as representative of their concerns and aspirations, and secondly, the essentially analagous nature of his conclusions illuminates, and is illuminated by, the "Heimatroman" proper.

The vision of a reborn nation is determined largely by the author's attitude to the society around him, and the positions of Frenssen, Ompteda and Wassermann in relation to the newly industrialized Germany of the Wilhelminian era are reflected in the reforms which they advocate in the novels. The study examines these from the aspects of interpersonal relations, social relations and institutions, and the ethical and religious foundation. Since the "Heimatdichter" are representative of a substantial body of Wilhelminian thought, examination of their vision of an ideal future sheds some additional light on the actual course of events in twentieth century Germany.

## The "Heimatroman" and its Historical Context

Seventy years ago the "Heimatroman" was considered by many Germans to be the most important literary development of the new century. In the heyday of Imperial splendour the self-conscious nationalism of the movement corresponded to an awareness of national pride on the part of large sections of the population, and the equally self-conscious evocation of a simpler rural past struck a responsive chord in the hearts of many for whom the headlong onrush of industrialization brought unwelcome changes in the social and economic structure of the nation.

This conservative faction in Wilhelminian Germany was not composed solely of those classes, such as the agricultural community, who were directly affected by the shift in emphasis from agriculture to industry reflected in the bitterly opposed tariff agreements of 1892-94. The inseparability in the Bismarckian Empire of the concepts of the army, the Junkers and patriotism per se led to a "feudalization of the bourgeoisie"<sup>1</sup> in which the patriotic middle class accepted the pre-eminence of the aristocracy in the military and bureaucratic hierarchy and took over many of the aristocracy's traditional myths and mannerisms, which were of course directed towards the maintenance of their residual feudal privileges.

The growing prosperity of the middle class not only served as a substitute for real political power but also wedded the bourgeoisie to the aristocracy in the face of the demands of the proletariat for a greater share of both power and prosperity. This conservative sentiment found in the "Heimatroman's" call for a return to a pre-industrialized state an echo of its own fears that the ascendancy of industrial goals posed the threat of a complete break with German tradition.

Aristocrats and bourgeois alike compared the traditional virtues of the German nation, the national self-image of such widely-read works as Freytag's Soll und Haben: industry, loyalty, piety, to the supposed lack of such values among the classes oriented towards industry. Not only were the socialist workers considered a danger to the existing order--in the Kaiser's words "eine Rotte von Menschen, nicht wert, den Namen Deutsche zu tragen,"<sup>2</sup>--von Plötz of the Bund der Landwirte expressed the widely-held belief that only the Junkers could provide the kind of leadership necessary to maintain Germany's position in his comment that "the speculators of the stock exchange would collapse in the face of a cavalry charge."<sup>3</sup> From this standpoint, where self-interest and conviction combined to produce a deep hostility to industrialization and its changes, the industrial age, especially in its gaudier manifestations,



threatened the material and spiritual foundations of society: the Triumphal Arch at the Paris Exhibition of 1900, surmounted by a statue of a Parisienne in an evening gown, symbolized to conservatives not the triumph of technology over poverty and disease, but rather the inner hollowness masked by the glittering spectacle.<sup>4</sup>

The Caprivi tariffs, which were answered immediately by the formation of the Bund der Landwirte in 1893, were no more than a belated recognition of the primacy of industry in a modern Great Power, something that Bismarck, in his years as Chancellor, had refused to concede. Bismarck sought to combat the agricultural recession of the 1880's by progressively raising tariff barriers, which resulted in high living costs for the urban working class with very little benefit to the farmers. (Even though industry was protected by the high tariff wall demanded during the depression of the 1870's, the great acceleration of industrial production after the introduction of the Caprivi tariffs indicated that the interests of "rye and iron" did not always coincide.) Because of their domination of the army, the civil service and the Prussian Landtag, the political influence of the farmers, and in particular the East Elbian Junkers, was such that heavy industry needed their support in order to benefit similarly from state protection. Barkin points out that

Bismarck's adoption of a protectionist tariff policy in 1879 was crucial in that it established the principle of state support for powerful interest groups.<sup>5</sup> As a result the economic confluence of interest between the Junkers and heavy industry broadened to include a political partnership, for both groups felt that their survival depended on the maintenance of the Reich as presently constituted. The inexorable rise of Social Democracy among industrial workers provided a common enemy, and the enormous prestige of the aristocracy following the 1870 war with France imbued the industrialists with the same ideology as the Junkers.<sup>6</sup> The "feudalization of the bourgeoisie" resulted in the prolongation of the philosophy of the Prussian aristocracy, its military, authoritarian and thoroughly conservative mode of thought, long after such postures had ceased to be appropriate in a modern industrial nation whose prosperity depended on trade rather than martial deeds. J.M. Keynes once observed that "the German Empire was built more truly on coal and iron than blood and iron"<sup>7</sup> but the prestige of the aristocratic class who had united the country obscured this unromantic truth.

Although the Bund der Landwirte was dominated by the Prussian aristocracy, there was considerable similarity in conditions in Schleswig-Holstein, where a patriarchal

relationship existed between the large farmers and their labourers in the marshes of Dithmarschen. Although eastern Holstein had its noble landowners, the farmers of Dithmarschen were their own lords of the manor, and by the 19th century what Heberle terms a "peasant aristocracy" with a highly stratified society had evolved.<sup>8</sup> Frenssen's comment that few farms remained in the same family for more than a century<sup>9</sup> coincides with Hans-Jürgen Puhle's statistic that by 1885 only 12.8% of the larger East Prussian estates had been in the hands of the same family for more than 50 years.<sup>10</sup> The farmers of Dithmarschen did not belong to an aristocratic caste and therefore had no sympathy for the Prussian traditions which the Bund der Landwirte and the Conservative Party desired to maintain. Indeed between 1890 and 1912 the Conservatives never polled more than 5.4% of the vote in Reichstag elections, in contrast to a maximum of 44.3% (in 1903) for the Social Democrats.<sup>11</sup> Only the larger farmers benefited from protectionist tariffs on grain and feedstuffs, while the steady rise in meat and dairy prices during the 1890's brought a general prosperity to the region.<sup>12</sup> Frenssen speaks of "unsolidem Leben und Spekulationen"<sup>13</sup> resulting from the intrusion of new ways into formerly isolated Dithmarschen. The situation of Andreas Strandiger in Die drei Getreuen nevertheless shows that problems such as the

migration of farm labourers were common to the larger Dithmarschen farmers as well as the Junkers, and for both the rise of Socialism, which was particularly strong in Dithmarschen,<sup>14</sup> presented a threat to their economic and social position, in reaction to which the conservative philosophy of the Wilhelminian era took shape. Hans-Jürgen Puhle enumerates the monarchical, nationalist, and patriarchal components of the agrarian catechism, the attempt to counter the socialist ideology of class struggle with the concept of the unified "Volk" in which each segment of the population performs the functions of its station, bound together by a common racial heritage and loyalty to the sovereign. Pride in the achievements of local troops in the war of 1870, as evinced for example in Frenssen's description of the Battle of Gravelotte in Jörn Uhl, did much to overcome the Dithmarschers' aversion to the Prussians, and the foundation of the Empire provided a focus for nationalist sentiment despite the prevalent dislike of Bismarck's "kleindeutsche Lösung."<sup>15</sup> As Puhle points out, the Prussian estate owners supported the new fleet at first out of political necessity rather than conviction, whereas the Dithmarscher, living by the sea, were more susceptible to feelings of national pride on that score. As long as their economic position did not suffer as a result, they shared the satisfaction of the majority of the nation at

the image of power and prestige presented by naval and colonial policies. This is reflected by the call of the Bund der Landwirte for a "vernünftigen Kolonialpolitik" entirely for reasons of national prestige, since Germany's colonies were incapable of producing agricultural exports for the domestic market.<sup>16</sup>

In conjunction with the political and economic goals of the farmers, this Conservative concept of the nation gave rise to the mythologization of the role of the farmer. In contrast to harmful influences emanating from the industrial cities, which, since their development followed a pattern already established in England and France, could be classified as "alien," the land and those who worked it were imbued with all manner of virtues: since they were manifestly uncorrupted by foreign contact, these became the pantheon of German virtues. This was by no means new: Gustav Freytag's Soll und Haben had elaborated on German virtues at great length in mid-century, but for Conservative zealots--and "Heimatsdichter"--they became articles of faith to the extent that blue eyes and blond hair were the inevitable concomitant of a whole constellation of worthy qualities. The concerns of the "Heimatsdichter" reflect to a large extent the political and ideological aims of the Bund der Landwirte, and although Frenssen in particular calls for a greater degree of freedom and prosperity for the

agricultural labourer, the "Ersatzautorität" of the theory of the state founded on the "organic" bond between the people and the land and between the classes in the state was a central theme of both the agrarians' struggle against the reality of the Wilhelminian Empire and the vision of a reborn Germany contained in the novels of the "Heimatsdichter."<sup>17</sup> Even when the agrarians opposed the Kaiser, as for instance over the Caprivi tariffs, and thereby ceased to render unconditional obedience as the aristocratic code demanded, this concept of the state provided a focus for nationalist sentiment.

While it would be totally unjust to accuse a "Heimatsdichter" such as Frenssen of being a mouthpiece for agrarian interests, this essential common ground between the theorists of a Germany reborn along the lines of an agricultural community and the self-interest of Prussian landowners cannot be ignored. Concrete problems facing the farmers, such as the labour shortage caused by the migration to the cities, were presented in the Wilhelminian Empire from both the practical and the ideological side. Novels such as Wilhelm von Polenz' Der Büttnerbauer (1895) or Frenssen's Die drei Getreuen (1898) deal sympathetically with the decline of the small farmer, caught between competition from larger neighbours and the unscrupulousness of speculators, and lament the poverty which drove the rural

population to the cities or to America, whereas the Bund der Landwirte used the same problem as a basis for demands that freedom of movement be curtailed by law. Behind both approaches to the problem there is discernable the additional justification that, since farm workers make both physically and politically more reliable soldiers, national security requires that the migration be halted. "National security" for the agrarians referred primarily to domestic considerations, for the spectre of Socialism loomed ever larger as the SPD grew steadily throughout the Wilhelminian era, and the final solution of an Imperial coup d' etat never lost its fascination in conservative circles.<sup>18</sup>

The concept of an "organic" nation, freed of the discord engendered by the competition of interest groups in a complex modern society was an emotional reaction rather than a politically feasible practical solution to the widespread unease, expressed by Nietzsche as early as 1873, that Germany's economic and political success had been bought at the expense of those traditional values which were assumed to be the social and spiritual foundations of the nation. The vitriolic nature of Nietzsche's attacks on cherished but obsolete institutions became popularized at the beginning of the 1890's as a selective rejection of certain aspects of 19th century civilization in such works as Julius Langbehn's Rembrandt als Erzieher, the first

edition of which appeared in 1890. In his book, which was such an enormous success that sixty thousand copies were sold in the first year of publication,<sup>19</sup> Langbehn calls for a rebirth of Germany's intellectual and spiritual life on the basis of traditional cultural values. He rejects the "geistige Leere"<sup>20</sup> of the asphalt culture of the cities, and in place of "l'art pour l'art" postulates cultural values, the abiding validity of which is guaranteed by unbroken contact with their native soil. Langbehn sees in the culture of Germany's rural north the last unsullied bastion of this moral integrity, and in the uncorrupted vitality of its people the strength and leadership necessary to restore these qualities to a paramount position in the life of the nation. Rembrandt als Erzieher was one of the most significant influences on Frenssen's intellectual development,<sup>21</sup> and as a result of its enthusiastic reception by Ferdinand Avenarius, the editor of Der Kunstwart, the book became one of the pivotal works of the "Heimatkunst" movement.

For all the passionate rejection of Wilhelminian society, which in its rapid development threatened to engulf even the most isolated rural enclaves in a flood of modernity, the "Heimatkunst" movement shares some common ground with its arch-adversary, Naturalism. Friedrich Lienhard and Adolf Bartels, the leading theoreticians of



"Heimatkunst," were well aware that from a purely stylistic point of view, "Heimatkunst" and Naturalism were not mutually exclusive.<sup>22</sup> Their attack was therefore "nicht gegen den Naturalismus als blosse literarische Schule, sondern als wesentlichste Ausdrucksform des Zeitgeistes."<sup>23</sup> The phrase "Die Moderne," coined in 1886 by the literary historian Eugen Wolff as a description of the anti-traditional, questioning spirit which was gaining momentum after 1882-84,<sup>24</sup> was fully applicable only after the Naturalists had made their stylistic and thematic innovations, and it was this spirit, international, materialistic, disrespectful of tradition and concentrated "im Literatentum der Grossstadt,"<sup>25</sup> against which Lienhard, Bartels and Ferdinand Avenarius with his Kunstwart directed their assault.

Naturalism, which reached its high-water mark with the performance of Gerhardt Hauptmann's Vor Sonnenaufgang in Berlin in 1889, brought contemporary social problems into the foreground, a trend which the "Heimatroman" continued, albeit in a rather different form. Although some of the "Heimatsdichter," most notably Frenssen, shared the Social Democratic bias of the Naturalists in their treatment of social problems, they used the misery of the industrial cities as a foil to support the call for a reaffirmation of the supposedly eternal rural values. This in 1900 amounted to a willful refusal to acknowledge the

fundamental changes in society wrought by the Industrial Revolution and the consequent impossibility of superimposing these rural values on the conditions of the industrial proletariat. The inability of the "Heimatroman," with its idée fixe of the values of the countryside, to cope with the problems of a modern urban society is most graphically illustrated by Frenssen's Klaus Hinrich Baas, which fails totally in its intention of reconciling the two. Baas' peasant toughness enables him to rise from poverty to affluence as a Hamburg businessman, but along the way he loses his spiritual foundations and the end of the novel suggests that in the commercial maelstrom he cannot, even by re-establishing his ties with the land, recover the serenity that contact with nature and the slower pace of life impart to the farmer.

A large proportion of "Heimatromane" such as Bartels' Die Dithmarscher (1898) and many of the works of Lulu von Strauss und Torney, deal with historical subjects, which is of course the most convenient method of excluding modernity. While most "Heimatdichter" knew too much about country life to glamorize the farmer's dawn to dusk toil after the manner of the Romantics, their attempt to isolate country districts from what they considered the corrupting and distasteful influences of industrial society introduces a didactic element into their works which is quite at odds

with the spirit of Naturalism. Whereas the style of both Naturalism and "Heimatkunst" is a development of German Realism in that both movements represent a progressive sharpening of focus in the author's depiction of the world, both from the standpoint of landscape and of social problems, this didactic element is a distortion of the subject matter that belies the photographic clarity of reproduction inherent in the style of the novels. The poetic filter through which writers such as Storm, Keller and Raabe depict the world is not so much stripped away as replaced by an ever-present didacticism which at times comes close to sheer propaganda. When Frenssen constantly uses adjectives such as "schlicht" and "ernst" to describe farm labourers, or calls Fährmann Teut (Meino der Prahler): "ein Tagelöhner, der ein Herzog war,"<sup>26</sup> the combination of expressive names and exemplary characteristics places an overlay of myth over the description which removes the work from the sphere of unvarnished reality. Erika Jenny's assertion that the "Heimatroman" is merely a continuation of well-established 19th century "Dorfgeschichte" ignores this central aspect of the "Heimatroman."<sup>27</sup>

The self-interest behind the ideological programme of the Bund der Landwirte was gradually submerged after the mid-1920's as its successor, the Reichslandbund, became no more than a component of the radical right-wing opposition.

The loss of control over the DNVP by the agrarians following Hugenberg's election to the presidency of the party in October 1928 had as its end result the subordination of agrarian economic aims to the political goals of the NSDAP in the creation of the Reichsnährstand under the leadership of R.W. Darre in the summer of 1933.<sup>28</sup> In an ironic twist, this successor to the East Elbian Junkers declared that: "Die Nationalsozialistische Agrarpolitik lehnt jedoch entschieden den liberalistischen Grundsatz ab, dass der einzelne Bauer möglichst viel Geld verdienen müsse."<sup>29</sup> The declared role of agriculture in the Third Reich was to be "verantwortlicher Sachverwalter seines Volkes über die höchsten Güter."<sup>30</sup> The basic tenet of the Bund der Landwirte, that the rural population was healthier and more politically reliable than the industrial proletariat, was similarly removed from the sphere of practical politics and transformed into such fatuous slogans as: "Jedes Bauernvolk ist blühendes Leben, jedes verstädterte Volk ist schleichender Tod."<sup>31</sup> The process of mythologization of the rural population, which the "Heimatroman" took over from writers such as Langbehn, became the canon of its unlovely offspring, the "Blut und Boden" novel, whose sole aim was the glorification of the race. The social programme of Frenssen and his contemporaries was forgotten, absorbed in the declamations and promises that the new

Reich would create a farmers' paradise.

Whereas anti-semitism had many adherents among the financially hard-pressed farmers of the Bund der Landwirte, it represents no more than an undercurrent in most works of "Heimatsdichtung" and is completely absent from Frenssen's novels. The Reichserbhofgesetz of 1933 removed land from the realm of financial speculation and thereby banished the agrarians' fears of further Jewish takeovers of farmland, but ideological anti-semitism was a much more significant factor in the "Blut und Boden" novel than in its predecessor. The frequent shifts in policy towards the Jews during the 1930's reflect the lack of coherent plans beyond the general wish on the part of Nazi officials to be rid of them, while at the same time the "strengthening" of the Germanic racial element in the population through the advocacy of large families among rural and other desirable segments points to the primacy of racial--and therefore ultimately mythological--considerations in the formation of state policy.

The "Heimatsroman" undoubtedly played an important part in the popularization of those aspects of the programme of the Bund der Landwirte which were absorbed into the attitude of the Third Reich to the rural population. The prime concerns of the "Heimatsroman" are nevertheless reflective of the social and political issues of the Wilhelminian era, just as the style and structure of the novels

are firmly rooted in the Realist tradition. Frenssen even at his most irrational differs from the frenzied demagoguery of the "Blut und Boden" writers as a Wilhelminian Junker differs from a Nazi Gauleiter: that the former's vision of a reborn Germany became the nightmarish reality of the latter demonstrates the fundamental failure of the "Heimatsdichter" to appreciate the extent to which the industrialization of Germany had changed the conditions of national life.

Gustav Frenssen

From the obscurity of a parsonage in the village of Hemme in Holstein, Gustav Frenssen became an overnight literary sensation with the publication of Jörn Uhl in 1901. Although Die Sandgräfin had appeared in 1897 and his second novel, Die drei Getreuen (1898) had been acclaimed by such writers as Raabe, Heyse and Wildenbruch,<sup>1</sup> Jörn Uhl was the first novel of Frenssen's to attract widespread attention. Within seven months one hundred thousand copies had been sold,<sup>2</sup> an enormous number for the time, and the reaction of the critics was in general no less enthusiastic than that of the public. Amid a veritable avalanche of adjectives such as "echt," "gesund," "kerndeutsch," Frenssen was compared to the great masters of world literature:<sup>3</sup> one critic praised the characters on the extravagant grounds that they were imbued with "wahrhaft homerischer Einfalt und Unparteilichkeit."<sup>4</sup>

The leaders of the "Heimatkunst" movement were more restrained in their praise of Jörn Uhl. Ferdinand Avenarius, writing in Der Kunstwart, admitted that the novel was good, but advised his readers that what they liked in Frenssen's book they would find "noch reicher, ursprünglicher, grösser" in the works of Keller and Raabe.<sup>5</sup> Adolf Bartels, whom Frenssen much later described as running "immer bellend

hinter mir her,"<sup>6</sup> dismissed Jörn Uhl as having "zwar viel volkstümliches Lebensgut, aber dieses leider vielfach unempfunden, und (in dem) noch mehr anempfundenenes steckt."<sup>7</sup>

Frenssen himself regarded the label of "Heimatsdichter" with misgivings: "Meinetwegen 'Heimatsdichter' und gar einer von stärkstem Masse, aber nicht einer, der nur zwischen Husum und Buxtehude gelesen wird."<sup>8</sup> His aim was always to serve the whole nation, and to do the same for the German people as he believed Dickens had done for the English:

Man sagt von Dickens, dass er mit seinen Erzählungen das einfache Volk geehrt, seelisch erhöht und so mitgeholfen habe, dass das englische Volk in seiner Gesamtheit sich selbst geehrt und so ein einiges und starkes Volk geworden sei; das ist es, was ich von Kind an unbewusst geglaubt und gewollt, und um das ich mich bemüht habe. 9

Frenssen considered the whole concept of "Heimatskunst" as a distinct literary movement superfluous. He felt that "alle grosse Kunst ist Heimatskunst," for when an artist has found himself, "dann findet er auch die Heimat, denn die Heimat ist ja ein Stück seiner selbst und das Beste."<sup>10</sup> For him "die heimatliche Scholle" was a source of inspiration in a very concrete sense: not only did it provide the material for his novels, but "es schien mir, wenn ich in der Fremde war, als würde alles unwirklich und als wäre ich verloren in einer schwankenden Welt."<sup>11</sup>

Frenssen's ancestors had lived in the village of Barlt in Süderdithmarschen since the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>12</sup>



His father was a carpenter, and although the success of Jörn Uhl gave him confidence in his ability as an author, Frenssen throughout his life thought of himself as simply a member of the village community: when he was over seventy he wrote: "Ich bin ein Bauer gewesen, in geistigem deutschen Gut."<sup>13</sup> Consequently Frenssen rejected the pre-eminent position accorded by Nietzsche and Langbehn to culture in the life of the nation:

Aber die Kunst . . . ist für das Leben eines Volkes und des Einzelnen nicht das Wesentliche, sondern nur eine Zierde seiner Existenz, eine Feder auf seinem Hut. Das Wesentliche eines Volkes und des einzelnen Menschen scheint mir das Leben selbst, dass es biologisch gesund, ernst, und wertvoll tätig sei. Um dies habe ich mich in meinen Veröffentlichungen bemüht. <sup>14</sup>

This downgrading of the importance of art in relation to the didactic purpose leads inevitably to an impoverishment of Frenssen's literary work; it precludes artistic innovation, for the didactic purpose requires that the message reach the greatest number of readers. Considerations such as structure and language become subordinate to content, and subtlety ceases to be a virtue.

That this sense of being a part of the village community, of equal value to the community as the other farmers and craftsmen, is not a pose for Frenssen is attested to by all who knew him.<sup>15</sup> An American scholar, John C. Blankenagel, wrote in 1948:

Anyone who has talked with Frenssen, as this reviewer has, must have been impressed with the sincerity and

almost austere simplicity of the man. His was not a subtle mind, nor was his background a wide one. His thinking along certain lines was naive and at times contradictory, but it was honest. Frenssen was not interested in art for art's sake; he desired to be regarded by posterity above all as a man who had taken an active part in the life and issues of his time.<sup>16</sup>

Frenssen would without a doubt have brought Gustav Büttner back from the city, for he felt from his own experience that only with the soil of home under one's feet was real happiness possible, and yet, more than most "Heimatomane" his novels have a wider relevance than merely "zwischen Husum und Buxtehude." The sparing use of "Plattdeutsch" is a clear indication that the last thing he desired was to restrict the reading public for his novels to the inhabitants of Schleswig-Holstein. He lived outside the province only when he was a student in Berlin and Tübingen, and as a result his outlook was such that he fulfilled Erika Jenny's criterion for a Heimatdichter: "Schaffen aus intuitivem Heimatgefühl heraus, nicht bloss aus objektiver Sachkenntnis."<sup>17</sup> Frenssen was so close to the life of the village that he was not misled by the unfamiliar environment into restricting himself to its depiction: his concerns were with universal human problems: pride, sexuality, injustice, frivolity. The theme of Der Büttnerbauer is the decline of the farmer as a class, whereas Jörn Uhl goes through the whole range of human experiences: youth, love, marriage, bereavement, in addition to his struggle to retain the family farm.

One attribute most sharply divides the Büttners from

Frenssen's farmers: pride. Although many of Frenssen's novels from Die drei Getreuen on castigate the "Bauern" for the excessive pride which gives rise to the old Dithmarschen saying "Dickdohn ist dat halve Leben,"<sup>18</sup> no farmer of his would react with the feeling of class inferiority that Gustav Böttner shows when visiting his relations in the town. The Dithmarschen farmers are conscious of their worth and are not subdued when confronted with the city and its manners. The case of Balle Bohnsack versus Dutti Kohl (Otto Babendiek) shows that, notwithstanding their slow-moving ways, Frenssen had considerable respect for his neighbours' ability to hold their own in a clash of wits.

Gustav Frenssen was a Lutheran pastor from 1890 to 1901, when the success of Jörn Uhl made him financially independent. Despite a widening gap between his own religious convictions and the orthodox dogma of his Church, he enjoyed the responsibility for serving and educating his parishioners, and regarded his literary production in the same light. For this reason he rejected the absolute realism advocated by the Naturalists on the grounds that it precluded this didactic element: "Es wäre mir wohl möglich gewesen, schier wirkliche, ja brutale Dinge zu schreiben . . . aber . . . ich musste es alles erhöhen, reinigen, blank machen."<sup>19</sup> The combating of harmful and disruptive influences remained his primary concern, but his parish was now the entire German nation. Dithmarschen

in Frenssen's novels is simply the world in microcosm, and between Barlt, St. Michaelisdonn and Meldorf he found in the farms and the villages all the material necessary for the depiction of humanity's glories and tragedies:

Der Schriftsteller, der Dramatiker wie der Erzähler, braucht nicht den Königshof, nicht die Grossstadt, um so tief, klar und bunt zu gestalten, wie sein Genie in seiner höchsten Kraft vermag; aber er braucht allerdings eine Gemeinschaft von Menschen, welche den ganzen Kreis des Menschentums darstellt, arm und reich, Regierte und Regierende, Weltliche und Geistliche, Stadt und Land, Tagelöhner, Bauern, Handwerker, Lehrer, Landvögte, und im Hintergrund angedeutet das ganze Volk und die Regierung. In solch rundem Abbild der ganzen Welt befand ich mich, fühlte und genoss es; und war doppelt froh, dass dies Abbild meine Heimat war. 20

Frenssen avoids the danger of cardboard characters because of his talent for observation, but there is considerable repetition of both physical and psychological characteristics throughout his work. Since his aim is to educate the German people for their moral and physical improvement, he endows his principal characters with exemplary racial attributes: in this Frenssen follows the normal pattern of the "Heimatsroman." Racial differences are important as early as 1901, in the loss of the Uhls' farm and its purchase by Fiete Krey. Significantly, in contrast to Polenz and Freytag, the Uhls are ruined not by social developments or evil foreign influences - these the race of the Uhls is vigorous enough to combat - but by their own frivolity. Frenssen is not looking for a scapegoat to explain the downfall of the old farming families, but rather attempting to rouse them from their

suicidal complacency.

There are two distinct races in the district, the Uhls and the Kreys. The Uhls are the marsh farmers: ". . .schmale, hellblonde Gesichter, das Haar so blond wie Roggen kurz vor der Ernte, Gesichter von starken, oft edlen Formen mit ruhigen, stolzen, klaren Augen."<sup>21</sup> The racially pure Saxon-Frisian strain contains the desirable elements of strength, nobility, reliability and pride, while the Kreys' physical features reflect more negative traits: ". . .runde, rote Köpfe . . . die klugen und flinken Augen, unstet oft und verschlagen . . . wie junge Katzen in der Sonne springen."<sup>22</sup> The inner character is frequently revealed by the eyes, and so the contrast of the "ruhigen, stolzen, klaren Augen" of the Uhls with the Kreys' clever, quick, inconstant and cunning eyes betrays immediately Frenssen's judgement on the relative value of the two clans. He goes one step further in suggesting that the Kreys are descended from the Wends, a Slavic tribe who occupied Dithmarschen from the time the Anglo-Saxons left for England until they were displaced by fresh waves of Saxon migration from the north. In the previous novel, Die drei Getreuen, the Wenden are somewhat scornfully described as opportunists rather than brave warriors: The name of the first scout, "Pribislav der Springer,"<sup>23</sup> implies agility rather than valour, and the wood spirits of Dithmarschen are happy to see the retreat of the alien invaders. The Uhls'

loss of the farm is therefore a repetition of a historical occurrence, and the lesson is that a revival of the old Saxon spirit of energy and enterprise is necessary for the old families to retain their land. By his choice of a historical parallel charged with irrational racial overtones, Frenssen adds an emotional element to an otherwise eminently practical call for a reaffirmation of the traditional values of seriousness and industry in the face of the pervasive influences from the newly affluent Reich which are leading the old farming families "zu unsolidem Leben und Spekulationen."<sup>24</sup> In this case the racial aspect of the novel is harmless, since it is not directed at any definable group: Frenssen is not advocating discrimination against the inhabitants of the "Geest." Nevertheless the effect of such a widely read work as Jörn Uhl in preparing the way among Germans for the acceptance of Hitler's racial policies cannot be overlooked.

The physical characteristics of the Uhls reappear in all of Frenssen's novels. Not only the heroes but also virtually all the characters of whom the author approves are blond, blue-eyed, well built and physically strong. The exemplary pastors, Adam Barfood the pastor of Poggsee and Pastor Bohlen (Otto Babendiek and Die Brüder) are also of this type, in keeping with Frenssen's conviction that the responsibility of educating the people requires men as vigorous and positive as the best of their parishioners. The one notable exception

is Otto Babendiek, Frenssen's autobiographical hero, who shares Frenssen's own physique of medium height and slim build.

Within the bounds of the typical Saxon physique that they all share, Frenssen's heroes represent "Urformen von niedersächsischem Blut."<sup>25</sup> Heim Heiderieter (Die drei Getreuen) is "der Träumer," Jörn Uhl "der dumpf Tätige," Kai Jans (Hilligenlei) "der Grübler" and Klaus Baas "der Helle und Tüchtige." The strengths and weaknesses of each are illuminated to serve as an example and a warning to the reader. The slow, deliberate nature of most of the heroes is reflected in their gait, the result of years of walking behind the plough in the heavy marsh soil. Honesty, reliability, seriousness, straightforwardness and loyalty are constantly recurring traits, accompanied by industry, which is depicted as a typically German virtue.

The way in which Frenssen attributes mostly positive traits to the characters in his novels reflects the fundamental conservatism that he shares with the "Heimatsdichter" in general. His aim is to conserve and strengthen the good in Wilhelminian society, to offer worthy examples to his readers and to expose harmful social institutions and character traits in a constructive rather than a revolutionary way. Schleswig-Holstein was a particularly appropriate setting for such an endeavour: its rural character was largely unchanged by the

Industrial Revolution, Hamburg was an easily accessible representative of the new age, and from a racial point of view, the nordic physical type was more common there than elsewhere in Germany. To this extent Frenssen was not merely presenting his characters as mythical stereotypes: flaxen haired children and robust, blue eyed farmers are a frequent sight along the lanes of Dithmarschen.

The ideal male hero, modelled after Frenssen's concept of the exemplary racial type, has, of course, his female counterpart. Beginning with Trude in Frenssen's first novel, Die Sandgräfin, which is by Frenssen's own admission an imitation of "Gartenlaubgeschichten,"<sup>27</sup> the procession of leading ladies is a gallery of full-blooded females quite free of the blushing modesty of Victorian heroines. They fall into two distinct groups: the lusty peasant girl and the middle class beauty, whose upbringing makes her more reticent in the expression of the sensuality of her nature.

To the former group belong Heim Heiderieter's wife Eva, Jörn Uhl's first wife Lena Tarn, who epitomizes Frenssen's ideal that the wife of a vigorous man must be a hard-working, willing companion, and Adam Barfood's Gude (Der Pastor von Pogsee), who with her stormy love stands by him through all the tribulations of war and revolution. Lena Tarn also exemplifies a danger inherent in this strength and willingness. She gets up on the sixth day after giving birth and looks after



the child herself, catching a fatal chill in the kitchen. Frenssen comments briefly and to the point: "Jörn Uhl liess es geschehen. Er war so stolz darauf dass er eine so kräftige Frau hatte: "nicht so zimperlich wie die anderen." Jörn Uhl war zu jung und zu dumm."<sup>28</sup> Even in the mundane details of everyday life Frenssen's didactic tendencies surface in this warning to other proud young husbands against making a similar mistake.

In the second group belong Jörn's second wife Lisbeth Junker, Klaus Baas' second wife Sanna (although this marriage comes close to breaking), Otto Babendiek's second wife Eva, and the wives of Bendix Groth (Dummhans) and Meino Ommen. The fact that the heroes of three of the major novels eventually marry this type of woman, and that the heroes of the last two novels spend their youth in pursuit of similar girls, indicates Frenssen's preference clearly enough, although from the point of view of analysis it is unfortunate that there is never an instance where the hero has to choose between the two types.

Not only is the physical labour of the farmer's wife demanding of strength in a wife. The heroes whose sphere of action is other than the land: Klaus Baas, Adam Barfood, Otto Babendiek, place demands on their wives that are more subtle but no easier to fulfil. Gude breaks down at the end of the war when her children die, but until then her healthy

earthiness compliments Adam's tendency to soar off on intellectual flights of fancy. Klaus Baas and Otto Babendiek, both of whom fall into the category of "die Hellen und Tüchtigen," make unsuccessful first marriages. Martje and Gesa are similar in that their families are decadent, and only the youthful inexperience of the heroes prevents them from realizing this. Both have a delicate, fragile beauty, but are incapable of grappling with the real world. Frenssen tells in Lebensbericht, chapter 45, of his own marital crises during the Blankenese years when Klaus H. Baas was written, but unlike Baas he and Frau Anna Frenssen were able to work out a solution. In the novel Martje's family have a timber yard in a village in Holstein, and their surname Ruhland indicates the seclusion in which they live. Martje is frigid, and wants to spend the first night of their marriage with her mother. When, despite her prayers to the contrary, she has a child, she, the child and her parents form a tight little circle from which Baas is excluded. Eventually Martje's older sister has to be taken to the asylum in Schleswig, which further underlines the decay of the family. Klaus cannot interest Martje in practical matters or discuss anything with her, for she only wants to withdraw from his thrusting ambition into the secluded, decaying world of her parents. Klaus eventually decides that divorce is the only solution, "damit jeder von uns das werden kann, was nach den Gaben seiner Natur in ihm steckt."<sup>29</sup>

Gesa's family display a similar inability to live in the real world, although Gesa herself is a more artistically satisfying character: her love of the sea which resists Otto's attempts at domestication gives to her personality a symbolic dimension that Frenssen's concrete characterization otherwise rarely achieves. The image of a beautiful girl, alone on a small boat on the wild North Sea, contains a much more subtle approach to the ever present theme of national rebirth, seen here in the context of individual self-fulfilment. Whereas in Klaus Hinrich Baas the practical virtues of the vigorous hero are called into question towards the end of the novel when Klaus discovers that Martje's life after their divorce is one of complete, if philistine, contentment, the emphasis in the early part of the work on the decadence of the *Ruhlands* and Frenssen's obvious sympathy for the "Hellen und Tüchtigen" makes for an uncomfortable union of the two themes and harms the unity of the novel. Doris Rotermund's warning of the dangers of materialism and spiritual impoverishment raises doubts about the whole value-system established in the early part of the work, which include by implication all the traditional virtues of industry and practicality. It is these principal virtues of the "Heimatroman" which are shown as inadequate to provide the spiritual contentment necessary for a balanced existence. Gesa's lack of these down-to-earth values is free of the implication of decadence, even though

her family's eccentricities reflect an inability to face up to life which bodes ill for the marriage. Gesa herself represents the freedom to follow the call of one's own nature, without which the individual cannot be content. This individual imperative of self-fulfilment is just as central to Frenssen's concept of Germany's rebirth as the social and political aspects of his programme.

It is clear from the family backgrounds of both Martje and Gesa that their characters were predetermined and that this heritage cannot be changed. Only when they come to this realization are Klaus and Otto able to continue their own development. In all the novels the parentage of the principal characters is examined, and, as Jörn Uhl indicates, the racial background is also decisive. Frenssen is here following the Naturalist tradition in emphasizing the decisive importance of heredity in determining the actions of his characters, but he goes farther than the Naturalists in placing heredity within a racial, not merely a family framework, albeit in a somewhat different direction. Where the Naturalists endeavour to remain within the sphere of scientific laws of heredity, Frenssen uses the theme of racial heritage to elaborate on the virtues of the Saxon race. He feels that the scientific method alone is inadequate to explain the vast array of life on earth: "Darwin mit seiner Anpassung und Auslegung erklärt nicht

die unsägliche Buntheit in Formung und Farben der Existenzarten des Daseins. Es ist vielmehr ein Geheimnis dahinter."<sup>30</sup>

The presence of an unexplainable secret leaves the way open to non-scientific interpretation. Jörn Uhl is proud and honest because that is the way of the Uhls, and Fiete Krey's quick wits are the result of his clan's heritage, going back a thousand years to Pribislav der Springer.

Very often the heroes have a split heritage, as did Frenssen himself. His mother was the daughter of a family of "Geestbauern," whose dark hair and melancholy disposition are reflected in the mothers of Jörn Uhl and Otto Babendiek. Jörn and his sister Elsbe have their mother's nature, which sets them apart from the boisterousness of Klaus Uhl's first three sons. Otto derives his physical health from his mother and at least part of his psychological health from his sunny, optimistic father, but his mother's melancholia necessitates constant effort on his part to keep the two in balance.

Heredity does not however exclude environmental influences: at the end of the novel Otto Babendiek explains the difference between his own life and that of his cousin, the artist Eilert Mumm:

Sag' ihm Bothilde, dass da zwei Unterschiede zwischen uns sind! Der eine ist, dass seine Vorfahren, von mütterlicher Seite, Totschläger waren, meine aber Stille im Lande, und der zweite, dass er als reicher Eltern Kind die Welt in seiner Jugend genossen hätte, ich aber durch Armut, Führerlosigkeit, Nichtwissen

und jede andre Not hindurch musste. So ist er allzu üppig geworden und hat sich dann vertrotzt und ist in Trunk geraten; ich aber bin durch sanfteres Blut und das Andenken meiner lieben Eltern und meine arme und bedrängte Kindheit zweifelnder, vorsichtiger und bedenklicher geworden, und so, trotz vieler Gefahren, die auch mir aus meiner Natur drohten, und unter Behütung guter Geister--wie mein Glaube ist--in leidlichem bürgerlichem Frieden und Ehren bis hierher gekommen. 31

The first difference between Otto und Eilert is in their heritage, the second in their childhood development. The third factor, the one which sets Frenssen apart from the Naturalist tradition, is implied by the words "das Andenken meiner lieben Eltern." This is the element of rational choice and free will, which is especially well defined in the character of Otto Babendiek: "Zuweilen, wenn ich fühle, dass Phantasien und Träume überhand nehmen, fahre ich auf einige Tage in die Welt."<sup>32</sup> Instead of waiting for the dark fantasies to overwhelm him, as his mother did, Otto takes steps to avoid them. He knows he is predisposed to melancholia, but this does not prevent him from refusing to succumb to it.

Despite the presence of free will, blood and background are more potent factors in the motivation of the characters, which accounts for the lack of criticism by the author of even the most misguided characters: misguided, for "evil" is not a concept that applies when character is predetermined. Fritz Hellebek, who moves through Otto Babendiek bringing misfortune to all with whom he comes in contact, is a liar, a thief, a vain opportunist who would abandon his wife to a

demonic lecher for financial advantage, and finally a traitor, and yet his mother's indulgence is responsible for his warped nature. His mother is blind to all his faults and his gilded, carefree youth insulates him from the consequences of his actions. Dutti Kohl, an unscrupulous swindler who for a time works with Hellebek, is similarly doomed by his family background: his father sells worthless trinkets and is a money-lender, and his grandmother spends her last years searching through American newspapers for her son's obituary, so that she can claim the inheritance. Otto himself is fortunate that his mother's melancholia is balanced by his father's optimism, but even so he has no easy time combating his heritage: when there is no counterbalance, the characters are unable to overcome their hereditary burdens.

The influence of geographical factors such as climate and landscape upon character has been pointed out by Oswald Hauser.<sup>33</sup> Fog, rain and leaden skies depress the Dithmarscher, making them prone to silence and suicide, and the long hours of solitude in the fields make them introspective, like Hans Hellebek, Fritz's half-brother. "Heitere Naturen wie Otto Babendieks Vater erscheinen als Ausnahmen, und ihre sonnige Art ist unter diesem stürmischen Himmel nicht zu erklären."<sup>34</sup> Singing is looked upon with distaste, as Lena Tarn discovers at the Uhl. Frenssen takes the character of the people of Dithmarschen, formed by hard work in a harsh climate amid the

wide horizon of the marsh and the sea, and extends the basic general attributes of taciturnity, introspection and reserve to the individual by going back two or more generations to establish inherited traits.

In this rural world, over which the 19th century laid but a thin veneer of "bürgerliche Sitte," Frenssen depicted relationships between the sexes in a way that shocked and offended many. Hilligenlei, in addition to its religious point, is a fervent plea for recognition of the physical desires as a legitimate and laudable aspect of life, especially of the lives of young unmarried women. Peter and Heinke decide, during an unchaperoned evening of passionate embraces, that passion for both of them cannot be ignored:

Da fasste er sie fest an beiden Armen und hatte heisse, ernste Augen und sagte mit gepresster Stimme: "Es ist nicht gut für uns beide, Heinke..., dass wir noch jahrelang mit der Hochzeit warten. Sie sah ihn aus dunklen Augen an. "Ich glaube auch, Peterlein, es ist nicht gut. 35

While other authors, such as Hauptmann, Wedekind and Schnitzler were making the same point as Frenssen at this time (1905) they did not have Frenssen's mass audience, and the outrage shown by many critics demonstrates that there was as yet no acceptance of these ideas. They were playwrights, and theatre audiences were more prepared for avant garde trends than the novel-reading public. The "Heimatroman," with its emphasis on traditional values, had not advocated greater sexual freedom and was not expected to do so. That Frenssen insisted



that puritanism was an alien importation into Dithmarschen, where young people had traditionally been free to experiment before marriage, in no way satisfied the outraged bourgeois. In a lecture given in the university Aula in Kiel on February 1, 1906, Professor D. Otto Baumgarten sums up the public attitude:

Es ist mit socher Bauernderbheit das, was die Mädchen, wenigstens alle guten Mädchen, vor sich selbst verbergen, zur Schau gestellt vor einem breiten Publikum, dass man es wohl versteht, dass es Mütter gibt, wie eine, die mir heute schrieb und mich anflehte, vor diesem schändlichen, schädlichen Buche zu warnen. 36

Frenssen must be given credit for laying his recently acquired reputation and his financial security on the line in order to give the widest possible exposure to what he believed were ideas of enormous importance. That the danger was not inconsiderable can be seen from an article in Das litterarische Echo of January 1906: there are reports of bookshops withdrawing Hilligenlei, and one from Hamburg offering to exchange any copies of Hilligenlei for a "Pastorenroman" called Das Erbe der Stubenrauch by Wilhelm Schaer. That this activity was not entirely occasioned by an altruistic concern for the morals of the Empire can be deduced from the article's complaints of "Kundenabtreiberei" by the publishers, F.A. Lattmann of Goslar.<sup>37</sup>

Frenssen's passionate advocacy of sexual freedom derives from personal experience:

Ich war achtzehn und war schon ein Mann, und durfte es

in Wirklichkeit nicht sein, weil die bürgerliche Sitte es verbot, zu sein und zu tun, was die Natur, die doch von Gott gegeben ist, konnte und wollte. Da habe ich mir Seele und Gewissen blutig gerissen. Seitdem hasse ich die bürgerliche Sitte, die feige Mörderin, mit ihrer verlogenen, verbogenen und schmutzigen Frömmigkeit und Gerechtigkeit. 38

The major novels all contain elements of this contempt for "bürgerliche Sitte," and right at the outset of his career, in Jörn Uhl, the direction of his philosophy is clear. The Sanddeern, who has a brief affair with Jörn, is involved for years with the husband of her best friend. She does not meet him until after the wedding, and their love, which is never consummated, is above criticism because it is a powerful, natural, honest emotion. In this early novel Frenssen ducks the crux of the issue by not having the love consummated: not until Der Pastor von Poggsee does he go this far in an adulterous relationship. Klaus Baas is actually cured of his obsessive materialism by Doris Rotermund, whose response to his assertive masculinity is quite uninhibited. Adam Barfood's initiation into the art of love is a parallel to Jörn Uhl and the Sanddeern, but Der Pastor von Poggsee goes much farther than the other novels in advocating the abolition of sexual taboos. The terrible toll of young men taken by the Great War, and the resultant large number of young women who were either widowed or deprived of the chance to marry and have children, prompted Frenssen to take the highly unconventional step of having Adam, a Lutheran pastor, encourage his daughter

Abel to have a baby by the local doctor, who has for years been unhappily married. When the Propst takes him to task for this, Adam stoutly defends his stand that humanity demands her maternal drive be satisfied. In his readiness to fly in the face of convention for what he considers a good cause, Adam is the character who best illustrates Frenssen's attitude to sexual questions.

In the realm of sexual relations the demands of social propriety infringe upon the individual's legitimate claim to fulfilment, and throughout his career Frenssen always insisted that individual happiness come first, as long as it is not injurious to the community. Social norms can be changed, but the loss to society and the cost in human frustration and suffering caused by rigid adherence to norms which are of no benefit to the community can in no way be justified. In his chosen role of "Volkserzieher," Frenssen makes his main characters find their fulfilment by overcoming some general human fault. The world of Dithmarschen is the setting for the novels, for it was from these few square miles of marsh and "Geest" that Frenssen drew his experience, but the theme is the general human predicament and the aim is the improvement of the whole German people. Consequently the novels expose the problems that hamper the fulfilment of the happiness of the individual and thereby the harmonious development of the nation.

One such problem is that of the "lateinischer Bauer," the farmer torn between the land and books. Jörn Uhl's school career is abruptly interrupted by the need for someone to see that the farm hands do their work, but his astronomical observations show that his interest in science continues despite the demands of the farm. After the Uhl is destroyed by fire Jörn is forced to abandon his attempt to save the farm but this change in his life is rather a liberation from crushing, hopeless servitude than a tragic bereavement. Jörn's aptitude is technical, and the dogged determination to keep the farm is motivated more by a feeling for the family tradition than interest in agriculture. The determination in this case is more negative stubbornness than laudable tenacity, for it stands in the way of the fulfilment of his potential as an engineer.

Heim Heiderieter in Die drei Getreuen resolves the same problem by becoming a writer, and the fact that he is successful in selling his historical novel at the end of the book indicates the rightness of this solution for him. Otto Babendiek follows the same path, returning to school after Hellebek's theft forces him to leave and work as a farm boy for two years. Both are autobiographical figures whose inspiration comes from the soil of home. When Frenssen was living in Blankenese from 1906 to 1919, he felt cut off from his roots in "die heimatliche Scholle" and Klaus Baas, the

most important hero of this period, is unable to solve his problems until his perspectives are righted by a visit to Dithmarschen. Cut off from the land man finds happiness elusive because his value system loses its supports: when Jörn becomes an engineer he works on the Kiel Canal, thereby remaining on home ground.

The land here clearly takes on mythical aspects as a source of values, which brings Frenssen close to Nazi literature of the "Blut und Boden" school, although he does not mythologize the peasant. Adam Barfood, the pastor of Poggsee, represents the converse of the "lateinischer Bauer," for he is the clergyman who wants to be a farmer. He longs for the day when he will have a parish where the vicarage has a small farm attached, but on his way to Poggsee he stops with a friend from his student days, Kong Christian, and finds him completely absorbed in farming to the exclusion of his office. Contact with the land is important to a village pastor from the practical point of view of sharing the interests of his parishioners, as well as providing the contact with nature which Frenssen considers so vital for all men and doubly so for a pastor, as nature is the direct manifestation of the divine presence; the pastor must establish himself somewhere between the two poles. He cannot afford to be too spiritual, for then he leaves no basis for understanding between the congregation and himself, but he cannot become so earthbound

that the spirit is excluded.

It is important for an understanding of Frenssen's position to remember that, while the setting for the novels is rural, his major heroes are not farmers by choice. Jörn Uhl wants to be an engineer, Klaus Baas is a businessman, Adam Barfood is a pastor and Otto Babendiek is an author. Their search is for a middle position where they can realize their potential but at the same time not lose their grasp of traditional values. Rather than being the repository of some mythology of its own, the significance of nature derives from its divine origin, transcending the reason of man, which invests it with the eternal values symbolized by the cycle of seed-time and harvest. There is no attempt by Frenssen to erect a cult around "die deutsche Eiche."<sup>39</sup>

Cut off from this source of values, Klaus Baas comes close to losing his soul. He shows enormous determination in the struggle to escape from poverty, but this total dedication to material success is for Frenssen a prostitution of the human spirit. Frenssen's purpose as a "Volkserzieher" is to redress this spiritual balance, and he feels that the countryman, in daily contact with the harmony of nature, has an awareness of the proper priorities which the city dweller lacks. Since Klaus Baas is the only hero actively engaged in the representative milieu of the Wilhelminian Empire, the world of commerce, this novel provides the crucial test

of the adaptability of the values of the "Heimatroman" to the everyday reality of the majority of Germans. The inconclusive nature of the solution reflects not only Frenssen's own pessimism during the Blankenese years but also a major shortcoming of the genre: the down-to-earth realism of the novels, their lack of philosophical speculation or intellectual examination of the dilemma of modern man leaves them with only the vaguest suggestions for a new direction. Doris Rotermund essentially does no more than point out to Klaus Baas that his priorities are wrong. He returns to Hamburg with the realization that his only emotional ties are to his wife and family, and resolves to elevate consideration of them to a position of prime importance. The concreteness of this realization reduces it to the level of the trivial, and yet the end of the novel intimates Frenssen's own awareness that it neither proves nor changes anything: Klaus Baas leaves for China for the duration of the war there. Instead of endeavouring to put into practice his new awareness of the primacy of such human qualities as love and consideration, Baas bows to the commercial necessity of supervising his Chinese contracts. Although the possibility of beneficial change is left open, it is doubtful whether even Doris Rotermund, the voice of home, has had any real effect on Klaus Baas' materialistic orientation.

Even when he was at his most pessimistic, during the

period when he wrote Klaus Hinrich Baas (1909) and Der Untergang der Anna Hollmann (1911), Frenssen's optimism was too great to permit a totally negative conclusion to a novel. His didacticism also dictated that the novels end on a positive note, but, even though his capacity for thorough analysis of the intellectual implications of the plots was limited, his essential honesty prevented him from twisting either of these novels to conform to the principle of didactic optimism. In subsequent pronouncements on the subject of Klaus Hinrich Baas, such as the one in Lebensbericht, it is the exemplary vigour of this type of Holsteiner which is mentioned, and yet in the novel itself he does not hide his doubts about the adequacy of these values. Had the positive didactic strain in Frenssen's writings been less pronounced, and the will to question the underlying values stronger, it is probable that Gustav Frenssen would not have suffered the eclipse of his literary renown.

### Man and Society

The device of the happy ending in Frenssen's novels is a didactic tool and not simply a cliché. The whole tenor of his work is optimistic, implying that it is possible to devise a social and ethical system within which the individual will be able to develop his full potential. Frenssen reached



this attitude during his years as a country pastor, and he did so in confrontation with the conventional Protestant philosophy that salvation and happiness are possible only in "the other world."

Ich wollte zeigen, wie ich das Leben, in Goetheschem Sinn, blutvoll auffasste, liebte und anerkannte, und danach, ja eben auf diesem Wege, die hohe Zukunft des Reiches Gottes sähe. Ich wollte in einem lebensvollen Buch, in verschiedenen Menschen und Lebensläufen, darstellen, wie wir ein Diesseitsgeschlecht sind, aber freilich eins, das in Zufälligem und Schwankendem nach dem Ständigen und Ewigen unterwegs ist. 40

Such questions as the frictions caused in society by the suppression of sensuality and the predominance of materialism reveal his underlying goal, which was to bring the various aspects of individual and national life into harmony with one another in order to revitalize the German people on all levels. Without the inner harmony and equilibrium of the individual he felt that there could be no broader harmony within the national community. The problem of Germany's dual heritage of "Germanentum und Christentum"<sup>41</sup> occupied his lifelong attention, and surfaces as an important component of his plan for the rebirth of Germany after the cataclysm of the Great War.

National unity seemed very far off in 1921, the year of the publication of Der Pastor von Poggsee. At the end of the novel the Wilhelminian Empire has collapsed and with it the aggressive self-confidence of the pre-war decades. The fabric of society has been torn by the revolution, and tradi-

tional ethics have failed to prevent the degeneration of large sections of the population into lawlessness or to provide a rallying point for the rest. The people of Poggsee organize a "Volksfest" to symbolize the new start for the nation.

The "Volksfest" takes the form of the traditional rustic gathering in the meadow. There are traditional games and dances and a display of livestock, but the novel feature is that the best specimens of the young men and women of the district are also displayed, not in the sense of a beauty contest, but as a part of the livestock show as an example to the people of the importance of biological principles for good breeding. The "Volksfest" is important as a signpost for the direction that Frenssen feels postwar Germany should take. There have already been indications in the novel that Poggsee since the revolution is the laboratory in which Frenssen is testing some of his social theories. The council of twelve elders which takes over the administration of the village has an old Germanic ring to it, a reminder of the days when Dithmarschen was a free "Bauernrepublik" before the Danes conquered it in 1465. The council, organized from the respected citizenry of the village, is headed by its most successful member, with the intention that it should in time evolve into a system of one-man rule with a "Führer,"<sup>42</sup> whose judgement would be universally respected and who, once chosen, would have absolute power. While such a system

might be operable on a village scale without abuse, since whoever was chosen as leader would be well known to all the voters, the element of familiarity disappears once the population involved exceeds one or two thousand and political manipulation becomes possible. It is a frequent lament of Frenssen's with regard to the outbreak of war, which he expresses in Der Pastor von Poggsee and also in Die Brüder, that the German people are "zu gläubig": in this case the epithet can be turned on its author, and one can only marvel at the extraordinary naïveté which envisioned such a regime functioning without abuse.

The display of livestock and physically perfect young people underlines a constant theme in the novels, that of racial improvement as a vital step towards the reborn Germany that is Frenssen's goal. He complains in Möwen und Mäuse<sup>43</sup> that people choose a spouse with less care than they would a cow, and with a countryman's eye he urges the application of the principles of "Zuchtwahl" to the human population, although he never goes as far as to advocate that the state or some other body undertake the selection process.

"Man würde einem bedeutenden biologischen Gesetz auf die Spur kommen, wenn man einem gesunden, jungen Weibe hundert junge Männer vorführte mit dem Auftrag, zu sagen, wer von diesen ihr sexuell gefiele und wer nicht, und warum."<sup>44</sup> On this point Frenssen fails to distinguish between natural

selection based on preference and unhampered by social considerations and scientific mating: he equates the two, providing that the partner doing the choosing is "gesund." The biological premises here are non-scientific and based on an emotional nationalism that is both vague and idealistic, as Elisabeth Grimm implies when she writes:

So wird es bei Vergleichen auch hier besser sein, die Gedankenwelt des 'Dichters' Frenssen der von Lagarde und Langbehn gleichzusetzen, weil in ihren Werken der Rassegedanken mehr als stolzes Bewusstsein und Ideal, denn als wissenschaftlich umrissene Klarheit auftritt. 45

The ideal of a race freed from hereditary deficiencies such as physical frailty or alcoholism demands its own morality, the only purpose of which is to serve the ideal. Adam Barfoot makes a convincing case for justifying Abel's adultery with Dr. Schack on humanitarian grounds, but Frenssen goes farther in Möwen und Mäuse: "Jenes Weib, das sich in freier Liebe heimlich ein Kind von dem Schönsten und Besten geben lässt, handelt frommer und sittlicher als das, welches in dumpfer Ehe dem Minderwertigen Kinder gebiert."<sup>46</sup> Do the words "in freier Liebe" imply that she really loves the "Schönsten und Besten?" If so, the situation is similar to the Sanddeern's predicament in Jörn Uhl: the right of the heart to choose, which is neither new nor dependent in any way on the man's being the best one. The loving heart chooses; that is sufficient. Since promiscuity for the sake of sexual gratification per se does not appear in the novels, and indeed

was described as "diesen im höchsten Masse unsittlichen und seelisch gefährlichen Zustand"<sup>47</sup> by Frenssen, the words "in freier Liebe" cannot be construed as euphemisms for sexual relations without love, which would make this pronouncement a forerunner of Nazi policies for improving the race; consequently Frenssen is breaking no new ground for himself here. The dubious assumption is that a healthy young woman will always choose the "Schönsten und Besten"; that Frenssen fails even to consider the theoretical problem of what to do should she prefer a "Minderwertigen" illustrates again the way in which he champions an idea but stops short of examining the implications. It is ironic that in some cases implications which would to Frenssen have been quite inconceivable were the very cornerstones of Hitler's own racial policy.

Birth control is not an issue in the novels, and even in the diaries the matter is discussed from a standpoint of "racial hygiene" rather than morality. Essentially, Frenssen believes in promoting the growth of "wertvolle Sippen"<sup>48</sup> and hindering that of the "Minderwertigen":

Es müssen zum Beispiel alle gesunden, wohl gebauten Weiber verpflichtet werden, wenigstens drei Kinder zu gebären, und es müssen die kranken und unwirtschaftlichen gehindert werden, beliebig Kinder in die Welt zu setzen. 49

"Minderwertig" includes the sick, the irresponsible, and those whose heritage has given them a character that cannot play

its part in the national community: the Martje Ruhland type. In the continuation of Die Chronik von Barlete, entitled "Tagebuch des Amtmanns der Amtmannschaft Wittschild im Jahre 2027," which appears in volume three of the diaries, Vorland, Frenssen expounds on his vision of an ideal future. Die Chronik von Barlete was published in 1928, so it is unlikely that the continuation was written later than 1932, making it a more reliable indication of his later thinking than if it had been written after 1933. In addition to reform of such areas as education, bureaucracy, the law, land tenure and museums, eugenics is an important aspect of the reborn Dithmarschen a century hence. Frenssen goes beyond Möwen und Mäuse in advocating sterilization for criminals and "Erbbelastete," such as alcoholics, but it must be emphasized that even here, where Frenssen goes much farther than in the novels, there is no mention of anti-semitism. In Lebensbericht, published in 1940, his thinking is almost completely "gleichgeschaltet" to conform with Nazi ideology, and here, at the age of seventy-seven, he turns anti-semitic, maintaining that the change took place in 1923 as a reaction against being criticized and "totgeschwiegen"<sup>50</sup> by Jewish critics. In Recht oder Unrecht, Mein Land (1940), a propaganda tirade against England, the expulsion of the Jews from Germany is justified on the grounds that they had abused the hospitality of their hosts by seeking to dominate national

life, but anti-semitism is a foreign element in his idealistic and individualistic "Weltanschauung" and has no place in the novels. Nevertheless, Nazi critics, eager to claim Frenssen as a forerunner of the movement, constantly attempted to read it into his work. Numme Numsen, in a book entitled Gustav Frenssen, der Kämpfer für die deutsche Wiedergeburt, writes of Jörn Uhl: "Früh ist Frenssen auf das Rasseproblem gestossen."<sup>51</sup>

The inflexibility which Frenssen considered one of the major personal problems to be combated also reappears as a social and political problem in the war novel Die Brüder (1917). Not by any means one of his best, the book was written at the instigation of the Foreign Office as a morale booster as the Great War dragged on. The slender plot, which is hardly more than an excuse for five hundred pages of the three Ott brothers at war, has as its basis the inflexibility of father and son. An unexplained whistle in the barn has caused their sister Emma to slide into a depression, which deepens when the farm boy who loves her suddenly disappears. Eggert, the most independent of the brothers, is accused by his father of being the whistler, and leaves for America. He returns and joins the navy with the other brothers, but it is not until 1917 that the farm boy returns, admits that he was the whistler, and marries Emma. Father and son are reconciled before the altar in the village church.

The farm boy, who comes from the Rhineland and is therefore considered by Frenssen to be a foreigner in Dithmarschen, explains that he whistled to shake the Otts out of their inward-looking complacency. Despite the frequent mention in the novel of Germany's innocence of any intention to start a war, this is clearly an allegory of Germany's position among the nations of Europe immediately before 1914; the development of Adam's thought in Der Pastor von Poggsee bears out this interpretation, although Frenssen must have come around to this view rather earlier than Adam, who does not change until almost at the end of the war. Germany was too little concerned with the effect of her rapid growth in wealth and power, and developments such as the naval building programme only served to make the other nations uneasy about her intentions. These intentions, according to Frenssen, were innocent but the diplomacy supporting them was so inept that nothing was done to prevent the distrust from deteriorating into a situation where war became inevitable.

Within the context of the "Burgfrieden" Frenssen was concerned with depicting in his novel a heroic, united people unjustly set upon by a horde of inferior nations jealous of Germany's success and urged on by that arch-villain, perfidious Albion. The predictable result is a propaganda piece, complete with laudatory introduction by Admiral Scheer, commander of the High Seas Fleet. Nevertheless the inclusion of the allegory pinpoints Frenssen's political standpoint quite



accurately: if one can divorce the word "völkisch" from its National Socialist connotations (and in view of Frenssen's age--seventy in 1933--to label him a Nazi only muddies the issue) it describes him well. He was very consciously a member of the German people, perhaps the more so since he was born a Danish subject, and while he could not conceive of the German people acting in a way contrary to his own sense of right and wrong, he was quite ready to admit that they had been misled.

Basically, Frenssen's conservative nature accepted whatever government happened to be in power: Peter Moors Fahrt nach Südwest and Die Brüder show him to have been no opponent of the Imperial regime, and in 1933 he was criticized by a prominent Nazi for having praised the Weimar Republic in Briefe aus Amerika and Der Pastor von Poggsee.<sup>52</sup> Meino der Prahler on the other hand, which was published in 1933, welcomes the approaching Third Reich. Despite his indiscretions, the Nazis considered Frenssen's credentials acceptable and he was lionized by them as a "Vorläufer."<sup>53</sup>

Did he, as is charged, set his sail according to the prevailing wind? To answer this one must go back to the 1890's, when Frenssen, as a young pastor in the tiny village of Hemme, joined Friedrich Naumann's National Socialist party. Frenssen was a nationalist, and his comments in Möwen und Mäuse<sup>54</sup> on the issues of poverty and the injustice of the

distribution of power and wealth prior to 1914 show him to have been also a socialist. His was a "Sozialismus echt vaterländischer Gesinnung,"<sup>55</sup> which, while differing from the internationalism of the political left wing in its foreign policy, was no less zealous in its campaign for social justice. That he accepted Hitler's movement on the basis of a similar name and some shared ideas demonstrates a calamitous lack of political sophistication which is at least partly attributable to his age and the fact that after 1919 he lived exclusively in Barlt, far removed from the grisly realities of Hitler's Reich.

Throughout his works, but especially in Die Chronik von Barlete, Frenssen makes much of the tradition of freedom and democracy, which he claims is longer and stronger in Dithmarschen than elsewhere in Germany. During the Middle Ages the area was a free "Bauernrepublik," and resisted until 1465 the attempts of the Danish crown to bring it under its sway. Unlike eastern Holstein and Stormarn, where aristocratic estates flourished in a lush landscape, the farmers of Dithmarschen preserved their independence in an enduring struggle with their uncompromising adversary, the North Sea. Danish rule was by no means harsh, and Frenssen frequently mentions that, even in the days of heady patriotism after 1864, the older men would recount with pride stories of their army service in Copenhagen.<sup>56</sup> He thought of himself as a "Grenz-

deutscher,"<sup>57</sup> and has nothing but contempt for the provincialism and narrow patriotism of Prussia. Bismarck's "kleindeutsche Lösung" he regards as a mistake, for Frenssen thinks of Germany primarily as a racial rather than a political entity. Criticism of the Kaiser occurs first in Der Pastor von Poggsee, written after the abdication, but from Möwen und Mäuse it is clear that his thinking even before 1914 was far from uncritical of the Imperial political system, although Frenssen was a monarchist and in agreement with many policies, especially naval and colonial expansion. Briefe aus Amerika also give considerable insight into the way in which he felt that the political life of the nation had to be restructured before any real rebirth was possible.

Frenssen believed that a redistribution of the wealth of the nation was essential if the mass of the population was to participate fully in Germany's rebirth. They would always feel alienated from a system in which a small percentage lived in opulence while millions, especially in the large cities, had no alternative to squalor. Klaus Baas experiences the poverty of industrial Hamburg and Kai Jans, the hero of Hilligenlei, lives and works in the slums of Berlin, which Frenssen saw as a student. These descriptions are couched in the starkest language of Naturalism, for Frenssen finds nothing to idealize in the city. Klaus Baas' father dies in the filthy air of a tenement as a result of

an accident at work: one of the nameless millions for whom the promise of the cities becomes a nightmare of exploitation and squalor.

Frenssen makes no concrete suggestions regarding housing or working conditions, but in one area, that of the redivision of land, he is quite specific. Elisabeth Grimm asserts that Frenssen must have known Adolph Damaschke, who in 1898 was the deputy president of Naumann's party; in 1902 Damaschke published Die Bodenreform, advocating the financing of small farms for workers and intensive land reclamation.<sup>58</sup> The impetus for Die drei Getreuen (1898) came from the miserable circumstances in which many farm labourers lived. Because there was no new land in Schleswig-Holstein, they existed meagerly as "Tagelöhner" but there was always the danger that an unscrupulous farmer would try to save money by using Polish labourers, who were paid even less. The German workers were then faced with the alternatives of starvation or emigration, either to Hamburg and its factories, or to America, where there was still cheap land to farm. The latter course is the one taken by the labourers in the novel. Kai Jans has a dream of "Hilligenlei," the holy land, which he has seen when a sailor, and the holy land is Vancouver: "Ein weites Land, waldreich, mit sanften Hügeln."<sup>59</sup> The people live in "sonnige Häuser . . . an den Rändern der Wäldern zerstreut in Gartenland." On their own land, surrounded by un-

spoiled nature, breathing air "wie Odem Gottes" a people can be reborn "stark, mit blitzenden reinen Augen und auf den Stirnen hohe friedvolle Gedanken." Whatever its discrepancies as a description of Vancouver, this passage does show what Frenssen hoped to achieve through land reform: space for people to live decently and develop physically and morally. This was possible in Frenssen's view only on the land, and he believed that emigration meant the loss to Germany of the most valuable element of the population: the industrious young farmers whose devotion to their own land would be unshakeable. Grimm puts the case in the terminology of the 1930's, but Frenssen would have concurred: "'Gerade die Besten lässt sie (die Heimat) ziehen und macht dadurch Platz für slawischen Einfall.'" <sup>60</sup>

The two possibilities for providing land in Germany were to divide the eastern provinces, "Ostelbien," and to reclaim land from the North Sea. Frenssen describes in Lebensbericht <sup>61</sup> how the Imperial and Weimar governments were deaf to ambitious plans for reclamation, and in Otto Babendiek Eilert Mumm tries in vain to persuade the dyke administration to undertake a project on the scale of the Zuyder Zee. The reclaimed island of Flackelholm in Die drei Getreuen is farmed by Andres Strandiger and made to bloom, but the fact that the island of Trieschen off the coast of Dithmarschen, upon which Flackelholm is modelled,

is no longer inhabited reflects the enduring nature of the local problems to which Frenssen addresses himself. One of the first acts of the Nazi regime, however, and one which did much to consolidate their prestige in the area, was to build the Adolf Hitler Koog, now the Barlter Sommerdeich. In the mid 1930's Frenssen greeted this tangible proof of national rebirth with words reminiscent of Faust II, Act V: "Auf schwerem Boden, unter schwerem Himmel, und in herber Luft ein frisches, starkes Geschlecht."<sup>62</sup>

Much as he condemns in Andres Strandiger those farmers who force the native labourers into exile by using cheap imported labour, Frenssen is much more critical of successive governments, both Imperial and Weimar, for not allowing "tüchtige Bauern"<sup>63</sup> to farm the vacant or sparsely settled lands in the eastern provinces. This would be of great benefit to hundreds of thousands of young farmers who would otherwise be driven from the land, with incalculable loss to the nation: "Der bodenständige, durch Eigenbesitz mit der Erde verbundene Bauer gibt dem deutschen Stamm Mark und Tugend und nicht das Heer der Entwurzelten ohne wirtschaftliche Beständigkeit."<sup>64</sup> It would also provide a strong German population in the eastern provinces to balance the Poles there, for Frenssen foresaw Germany losing the east for precisely this reason. His agricultural conservatism certainly does not extend to the Prussian landowners, whose "Rittergüter" he frequently com-

pared unfavourably with the farms of Dithmarschen.

The allocation of land as an instrument of social improvement is an important aspect of Frenssen's thinking, and it also reflects his strengths and weaknesses as a reformer. His suggestions are concrete and well-reasoned when they cover areas in which he had experience, and he was a countryman all his life; his roots and his heart remained in Dithmarschen even during the Blankenese years. Outside his own sphere he tends to advocate simple solutions to complex problems, as for example in legal matters. He felt that Roman law was inappropriate for the German mentality, and that judicial decisions should be made on the basis of common sense. The lawsuit of Bohnsack versus Kohl in Otto Babendiek illustrates this belief that codified law is calcified law, that the living reality of national life requires a directness and flexibility in place of the maze of paragraphs through which the guilty can escape.

Dutti Kohl is a swindler who has grown rich from revolution and inflation. Balle Bohnsack is suing him for fraud. In Balle, a farmer's son who at this point in the novel is a butcher, Frenssen creates one of his most vivid characters. He spends his youth with animals and becomes ever more disreputable in appearance, but through persistence finally marries Dina Busch, whose incredible cleanliness is one of Frenssen's rare forays into irony. The combination of honesty, bravery and "Bauernschlauheit" brings him safely through the

war, and in the legal tussle with Dutti Kohl, who epitomizes those who avoided military service and grew fat through exploiting the misery of the home front, he stands as a representative of the honest, straightforward German.

The law has become so cumbersome that no judge, however good his intentions, can produce justice from the confusion. Frenssen is always prepared to give individuals the benefit of the doubt: "Nein, an den Menschen liegt es nicht. Es liegt am System!"<sup>65</sup> Tante Lene, who with her warm humanity and quick wit is Frenssen's most memorable character, sees the symbol of justice with the veil over her eyes as the root of the problem:

Alle andern Wesen danken Gott für helle und klare Augen; aber die Justiz dankt Gott für ihren Fehler und Jammer. Mein Vater in Wenneby sagte, das ganze Unglück der Justiz fing an dem Tag an, da sie sich die hellen, klaren Menschaugen verband, das beste, das der Mensch hat, und sich selbst blind machte. 66

It is obvious that the law will not deal with the likes of Dutti Kohl, who can slip through the maze of paragraphs with the help of clever lawyers, and Balle is unable to get any results with his outburst in court. Nevertheless Balle brings life, the life of the ordinary people, into the "verstaubte Gleichgültigkeit" of the courtroom: "Es war ein wirklicher Gerichtssaal geworden. Das Gericht ist eine grosse, lächelnde und herzklopfende Sache."<sup>67</sup> Frenssen advocates a simple, swift trial by a wise judge. Balle explains



to Tante Lene: "Ein einziger gelehrter, weltkundiger Richter . . . mit einem Schreiber aber ohne andre Leute und vor allem ohne Paragraphen,"<sup>68</sup> could deal with the fifty cases outstanding against Dutti Kohl in three hours. The lack of safeguards is justified by the fact that "in neun Fällen von zehn gehört die eine Partei nicht vors bürgerliche Gericht, sondern vor den Strafrichter oder den Irrenarzt."<sup>69</sup> Frenssen wishes the swift, clean decision, which in many cases may be obvious, and therefore would make this the general rule. If there is a miscarriage of justice in one out of ten cases, this is unfortunate, but it is still an improvement over the old system. Walther Gonser attributes this to a desire to extend the relatively simple country practice onto a national level,<sup>70</sup> but it goes deeper than that. It is the desire to establish uncomplicated guidelines for the betterment of society which tends to disregard those complexities which do not fit into the mould. The vulnerability of such a system to misuse escapes Frenssen, who in this case is blinkered by his own ideals of honesty and incorruptibility.

High ideals of individual dignity are also the driving force behind Frenssen's defence of democracy in Der Pastor von Poggsee. In his speech at his daughter Heedje's wedding just before the outbreak of war, Adam demonstrates his awareness that a greater degree of freedom is desirable:

Freilich, das ist wahr: wir sind noch kein ganz freies

Volk. Wir haben noch nicht alle Rechte von freien Menschen; besonders die Arbeiter auf dem Lande entbehren sie. 71

The individual is worthy of the freedom to make his own decisions, which amounts to a call for constitutional monarchy. Frank Braun points out that this was also Naumann's ideal, and that it is spelled out clearly in Möwen und Mäuse<sup>72</sup> about 1908:

Frenssen forderte also, genau wie Naumann, eine demokratische Monarchie und glaubte sogar, der Kaiser müsste, um die Einheit und Würde des ganzen Volkes zu wahren und aus eigenem sittlichem Verantwortungsgefühl 'in freiwilliger Tat zur demokratischen Monarchie übergehen.' 73

Adam describes himself as "kaiserlich-demokratisch-sozial,"<sup>74</sup> and this is certainly Frenssen's position also. Constitutional monarchy acts as a conservative influence while permitting the voice of the people to be decisive. It thereby guarantees the twin pillars of society: preservation of what is valuable in the traditions of government, and openness to the people's demands for change.

### Man and God

The basis for the happiness of the individual within a restructured society is a restructured ethical system. For Frenssen this can only be rooted in religion, although the specifically Christian content diminishes as his thought develops. The milestones in this development are the Dorf-

predigten, written while he was still pastor in Hemme, Hilligenlei (1905), and Der Glaube der Nordmark (1936), in which Christianity is rejected in favour of what he describes as the "angeborenen . . . Väterglauben,"<sup>75</sup> the traditional "Frömmigkeit" of the people of Schleswig-Holstein. Frenssen's whole development in this area can be interpreted as an unending attempt to reconcile Christianity with the demands of human nature and what he believed was the need of the German people for a religion appropriate to them in the twentieth century.

Whilst the Dorfpredigten represent the thrust of liberal Protestant theology at the end of the nineteenth century, Hilligenlei goes beyond the bounds of any existing church in its reconstruction of the life and person of Christ, whom Frenssen makes into a Schleswig-Holstein "Handwerkerkind" with no claim to divine parenthood. The title of the manuscript of the life of Christ, written by the novel's hero, Kai Jans, shows the fundamental importance Frenssen attached to religion: "Das Leben des Heilands, nach deutschen Forschungen dargestellt, die Grundlage deutscher Wiedergeburt."<sup>76</sup> Frenssen regarded it as essential to the rebirth and revitalization of national life that the "Frömmigkeit" of the German people be channelled into a system of religion that would satisfy the need, which he himself felt strongly, to believe in a deity, and yet would not erect a series of dogmatic

barriers which would clash with the fulfilment of human physical and spiritual needs.<sup>77</sup>

Frenssen was as passionate an idealist in the cause of justice as Wassermann, but in all the critical barrages aimed at his work he has received little credit for his idealism. The inequities of human justice, could, he believed, be removed by the application of healthy, natural good judgement in the place of legal bureaucracy, but, whereas in the face of the mysterious workings of divine justice or "Schicksal" he was prepared to admit the existence of the unknowable, he would not quietly tolerate the continuation of human injustice on the grounds that God would provide a heavenly reward:

. . . indem die christliche Religion das rechte Leben erst hinter dem Tode sieht, und damit tröstet, trägt sie dazu bei, dass man das Rechte und Gute nicht fördert. Und so ist es noch heute ein unruhiges, böses Leben, und die Erde eine Mördergrube. 78

Der Untergang der Anna Hollmann marks the crisis in Frenssen's own spiritual reckoning. After the ship Anna Hollmann sinks, Jan Guldts has a vision of his father and Heinrich Hollmann, the one guilty, the other innocent, imprisoned for slave trading on a South American island, and of Hans Hollmann, who has profited from the venture, living well and unpunished in Hamburg. He hurls himself against the Gates of Heaven in a vain attempt to demand an accounting from God, but only stuns himself. He tells Eva Sötte that he had believed in

"Gerechtigkeit, Treue, Ordnung," and that God looked out for the righteous, "aber ich musste erfahren, dass die Menschen ihren eigenen Weg gehen, und Gott sie laufen lässt."<sup>79</sup>

Jan Guldt's faith in "Gerechtigkeit, Treue, Ordnung" shows how closely Frenssen's theology is interwoven with the concerns of this world, for all three qualities are more worldly than religious. "Treue" implies a relationship between man and God similar to that between men, and specifically the "gegenseitigen Diensterweisung"<sup>80</sup> of the old Germanic peoples. "Ordnung" is a term more appropriate to the Wilhelminian Reich than the "Reich Gottes." Conversely the Great War produced a series of problems from which God could not, given Frenssen's philosophy, be excluded. Germany's defeat in particular required a reckoning on the basis of guilt and punishment. In Die Brüder, which appeared in 1917, the course of the war had not yet proceeded far enough to necessitate the contemplation of defeat: this would in any case have been unthinkable in a novel written at the prompting of the Foreign Office. Below the question of Germany's complicity, by reason of complacency and self-centredness, in the outbreak of war, there is the underlying certainty that Germany is fighting a just war to defend herself against a world of enemies enlisted by England to maintain her worldwide hegemony. The outcome will be in Germany's favour because she, as "das junge, frische, kühne," is the instrument

of God in the evolutionary transition of world leadership from "das alte, verstockte und verirrte, das von seinem Recht redet und meint sein Geld und von Gott und meint seine Macht."<sup>81</sup> The mission of Germany is to show England "dass es immer noch gegen Gottes Willen ist, dass eine einzige Art herrsche auf Erden, sondern dass er will, dass sie buntfarber bleiben soll, seinen Augen zu gefallen."<sup>82</sup>

This enlistment of God's help in an earthly cause, supported by a statement on God's will, is as old as religion, and was certainly common to all countries during the Great War. It is remarkable here only insofar as it represents a considerable shift from the position expressed six years previously in Der Untergang der Anna Hollmann, where God lets men go their own way. The earlier work represents a religious conclusion, whereas in Die Brüder the emotional patriotic reaction brings forth the unreasoned cliché. Adam Barfood undergoes a similar development four years later, when defeat and the loss of his sons cause him to think through to a God above national favouritism, and still returns at the end of the novel to a reaffirmation that Germany's mission and specifically her eventual hegemony on the Eurasian continent is in the service of God's plan.

A naval chaplain defends Christianity and faith in Die Brüder against the war-born nihilism of the crew of S.M.S. Below:

Viele . . . hatten den Glauben an den Sinn der Welt verloren . . . Die Welt war nichts anderes als eine Sinnlosigkeit; das Leben nichts anderes als Zerstörung und Tod! Gott? Gott ist nicht mehr; oder wenn er ist, ist er ein Engländer, das heisst gierig, friedenvernichtend! 83

Against this attitude, which is similar to Jan Guldts despair, the chaplain asserts: "Christentum . . . der Glaube an das Gute . . . würde noch da sein und über die Schöpfung strahlen, wenn auch kein Mensch in Menschengestalt mehr auf der Welt wäre." 84

"Der Glaube an das Gute, Reine und Grosse" is the essence of Frenssen's Christianity since the Dorfpredigten, and especially since Hilligenlei; it is re-echoed in Die Brüder by the Otts' village pastor, Pastor Bohlen, whose humanity shines through despite the burdens of hereditary alcoholism and a hard youth as the son of a fisherman in the "Watt." In comparing him to Goethe, Frenssen singles him out as a particularly significant character, and he also appears in Otto Babendiek, where as a sexagenarian he can still carry a horse on his back at a wedding party! "Und so, wenn er auch von Natur Goethisch fühlte und auch predigte . . . so war es eine besondere Art Goethe; es war ein mühseliger und ein dunkler." 85 Pastor Bohlen represents the great national cultural tradition transposed onto the level of the ordinary German.

Beset by his own personal problems, Pastor Bohlen preaches a fundamental faith, devoid of dogma, a basic philosophy of courage in adversity: "Wie trotz aller Not und

allen Grauens die Menschheit doch immer an einen guten, tiefen Sinn des Lebens geglaubt! Wie die besten Geister darum gerungen haben . . . um dies 'Trotz alledem,' um dies 'Dennoch!'"<sup>86</sup> All the great Germans: Luther, Lessing, Herder, Goethe, "Friedrich der Grosse, und der alte Kaiser und Bismarck" were "Dennoch-Leute," and this faith in a divine purpose, however unfathomable, is "dies Eigentümlichste und Beste am deutschen Wesen."<sup>87</sup>

Coming at the climax of the novel, immediately prior to the admission of old Reimer Ott before the altar that he wrongly accused his son, the sermon is intended to be obvious to any reader. The message is simple, and presumes no other dogmatic basis than belief in some divine power: "Dass Über den Sternen ein Gott einen feinen, schönen, reinen Sinn der Welt in seinen Händen habe, den wir zwar noch nicht erkannten."<sup>88</sup> This recognition comes only in the afterlife, the one aspect of formal Christianity that Frenssen retains. Here Frenssen is pursuing the goal of the Dorfpredigten and especially of Hilligenlei of distilling the religious beliefs of all sections of German society: Catholic or Protestant, royalist-conservative or socialist, into an essential common denominator that would give the moral and spiritual resilience necessary to withstand whatever trials the fortunes of war might inflict. In the hour of his country's greatest test of endurance Frenssen was trying to provide the religious and ethical foundation for the unity



of the nation, which was for him the essential ingredient in Germany's rebirth.

The "Dennoch" theory is similarly general. It presupposes nothing but the basic human need to hold onto some belief that transcends the "Not und Grauen" of the moment. Neither is it particularly German, although in this novel it suits Frenssen's purpose to search for any available bonds between Germans. Just as the problems faced by Frenssen's characters are not peculiar to Dithmarschen, neither are they confined to Germany, as is borne out by the sales of the novels abroad:<sup>89</sup> Frenssen's abilities as an observer of human nature intellectually outstrip his genuine, if at times confused, patriotism. The pantheon of great Germans is also an instrument of unity, for who, in 1917, could find fault with any of them? "Der alte Kaiser" and Bismarck, who are always mentioned together by Frenssen, stand for national unity, not the Prussian particularism excoriated in Lebensbericht. This is a list compiled by convention rather than analysis, for Frenssen's Bismarck--almost five hundred pages of questionable hexameters, the first edition of which he withdrew from the market in 1914 after it was castigated as unpatriotic--hardly portrays its hero as an impeccable "Dennoch-Mensch."

Der Pastor von Poggsee also reflects the manner in which Frenssen came to terms with the problem of how God could

permit the defeat of his own chosen instrument. Although by the end of the novel the defeat is viewed in essentially Old Testament terms: as a warning that Germany was on the wrong track; and consequently ends with a reaffirmation of her special relationship with God, the months before and after November 1918 show the same helplessness in the face of God's unfathomable purpose, and the same faith. Adam comforts Gude, who is fearful for her sons at the front, by saying: "So lange wir leben, wollen wir ein rechtes Leben führen. Wir sind in Gottes- und Geisterhänden."<sup>90</sup>

Although the "angeborene Frömmigkeit" forms the basis for Frenssen's ethical thought, Adam refuses to accept any religious system if it is not firmly rooted in terrestrial reality. This one would expect as a result of his belief that this world is the only tangible manifestation of the Deity upon which man can base his concepts. The crisis is brought about, not as in Job's case, with which there are clear parallels, by the loss of his sons in November 1918, but by the collapse of Germany:

Der Tod der Söhne hatte ihn in die Knie gedrückt; aber der Zusammenbruch des Landes hatte ihn zerschmettert. Die Niederlage und der Zusammenbruch seines Volkes, und die neue Erkenntnis, dass dies Schicksal nicht unverschuldet, hatten ihm den Halt seines Daseins genommen, seinen Glauben. 91

"Die neue Erkenntnis" is the result of Adam's roadside conversation with a workman, who explains to him how Germany's blustering attitude provoked and frightened the nations of

Europe, and thereby destroying at one stroke Adam's belief in Germany as an instrument of the divine plan for the evolution of humanity. It is only because for Adam the secular power of Germany and the divine will are intertwined that the awareness of his country's co-responsibility for the outbreak of war, and of the failings that caused defeat, can simultaneously destroy his national pride and his religious beliefs. He had regarded the war as the result of inept leadership, and in place of a grand design for the improvement of humanity--"in diesem Sinn . . . hatte ich auch den Tod meiner lieben heiligen Knaben . . . erduldet"<sup>94</sup>--there yawns the abyss of futility. The absence of any point to the war, of any way in which Adam can see God's purpose behind the slaughter and destruction, brings him to the same position as the revolutionaries in Kiel and Hamburg. He explains to a group of industrialists, who are lamenting that the people should have held out a few weeks more (exactly Adam's own lament at the beginning of his talk with the worker):

Was jetzt in unserem Volk geschieht, ist kein militärischer Aufruhr, auch keine Hungerrevolte, auch keine Arbeiterrevolution. Es ist die seelische und sittliche Verzweiflung über das lange Morden . . . Es ist der Ekel darüber, dass die Menschheit so unsagbar dumm und roh geführt wird, und das Grauen vor der Menschheit. 95

From this abyss of despair Adam is aroused the next day by the sight of a boy striding over the heath with a glass, obviously on his way to the doctor or chemist for a

sick relative. The purposeful step, despite the cold November wind and the hunger and the long distance, suddenly gives Adam back his courage:

Der Mensch! . . . Mag alles wild, grausam und wüst sein  
und voll Rätseln mit bösen Augen . . . der Mensch ist  
da . . . mit seinem Ernst, seinem tapferen Wollen,  
seinem heiligen Glauben . . . Ich . . . ich muss . . .  
ich will mich am Menschen halten . . . am Menschen  
und seinem Willen. 96

Adam calls this the new beginning, and the idea of rebirth takes on a different nuance at this point. Whereas in the pre-war years Adam--and Frenssen--had been confident that the changes in the political system and in human character that were necessary for rebirth were in fact taking shape, albeit in a slow, organic way: "Wir waren doch schon dabei, das starre hochmütige Wesen . . . ein wenig zu Überwinden"<sup>97</sup>--in the zero hour of collapse there can be no such confidence; when the moral fibre of the nation, however superficial or complacent it may have been before 1914, is rent assunder and replaced by the morality of the jungle, nothing can be taken for granted. The belief of the war years, that Germany was the instrument of divine progress, is of course dropped: "Wie könnte ich etwas behaupten, was über meine Vernunft geht."<sup>98</sup> The basic moral integrity that Adam attributes to the German people when he cites their "sittliche Verzweiflung" at the senseless slaughter on the battlefield as the prime reason for Germany's collapse reflects the way in which Frenssen's belief in the fundamental goodness of man automatically encompasses the national

community: his vision is nationally oriented in contrast to Wassermann and the Expressionists, for whom national peculiarities are of at best secondary importance. This insistence on Adam's part on an irreducible minimum of national moral integrity is not easily reconciled with his despair at the collapse of the moral fibre of the nation, which manifests itself most clearly in the rise of those criminal elements which the pre-war social order held in check. At this point it is no longer possible to regard the national community as a unit: the mass of the population, worn out by four years of suffering, retains enough moral integrity to finally reject the inhumanity of war, placing human values ahead of the political imperative of victory, but in their state of demoralized impotence after the surrender they have no more resistance to the ruthless machinations of the profiteers. The sight of the boy on the heath makes Adam aware that this demoralization is temporary and that the fundamental dignity of man's spirit is still intact. Whatever lies beyond that is unknowable and not even sufficiently intuitable to become belief:

Ach, bescheidene, demütige Hoffnungen! Dass Er lachen kann . . . wie einer mit lieben Kindern lacht . . . und dann wieder mit ehernem Gesicht pflügt, und zuweilen den Pflug tief, tief und grausam niederdrücken muss. 99

The nadir of national fortunes is, then, at the same time the nadir of Adam's spiritual life: despair over the

nation and despair over the ways of God go side by side, and as the nation is reduced to a collection of individuals, God also retreats from the viewpoint of men. True, God still is the controlling force behind events on earth, but he becomes impersonal and uninvolved, pursuing his own plan without regard to the individual. Whilst Adam never denies the existence of God, he does change the nature of the Deity at this point from one intimately concerned not only with mankind, but also with the individual and the nation, into the invisible power over the universe. When events shatter Adam's old, more naive faith, he places God at a much greater distance from man, and turns his own attentions, even in his sermons, exclusively to the state of the German people.

For Aatje Stamp, who is present when Adam and the villagers catch the curate Holgersen and his disreputable followers with the stolen church gold, Adam has only angry contempt. "Das Reich Gottes," which Stamp's sect is announcing amid the Armageddon atmosphere of the defeat, will not come amid signs and wonders: "Wir selbst müssen es uns erobern, in langer Mühe von Jahrtausenden."<sup>100</sup> By this point, in the 30th out of 35 chapters, Adam has recovered his old strength and confidence, as is most clearly demonstrated by his attitude to the dying Holgersen, whose predilection for robbery and murder is elevated to a Mephistophelian level. Throughout the novel he has appeared surrounded by mystery, with unex-

plained power over the churchwarden of Poggsee, and in his first parish Adam discovers him in the barn with Gude, who is also attracted by his mysterious influence. He is first described as "der Fremde im Schafspelz" but Frenssen keeps him within the realm of the human, without investing him with any consistent symbolism of a philosophic nature. Over his corpse Adam tells Thorwald, the young teacher:

Dieser war ein Urheide, eine wilde, urwüchsige und blanke Kraft Gottes. Er war ein Jäger im Wald, der vielem Wild heisse Füsse machte, der Menschen und Tieren die Sehnen geschmeidig machte, und einigen die Sehnen brach. Gott mit deiner Seele, du Jäger Gottes . . ." 101

Holgersen's role in the novel is consequently not entirely negative, although his activities as thief, murderer and communist revolutionary are definitely anti-social. He is a catalyst, forcing the parish out of its complacency, and as the leader of a band of marauding ruffians who burn down the vicarage, he makes Adam search harder for the fundamental meaning of life. Holgersen's last words to Adam, after he has been shot, are reminiscent of the farm-boy in Die Brüder: "Ich habe euch tüchtig in Bewegung gebracht."<sup>102</sup> When he adds that life is "ein grosses . . . grosses Spiel," Adam replies in terms of his original belief, which he had explained to the old bishop at the beginning of the novel: "Aber wir sollen bei diesem Spiel auf Seiten des Lichts stehn, Bruder . . . auf Seiten der heiligen Helden der Menschheit und aller guten Geister."<sup>103</sup> Despite the hint

of disapproval in this comment, and the address "Bruder" which emphasises that Holgersen is a man, and therefore capable of moral choice, rather than a mere symbol, Adam's remark to Thorwald a few minutes later places him definitely in the category of God's agent. His actions are therefore in the final analysis morally neutral, since they are undertaken in the service of the divine plan, which is beyond the bounds of human moral judgements.

The remarkable change in Adam's attitude to Holgersen, who in the dark days of defeat and revolution had seemed nothing more noble than the leader of a pack of jackals eviscerating the carcass of a fallen beast, can be attributed to Adam's recovery of his spiritual orientation and confidence in the divine plan and man's place in it. Just as the success of the republican government in crushing the communist uprisings and re-establishing order had contributed to a new feeling that Germany was not completely finished, Adam's fortunes have also been repaired somewhat. He and Gude still live in the small widow's cottage, but the thatch is sound, Gude's father's unlamented passing has enabled them to pay their debts, and the recovery of the gold has cleared Adam's name. Abel's affair with Dr. Schack has borne fruit, and she is pregnant and happy, so Adam once more sees concrete grounds for hope.



## Deutschtum

In all the novels save one<sup>104</sup> Frenssen brings the heroes to maturity and prosperity by the end, and the success that comes to them as a result of their process of "Bildung" is a reward intended to demonstrate to the reader that self-improvement, both spiritual and practical, has concrete advantages. In contrast to the traditional "Bildungsroman," such as Wilhelm Meister or Nachsommer, the:

Umwelt ist nicht etwa die Kultur, . . . sondern sie ist einfach die Wirklichkeit ausser dem Ich. . . . Der Mensch und die Wirklichkeit innen und aussen, die lebendige Wirklichkeit des Geschlechts, dem er entstammt und die er als Schicksal in sich trägt, und die ebenso lebendige Wirklichkeit der Natur und des Menschen ausser ihm, das ist das einzige grosse Thema . . . 105

The goal of "Bildung" is thus a tangible coming to terms with the world around the hero, and prosperity--but not wealth--the tangible reward. The novels end when this state of material prosperity and spiritual harmony has been reached, and since Frenssen saw in work the essence of a satisfying life, he leaves the heroes integrated into the social framework, productively occupied. In the last novel, Meino der Prahler (1933), Meino Ommen at the end agrees to help the N.S.D.A.P., after having throughout the book been too preoccupied with his own plans to participate actively. That Frenssen regards Meino's work as beneficial to the nation, and not simply as in the service of a political party, is clear from a remark

halfway through the novel: "Er (Meino) war mit all seinen jungen Bekannten Anhänger einer politischen Bewegung, die Erneuerung und Erstarkung des Volkes wünschte."<sup>106</sup> It is moreover characteristic of Frenssen's lack of awareness of what the Nazis stood for that they are presented solely as the bringers of national revitalization. He himself voted for the N.S.D.A.P. from 1930 onwards because of their promises to improve the lot of the farmer.<sup>107</sup>

A happy ending with the hero fulfilling his mission in the life of the nation, whether it be Jörn Uhl helping to build the Kiel Canal or Meino making speeches on behalf of the Nazis, is the artistic reflection of the fundamental optimism that characterizes Adam Barfoot's politics. "Ein rechtes Leben"<sup>108</sup> is the image of German life that Adam gives in his speech at Heedje's wedding in 1914, just before the outbreak of war:

Wir haben auch gute Sitten im Land. Wie wenige, die ihr Leben verspielen, verfaulen oder verschmutzen!  
Das deutsche Volk ist im grossen und ganzen ein Volk von ernster, sauberer und geordneter Lebensführung. <sup>109</sup>

"Ordnung," the first prerequisite for a "glücklichen und glänzenden Zeit,"<sup>110</sup> and "Sauberkeit," which is used constantly in the novels to denote the external evidence of good citizenship, are the twin pillars of the Wilhelminian era; an era that, despite Frenssen's not uncritical posture to many of its institutions, from the vantage point of 1920 seemed almost like the Garden of Eden.

This does not mean that Frenssen does not at times view those virtues with a measure of irony. He pokes fun at "Sauberkeit" in several of the novels, notably Der Untergang der Anna Hollmann, where Eva Sött's house is often referred to as "das sauberste Haus in Üwelgünne,"<sup>111</sup> and Otto Babendiek, in which the family of Fährmann Busch is subjected to gentle irony. "Sauberkeit" is such a positive attribute that the shining complexion of Dina Busch, Balle Bohnsack's wife, and her starched cap is simply a loving overdrawing of a widespread fanaticism among the women of Schleswig-Holstein rather than the ironic treatment of a fault. Despite the irony however, Frenssen is proud of this manifestation of the orderliness of the German people and uses it to reinforce the reader's pride in a traditional attribute of the race.

A certain all-pervading optimism is the most important factor in Adam's view of internal politics. Although individual freedom is as yet imperfectly safeguarded, "die Gerechtigkeit wächst doch von Jahr zu Jahr, und wir sehen die Zeit kommen, da alle Deutschen freie Menschen sind."<sup>112</sup> This optimism is based on confidence in the government, personified by the Kaiser:

Es ist aber . . . im ganzen Volk nicht einer, der ihn hasst oder verachtet; sondern wir haben alle, Arbeiter und Edelleute, Dorf- und Stadtleute, Männer und Frauen eine Art geschwisterlicher, verstehender Liebe zu ihm. Denn seht: so wie er sich zeigt: gutmütig, das Beste, ja das Heilige und Reine wollend, in Gedanken bald himmelstürzend, bald verzagt, sehr stolz, zu früh stolz,

lässig, ein wenig hin und her: so ist er ein rechter  
Deutscher, Blut von unserem Blut, Bein von unserem  
Bein. 113

This is a purely emotional outburst, and it stands in sharp contrast to Adam's more sober postwar evaluation of the lack of unity in the country. It is however in tone strongly reminiscent of Recht oder Unrecht, mein Land, a propaganda blast against England written in 1940, which ends with the assurance that the German people will not rebel against Hitler: ". . . gegen den Führer? Man macht keine Revolution gegen sein eigenes Wesen, gegen das eigene Herz."<sup>114</sup>

Frenssen is capable of extraordinary blind spots when he makes patriotic statements, whereas, as previously noted,<sup>115</sup> his analysis of the social ills of Wilhelminian Germany was far more incisive. At the root of these blind spots lies the concept of "Deutschtum," Frenssen's notion of those qualities which are peculiarly German. The qualities he singles out: honesty, seriousness, industry, orderliness and loyalty, are those which the German people have traditionally attributed to themselves. They are, to cite but one example, the qualities associated with the Germans in Freytag's Soll und Haben (1855). The use to which Frenssen puts this concept parallels his exposure of such failings as excessive pride, materialism and complacency: they are intended to strengthen the self-esteem of his readers at the same time as they are made aware of their faults. As is true of all such genera-

lizations, "Deutschtum" is of course a largely mythical sphere and, although in Frenssen's estimation it serves a didactic purpose, it weakens the novels by substituting ritualistic repetition for dispassionate observation.

Clearly, no conservative patriot of the traditional school sees his country as at odds with God, and once Germany has lost the war, Frenssen has somehow to restore harmonious relations between Germany and God. Adam Barfood serves as his mouthpiece in this, and reflects at the same time Frenssen's efforts to find a solution to the problem and the way in which nationalism, the terrestrial reality, remains constant, while the image of God is moulded to fit it. A victorious Germany could be the instrument of God's will, but Germany's collapse could not be interpreted the same way, at least not at the time. Consequently God moves away from the earthly theatre in 1918 and 1919, but returns by the time the "Volksfest" takes place with a new mission for a reborn Germany and now, in retrospect, the defeat can be seen as God's warning to his chosen people.

Gustav Frenssen is too consciously a "Volkserzieher" for the parallel between Adam and the German nation on November 11, 1918 to be overlooked. Both are at their lowest point: "Es ist alles ein böses, sinnloses Spiel,"<sup>116</sup> but the necessity to console Gude and fight to stay alive, beset by hunger and the threat from Holgersen's gang, forces Adam to keep on. He puts an axe by his bed because he cannot shoot: "Nun muss

ich mich mit der alten Waffe wehren, nach der meine Vorfahren griffen, wenn sie den Eingang ihrer Höhle verteidigten."<sup>117</sup>

This allusion to ancient ways is significant, for in a didactic writer such as Frenssen it represents the consciously emotional, irrational appeal of a simple direct solution, as well as suggesting, at the nadir of national fortunes, the way to recovery on the basis of a return to the foundations of the nation, its Germanic heritage.

The long speech which Adam delivers at the "Volksfest" explains in detail Frenssen's vision of Germany's rebirth, and it is significant that God is once again assigned the role of guardian of the German people. The war was a terrible lesson that the nation had left the path allotted to it and thereby lost its ability to function as God's instrument. The most striking feature of the speech however is the extent to which the basic premises of Adam's pre-1914 patriotism remain unchanged.

The speech falls into four sections: an introduction, which moves swiftly from a description of the prosperity and industry of the prewar era to the enthusiasm of August 1914 and the "Schändung" of Germany following the armistice; the second section examines why the war began and the reasons for the defeat. The third and most important section outlines Adam's ideas for national recovery, and the fourth contains his prophecy of Germany's future destiny.

Externally, Germany in 1914 was a glittering spectacle of harmony and industry: "Das ganze Land eine einzige Ernte . . . die Städte eine einzige Werkstatt und Fabrik . . . die Kinder eine einzige Schule im ganzen Land, von Schleswig bis an die Alpen."<sup>118</sup> In the first months of the war the entire nation responded to the clarion call of destiny in an "Aufschwung von reiner Schönheit,"<sup>119</sup> "jeder . . . hat Gottes Flügel rauschen gehört . . . damals, als unser Volk sich erhob, im Fluge wie ein Adler . . . seine Ehre und sein Gut zu verteidigen . . ."<sup>120</sup> But although the German people entered the war confident of the holiness of their cause and the support of God, "die bitterernsten Augen auf Gott gewandt,"<sup>121</sup> they were not only defeated but despoiled. Considered "die Schande der Menschheit . . . diese feige Hyäne"<sup>122</sup> by the other nations, Germany has lost her army, her ships and her colonies, her rivers and "neun Millionen Brüder, die von Bluts wegen so bittergern bei uns bleiben oder zu uns kommen wollten."<sup>123</sup> As the German people screams to God and man for justice, the greatest sin the individual can commit is to ignore the nation's plight and calmly pursue personal aims.

The defeat and the revolution were God's verdict on Germany: "Du hast geirrt, deutsches Volk."<sup>124</sup> Adam outlines the three areas in which the nation went wrong. All three represent internal failings, lying at the root of the

causes described to him by the workman on the road in November 1918. "Es fehlte uns, nach der Weise des neuen Reichtums, an allen Ecken und Enden an guten Formen."<sup>125</sup> Germany forced herself too quickly into the front rank of the nations; blinded by her material success, she was incautious: "Vom Schein des vielen Goldes . . . Berge von Gold! . . . von Hochmut, von Gleichgültigkeit, von Besserwissen, ach, von Alleswissen, geblendet!"<sup>126</sup> Germany was unaware of the fear and hatred she engendered. This is a criticism of government policy, but also of the national preoccupation with success and materialism: the theme of Klaus Hinrich Baas reappears here after a calamity far greater than Frenssen foresaw as the consequence of such single-minded materialism in 1909.

The second fatal mistake, this time a reason why the war was lost, was the lack of action to heal the gulf between "Bürger" and "Arbeiter." Adam personifies the two classes, and describes two Germans with quite different opinions and beliefs. The bourgeois "lobte und liebte den Kaiser, das Heer, die Offiziere, die Beamten, die Kirche, die Banken;" the worker "liebte und lobte die demokratische Republik, die Miliz, die völlige Freiheit des Glaubens und Denkens, die soziale Gesellschaft und die gleiche Menschenwürde aller,"<sup>127</sup> and the two despised and distrusted each other. Whereas the French, English, Serbian and American peoples were like blocks of granite and withstood the cataclysm, the two divided



peoples, the German and the Russian, collapsed. While there is a degree of naiveté in such a disregard of social tensions in England and France, it is true that, for the duration of the war at least, the differences between the classes faded in the face of the call for a united national front. Only the institutions of democratic government, maintains Adam, could have forged the German people into a united nation.

The third mistake, which again harkens back to Klaus Hinrich Baas, and in retrospect places that novel in an almost allegorical light, was the materialism caused by fifty years of uninterrupted success, which had harmed the soul of the nation. Adam hammers home his point with more concern for a striking picture than for accuracy by characterizing the prevailing materialism of the era as the typical German with a bankbook in his left hand and a tool or scientific book in the right: "Sehr ehrenwerte Dinge . . . ich will nichts gegen sie sagen. Aber nicht genug!"<sup>128</sup> Germany must have spiritual depth, "ein grosser, heiliger Glaube," and a national pride: "Eine Nation sein, das heisst: sich als Persönlichkeit unter den Völkern fühlen und sich eines bestimmten stolzen Auftrags an der Menschheit bewusst zu sein."<sup>129</sup> What Adam is calling for here is not a sabre-rattling self-assertiveness, but a deep sense of national dignity which gives stability and continuity to national policy and unity in times of crisis.

National recovery can take place only when these faults are replaced by virtues, and these Adam enunciates at length. From the despair of defeat must come a national pride based, not on material success, but on the enduring memorials to the German spirit: the piety that has marvelled at God's wonders through the ages, and is reflected in German achievements in art and science: "Lorbeer über das deutsche Volk . . . über seinen mühsamen, quäligen Aufstieg und all seine Taten aus den Tiefen des Menschengesistes."<sup>130</sup> Future generations will regard the Great War as Germany's hour of glory, and Adam makes much of the odds against Germany to show that, while the Allies continued the blockade after the armistice at the same time as they accused Germany of war crimes, it was they who were guilty and Germany who had "trotz allem, eine reine Sache."<sup>131</sup>

Adam here moves from the relatively firm ground of moral values to the quagmire of emotional nationalism, at which point he contradicts his preceding argument. Having attributed the outbreak of war to basic internal failings that produced provocative political actions--a reasonable summation, despite insufficient emphasis on the Kaiser's aggressive foreign policy--it is simply inconsistent to declare that Germany's cause remained pure. Although Frenssen, whose mouthpiece Adam obviously is here, is capable of reasoned analysis in the moral sphere, when he concerns

himself with nationalism he ceases to analyse and reverts abruptly to the dubious medium of emotional cliché. The overdrawn, demagogic language of Adam's speech, contrasting sharply with his unflinching honesty at the end of the war, highlights the dangers of didacticism of Frenssen's type. In order to counteract the postwar demoralization, the speech calls for a revitalization of national life based on the fundamental qualities of the German people. The stylistic exaggeration reflects the degree to which Frenssen distorts for the sake of didactic effect the crucial realization of the novel, that Germany was co-responsible for the war. The everyday style of the novels, with its down-to-earth, rural imagery, is discarded in favour of pathos in the same way as the novel's honest attempt to come to grips with the facts of war and defeat is obscured by ill-considered rhetoric. Here again the didactic purpose takes precedence not only over artistic considerations, for the inordinately long speech disturbs the end of the novel, but also over the worthwhile content of Adam's development, which it essentially negates with its undertone of the necessity of revenge. In his indignation over what he considers the injustice of the Versailles Treaty, Frenssen loses his sense of proportion, and it is here, where logic is subordinated to passion, that the ideals of a reborn nation degenerate into the slogans of political demagoguery.

In his prescription for overcoming disunity, "die innerste Ursache unseres Unglücks,"<sup>132</sup> Frenssen's picture of an ideal society is an unqualified affirmation of support for the Weimar Republic. Disunity can only be overcome by the establishment of a national structure that enables all sections of society to participate in this national pride: the worker must become patriotic: "Wer gegen seine Nation kämpft, der kämpft gegen sich selbst;"<sup>133</sup> the nobility must march side by side with the workers; the farmer must abandon his splendid isolation and become more conscious of his place in the national community, and the government must face up to its responsibility to become a force for beneficial change. True to his earlier assertion that democracy could have brought unity in 1914, Adam urges all his listeners to put the past behind them and unite behind the symbol of hope, the Weimar constitution. Neither the imperial flag nor the red flag--the former he calls "herrlich" and the latter "die Fahne der freien Menschenwürde für alle, die Fahne des Vertrauens an das Edle in jedem Menschen"<sup>134</sup>--could unite the country, but Weimar is this "Sieg der Vernunft, diese Vereinigung auf mittlerer Linie."<sup>135</sup> The constitution is a bulwark against "den geborenen Hochmut und gegen die Übermacht des Goldes,"<sup>136</sup> and Frenssen-Adam here explicitly underlines his socialist stand by saying "Landsleute, ihr schlichten Menschen."<sup>137</sup> Adam is addressing the

whole population of Poggsee, just as Frenssen is addressing the mass of the German people. The troubles of the time come from "dem Irrweg, den die früheren Führer uns geführt,"<sup>138</sup> from disunity and from defeat, but not, as many maintain, from the Weimar constitution. The new Germany must be a classless society, united and led positively by a representative government. But just as this new unity is at the service of the nation, in contrast to the internationalism of socialism, the position of the individual is much more significant than in a socialist state, for the individual is by no means reduced to a faceless component in the service of the national ideal. This is an idealistic, utopian vision, a national socialism without the subordination of the individual, and the reality of the national socialist state that did finally emerge demonstrates how utopian Adam's dream was. Three years later Otto Babendiek reflects the disappointment Frenssen felt at the failure of the Weimar Republic to realize this ideal, but in 1929 Dummhans shows that he is still supporting the forces of law and order in the increasingly chaotic political atmosphere. Not until 1933 does Frenssen's sympathy for the N.S.D.A.P. reach the pages of Meino der Prahler, but the root cause of this switch of allegiance clearly lies in the failure of the republic and the renewed promise of Hitler to build the ideal state.

Despite the good qualities of the German people, which

Adam extravagantly extols, he attacks "Formlosigkeit und Lässigkeit" and demands a rejuvenation of the national character: "Wir müssen nachdenken und daran arbeiten, dass unser Volk einen anderen, und zwar einen festern und zusammengerissenen Charakter bekommt."<sup>139</sup> When combined with the preceding call for a national socialism, this revitalized character of the nation makes Hitler's appeal to Frenssen quite obvious, especially as Adam calls for a new spirit in Germany's youth. They will at first be inspired by the traditional ideals of Jesus, Goethe or Bismarck, but eventually these streams will unite "zu einem einzigen Geist neuer deutscher Art . . . klarer, herber, tüchtiger . . . ." <sup>140</sup>

With this call for a revitalized youth, and a nation forged into a single will by pride in the national heritage, Adam ends his speech by seeing in Germany's history and national character a sign "dass Gott noch Grosses mit dem deutschen Volk vorhat."<sup>141</sup> Germany's future role is to be the decisive factor in the coming struggle between the eastern and western nations. Her geographical position dictates this, although no-one can tell on which side she will stand. But one thing must be the belief of every German:

Dass am Ende dieses ungeheuren Kampfes das deutsche Volk mit seinem tiefen Geist und mit all seinen Gaben wirtschaftlicher Art der Führer werden wird, und vom Atlantischen bis zum Stillen Ozean die Völker mit seinem Geist und Wesen erfüllen wird . . . . Ohne Deutschland kein Europa-Asien, durch Deutschland das neue Europa-Asien! 142

Nationalism and religion merge here, as God once again renews his special relationship with the German people. The nature of Frenssen's idealism is apparent in the goal: moral leadership of Europe and Asia, but at the same time he remains conventional in the means he envisages to that end. There will be a decisive battle, at the end of which the entire continent will look to victorious Germany for moral and economic leadership. There is no mention here of "Lebensraum" or any trace of the naive imperialism of Peter Moors Fahrt nach Südwest: God is not going to help Germany conquer the entire continent because of her virtues: the virtues will conquer by themselves. It is this idealism that differentiates the philosophy of Frenssen's mature works from the sabre-rattling nationalism of Peter Moors Fahrt nach Südwest (1906) that uses virtues as an excuse for conquest.

Frenssen's reborn Germany is not the land of the brown battalions, but in his enthusiasm for the ideals he pays too little attention to the consequences of some of the details in his plan. The basic similarity of Adam's wedding speech in 1914 to the speech at the Volksfest shows that the emphasis is on the conservation of valuable traditions rather than on fundamental change, and even the shift of emphasis from Potsdam to Weimar, which Adam describes to Thorwald is strongly qualified: he says then: "Die Deutschen sind von Natur mehr Weimar als Potsdam, mehr graue Ackerleute, Kauf-

leute, Gelehrte, als straff geknüpfte bis ans Kinn," but in the next paragraph: "Das deutsche Volk, Arbeiter, Bauer, Bürger, Adel, wird nicht eher wieder Ruhe haben, nicht eher wieder innern Frieden gewinnen und ein gutes Gewissen haben, als bis wir wieder in sauberer straffer Ordnung, und ein starkes, selbstgewähltes Haupt an unsrer Spitze, alle einander dienen."<sup>143</sup>

The individual freedom which looms so large in Frenssen's scheme for a reborn Germany is here subordinated to the overriding need for national unity. Here the key phrase is: "alle einander dienen" with its vision of the monolithic nature of the German people once the necessary steps are taken to remove the barriers to unity. The image is military: the entire nation marching in column, led by the unquestioned chieftain, "in sauberer straffer Ordnung" reflecting the traditional national qualities forged into a common will by the tough and vigorous new spirit. The fate of the dissenting individual goes unmentioned: in his naive enthusiasm for the new order Frenssen simply fails to consider the possibility that any right-minded German will not be in complete accord. The lack of any mention of coercion as an instrument of unity demonstrates Frenssen's idealism: just as Germany will not conquer the continent, the new order will not suppress opposition, for in both cases the benefits will be so self-evident that coercion



will be unnecessary. On one level this is an idealistic, utopian dream; on another it exposes Frenssen's basic flaw both as a novelist and as a "Volkserzieher": his inability to think through to the abuses that would be inevitable once the theory is applied to eighty million fallible human beings.

Gustav Frenssen's strength lies in his astute powers of observation and his appreciation of the needs of his fellow-countrymen. Epigonal though his style may be, the authenticity of his characterizations can be attested to by anyone who is familiar with the people of the marsh and the "Geest." His practical suggestions for the alleviation of poverty and the removal of social injustices are genuinely humanitarian. The emphasis on the virtues of the German people, although intended primarily to increase domestic harmony and self-respect, leads him nonetheless into an aggressive posture when he deals with Germany's relations with her neighbours. Although Frenssen never advocates war as an instrument of national policy nor, in his prewar novels, does he even consider the possibility, the constant reiteration of national virtues produces, under appropriate circumstances, the kind of threatening undertone for which he criticizes the Kaiser's foreign policy. The rebirth of Germany, which in the novels is principally a call for the removal of social injustice, here becomes sullied by martial

clichés.

Frenssen's concern for the rebirth of Germany cannot be divorced from any aspect of his writings. It is the driving force behind his social message, it inspires his search for a religious and ethic foundation, and at times it obscures his logic and debases his work to the level of cheap propaganda. But these instances are infrequent in the long list of novels from Die Sandgräfin to Meino der Prahler, and basically his vision for Germany is an idealized one: "Überm Gewirr und Gewühl der Völker emporzuragen und sie mit neuen heiligen Gedanken und Plänen zu sammeln, und zu neuen, hellern Zeiten aufzurufen."<sup>144</sup> His reborn Germany was not the Germany of the brown battalions, and although he cannot be acquitted of the responsibility of furthering the concepts that made the Third Reich possible, Gustav Frenssen's ideals are not of themselves ignoble.

Georg von Ompteda

The subjects of Georg von Ompteda's novels, the landed aristocracy of Prussia, entered the twentieth century with their relative social and economic position undermined by the proliferation of families whose fortunes stemmed from trade and industry, and by the decline in agricultural prices caused by American competition. The vigorous adoption of modern methods, which was characteristic of German industry and was of crucial importance in the phenomenal rise in national wealth and productivity during the last three decades of the nineteenth century, was hampered in the agricultural sector by conservatism and lack of capital, and in consequence the social pre-eminence of the aristocracy was endangered.

Unlike writers such as Gustav Freytag and Theodor Fontane, whose writings about the aristocracy are the product of observation, Ompteda's novels have the benefit of personal experience. His career was the traditional one of cadet school and cavalry regiment, and his comments and criticisms of the limited horizons of aristocratic families are tempered by an understanding and sympathy accessible only to those who are members of the "caste." It is precisely this understanding and sense of pride in the achievements of former generations that makes Ompteda so conscious of the

need to revitalize the aristocracy to prevent a drift into decline and finally irrelevance: Rudolf's final speech in Eysen is the best example of this didactic element, which runs consistently through Ompteda's work.

His concern is nevertheless for the whole nation, which had, he believed, been well served by the nobles themselves and by the traditional values of their caste, and which would be endangered if these pit-props of her greatness were allowed to rot. Ompteda's vision of Germany's rebirth retains a more hierarchical structure than does Frenssen's, but the basic aim of a unified people and a harmonious life for the individual and the nation remains the same. Ompteda is far removed from, and frequently castigates, the "Standesdünkel" which simply demanded the preservation of aristocratic privileges while ignoring the fundamental and obvious changes that the industrial age had brought, although the extent to which the novels come to grips with the social problems of the Wilhelminian era is extremely limited. Ompteda formulates his vision in terms of the leadership of the nation, and in this the decline of the aristocracy as a class forces him into a defensive position: whilst he by no means regards leadership as the exclusive preserve of the hereditary nobility, but on the contrary argues strongly for the acceptance on the part of the old families of the new commercial aristocracy as equals, he approaches the question

of national revitalization from the top of the social ladder in contrast to Frenssen, who starts with the broad mass of the population.

The call for the preservation of traditional values in a society which had telescoped the transition from a feudal-agrarian state of soldiers and administrators to a modern industrial nation with an increasingly powerful middle class as well as an enormous and disadvantaged proletariat springs from essentially the same conservative philosophy as is evinced by Frenssen's works. The major difference between the two authors, which can be explained in large measure by their respective positions on the social scale--Ompteda's father was Lord Chamberlain to the King of Hannover while Frenssen was the son of a village carpenter--lies in Frenssen's advocacy of social reforms along with his desire to preserve traditional values, whereas the only changes advocated by Ompteda are in the attitudes of the aristocrats themselves. The wistfully retrospective novel Ernst III (1925) paints a nostalgic picture of pre-war society which completely ignores the misery of the industrial slums and depicts the parliamentary process as a comic irrelevance. Ompteda seeks to question the need for "progress" by correcting the image of the traditionally dominant class within the state, thereby making the existing system more palatable. The absence of

concrete suggestions for the correction of social ills within the state as a whole (in contrast to the advocacy of reforms, such as the abolition of the duel, which are of peculiar concern to the aristocracy) brings Ompteda closer to Wassermann, whose concern is also with the inner world of human attitudes, although Wassermann questions precisely those basic foundations of the state which Ompteda would preserve. Ompteda's vision of Germany's rebirth emerges as a blend of traditional values and democratic open-mindedness, which is best exemplified in the person of King Ernst III of Tillen, whose primary qualities are industry and tolerance. Without the programmatic nature of Frenssen's vision, Ompteda's logic is at times inconsistent, but examination of his work as a whole reveals the basic goal of a revitalized nation in which all classes co-exist harmoniously.

Ompteda's approach resembles that of Frenssen in that he takes the subjects for his novels from within the range of his own experience, illustrating his concept of values and his vision of national rebirth by the example of the aristocratic class. In a review of the novel Droesigl, Hugo Greinz sums up Ompteda's ability to portray the life and customs of the aristocracy:

Das mondäne Leben der vornehmen Gesellschaftskreise Deutschlands zu Ende des vorigen und Beginn des gegenwärtigen Jahrhunderts hat in Ompteda wie kaum in einem zweiten seinen Romancier gefunden. Er beherrscht die Welt, aus der er seine Stoffe und Menschen holt,

und in seinen Romanen wird man wohl niemals irgend-einen lächerlichen Widerspruch mit der Sitte und dem Brauch des Lebens der Wohlhabenden und Hochgestellten finden. 1

E.W. Braun refers to Ompteda as "ein gesunder Realist,"<sup>2</sup> an epithet normally reserved in the Wilhelminian era for those who supported the state and its institutions,<sup>3</sup> and this combination of verisimilitude and an essentially positive attitude explains Ompteda's success:

Georg von Ompteda war lange Zeit ein vielgelesener und vielgeliebter Dichter der adligen Kreise. Sein Eysen, Sylvester von Geyer und Cäcilie von Sarryn waren Geschenkwerke, die auf dem Gabentisch keines jungen Fräuleins, keines heranwachsenden Junkers fehlen durften. 4

Clara Viebig, who wrote the review from which these remarks are taken in 1932, was herself, along with Ompteda, Frenssen, Thomas Mann, Beyerlein and Elisabeth von Heyking, one of the six best selling authors of 1903,<sup>5</sup> so in her assessment of Ompteda's appeal to the Wilhelminian reading public her comments may be considered authoritative.

The literary framework within which Ompteda communicates his message is similar to that used by Gustav Freytag, whose intention in Soll und Haben was to show "das deutsche Volk . . . bei seiner Arbeit."<sup>6</sup> Ompteda's characters, though they belong to a more limited social sphere than Freytag's, are depicted in a wide range of situations pertaining to their duties as officers, farmers or civil servants. This is especially true of his military men, who appear amid all

the monotony of garrison life, like Karl von Rundstetten (Heimat des Herzens), or tramping along in the dust and heat during autumn manoeuvres like Sylvester von Geyer. Even where the subject of the novel is the officer as lover rather than soldier, as is the case with Lieutenant von Harff in Die Sünde, Ompteda avoids the conventional Wilhelminian stereotype of the glamorously free, dashing lieutenant, for Harff always has to take the last train back to the garrison town following an evening with his mistress in Berlin.

Since Ompteda's aim is to portray the real world of the aristocracy, he must of course examine the general human spheres of love, honour, marriage and money as they pertain to this class, but by avoiding the stereotype he is able to present his characters as human beings with a fully developed emotional life, after the manner of Fontane, despite their ever-present awareness of the demands of the caste. In consequence Ompteda's world, though now "längst verschollen"<sup>7</sup> in a way that Frenssen's Dithmarschen is not, retains its authenticity for the modern reader as it did before 1918.

### Man and Woman

Love and marriage occupy a central position in Ompteda's



novels. In contrast to the more egalitarian society of Frenssen's Dithmarschen, love in Ompteda's Prussia is influenced, often decisively, by social and financial considerations, and only rarely, as in the case of Fritz and Herzeloïde (Herzeloïde) is marriage the culmination of the novel. In most instances Ompteda follows the lovers through their marriage and illuminates the problems that arise. This conscientious avoidance of romantic cliché enhances the verisimilitude of the novels and points to a serious intent beyond the sphere of novels that are simply meant to entertain.

a) The physical type:

Although the Nordic physical type predominates among Ompteda's heroes, the range of hair colour and stature among his heroines is much greater than in Frenssen's novels. Race is not of prime concern for Ompteda, since the pages of the Gotha Almanach provide ample documentation of an aristocratic pedigree: the novel Eysen, which traces the development of a family through the nineteenth century, is preceded in all editions by a fictitious page from the Gotha Almanach showing their lineage. Frenssen's concern for and advocacy of "Zuchtwahl" is irrelevant for the chronicler of the aristocracy, amongst whom selective

breeding has been practised for centuries, even if the criteria have been social and financial rather than biological. The unadulterated blood of the Dithmarscher, which is such a standard feature of Frenssen's works, was not self-evident to the reading public in other parts of Germany, whereas it was common knowledge that the Prussian aristocracy married as a rule among their own kind, and it was therefore unnecessary for Ompstedt to emphasize the purity of the race. He does however make use of the standard physical image of the officer, to the extent that the majority of his heroes could, suitably attired, blend easily into a group of Frenssen's farmers: they are tall, well-built, fair haired and suntanned from their outdoor life. The universal acceptance of this physical stereotype can be judged from Wassermann, to whom the concept of Nordic supremacy is totally foreign: his symbolically typical officer in Etzel Andergast, Gore von Groothusen, is of this type, and Irlen, the retired General Staff officer in the same novel, looks, with his height and bronzed features, like "ein hoher Marineoffizier in Zivil."<sup>8</sup> The stereotype is most apparent in Heimat des Herzens, where Karl von Rundstetten, a blond giant, stands out in contrast to the family and friends of his French wife. To his French host, Baron de Préfaillies, whom he once saved from robbers in Constantinople, he remarks: "Unsere ganze Rasse ist grösser und stärker."<sup>9</sup>

At the wedding of von Rundstetten and Simone de Corvieux, the solid, well-bred German officers are much admired by the French ladies, one of whom contrasts them with the Frenchmen present with the words: "Das sind doch wenigstens Männer."<sup>10</sup> The theme of unimpaired racial vigour appears when they return to northern Germany: "Diesen Himmelstrich, der ein starkes, von weichen Lüften nicht erschlaftes Geschlecht trug."<sup>11</sup> The emphasis in Frenssen and Ompfeda on the fundamental vitality of the German people is a central feature of their concept of national rebirth, for it forms the indispensable basis of a national desire for the revitalization of society and its institutions. Artistically it is a tiresome cliché, but it performs the important didactic function of setting the stage for the introduction of other values.

Ompfeda was a francophile who spent ten years translating Maupassant into German, and whose style was influenced by the French master to the extent that the frequently vitriolic Adolf Bartels considered him one of the few German authors "die sich auch mit der Feder wie im Salonrock zu bewegen verstehen und Fremden wie Maupassant und Kielland, wenn auch nicht an Talent, so doch wenigstens an weltmännischer Sicherheit gleichkommen."<sup>12</sup> The contrast of von Rundstetten, "ein kerndeutscher Edelmann mit dem engen Horizonte des pflichttreuen Berufssoldaten,"<sup>13</sup> with de

Préfailles, who is a sympathetic character with enormous charm and savoir-faire, has its roots, one suspects, in defensiveness. De Préfailles tells von Rundstetten that Germans are "steif, eckig und plump"<sup>14</sup> and at the wedding the officers' ladies are similarly judged. Against these accusations of crudeness and lack of taste von Rundstetten sets a galaxy of German virtues, familiar from the pages of Frenssen's novels: strength, vigour, orderliness, cleanliness, duty and efficiency. Duty, the most important concept in von Rundstetten's life, is a totally foreign concept to Simone: "dies eiserne Wort, das sie bei ihrem Vater, den Verwandten und Gutsbesitzern in der Umgebung nie gehört hatte."<sup>15</sup> Impressions on their last trip to France confirm these national differences. The French customs officials are slovenly and wear civilian clothes: "Statt der gehaltenen preussischen Beamten im Dienstkleide erschienen bummelige Angestellte in bürgerlicher Kleidung."<sup>16</sup> The railway station falls far short of German standards: "Karl verglich den vernachlässigten, schmutzigen Bahnhof, der Weltstadt nicht würdig, mit den hohen Hallen und der Ordnung in deutschen Grossstädten."<sup>17</sup> To the familiar German virtues is added one that Frenssen, the non-Prussian civilian, mentions as desirable only in Adam Barfood's last speech: military discipline. For Ompteda this is a positive attribute, a fact of German life as a logical extension of

"Ordnung." Ompteda's obvious approval of this aspect of the German character coincides here with Frenssen's vision in its most programmatic manifestation, but Frenssen's view of the German people is the broader one: Ompteda is blinkered by his own experience and reduces national characteristics to an almost simple-minded stereotype.

Ompteda does not hesitate to show that von Rundstetten, though a thoroughly honourable man, is a victim of the narrow horizons of his caste. The statuette of an Arab dancing girl which Simone gives him for Christmas embarrasses him: he finds it indecent, something that cannot possibly be shown to the other ladies of the regiment. But even though Ompteda maintains his distance from von Rundstetten's comments and retains enough objectivity to discern that the ubiquitous laws of Prussia constitute "ein peinlich wachendes Gesetz,"<sup>18</sup> the image of Germany that remains is completely in harmony with that expressed in Frenssen's novels. The influence of Lagarde and Langbehn is apparent in the concept of Germany as the young, vigorous, disciplined state in contrast to the decaying civilization of France.

In the novel Excelsior!, written in 1909, Ompteda abandons art in favour of propaganda of the most tedious variety. Ompteda's own military experience prevented him from ruining his young officers with excessive idealization, but away from the barrack square such constraints vanish and

amid the "Grösse und Erhabenheit der Natur"<sup>19</sup> the stature of the hero must match that of the scenery. Only a devout believer could excuse the pretentious vacuity of the novel with the words: "Es ist etwas wie Tendenz in dem Buch, aber eine im letzten Sinne gesunde, der man durchaus sympatisch gegenüberstehen muss."<sup>20</sup> Adolf Bartning, writing in Der Kunstwart, a magazine usually ready to forgive a lapse in taste if the sentiments were acceptable, calls Ernst Sturm, the hero, "nicht nur einen Steiger ersten Ranges, sondern auch in jeder andern Beziehung einen Idealmenschen . . . dessen schlackenlose Vollkommenheit sehr bald unerträglich wird."<sup>21</sup> So perfect is he indeed that the descriptions of him read like Gustav Meyrink's parody of Jörn Uhl in Simplicissimus: "des blonden, hochaufgeschossenen Burschen deutsche Augen" are "blau wie Gottes reiner Himmel."<sup>22</sup> Historians who, like Barbara Tuchman in The Proud Tower,<sup>23</sup> seek to explain the course of German history in the twentieth century on the basis of a pathology of the German mind, would delight in Ernst Sturm's relationship to his mother, the only woman with whom he has any contact: the magnificent physique appears to be inhabited by a personality flawed by latent homosexuality, an accompanying terror of women and an unresolved Oedipus complex. He sends his mother touching little telegrams after the ascent of each new peak, ending with the words "Gruss, Kuss, Tschuss." While in the army--

he is neither an aristocrat nor a professional soldier-- he is nearly raped by a barmaid, but the arrival of his commanding officer saves him, prompting Ompteda to comment: "Rein war seine Seele."<sup>24</sup>

Ompteda's heroines vary greatly in physical appearance; in contrast to Frenssen, however, he places no particular premium on the Nordic type. He is nevertheless conscious of the traditional racial characteristics, and there are undertones of approbation in the adjectives used to describe Nordic features. For all the urbanity of his aristocratic milieu, Ompteda is a true "Heimatlidher" in his insistence on a racial framework. In Herzeloide (1905), the novel in which Ompteda expresses most programmatically his concept of love, Fritz' first wife Maria has black hair and eyes but a fair complexion: "Haar und Augen des Sfidens mit der Hautfarbe des blonden Nordens vereint."<sup>25</sup> Seven years after her death Fritz marries his old friend Herzeloide, who is "gross, schlank und blond."<sup>26</sup>

The philosophy of the "Wandervogel" youth movement, which acknowledged Paul de Lagarde as one of its guiding spirits,<sup>27</sup> finds precise formulation in Ompteda's foreword to Excelsior! The "mens sana in corpore sano" spirit of Wilhelminian youth is contrasted with the unhealthy conduct of the previous generation: "Einst sass eine bebrillte, kassig blasse Jugend in dumpfen Kneipen bei Skatdreschen und

Tabaksqualm." The new age has revived:

. . . uralte deutsche Freude an körperliche Leistung. Den Weingeist, Feind aller Leistung, begann man in den Bann zu tun. Da erwachte auch die 'teutsche Jungfrau,' ward hirn- und fussfrei. Und der Jüngling lernte sie bei Sport und Spiel als Gefährtin kennen, dass er die heimliche Venus der finsternen Gassen vergass. 28

Even the social barriers crumble in the idealized world of the mountains, as the sons of gentlemen "teilten in eisiger Beiwacht das harte Felsenlager mit dem armen Sohn der Berge."

As with Frenssen's didacticism, Ompteda here reveals both the positive and negative aspects of the theme of national rebirth. On the one hand there is approval of welcome developments: the youth of the nation is turning away from unhealthy pursuits, barriers of sex and class are falling, and there is the prospect that society will become healthier and more harmonious. On the other hand there is the almost obsessive use of the adjective "deutsch," the beginning of a calamitous self-glorification, a race-consciousness that ultimately divides the world into "deutsch" and "undeutsch" and attributes all positive qualities to itself. Ompteda is no demagogue; his vision of a revitalized nation is moderate and inoffensive, but, like Frenssen's, it contains elements with a disastrous susceptibility to abuse.



b) Relationships between the sexes:

In his admiring picture of the new youth, Ompteda expresses an otherwise rarely heard impatience with the social propriety that wrapped young ladies in a cocoon, and the call for a less rigid adherence to class barriers is echoed quite frequently in his novels. The excessive "Reinheit der Gesinnung"<sup>29</sup> that Ernst Sturm displays demonstrates however the presence of a strain of puritanism that sets Ompteda quite apart from Frenssen in his treatment of love.

The characters in Herzelöide are all exemplary, and so the novel affords a good opportunity to observe Ompteda's ideas in the sphere of personal relations. Fritz, the hero, is twenty years old at the beginning, "ein junger Fant, der eben erst die Achselstücke trug."<sup>30</sup> After the "Begeisterung, Schwung und junge Liebe"<sup>31</sup> of his marriage to Maria, he becomes a conscientious colonel, but Ompteda depicts Fritz' life as a widower as an emotional limbo. Ompteda throughout his works places a high value on marriage, and he makes a definite attempt to formulate the requirements for a satisfying partnership. Although he is much more responsive to the demands of convention than is Frenssen, he clearly regards the alleviation of marital distress as a primary feature of a more content and harmonious society.

Fritz meets Herzelöide--not her real name but one which Fritz gives her--soon after the novel opens, but she

lacks the beauty and coquettish charm necessary to attract the lieutenant and he moves on. Hers is a gentle and loving nature, in harmony with the world around her, and the outward manifestation of her nature, her eyes, make an impression on Fritz even at this stage. She is present at Maria's funeral, and Fritz remembers her comforting words: "Sie ist heimgegangen."<sup>32</sup> Her nature personifies "den stillen Abendfrieden,"<sup>33</sup> the gentle comfort after the frantic days and deeds of youth. She is the mate of a man who has seen much and worked hard:

Und doch schien es mir, als wäre die Liebe, die mich mit diesem alternden Mädchen verband, so echt, so tief, so gut wie jene aus des Lebens Lenz, wie jene aus den jungen Sommertagen. Es war kein Sturm, der mich überrann, nicht eine Raserei, die mir das Blut durch die Adern trieb. Es war kein brennendes Feuer, keine lodernde Flamme. Es war eine stille, wärmende Glut, wie wir ans Feuer uns setzen an frischen Herbstestagen, wenn der Wald sich färbt, wenn nach frühem Sonnenuntergang es dunkel wird um uns und wir an die Heimkehr zu warmen Stuben denken. 34

Maria and Herzeloide both exemplify the traditional virtues of the German wife, which are spelled out in considerable detail by Herzeloide at the end of the novel. Taking her cue from the Book of Ruth, she describes the mission of a wife as support in adversity, companionship in joy, and the constant subordination of her own wishes to her husband's, prompted by an all-embracing love. In Maria's case these qualities are increased by her bravery and lack of complaint during her last illness, and in Herzeloide's by her taking

upon herself the raising of her dead sister's two daughters. Fritz is a devoted husband, whose consideration for Maria is such that he is prepared to resign his commission if he cannot obtain sufficient leave to care for her during her illness. In Ompfeda's world this would be a major sacrifice for an active man, since all other professions would be closed to him. The basis of both marriages is harmony, both between husband and wife and with the world around them. The ideal situation can be described as one with the least possible degree of friction.

Philister über dir! (1899) is subtitled "das Leiden eines Künstlers" and illustrates the pitfalls of an artist's marriage. Nikolaus Sandtner is a successful artist in Berlin, "ein spät entwickelter, schwerer Künstler,"<sup>35</sup> who marries the daughter of a general. As a retired officer with a considerable income from his painting, Sandtner is "salonfähig," despite the misgivings of his wife's family about his occupation. General von Oevelhorst warns him when he asks for Vera's hand that she is a "Lustikus" who will not easily adapt to Sandtner's quiet, withdrawn life, but Sandtner feels that she must love him sufficiently to forsake the social whirl.

After one year the marriage has proved itself to be a total disaster, and Sandtner asks for, and receives, the General's permission for a divorce. Although divorce was

not regarded lightly in Wilhelminian Germany, the General can see no prospect of improvement in the marriage, and his consent places him among a group of important older characters who in several novels express the important message for the revitalization of society's institutions. These figures are all successful, highly respected representatives of the ruling class, and in their moderate, unprejudiced stands on major issues they are clearly Ompteda's mouthpieces. They are however not idealized, and Ompteda endows most of them with extremely conservative views on minor issues. Von Develhorst admits that he has no sympathy for art, and his opinion on a woman's role in marriage: "Eine vernünftige Frau sollte den Wunsch ihres Gatten erfüllen--den Wunsch ganz allein,"<sup>37</sup> is far more reactionary than Ompteda's own concept of companionship and mutual accommodation. Major von Werck in Der zweite Schuss, despite a degree of aristocratic prejudice so extreme that he banishes von Löhne from his house for marrying his housekeeper, voices Ompteda's views on the central issue in the novel, the duel. Von Harff's commanding officer (Die Sünde) gives him a lecture on the necessity for a marriage to be in harmony with the society in which one must live, which is the formulation of the novel's import, and Professor Diethoff, who delineates for Harff the extent of his responsibility for his mistress' suicide, expresses what is clearly Ompteda's own summation

of the problem, since acceptance of Diethoff's advice brings Harff peace of mind. The essence of Ompteda's message in Eysen is likewise placed in the mouth of General Rudolf von Eysen, the most successful member of his generation of the family.

There are very few "gentlemen of leisure" among Ompteda's aristocrats: most are either employed by the state in the army or the civil service, or else they are farmers, and consequently in the majority of cases the characters in the novels do have duties, to the demands of which they and their wives must conform. Since the husband is the one directly obligated to perform a duty and thereby support his family, the wife is the partner who must adapt to the conditions of life imposed by his career. Simone in Heimat des Herzens has to adapt to the life of an officer's wife in a provincial garrison, to the foreign code of duty and all the unfamiliar aspects of daily living. Ompteda shows how highly he values such adaptability, and the selfless love that prompts it, by the way in which the ladies of the regiment, initially hostile to, and jealous of, the beautiful French girl, are won over by her genuine attempt to love the unlovely town and the spartan life, so different from the lushness of southern France.

In his treatment of the role of women, Ompteda reveals how limited are his attempts to break out of the conventional

stereotypes. He may proclaim in theory that the "teutsche Jungfrau" of the Wilhelminian era is free to climb mountains and mingle with her male peers in an unfettered atmosphere, but in fact Ernst Sturm has no more contact with these liberated young ladies than with the dubious Venus of the dark alleys.

Since Ompteda's heroines are restricted in their activities to the domestic sphere, it must be inferred that he considered this to be the appropriate role for the German woman. This attitude is a reflexion of the class differences in Wilhelminian Germany: Frenssen's countrywomen work alongside their menfolk, whereas this type of activity is almost unheard of in aristocratic circles. Only in one instance, that of the younger Fabian in Eysen, does a young nobleman take the kind of wife--non-noble, strong, and healthy--who has the capacity and the willingness to work on the farm. Fabian is a prime example of Ompteda's vision of national rebirth, for he is the last son of a bankrupt family who must re-earn a position of respect in society by pure hard work. As such he is Ompteda's answer to the challenge flung down fifty years before by Gustav Freytag in Soll und Haben: ". . . die Familie, welche im Genusse erschlaft, soll wieder heruntersinken auf den Grund des Volkslebens, um frisch aufsteigender Kraft Raum zu machen."<sup>38</sup> Ompteda clearly wishes to remove the barriers preventing full

participation by women in the life of the nation, but here as in other aspects of his concept of rebirth he is hamstrung by his respect for existing conventions.

Just as Philister Über dir! shows the destruction of a marriage as a result of the wife's inability to understand her husband's needs, Benigna explores the husband's lack of consideration as the reason for the breakdown. The novel has strong parallels with Fontane's Effi Briest, except that von Dobritz, in contrast to Instetten, lacks the mature seriousness and capacity for soul-searching that prevents Instetten from becoming a negative character. Dobritz' ambition is simply an extension of the frivolous vanity that, on their honeymoon, allows him without complaint to be fleeced by a Viennese cab driver just because he is addressed as "Herr Baron." Benigna is the indulged child of a former diplomat, who gives in to her pleas to marry Dobritz, despite his reservations about the entire family. Father and son have the same "Puppengesicht," superficial good looks which mask shallowness of character. As in Frenssen's novels, heredity is of prime importance in the shaping of character, although Ompstedt does not stress the racial heritage to the same degree.

Of the forty chapters in the novel, twenty deal with their married life, which is an indication of the honesty of Ompstedt's intent to paint a realistic picture of his own

segment of society beyond the romantic clichés of fair ladies, dashing officers and eternal love. The many incidents in which Dobritz' insufferable vanity gradually erodes the foundations of their marriage represent an attempt on Ompteda's part to illustrate the importance of mutual consideration in a relationship. A sound marriage is for him, as for Frenssen, an essential ingredient in a harmonious society: he views relations between the different classes in the same light.

Benigna's affair with von Thumen is even more perfunctory than that of Effi Briest with Crampas: during a sleigh ride, in which the echoes of Fontane's novel, written sixteen years earlier, are unmistakeable, Benigna asks von Thumen to be her friend, "dass ich nicht ganz allein bin."<sup>39</sup> There is not even the intimation of passion: loneliness is the sole motive for the affair on Benigna's part. The affair itself amounts to no more than a kiss in a carriage, and ends abruptly when Dobritz' mother asks von Thumen to leave Dresden. Neither here nor anywhere else in his novels does Ompteda explore the sensuality of his heroines. This aspect of life, which is such a central feature of Frenssen's vision of a reborn nation, is absent from Ompteda's because it conflicts too sharply with the accepted standards of his class.

The end of the novel is similarly influenced by social



convention. Benigna's father tells her of his own unhappy marriage, with which he has come to terms, and rules out divorce. Benigna is to live with her parents and both she and Dobritz are to live their own lives. Despite the symbolic touch that the slate tablet, on which Benigna had written in Arabic script "Ich habe ihn so lieb,"<sup>40</sup> is wiped clean by the maid at the end, the novel does not have a poetic ending. She is only twenty when she withdraws from the world by going back to her parents' country house. Since Ompteda depicts her as a lively girl, it is hardly conceivable that such renunciation will be permanent, and yet the social proprieties offer her no outlet for her energies within her own circle. Again, domestic life, which amounts in Benigna's case virtually to incarceration, appears as the only possible acceptable course once a girl has joined the ranks of German wives and mothers.

Domesticity, however, is by no means a purely female drive, and marriage in the novels is frequently motivated to a large extent by a desire to found a home. While as a motif this is neither new nor peculiar to the "Heimatroman" it illustrates the nature of the national rebirth that the genre demanded: conservative in its championship of traditional elements in the state, such as the family, and revolutionary only in its advocacy of the removal of artificial social and economic barriers to personal happiness. Ompteda does not

stress the benefits of such marriages to the state to the same degree as Frenssen, but the nature of the characters involved is such that the transmission of their qualities to the next generation can only be constructive. Among many of the most positive characters, Sylvester von Geyer, Cäcilie von Sarryn, Fritz (Herzeloide) and Sandtner, this desire for hearth and home precedes the initial encounter with the future mate. Sylvester von Geyer's love for Line von Eldenfleth does little more than add poignancy to his death, which occurs only days after his engagement. For years he has endured the poverty and loneliness of being a lieutenant in an obscure provincial infantry regiment, dreaming of a home of his own, but financial considerations make this virtually impossible. He falls in love with Line and quickly proposes, despite the prospect of several years' wait.

Engagement in the novels rarely follows an extended courtship, and Sandtner is an example of how the social proprieties of the world before the Great War virtually precluded that young lovers would get to know each other on a level deeper than the conversation of the ballroom or the drawing room, quite apart from any physical contact. Sexual relationships, in sharp contrast to the much-criticized freedom of Frenssen's farmers, are restricted entirely to those affairs which take place beyond the social framework,

such as between Harff and Dagmar in Die Sünde. In this instance the Colonel tells Harff that the main reason that girls from another class make unsuitable mates is their lack of proper supervision, which affords them the opportunity, denied to the daughters of the aristocracy, of being led astray.

Although Ompfeda speaks of the desirability of natural companionship between the sexes in the foreword to Excelsior! he fails to draw the conclusion that sexual contact is the equally natural and inevitable concomitant of the removal of artificial barriers. The absence of any mention of the frustrations suffered by young people as a result of this code indicates that Ompfeda regarded this morality as a self-evident and immutable facet of upper-class life, and that he therefore regarded change here as both unthinkable and unnecessary.

On the subject of divorce, however, he is prepared to advocate a limited degree of freedom. In Philister Über dir! divorce is permitted because no one is injured as a result. Sandtner agrees to the General's request that he declare himself the guilty party, since the inevitable gossip is of no consequence to him, "während, wenn die Frau Schuld bekäme, leicht ein Makel auf ihrem Ruf sitzen bleiben könnte, den sie nicht verdient habe."<sup>41</sup> The degree of incompatibility is just as great between Dobritz and Benigna, and yet divorce

is out of the question. The reason, though unexplained in that novel, where Benigna's father talks only of renunciation, is not to be found in a change of heart on Ompteda's part between 1899 and 1910, but rather is suggested by Professor Diethoff at the end of Die Sünde. He explains to Harff that there is no morality in staying with an unloved partner, for the torment of one would be a constant insult to the other. Only when the union has produced children, as is the case in Benigna, must the joint responsibility be borne together: "das darf die menschliche Gesellschaft verlangen."<sup>42</sup> That this is a morality of appearance rather than conviction is obvious in that, when separated, Benigna and Dobritz are not sharing in the upbringing of the child. The permissibility of separation destroys even the argument that divorce is impossible where there is a socially useful purpose, such as child-rearing, to be served by staying together. One must conclude that Ompteda's views on sex and divorce were so determined by what was acceptable to his own class at that time that he felt it unnecessary to advocate a greater degree of freedom. Although Benigna's fate was shared by thousands of her class, he placed the preservation of the fabric of society ahead of individual happiness.

## Man and Society

### a) Morality and Honour:

The incident in Der zweite Schuss in which Major von Werck argues violently with Herr von Lühne about the latter's marriage to his housekeeper, has a parallel in a short story entitled "Das Moralische." In this story Ompteda emerges from the wings and takes a stand against the prevailing morality. The narrator meets an old army friend, Captain von Lang, who has just received his discharge. For fifteen years he has been living with his housekeeper, the love of his youth, but now he considers that it would be "gegen seine Ansichten"<sup>43</sup> to marry her. The narrator realizes that von Lang needs to marry, or else the boredom of retirement will ruin the rest of his life, as well as the fact that the woman has sacrificed her youth to him, and now risks losing everything.

At the end of the story, after von Lang has been persuaded to marry her, the woman remarks to the narrator: "Aber nun wird alles rein."<sup>44</sup> The narrator, who presumably represents Ompteda's own view, replies to this implication that the unsanctioned liason was unclean with the words: "Es kommt nur darauf an, wie man sich selbst fühlt. Das Moralische versteht sich immer von selbst."<sup>45</sup>

Ompteda's concept of morality is therefore entirely subjective: it exists only in the conscience of the individual.

It is a situational ethic, since any action can be termed good or bad, depending on its consequences, which determine the individual's attitude to the action. Ompteda's purpose is to remove morality from the impersonal sphere of taboo and convention and make it dependent on human criteria. The removal of the cast-iron prejudices, such as the one that only a virgin was a fit wife for an officer, which excluded even those women for the loss of whose virginity he was personally responsible, would clearly have a beneficial effect on the revitalization of the aristocracy, but Ompteda never goes so far as to issue an outright challenge to the prevailing code, as Frenssen does in his frontal attack on Christianity and sexual restraints in Hilligenlei. In order to have any hope of reaching his audience, composed in large part of those for whom the code was a way of life, Ompteda's attempts at reforming the ethic of his class had to take the form of subdued exposure of injustice.

In Der zweite Schuss Ompteda approaches the subject of the duel in the same manner. The duel between Christoph von Werck, the Major's son, and Traugott von Breitsamter which forms the plot of the novel, fails to satisfy honour, for Traugott's first shot misses and Christoph collapses and dies of a heart attack. Although he is unaware that Traugott is his real father, Christoph Renatus is a prime example of the benefits to be derived from the introduction of new

blood into the old families. He possesses the ability of the Breitsamters and the traditional aristocratic values. Despite that fact that Ompfeda clearly regards the old nobility as "das Rückenmark in Preussen,"<sup>46</sup> it is important for the message of this novel that it is precisely the exaggerated adherence to the outdated aristocratic code of honour that destroys his promising career by placing him in a position where suicide seems the only honourable solution.

The heated debate among the Breitsamter family, whose nobility is only two generations old, over the insult to Traugott by Christoph Renatus at the "Polterabend" illustrates the extent to which the new aristocracy absorbed the values of the old. Traugott's brother-in-law, a lieutenant-colonel, accepts the system in its entirety:

Wir haben weder die Macht, noch den Beruf, an unseren gesellschaftlichen Zuständen etwas zu ändern. Wenn du in einer Kaste bist und bleiben willst, musst du dich dem fügen, wie die Kaste denkt. Wollten wir das System einführen des ruhigen Einsteckens, dann würden wir aufhören zu sein, was wir sind. 47

Despite the aggressive claim of the third sentence to belong to the caste, the second sentence betrays the newly-acquired position. The position of the Breitsamters is still too new and too insecure--because there are still people who remember the family's beginnings--to permit them to advocate any revision of the code. The very newness of their title robs them of any power to change the code, and implicit in the speech is the parvenu's self-satisfaction at his new

status. Traugott refuses to challenge Christoph Renatus simply because the demands of humanity, that a man cannot fire on his son, have precedence over any claims that the code may make. Traugott, who, like Gideon in Eysen, possesses the polish and savoir-faire of the born aristocrat, despite the relative newness of the family wealth, is sufficiently secure in his position in the caste to act with a greater degree of freedom, and does not feel constrained to obey the code at any price.

The attitude of Major von Werck illustrates again Ompteda's approach to his goal, the revitalization of the aristocracy. Aspects of the code are clearly in need of modification, but here too a frontal attack would serve only to brand the author as a déclassé liberal and thereby destroy his credibility. Von Werck begins by placing himself firmly within the aristocratic tradition when he justifies his refusal to fire on Traugott in the final duel: Christoph Renatus, after hearing from Eva that Traugott is his father, accepts the second sent by him in a gesture of reconciliation and then shoots himself. But then the Major moves beyond the code to a position that recognises the general demands of humanity:

Ich musste das Recht haben, das deutsche Recht, das Mannesrecht, dem Schuft gegenüberzustehen! Aber als ich dastand . . . . Mein Herr und Gott, ich danke dir, dass du mir die Kraft gegeben hast und keine Schuld über mich kommen liessest. Amen. 48



The novel exposes as doubly false the justification of the duel as an institution advanced in the Werck household at the beginning: that it ensures privacy by preventing the public spectacle of a civil suit for insult, and that it provides satisfaction in matters where "das Gesetz nicht so ahndet, dass von einer wirklichen Sühne die Rede sein könnte."<sup>49</sup> When the novel opens Eva, who is pregnant, is not told of the duel, but reads about it in a liberal Berlin newspaper. The private nature of the duel is thereby negated even before it is advanced as a justification. The idea that the death of one of the participants amounts to an appropriate propitiation for an insult received is shown as being equally untrue. The victor acquires a moral guilt that overshadows the "satisfaction" obtained. In Eysen the duel between the chamberlain Fabian and his enemy at court, Zuckerode, has a tragi-comic air about it. The little princely court is a comic-opera background to Fabian's pointless death and the resultant plight of his family. Ompteda's presentation of the duel as both ineffective and morally wrong would be more persuasive to an aristocratic audience since it does not attack it on intellectual grounds as an atavistic remnant of the middle ages, which would cause such readers merely to value it more highly as an element of a proud tradition, but on pragmatic and moral grounds.

b) Religion:

Major von Werck's outcry, "Mein Herr und Gott," as well as the whole question of the morality of taking life in revenge, raises the question of Ompteda's attitude to religion. One might expect that, in the context of a revival of aristocratic values, he would attach considerable importance to a religious foundation, not only for the code of the caste, but for the very justification of aristocratic privilege; not even the principle of "von Gottes Gnaden," however, finds an explicit defence in the novels. Implicitly, the emphasis on a nobility won by the efforts of former generations negates the idea that the Grace of God was significantly involved in the establishment of aristocratic privileges, and the call to the present generation is for greater effort rather than increased piety.

Throughout the novels one is reminded of the English observation that the Church of England is the spiritual arm of the Conservative Party, for the important characters, the ones who are the mouthpieces for Ompteda's message, mention religion only within the context of the clichés of throne and altar. The old minister in Eysen gives the exhortation of "Habet die Brüder lieb, fürchtet Gott, ehret den König."<sup>50</sup> The biblical formula empties the

admonition of any force by the archaic language that renders it remote from a twentieth century application.

Major von Werck further reduces the importance of religion by his comment to Christoph Renatus: "Es gibt adelige Schweinigel und bürgerliche Schufte! Am Ende kommt es nur darauf an, dass einer ein anständiger Mensch ist und den rechten Glauben hat!"<sup>51</sup> "Glauben" here is clearly synonymous with "Gesinnung:" it represents the proper set of values, without which one cannot be "ein anständiger Mensch." Membership in the Protestant Church is as much a part of the heritage of Ompteda's Junkers as the "von" in their names, but the exercise of religion is peripheral to the lives of even the exemplary characters. Major von Werck's refusal to fire on Breitsamter, although phrased in religious terms, is based on Christian doctrine only insofar as his awareness of the wrong he would thereby commit coincides with Christian teaching. He certainly considers himself a Christian gentleman throughout the novel, and yet it is only with the dueling pistol in his hand that he rejects the time-honoured tradition.

While the religious phrasing of von Werck's rejection of the duel adds an additional justification to the moral objections, it cannot be said that he receives a religious insight. His religious faith undergoes no revitalization, indeed there is no indication whatever that he, or Ompteda,

feel any need for such a change: Ompteda here, as elsewhere, is simply opposing one tradition with another, both nobler and older. For him, religion is one aspect of the traditional aristocratic values, but not one from which a revival of the effectiveness of the class may be generated.

c) The Caste:

The picture of German society presented by Ompteda in the novels rarely goes beyond the world of the aristocracy and the upper middle class. The description of the perfect wife for the scion of an old Prussian family in Der zweite Schuss delineates the boundaries of this world:

Aus einer jener alten preussischen Familien sollte sie sein, wo der Onkel am Hof war, der Vater im Herrenhause oder im Reichstage sass, die Brüder in der Gardekavallerie dienten, Vetter in den Ministerien Preussen, und in fernen Ländern das Reich dienten. 52

By the time Wilhelm II ascended the throne in 1889 however, the pre-eminent position of such families was severely eroded, largely because their traditional disdain of employment outside the service of the state excluded them from the sources of new wealth, the result of industrial development, which was creating its own aristocracy.

In two novels in particular, Der zweite Schuss and Eysen, Ompteda comes to terms with this problem by issuing a call to the old aristocracy to re-earn their privileged position

by facing up to the challenges of a new age. Ompteda's concern for the nation as a whole is reflected in his view that many of the present generation, by continuing to sleep upon the laurels garnered by their forebears, are condemning their successors to penury and impotence, and at the same time depriving the nation of traditions and experience acquired through the centuries.

In Der zweite Schuss the Werck family represents the declining aristocracy, and the newly-ennobled Breitsamters the rising class whose claim to participate in the leadership of the nation rests upon their capital. Old Major von Werck is a prototypical representative of his class:

Er sass in allen Ausschüssen, leitete alle Landwirtschaftstage, hatte die führende Stimme im Fohlenaufzuchtverein, stand an der Spitze jeglicher Armenpflege und Fürsorge, aus der Überzeugung heraus, dass den Besitzenden doppelte Pflichten auferlegt seien . . . . Ein Mann, der nur eines gelten liess: Arbeit . . . . So war er, selbst von eiserner Gesundheit, empört, als Christoph den Abschied nahm, weil er den Anstrengungen des Dienstes sich nicht gewachsen fühlte. 53

The emphasis here is clearly on the duties, rather than the privileges of noble birth. Despite their apparently unassailable position however, the Wercks are no longer fully in command of their own destiny. The mortgages to Bärwalde, their old estate, have been acquired by the Breitsamters, who now live in the baroque "Schloss" while the Wercks live on the small adjacent farm. Ompteda uses small details to bring out the differences between the two

families: the Breitsamter's carriage is "teuer, aber schlecht angespannt,"<sup>54</sup> a state of affairs unthinkable in an old military and farming family; Ehrenreich von Breitsamter, the family patriarch, is "ein wenig zu höflich,"<sup>55</sup> in contrast to Major von Werck's bluntness.

The second generation of each family illustrates the difference more fully. Traugott von Breitsamter personifies the broader outlook and international taste of the new aristocracy with his English wife and his refusal to follow the code if it means firing on his own son. Although he has the aristocrat's polished manners which his father lacks, Traugott is clearly a capable businessman as well.

If Traugott represents an advance for the Breitsamters in polish without the loss of the traditional family financial ability, his rival Christoph von Werck illustrates the decline of the old aristocracy. Even the physical toughness of his martial ancestors is lacking, and although the Major wanted him to marry a conventional Prussian girl to counteract his quiet nature and restore the old Werck energy in succeeding generations, Christoph, like Thomas Buddenbrook, marries a Dutch girl. Eva van der Gellen is quiet and withdrawn, and makes no attempt to oppose the Major's desire to have Christoph Renatus raised in the Prussian manner as heir to the estate. The ultimate irony is that Christoph Renatus, as the son of Eva and Traugott, is quite at home in

his role of "heranwachsender Junker," to the extent of sacrificing his life for the ideals of the caste, despite his Breitsamter heritage of thrift and mathematical ability.

The point that the interests of the old families and the new aristocracy coincide, and that the newcomers are worthy of respect as equals, is one of the main themes of Eysen, a huge canvas on which Ompfeda paints an impressive panorama of the German upper class before the Great War and makes most strongly his plea for its rejuvenation. The decline of a family that has served Prussia from its beginnings, and traces its nobility back eight hundred years is depicted over the critical decade and a half from 1880 to 1895, as the industrial age erased the last vestiges of the feudal Prussia in which such families flourished. Three generations are shown: the Minister, his nephews, and their sons, the contemporaries of Jörn Uhl, Klaus Baas and Wassermann's characters born around 1880. The Minister dies at the same time as Kaiser Wilhelm I, signifying the end of an era: "Mit beiden sank eine ganze Zeit ins Grab."<sup>56</sup> Since he is almost eighty when the novel opens, his importance is largely symbolic of the position achieved by the family. As a former colleague of Bismarck, he represents the alliance of throne and nobility which guided Prussia to European pre-eminence, and also the leading, but endangered position of the aristocracy in the state. The Minister is

the only one of his brothers still living in 1880, and of his five nephews, only two demonstrate the traditional family vigour: Rudolf and Ludwig. Although trade was not considered a suitable career for a member of such a family, Ludwig is an exemplary character because of his success, which Ompfeda feels should be emulated by more of his class, while Cäsar, the actor, appears in a much less favourable light because of his unsuitable career, even though he acquires the title of "Hofrat" at the end of the novel. Ernst leaves the estate at Polze in the Prignitz so burdened with debts that it must be sold, and Fabian spends a futile existence at the court of a petty prince until he is killed in an equally futile duel.

The perilous position of the aristocracy at the turn of the century is most clearly seen in the children of the Minister's nephews. Ernst's sons follow the traditional officer's career, until the elder, Christi, amasses such a mountain of debts that he is forced to flee to America. Both boys join a cavalry regiment, although the income from the estate cannot begin to support such luxury, and Christi soon falls into disastrously bad company. In America he marries a forty-four year old part negress, whose "Fehler im Pedigree"<sup>57</sup> is however balanced by a considerable fortune. For all his new wealth, Christi remains forever lost to the family. Fabian, Ernst's second son, resigns his commission



after his father's death, and develops into a competent, hardworking farmer in the best tradition of Frenssen's heroes. Fabian maintains the traditional ties with the land, but with modern methods and Gideon's capital he makes Poltze pay. He is an exemplary character in the novel in that he adapts to the changed and potentially humiliating circumstances of being an employee on the ancestral estate, and--which is even more important in view of the aristocracy's situation--he is successful on terms not of his own choosing. He introduces vegetable farming into the Prignitz, which is reminiscent of the innovations of Frenssen's Meino Ommen, a modest but significant indication that the aristocracy still possesses the ability to take the lead in breaking new ground. The girl he marries, while not noble, is strong and healthy, in sharp contrast to some of the spoiled and useless aristocratic daughters.

Emil, the professor, is likewise a leader in his own field, but his sons exhibit little promise of adding fresh glory to their ancient name. Fedor, the eldest, shows his lack of family spirit at the first gathering, where he argues violently with Ernst; a year later he is called to account by the Minister for a pamphlet he has written attacking the aristocracy on the grounds that it produces nothing, but lives off the achievements of former generations. Instead of the "Adliger" he proposes a concept of "Edeling":

Eine Vereinigung soll es sein der Menschen . . .  
 edelster Gesinnung, edelster höchster Leistung!  
 Die Tüchtigsten, die im Kampfe ums Dasein in der  
 Auslese Obengebliebenen. 58

Despite the Minister's initial outrage at this rather confused utopian vision, with its echoes of Langbehn's social application of Darwin's theory of evolution and Nietzsche's "Übermensch," the basic idea, that nobility and its pre-eminence must be earned, is reiterated by the most traditionally successful members of the Eysen clan, the Minister himself and Rudolf, as well as by Ludwig. Ludwig was disinherited as a young man when he was unable to succeed in "einem standesgemässen Beruf,"<sup>59</sup> and sent to America. The family gathering of 1880 is his first meeting with his brothers after twenty years, during which he has worked himself up to be the head of a tobacco company and acquired considerable wealth. Although his profession places him outside the usual boundaries of his class, and his views are considered quite astonishing by Fabian, the chamberlain, Ompteda clearly bestows upon them his stamp of approval by having them repeated by Rudolf in his speech to the young Eysens at the last gathering in 1895. This speech sums up the essence of what the others, including Fedor, have demanded in a revitalization of the aristocracy: "Es war, als hätte er aus Fedors verstiegenen Ansichten den gesunden Kern herausgeschält."<sup>60</sup> Ludwig points out the anachronisms of the caste code while alluding to the family crest, an iron-coloured heart

emblazoned on a shield surmounted by a bras armé brandishing a sword:

Herzen von Eisen sollen sie bewahren, allen gegenüber, dann werden sie selbst auch von anderen nicht zu leiden haben und werden vorwärts kommen. Den Arm von Eisen mögen sie zu Hause lassen, denn heute werden unsere Schlachten auf der Börse geschlagen, in Handel und Wandel, in der Industrie. Mit dem Schwerte richten wir nichts mehr aus. Das vergisst der deutsche Adel. Er ist im Mittelalter hängen geblieben. 61

While money is not the goal of the aristocracy, it is an indispensable prerequisite for social pre-eminence and even for continued participation in the traditional spheres of agriculture and the army: Rudolf warns that neglect of their finances could destroy the effectiveness of the class, "denn auch für die Offiziersequipierung fehlt uns das nötige Geld!"<sup>62</sup> The pursuit of wealth for its own sake is however unworthy: Fedor's assertion that there is no aristocracy in America is challenged by the Minister with the words: "Geld ist ihr Adel, und darin sind sie aristokratischer als wir."<sup>63</sup> In families such as Ernst's and the Wercks, decline is invariably financial: neither Ernst's sons nor Christoph Renatus exhibit any evidence of physical or mental degeneration. A fortune is the means to an end, and the purpose of the aristocracy is to serve the nation by providing a vigorous, competent example. In the scheme of national rebirth envisioned by Ompteda, the values upon which the rebirth will be based become guidelines for the entire nation as a result of this example. Though this

direction is contrary to Frenssen's belief that such values are to be found primarily among the general population, the values are in fact the same. While the hereditary aspect is of course absent from such institutions as the council of village elders in Der Pastor von Poggsee, the question of how to provide effective leadership is important for Frenssen, and the concept of an all-powerful village headman is in the final analysis very close to the kind of role played in local affairs by Major von Werck. The task is leadership, made more difficult by a new age in which the feudal knight is an atavism.

For this task the aristocrat needs strength and nobility of character, "vornehme Gesinnung," and he has an advantage over other classes of society in that this quality lies deep in his heritage. The tradition of "noblesse oblige" is as vital in 1900 as at any time in the past:

Adel mag dem Dummen und Faulen zur Last werden, denn in ihm liegt die Verpflichtung, etwas zu leisten. Dem Klugen wird er keine Bürde sein, auch nichts Neben-sächliches, sondern steter Sporn zur Arbeit, zu vornehmer Gesinnung. 64

The philosophical concept of "Übermensch" or "Edeling" is here translated into practical terms. In Ompteda's view, the old aristocracy has the necessary spiritual qualifications, inculcated by tradition, to provide a preponderance of these national leaders.

The example of Fabian revitalizing the overworked soil

of the Mark Brandenburg assumes programmatic form in Rudolf's last speech. Ompteda comes very close to Frenssen's concept of "die heimatliche Scholle" as the source of strength and tradition, and indeed Eysen was considered a work of "Heimatkunst," "echt brandenburgisch, bodenständig."<sup>65</sup> Certainly the family at Poltze is just as reluctant to sell the estate as Jörn Uhl, and the debts that force them to do so are just as inexorable for the Prussian Junker as for the Dithmarschen farmer. Rudolf warns the young Eysens not to regard the estate "als melkende Kuh," and hopelessly overtax its productive powers by all trying to live off it; he invests the land with powers of spiritual regeneration: "Betrachtet das Gut nur als die Heimat, aus der ihr Kraft zieht, wenn ihr euch an ihrem Erdgeruche wieder erquickt."<sup>66</sup>

There is however an additional, social aspect surrounding the acquisition of land in the Mark Brandenburg which is absent from the less hierarchical society of Schleswig-Holstein. The industrialist Gideon family who buy the estate at Poltze are newly-minted barons. The Baron, who marries Ernst's daughter Gella, is one of three brothers. Two of them remain with the firm, but he wants to devote himself to agriculture. He explains to Rudolf why he accepted the title his father had refused:

Wenn er aber ein Rittergut kaufte, wie er es getan, so begeben er sich damit, in der Prignitz wenigstens, fast ausschliesslich zwischen eine festgeschlossene Kaste,

der nicht anzugehören peinlich sei. Um so peinlicher als er, der alte Korpsstudent und Reserveoffizier eines bevorzugten Regiments, tatsächlich in allen Ansichten auf dem gleichen Standpunkt stünde, wie seine jetztigen Standesgenossen. 67

Rudolf, initially cautious about such motivation, admits that Gideon is right in his assessment of the advantage of nobility for his children:

Bei seinen Kindern . . . krächte schon kein Hahn danach, woher sie stammten. Bei den Enkeln wusste man gewiss vom Ursprung der Gideons nichts mehr, und die Urenkel hielt man dann vielleicht für eine alte Familie. 68

The last sentence, with its "vielleicht," contains a shade of superiority in the consciousness of the centuries' old tradition of Eysen nobility, but basically Rudolf's attitude, which can be assumed to reflect Ompteda's own, is that aristocratic rank implies duties rather than privileges, and as a recognition of achievement it must be accessible to new blood. Ompteda considers the nature of the leadership that a revitalized Germany will need to be of central importance, and although he would preserve the caste, his insistence on the fundamental equality of the old and the new nobility demonstrates how, in a conservative, un-revolutionary way, he advocates a greater degree of social mobility than most of the old families were prepared to accept at the time. Young Fabian von Eysen and Christoph Renatus both illustrate this belief that the barriers between the old aristocracy and the rest of the nation must come

down for the benefit of both: Fabian, as a conscientious estate manager finds fulfilment in a most unaristocratic role and Christoph Renatus lives and dies an aristocrat with not a drop of old Prussian blood in his veins. Far from being an anachronistic remnant, the aristocratic code, if properly attuned and modified for the demands of the new century, can serve as an example to its members to fulfil the responsibility of leadership.

d) The Army:

Although he urges the aristocracy to strive for leadership in all fields of national life, Rudolf stresses in his last speech the importance of maintaining the army in its present form:

Werdet Offiziere, die brauchen wir, denn die Armee ist  
 . . . der "rocher de bronze!" Gott erhalte sie uns,  
 wie sie ist, hört ihr, wie sie ist--sonst--finis  
 Germaniae! 69

Rudolf fears that without an officer corps drawn from the ranks of the aristocracy and steeped in military tradition, the army will be weakened, placing the nation in mortal danger. Although he feels that the battlefields of the future will be the stock exchange and the laboratory, the "Heimatroman's" attitude to war reflects the aggressive self-confidence of Wilhelminian Germany and not the idealistic pacifism of later movements such as Expressionism.

Germany must be prepared, and the officer-aristocrat has been a historically dependable leader on the battlefield. The insistence on maintaining the army thus constituted appears hopelessly anachronistic in the light of two world wars, the scale of which demanded far greater reserves of manpower for the officer corps than the aristocracy alone could provide, and yet it must be remembered that the full impact of the technological developments of the nineteenth century did not become apparent until the autumn of 1914. In 1900 it was still possible for staff officers to deprecate the machine gun as an overrated weapon, and British generals were engaged in heated debate over the respective merits of the sabre and the lance as cavalry weapons.<sup>70</sup>

In 1912, during the Reichstag debate on the Zabern incident, where the garrison of a town in Alsace opened fire on the inhabitants, a member of the Centre Party used Rudolf's phrase "finis Germaniae" to describe the dire consequences that would ensue if army officers were placed beyond the law. Colonel Reuter, the officer commanding the Zabern garrison, was court-martialled and acquitted, and the power of the army over the rights of the citizen became a major political issue. That the member used Rudolf's phrase to attack the very institution that Rudolf defends indicates the extent to which the caste was under



attack during the Wilhelminian era.<sup>71</sup> It also illustrates the limitations of Ompteda's concept of national rebirth, which he sees primarily in terms of a revitalization of the values and institutions which have served well in the past. These must be brought up to date and purged of atavistic, and therefore destructive, prejudices; within the tested framework of traditional institutions there must be equality of opportunity, for the able bourgeois to join the aristocracy and for the aristocrat to engage in bourgeois pursuits. To the latter end he challenges the popular stereotype of the gallant, carefree officer and subjects the military routine to unromanticized scrutiny.

The officers in Ompteda's novels exemplify a hard work and subordination to duty that contrasts strongly with the image, current at the time, of the dashing lieutenant. "Nicht die glänzende Seite des Offiziers . . . nicht der "Leutnant" wie ihn sich die grosse Masse denkt, sondern in seiner ernsten Arbeit, dem bitteren Entsagen,"<sup>72</sup> as one critic describes Sylvester von Geyer. Ompteda's critics, imbued with the chauvinism of the Wilhelminian era that exaggerates and distorts the simple patriotism of the traditional Prussian ethic, were frequently far more aggressively enthusiastic about Ompteda's characters than their creator. Henriette von Meerheimb, for example, rhapsodizes: "Es gibt manch einen Sylvester von Geyer in der deutschen Armee. Und solange der Typus nicht ausstirbt, wird sie die erste der

Welt bleiben."73

Sylvester von Geyer, however, is not intended as an exemplary character: even as a soldier he has serious flaws, and does not fit as easily into military life as might be expected from one of his background: the Geyers have always been soldiers. Criticism makes him obstinate and rebellious, and lack of money combines with the boring routine of a provincial garrison to make his life one of unrelieved tedium, for he cannot afford the luxury of entertainment or trips to Dresden. The romantic arm of the service, the cavalry, is out of reach for the same reason, and Sylvester spends his days in the constant drilling of recruits on the parade ground.

Sylvester's natural intelligence rebels against the routine, but as he becomes more experienced his disenchantment is transformed into pride in the faithful performance of small tasks. While this is, within the context of the novel, a positive development, since the system that makes these small tasks necessary is at no time under attack, Ompfeda is quite aware of the negative aspects of this narrowing of the horizons. He writes in the foreword to the novel:

Wie überall, wo Kastenwesen herrscht, greift unter ihnen in gewissem Masse eine Verknöcherung um sich, eine Verengung des Horizontes, ein Nicht-begreifen-können anderer Kreise und fremder Lebenstätigkeit . . . . Aus gewollter Beschränkung ergibt sich leicht Beschränktheit. 74

Ompfeda is not primarily an apologist for his class to those outside it, but rather his first concern is to break down this narrow, self-centred attitude in order to overcome the deadly calcification that eventually overtakes even the intelligent members of the caste. In order to perform properly as an officer, Sylvester must first realize that it is the sum of small tasks, meaningless in themselves, that forms the fabric of the army: since the army is vital to the welfare of the nation, Sylvester and his colleagues are fulfilling a socially important role. Ompfeda defines the problem, the incompatibility of the narrow viewpoint necessary to continue to perform the small duties and a breadth of vision that would open up the caste to an appreciation of the new century, but he does not provide the key to its solution. A figure such as Rudolf von Eysen is, to be sure, exemplary, but he is too able to be a generally emulatable model. Von Rundstetten (Heimat des Herzens) is happy in his profession, but he is too limited in his horizons to rise above the prejudices of the caste.

That the army as an institution has a confining effect on its members can be seen in the way some of the more enlightened characters turn their backs upon it, a theme that is of some importance in Wassermann's novels, particularly Christian Wahnschaffe and Etzel Andergast. Nikolaus Sandtner, whose artistic temperament will not be bound by

military conventions, leaves the army to pursue a career as a painter, and Ompteda himself abandoned the army to become an author. In the novel Herzeloide the attitude of Fritz to his career is of interest from this point of view, for he, unlike Sylvester von Geyer, is not bound to the army by pecuniary considerations. Fritz in his youth is a typical young officer of the type that Sylvester envies, the rich cavalry lieutenant whose evenings are spent at society balls rather than in his quarters. As a brand new officer, delighted to have escaped from the school bench, he imagines himself as a kind of noble savage, a natural, primeval being unsullied by civilization, but "of course" as an officer mounted on a thoroughbred. This adolescent fantasy is not entirely naive on Ompteda's part, for it reflects a widespread "mal de siècle" in its hostility to the actual state of European culture and society at the close of the nineteenth century. Ompteda is however concerned with demolishing this aura of Romanticism by showing that the realities of military life are just as mundane as those of the rest of the population. Fritz' frequent mention of his willingness to resign his commission if obstacles are placed in his way underscores the restrictions on personal freedom of action placed upon the officer, thereby strengthening the idea of a fundamental community of interest between all classes.

Sylvester von Geyer's freedom of action is much more limited, primarily because of his lack of money but also because of the family tradition of army service. Ferdinand Avenarius, the patron of the "Heimatroman," describes the Geyers as one of "jene einfachen, wenig bemittelten, in manchen Gliedern geistig beschränkten aber fast immer durchaus achtbaren Familien, deren Leben von Geschlecht zu Geschlecht dem Dienste des Königs gewidmet ist."<sup>75</sup> The military tradition runs so deep that Sylvester's father, who retired as a captain and is bitter that he went no higher, forgets his resolve, taken in anger, that Sylvester will not become a soldier and undergoes considerable financial sacrifice in order to support him. The nine hundred and sixty marks a year that it would cost to have Sylvester join the cavalry is beyond them, and even the two hundred and forty marks for the 216th Infantry Regiment is a severe strain. It is impossible for Sylvester to save, for out of his small salary he must pay for his uniform, mess bills and collections for departing or marrying officers, and keep up appearances. When he is first promoted to lieutenant, Sylvester is unable even to pay his mess bill for one month because his first pay packet goes into the widows' and orphans' fund. He and his friend Eldenfleth decide that a shop assistant is financially better off than they are. Rudolf's warning at the end of Eysen that poverty will

destroy the ability of the aristocracy to participate in the army is illustrated in this novel, for Sylvester is forced to turn down the position of battalion adjutant because he cannot afford to keep the necessary horse.

The figure of Rudolf, whose military career is more successful than that of any other of Ompteda's main characters, indicates, both alone and in contrast to the others, Ompteda's hopes and fears for the army. On the one hand the army, as presently constituted, forms the bulwark of the nation, both physically and spiritually. The idealism in the service of a cause, which Frenssen's Adam Barfood also stresses as a particularly valuable aspect of the German character, is preserved and fostered in the army, at least by its best members, and since the army and the aristocracy are virtually interchangeable in their composition, Ompteda insists that these values can only be maintained if the aristocracy continues to be the dominant force in the army.

On the debit side, the narrow horizons of the old aristocracy are made even more rigid by the nature of the army as an institution, and in the figure of Rudolf, Ompteda shows that this is unnecessary. To remain capable of reacting effectively in a new age, Ompteda realizes that the army and the aristocracy as a whole must understand the new developments and social trends: to close the mind to the twentieth century is to ensure that the new century will overwhelm the

venerable institutions and simply consign them to the attic of history along with the other forgotten relics of feudalism.

e) Duty:

Nowhere is the close relationship between the army and the aristocracy more apparent than in the concept of duty. In the novel Die Sünde Ompteda examines the conflicting demands of duty to his mistress and duty to his class that beset a young officer. The novel, subtitled "Geschichte eines Offiziers," deals with the same topic as Fontane's Irrungen Wirrungen, which appeared nine years earlier in 1887 and the contrast between the two novels illustrates the limits of Ompteda's talent. The clash between love and duty in Irrungen Wirrungen is more subtly formulated than in Die Sünde, since Ompteda does not question the values implied in either concept. Harff's love for Dagmar is either genuine or not, and duty is either present or non-existent. The questioning of the concept that occurs in Der zweite Schuss is absent from Die Sünde. Consequently the poignancy of Botho's decision to leave Lene is dissipated in Harff's case by the absence of any real crisis of conscience, and the melodramatic extremes of the plot exclude a subtlety such as Fontane's characters possess. Dagmar is a singer, and a foreigner as well, and so she is

even farther removed from the social sphere of the Prussian officer than the ordinary working-class girl. After Harff has left her she drowns herself in the Spree, a theatrical exaggeration that weakens the impact of the novel's social comment.

Harff's love for Dagmar begins to decline immediately after she has surrendered her virginity to him, for his upbringing has left him with a set of moral prejudices too strong to be overcome by love. Thus the social environment is an integral part of the affair, even at the zenith of their love: there is an irreconcilable inconsistency in Harff's attitude to Dagmar. On the one hand he is proud to be the recipient of the love of a beautiful woman: "Es war eine Art von Eitelkeit, dass er sich mit ihr zeigen wollte, um der Welt zu offenbaren, welchen Schatz er besäße,"<sup>76</sup> and on the other hand they have basically so little in common that he becomes increasingly reluctant to stay alone in her apartment. Their only excursion to the theatre where Dagmar first played indicates the gulf that separates them: Harff is jealous because Dagmar is greeted from the stage by an unpleasant-looking juggler, and then annoyed when he hears another officer describe her as "Harff's Verhältnis."<sup>77</sup> The next day he visits her to find her former landlady in the apartment, a nauseating, leering woman who steals Dagmar's sugar lumps and



whom Harff rightly suspects of wanting to make a profit by introducing men to Dagmar. The figure of the landlady is another ominous sign that Dagmar, although pure herself, lives in a world totally alien to Harff. The grotesque landlady and the juggler are also melodramatic elements in the novel which in the long run submerge the personalities of Harff and Dagmar in a morass of clichés.

Harff's single attempt to bring together the two worlds ends in total disaster. He and Dagmar go to dinner--in a private room in a restaurant--with Harff's friend and confidant Feller. Dagmar's ingenuous ignorance of art and culture thwarts all efforts to find a common conversational ground, and she speaks only of her love:

Nur wenn auf Harff die Sprache kam, schien ihr Verstand und Zunge gelöst. Sie war rührend in ihrer Liebe, in dieser Liebe, die den gesamten Gesichtskreis auf einen Menschen beschränkte: den Geliebten. 78

During the meal Harff becomes acutely conscious of Dagmar's lack of social graces; he notices that she uses her knife to dismember the fish and spreads her elbows more widely than is polite. In the following chapter he shows that his love has turned sour by pouring scorn on everything she does, from her logic to her love letters.

At this point Harff's colonel, to whom his dying father entrusted him during the battle of Gravelotte, analyses the situation in a moderate and unprejudiced way. He is afraid that Harff will resign his commission and emigrate in order

to marry Dagmar, and formulates precisely the state of mind that Harff has now reached:

Wenn man herausgerissen ist aus allen Lebensbedingungen, wenn alles fehlt, was durch Erziehung und Gewohnheit begehrenswert, notwendig, ja unentbehrlich schien, dann leidet die Liebe. 79

Harff's love has already been undermined by the mere awareness of social differences, and the question for him is no longer one of love or duty, but which duty is the stronger. He is well aware of the consequences for Dagmar if he leaves her: "Wenn er sie heute verliess, so zertrat er eine Seele, so verschüttete er das Blut eines Herzens, so tötete er ein fremdes Leben."<sup>80</sup> Despite the Colonel's hinting at his duty to the caste and to his father's memory, Harff feels that, since he has no family, "nichts verpflichtete ihn, als sein Gewissen."<sup>81</sup>

The realization that his conscience dictates that he marry Dagmar and abandon his present life brings with it the fear that life will be unbearable with a woman whom he does not love and that the abandonment of the familiar world will be "das Scheiden vom Dasein."<sup>82</sup> Faced with this intolerable prospect, Harff's subconscious searches for an excuse to deny his responsibility to Dagmar, and he soon finds such a justification in doubts about her purity before their affair. The impetus for these doubts is provided by the sight of two singers, who are no more than prostitutes, at a stag party given by his brother officers. Harff

immediately adds a prejudice born of wishful thinking which far exceeds the implications of the colonel's comment that lack of proper education and supervision makes virtue harder to retain: "Und war sie auch an einem grösseren Etablissement nur aufgetreten," he thinks, "immerhin, es klebte zu viel daran."<sup>83</sup> If Dagmar were not a virgin before they met, there exists no moral duty for him to marry her, "was im tiefsten Grund seiner Seele als Wunsch der Erlösung schlief."<sup>84</sup>

Dagmar refuses to answer his question, which considering her position as a scorned but loving woman is supremely insulting, but the next day he returns, as his conscience has reasserted itself and insisted on her purity. The unhappy coincidence of the obnoxious juggler's presence corroborates Harff's suspicions and the desire to be free of her, not to have to sacrifice his future for a woman he does not love, makes him unable to admit the possibility of any other interpretation other than the one that provides a justification for abandoning her. The combination of desperate love and injured pride in Dagmar and Harff's immediate acceptance of the solution that absolves him of responsibility makes it clear even the colonel's generalizations on the relationship between upbringing and virtue are inadequate in this situation.

Although by the act of leaving Dagmar Harff has placed

her in a situation that, emotionally and socially, must destroy her, Ompteda follows his story to the end. Figuring largely in Harff's recovery from the breakdown brought on by guilt are two factors: the beauty and grandeur of the Dolomites, which play a similar role in Herzeloide, and the advice of Professor Diethoff. Diethoff, whose analysis of his motives enables Harff to look at the situation with a calmness and clarity, complements the colonel's speech. Whereas the colonel spoke of the claims of society and the responsibility of the individual to it, as well as the impossibility of cutting oneself loose from one's heritage, Diethoff speaks of the responsibility of love. Harff has a duty, not only to Dagmar, who was pure before she surrendered herself to him, but also to himself. Marriage to Dagmar would have destroyed them both.

Diethoff defines sin as transgression against a generally accepted convention, and pinpoints Harff's as the appropriation of Dagmar's virginity, her one weapon in the struggle for survival. That he subsequently abandoned her, in the full knowledge that she had not the strength to recover her emotional or her social position, is not a new sin, but a "secondary appearance" of the original one. The sin is not "die That an und für sich, denn sie entsprang dem natürlichen Gefühl . . . und die Natur hat immer recht . . . was auch die Menschen sagen mögen . . . aber

die That angesichts des Verdammungsurteils der Gesellschaft gegen das Mädchen."<sup>85</sup>

In his endeavour to come to grips with the existing morality of Wilhelminian Prussia, and establish a saner moral order that will not take such a toll in misery and ruined lives, Ompteda is hampered by his simultaneous desire to uphold the social conventions. As a result he cannot take the ultimate step that Frenssen does in dispensing altogether with the concept of sin in sexual relationships, but has to establish an infallible higher morality, that of nature. Frenssen maintains simply that natural desires cannot be condemned, but Ompteda goes further, investing them with the infallibility of an integral part of the natural universe. The setting for this conversion between Harff and Diethoff, amid the majestic mountains that reduce the concerns of men to insignificance, underlines the unity of nature, and makes all the more surprising Diethoff's conclusion, which in effect gives primacy to social conventions.

Unfortunately Diethoff suggests to Harff that he undertake to do penance for his sin by placing himself in the same position as his actions placed Dagmar, a solution which, while consistent from a moral standpoint, destroys the social basis of the colonel's speech: the "sin" had after all preceded Harff's talk with the colonel. Harff should give up his fortune, at least temporarily, and undertake some

hard work to build an independent existence without the advantages of money or social position. Penance is not only a moral imperative, but also a palliative for Harff's conscience:

Und in der Arbeit liegt die Heilung. Wenn dann vielleicht Jahre vergangen sind, wer weiss . . . am Ende kehren Sie einmal zurück und dürfen sich eine neue Heimat in der alten gründen. 86

So Harff goes off to drill for oil with a new German company in the bandit-infested mountains of Asia Minor, having effected precisely the ostracism from society about which the colonel warned him. Ompteda makes no attempt to balance the inherent contradiction of Diethoff's solution and the colonel's position. The colonel's words can hardly be meant to represent a more shallow philosophy, for then the whole basis of Ompteda's social philosophy would be undermined. It cannot be that Ompteda here is demonstrating the higher imperative of the individual moral over the social responsibility, for the colonel's words, spoken in the knowledge that the sin has been committed, dwell on the difficulties of living outside the accustomed social sphere, even with the beloved. Harff's position at the end, without either love or society, appears to be the worst of both worlds, the only redeeming feature of which lies in a feeling of penitence. Since there is no logical or aesthetic consistency in the ending of the novel, the inescapable conclusion is that Ompteda wanted a poignant ending with a

moral, but in so doing he destroys his own logical argument, presented in the colonel's speech.

Whether Harff had followed the colonel's advice and remained in the army, or that of Diethoff, he still acknowledges the paramountcy of duty, be it social or moral. "Dies eiserne Wort"<sup>87</sup> provides the main satisfaction in Sylvester von Geyer's joyless existence, and is the prime motivating factor for Cäcilie von Sarryn, who shows the extent to which aristocratic life is permeated by the precepts of the officer's code of duty. Cäcilie accepts it as her God-given duty that she must take her dead sister's place and bring up her children. Though Ompteda waxes at times mawkishly sentimental over Cäcilie's resignation of her own chance of motherhood and the compensation she finds as the mother of her sister's children, the novel is significant for its broadening of the scope of the concept of duty.

In fulfilling her duty to her family, Cäcilie is discharging both a personal and a social responsibility. The family is simply the smallest cell in the organism of the state, and for the Prussian aristocrat loyalty to the state and its institutions, most importantly, of course, the army, is symbolized by loyalty to the sovereign: "Niemand unterthan, von niemand abhängig! Über uns nur einer: Seine Majestät!"<sup>88</sup> Even in the confused ending of Die Sünde, Harff goes off to work for a German company thereby fulfilling his

duty to the state. Ompteda conceives of duty as the indispensable mortar which holds together the edifice of society. In a novel such as Die Sünde he attempts to contribute to society's revitalization by clarifying the implications of the code of duty so that, stripped of confusion and prejudice, the code can provide effective guidelines for personal conduct. Ompteda's failure to achieve the desired clarity is due in part to his limitations as a writer and in part to his unwillingness to abandon any of the characteristic features of the aristocratic system: his veneration of the tradition is too great to allow him the objectivity necessary for the advocacy of significant change, and in consequence his vision of Germany's rebirth is restricted to an attempt to reform the attitudes of the individual to existing social institutions.

The ethic of social responsibility is underscored by the fate of those of Ompteda's characters whose lives are devoted entirely to the pursuit of pleasure, such as Count Eysen and Cäcilie's beautiful sister Eva. Both are jolted out of their hedonistic careers by family tragedies, brought on by neglect of their parental responsibilities. That fate should intervene in this way shows how firmly Ompteda's concept of nobility is rooted in a belief in the unity of the natural universe, in which the state and its institutions also carry the seal of legitimacy.



f) The Monarchy:

Within the essentially feudal society of Ompteda's novels, the position of the monarch is never questioned. After the collapse of that society in 1918 Ompteda never again wrote the kind of novels for which he was famous, but confined himself to mountaineering novels and memoirs. In his last novel, Die schöne Gräfin Cosel, he describes the court of the eighteenth century Saxon king August "der Starke." Ernst III, published in 1925, is a whimsical, nostalgic farewell to the vanished epoch and its most important institution. In contrast to the rather scornful depiction of the court of Sarnheim-Resa in Eysen, where Fabian the chamberlain spends his futile existence, the gently ironic light in which Ompteda paints the court and kingdom of Tillen serves primarily to illustrate the useful function performed by the king, and the stern sense of duty that watches over his every action.

Tillen, with its mountains, lakes, industrial region and its position as a medium-sized kingdom in the heart of the old Reich, sounds very like Ompteda's adopted homeland of Saxony. Ernst II, the hero's predecessor, makes no attempt to win the love of his people, and so, despite his exemplary industry and brilliant mind:

Seine Majestät erfreute sich einer erstaunlichen

Unbeliebtheit. Die Industriearbeiter und Bergleute des Kreises Stangenberg, die Erzkapfen aus der Munde, vernahmen nicht seine Stimme, sondern jene ihrer Führer, die ihnen weit schönere Dinge versprachen an kommender Glückseligkeit, an Wohlleben wie Faulenzertum, als dieser finster blickender Schlagetod von König. 89

Had this novel been written prior to 1918, it might have been interpreted in the same light as Eysen, with the reign of Ernst III, in its combination of the "common touch" and devotion to duty, a blueprint for the survival of an endangered institution. Since the novel in fact appeared seven years after the Kaiser's abdication, it must be regarded in part as an affectionate farewell to the world of Ompteda's youth and in part as an attempt to counteract those who spoke only ill of Germany's former ruling houses, to set the record straight.

Ompteda begins by describing conditions at court in such a way as to demolish the conventional image of regal magnificence. The royal coffers are so empty that the chamberlain refuses to renew the Crown Prince's chamber pot, resulting in his death when the handle falls off and cuts him. Before his accession Prince Arbogast is kept in penury and ignored by the court; he only becomes king after his uncle Theodor refuses the crown. Theodor, the only wealthy member of the royal family, made his fortune in a most unregal way: as a businessman in America. Ompteda's intention of presenting royalty as having essentially the same concerns as other sections of the population becomes

even clearer after Arbogast is crowned as Ernst III, and much of the humour of the novel derives from his behaving like an ordinary young man after ascending the throne. He keeps his army batman, Corporal Piephacke, who encourages his royal master with most uncourtly language, and the "Hof- und Leibscheuerfrau" Lore Lene, a pretty blonde girl, is his confidante until her death.

Although Ernst's circumvention of court ritual in his personal dealings becomes predictable, there are serious implications to it. The burden of routine audiences and visits is inescapable, and Ompteda shows the king working as hard as any of his subjects, living spartanly in two rooms facing the royal stables and freezing because of the lack of central heating. There is a sharp contrast between the heating in the palace and in the parliament building, known as the "Schwitzkasten," which the leader of the socialist opposition, Herr Schreyer (virtually every name in the novel is a "redender Name," a tour-de-force over four hundred and eighty-three pages but eventually somewhat tedious for the reader!) keeps luxuriously warm. This contrast in temperature between palace and parliament is paralleled by an equally sharp contrast in efficiency. In the debate on whether to install central heating in the palace, Ompteda shows his scant regard for the parliamentary process. While the members engage in rhetoric designed to please their

constituents, Ernst and his Prime Minister, Baron von Sturza-  
acker, rule the country.

Ompateda is without doubt a fervent monarchist, but his attitude towards the servile scraping which flourished during the Wilhelminian era results in a scorn only slightly less acid than that of Heinrich Mann's Der Untertan. The reason of course is quite different: Ompateda, who reveres the institution, feels that such servility merely brings the monarchy into disrepute:

'Ein wilder Schrei des Schmerzes zittert durch alle Tillener Herzen,' so schrieb der Staatsanzeiger, obwohl gewiss achtundneunzig vom Hundert sämtlicher Tillen den armen Kronprinzen nie zu Gesicht bekommen hatten) in jenem Speichelleckerstil, der, den Königs-gedanken unrettbar schädigend, gerade von Ernst dem Zweiten immer verspottet wurde. 90

Ernst III does his utmost to do away with the forced cheering whenever the king appears, since the only enthusiasm that really benefits the monarchy springs from genuine affection. This he readily creates wherever he goes, for he mingles with the people as one of them, speaks their dialects, and is interested in them as individuals. Although king he is still a poor man, contrary to popular belief, and in one scene at his dilapidated lake castle he is given a lecture on the evils of property by a furniture polisher who thinks that Ernst, returning from a swim, is the gardener's mate. Ernst suggests that, since the polisher is against property, he should exchange his silver watch

for Ernst's cheap one--with predictable results.

Oempteda sees the monarchy as an instrument of unity, bridging the gulf between the classes. At the beginning of the chapter containing Ernst's discussion with the polisher, he laments in an ironic way the total lack of communication or understanding between the classes,<sup>91</sup> and it is once more apparent that Oempteda himself has no illusions that his own class is the sole guardian of virtue in the nation: he compares "die Geschäftsehre des untadeligen Seidenhändlers Maulbeer" to the "ebenso untadelige Offiziersehre des Kriegsgottes Kotz von Gerben."<sup>92</sup> Their codes are different but equally honourable. When Prime Minister von Sturzacker visits Herr Schreyer, the socialist leader, he takes note of the pictures on the walls:

An der Wand erblickt man in einfachen Rahmen eine Art Ahnengalerie, nämlich die Herren Marx, Engels, Lasalle, Babel und Liebknecht. Der Besuch denkt lächelnd an sein Zimmer in Sturzacker, wo ähnliche Bilder hängen, nur anderer Art, nämlich Sturze und Osterburger. <sup>93</sup>

The tone of amused irony here is significant when compared to the Kaiser's loathing of the socialists, and his strong utterances on the subject of "vaterlandslose Gesellen." Sturzacker merely notes that Herr Schreyer and his colleagues have different heroes to the monarchist party, but he sees no need to stifle dissent. He realizes that the monarchical principal is not as strong as it once was, but the crown represents a unifying force if properly

presented to the people, without the excesses of right-wing adulation or left-wing vilification. In an important scene just before the procession in which Ernst brings home his Scandinavian bride, Sturzacker and the king discuss the significance of such spectacles.

Sturz: 'Es stärkt auch den monarchischen Gedanken, und . . . der kann's brauchen. Ich fürchte, er ist ein bisschen wacklich. Euer Machestät haben mir neulich erzählt, was der Grossherzog vom Westerwald von der Einkreisung geschrieben hat . . . . Na, dann meine ich: das Allerwichtigste ist, dass wir Deutschen geschlossen sind, und da brauchen wir alle Volksteile. Es wird aber manches gesündigt, nicht nur von unten!' 94

Ernst agrees that a state needs both order and tolerance, "und wer bei Schreyer nicht pariert, fliegt eher als bei uns,"<sup>95</sup> but he asks how the king can overcome the servility of his subordinates, which generates an equally extreme counter-emotion among the opposition, and create one unified national family. Sturzacker replies that royal spectacles, which attract everyone and benefit all, are one way to bring all classes together. The procession is a triumphal success, but Ernst notices one red flag amid the red and green banners of Tillen: "Hing nicht an der Tillenbrücke, Mahnung kommender Zeiten, ein blutroter Fetzen?"<sup>96</sup>

The increasingly tense relations between the European powers after 1900 make it imperative that the dissenting voices remain "His Majesty's loyal Opposition,"--sonst--

finis Germaniae!"--but the conservative parties and the ruling class are themselves not without sin on the question of national unity. They must lower the barriers of self-interest and "Standesdünkel" in order that the rest of the nation not feel excluded from the mainstream of national life. Ompteda here stands on the same ground as Frenssen and Wassermann, although his amusement at the deliberations of the Tillen parliament indicates that he basically feels that the participation of the population in the business of government is of little real benefit either to the people or to the state. It is in the evolution of the traditional system, the eradication of its faults and the concomitant preservation of its virtues, in particular the code of service and duty that is the aristocracy's most important contribution to the nation, that he sees the salvation of Germany. The developments of the twentieth century in the direction of a mass industrial society and a participatory democracy cannot be ignored, but the old Germany, Ompteda's Germany, has much that is worth preserving. For all its ills, Wilhelminian Germany deserves the parting comment of Simone von Rundstetten (Heimat des Herzens) as she leaves the bleak little garrison town of Rosenau to return to France: "Es ist doch schön hier."<sup>97</sup>

In his contrast of the traditional aristocratic ethic of duty with the selfish materialism of the new age, Ompteda

shares the concern for the nation's sense of values that his friend Wilhelm von Polenz<sup>98</sup> expresses in Der Buttnerbauer. Though his characters are aristocrats rather than farmers, Ompteda's novels are true "Heimatomane," advocating a revitalization of traditional institutions and values as the best foundation for a reborn Germany. Whereas Frenssen attacks specific injustices in the Wilhelminian Reich, Ompteda abstains from such criticism and directs his attention to the reform of the aristocracy's own code of conduct. By liberalizing the rigid conventions in such fields as sexual relations and the duel, and stressing the need for greater effort in exercising its leadership of the nation, Ompteda endeavours to breathe new life into the venerable traditions of the Prussian aristocracy. Before 1918 his vision of a possible future state is one in which the traditional institutions and values, re-endowed with the elasticity of youth, can adapt to new demands and new challenges: his conception of national rebirth is based largely on the belief that the revitalization of what he regards as the leadership of the nation will inevitably produce beneficial changes in all areas of German life. Not only is the degree of reform extremely limited: the entire concept of the aristocracy as the decisive factor in Wilhelminian Germany is more reflective of Ompteda's devotion to tradition than of his perspicacity. After the catastrophe of November 1918,



this solution is no longer a possibility and he lovingly bids farewell, for no aristocratic Adam Barfood can resurrect "die längst verschollene Zeit."<sup>99</sup>

Jakob Wassermann

Jakob Wassermann was born in 1873, ten years after Frenssen and Ompteda, in Fürth near Nürnberg, the first child of an unsuccessful Jewish businessman. The death of his mother nine years later was a crucial milestone in his childhood, for his father's second wife proved to be a harsh and unjust stepmother, and the feeling of being an outcast was of extreme importance for Wassermann's personal and literary development. The experience of his stepmother is reflected in many of his major novels, especially in Caspar Hauser, Das Gänsemännchen and Joseph Kerkhovens dritte Existenz. After finishing school, Jakob was apprenticed to his uncle, who owned a fan factory in Vienna, but his loathing of the business atmosphere was such that after two years the family decided that he should do his military service. Wassermann was able to take advantage of the one year option open to the sons of the bourgeoisie, but his poverty and the anti-semitism of both officers and men excluded him from the comradeship that both Ompteda's young officers and Frenssen's farmboys find in the army. A sense of social isolation, which was never completely overcome, was thus added to Wassermann's childhood experience of being an outsider in his own family.

In 1892, on his discharge, Wassermann returned to

Nürnberg, where his life on the fringes of the underworld is described in Daniel Nothafft's experiences in Das Gänsemännchen. Upon reaching twenty-one he received the rest of his mother's small inheritance, half of which had already been used to finance his army year, and moved to Munich. Here he sank into almost total isolation until Ernst von Wolzogen, who gave him a job as a secretary, became enthusiastic over Wassermann's first literary efforts, and he was introduced to the bohemian literary world which he describes in Renate Fuchs.

Wassermann's literary career was launched in 1896 with the publication of Die Juden von Zirndorf, followed by Melusine. The heroine of Melusine, which was actually written first, is based on the woman with whom Wassermann was involved for four years until he moved to Vienna in 1898. He was also co-editor of the magazine Simplicissimus, published by Albert Langen, Wassermann's publisher.<sup>1</sup>

Following the move to Vienna, Wassermann came into contact with a sophisticated, cosmopolitan culture through two of its chief exponents, Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Arthur Schnitzler, whom he met in the house of his fiancée.<sup>2</sup> The large percentage of Jews among the Viennese intellectual elite protected Wassermann from the anti-semitism prevalent in Germany, and in the tolerant atmosphere of Vienna there was no confining code to shackle his literary talent.<sup>3</sup>

Wassermann joyfully responded to his acceptance by the literary "guild" in Vienna, and his correspondence and diaries give evidence of the firm friendships he established within this group.<sup>4</sup>

The presence of an established literary circle as a context for Wassermann's early novels forms a sharp contrast to Frenssen's intellectual loneliness during his student days. Around 1940 Frenssen wrote in his diary:

Als Student in Berlin berührte mich die damalige geistige Bewegung gar nicht. Zola, Nietzsche, Bebel, Strindberg, Hauptmann waren für mich nicht da; ich lebte im Geiste--und lebte Öppig--der heimatlichen Menschen und Zustände. 5

Even after the phenomenal success of Jörn Uhl in 1901, Frenssen remained a solitary figure, standing apart from the literary circle of "Heimatlidhter." While his style and intellectual rigour might have been beneficially influenced by greater contact with the literary world, the essential core of Frenssen's work, the atmosphere of Dithmarschen, might at the same time have been diluted. In any case, Frenssen personally never felt the lack of a literary context, for he drew his intellectual as well as his spiritual material from the village life around him.

Ompteda's position is essentially similar. Despite his attempts to reform some of its aspects, the aristocratic caste dominated Ompteda's perception of the world. Ompteda had a wide circle of acquaintances in the artistic world,<sup>6</sup>

but these did not include writers of the first rank. His intellectual sustenance, like Frenssen's came from the world around him.

Wassermann lacked this sense of belonging to an identifiable social group, and one of his bitterest disappointments was the failure of Caspar Hauser to be recognized as "ein deutsches Volksbuch."<sup>7</sup> While the literary circle in Vienna provided him with an intellectual home, it never compensated for the lack of a real home which would accept him as a native son. Wassermann's feeling of rootlessness, exemplified by his lifelong interest in the figure of Ahasver, the Wandering Jew, hampered his effectiveness as a "Volkserzieher," his goal by his own admission,<sup>8</sup> because it prevented him from identifying strongly enough with a practical, definable, social programme to be able to advocate it unequivocally. In contrast to Frenssen and Ompstedt, Wassermann died a disappointed man, bitter, like Martin Mordann in Joseph Kerkhovens dritte Existenz, at the ineffectiveness of his life's work.

Arthur Schnitzler's play Professor Bernhardt (1912) deals with the problems of the Jew who, himself committed only to a humanitarian ethic that is universal in scope, is trapped between the extremes of nationalist and Zionist. Bernhardt's action in refusing a priest access to a patient,

who, though dying, is euphorically convinced of imminent recovery, is maliciously interpreted as an attack on the Christian religion because Bernhardt is Jewish. The position of the Jew is constantly vulnerable, his acts always subject to malevolent scrutiny. Similarly Wassermann complained in Mein Weg als Deutscher und Jude that he always had to exert an amount of effort disproportionate to that of Gentile writers to get his audience to respond at all: "Ich musste darauf dringen, dass sie sich mir stelle, ich musste sie von Leistung zu Leistung von mir und meiner Sache Überzeugen, ich musste die glühendste Überredung, die äusserste Anstrengung aufwenden."<sup>9</sup> Upon reading this comment, Thomas Mann wrote to Wassermann that this was the lot of all German authors, Jew or Gentile, and Wassermann himself speaks of the lack of appreciation in the Wilhelminian era on the part of the general population: "Das Verhältnis des Bismarckschen Deutschland zu seinen geistigen Repräsentanten war von einem unbesieghchen Misstrauen bestimmt."<sup>10</sup>

Adolf Bartels' review of Die Juden von Zirndorf bears out Wassermann's point that a Jewish writer faces additional barriers:

Wassermann ist unbedingt, so konfus, so aufdringlich sein Werk zum Teil ist, ein grosses Talent, und er ist zugleich ein Typus, der Typus des modernen dekadenten Juden, den wir genau zu studieren alle Ursache haben.<sup>11</sup>

The use of the adjective "aufdringlich" assumes that

Wassermann is an outsider trying to thrust his way into the German sphere: the same novel by a Gentile would have been praised, for the qualification would have been inappropriate. As it is, Wassermann's talent, though highly rated, is downgraded by the use of an adjective more suited to criticism of a person than of a book. "Aufdringlich" also implies that the person making the judgement is socially superior to the one judged, and is a quality frequently attributed to the Jews. When Bartels moves on to the type that Wassermann allegedly represents, "der Typus des modernen dekadenten Juden, den wir genau zu studieren alle Ursache haben," the continuity between Wilhelminian anti-semitism and the Third Reich is quite apparent. The modern Jew is decadent, and the fact that it behooves Germans to study the type implies that it is in some way dangerous. Since decadence is not an aggressive quality, the threat must come from its influence poisoning the nation's own vitality and corrupting the German spirit.

Bartels is an extreme example of anti-semitism, but he is important because his influence spans the Wilhelminian, Weimar and Nazi periods. The intrigues against Bernhardt's hospital in Schnitzler's play, because it is considered to have too high a percentage of Jewish doctors, reflect the prevalence of attitudes such as his. The vision of Germany that this view embodies is of a homogeneous national

community based on racial heritage, sharing common values inaccessible to the outsider. Wassermann set out to show, especially in Caspar Hauser, that a common history and cultural heritage formed a sufficient basis for belonging to the community. Although this intent could theoretically have resulted in a more objective type of "Heimatroman," capable of more penetrating analysis of society's ills because of the abandonment of the racial mythology found in a work like Jörn Uhl, it failed to find acceptance among the reading public in this spirit because Wassermann's sense of isolation prevented him from expressing the aspirations and concerns of the broad mass of the population. His sympathies were with the outsider and therefore directed against society as a whole. While such a position runs counter to the traditional standpoint of the "Heimatsdichter" Wassermann's attempt to write for the mass of the population illuminates the nature of the "Heimatroman" and the pitfalls attendant upon a synthesis of the two positions.

### Man and Woman

In view of his position on the fringes of society and his experience of the bohemian life in Munich and Nürnberg, it is hardly surprising that, even after he had married into



the cultivated upper middle class of Viennese society and achieved a degree of stability and success, Wassermann should portray the relationships between the sexes from a different standpoint to Frenssen and Ompteda. For all his attempts to reform it, the caste remained the dominant factor in Ompteda's scale of values, and Frenssen's experience with the pernicious effects of middle class morality in his country parish was crucial for the development of his role as reformer. The sensual emancipation of the German woman, which Frenssen so courageously advocated before a hostile audience,<sup>12</sup> is no longer a point of contention for many of Wassermann's female characters. Renate Fuchs, Luise (Laudin und die Seinen) and Eva Sorel (Christian Wahnschaffe) live outside the middle class world and are not bound by its morality, and from Das Gänsemännchen (1915) onwards the physical consummation of love outside of marriage is of secondary importance.

In the early works, Melusine (1896) and Renate Fuchs (1900), of which Wassermann's first wife Julie says that they were inspired by his long affair in Munich,<sup>13</sup> love is opposed by the social order. Melusine's plot has the elements of a Victorian melodrama. The threats of Melusine's guardian to commit her to an insane asylum if she is not compliant, her duty to her sister and her illegitimate child, and her threat of suicide if Falk takes "den letzten Zoll

der Liebe"<sup>14</sup> amount to an attack on society's exploitation of youth. In Melusine's bitterness over the prudishness of her education: "Wieviel Schmerz ihr hätte erspart werden können durch die verständige Offenheit einer Lehrerin oder einer Freundin,"<sup>15</sup> Wassermann takes the same position with regard to current morality as does Frenssen at the time of Hilligenlei (1905). Wassermann in his early twenties is however far from having an expressly didactic purpose: here the task is the artistic reproduction of personal experiences. Melusine's fate is unknown, in contrast to that of the next heroines, Monika (Die Juden von Zirndorf) and Renate Fuchs, both of whom find salvation and fulfilment with the messiah-figure Agathon Geyer after being seduced by Stefan Gudstikker.

Conventional morality is for Wassermann the means by which young women are forced to accede to blackmail. If they do not marry the men of their parents' choice, who are frequently middle-aged and whose sole recommendation is that they are wealthy, they are denounced by their parents and ostracized from bourgeois society. Although Renate Fuchs flees the social world of which her money-conscious mother is a caricature, she is unable to escape from the circle of exploitation and ostracism until she renounces the world and goes to Agathon Geyer. Renate makes her decisions largely as a result of disappointment with the

preceding phase. Anselm Wanderer, with whom she first runs away, is another of Wassermann's "Literat" figures, whose failing is that they stand aside from life; their liaison ends when the loss of his fortune exposes the weakness of Wanderer's character. Stefan Gudstikker offers her his superficial wisdom, and Renate becomes his mistress because she has no other means of support. She is an outsider in the bohemian world: her upbringing and her pride will not let her degrade herself by sharing an apartment with a girl who has been exploited and abused, even though, in a more subtle way, this has been her own fate. The vulnerability of a girl in the middle class world is shown in Renate's next job, as a governess in a wealthy family. Her employer offers her a diamond brooch if she will submit to his advances. When she refuses and the brooch disappears, she is accused of theft. The words with which she then goes to the callous and sinister Graumann: "Hier bin ich. Ich gehe mit Ihnen. Tun Sie, was Sie wollen,"<sup>16</sup> demonstrate the extent to which the reality of being unprotected in a rapacious world has destroyed her pride.

Renate comes to terms with her situation in a discussion with Angelus, the dog that Wanderer gave to her. This exchange prefigures Daniel Nothafft's talks with the Gänsemännchen statue at the end of that novel, as a result

of which he is able to analyze his life. She has had no peace of mind since the end of her relationship with Wanderer, for "wer ohne Liebe ist, ist ruhelos."<sup>17</sup>

Angelus can be regarded as Wassermann's spokesman, since he is treated anthropomorphically throughout the novel. He reacts with good judgement to the various characters with whom Renate comes in contact, and dislikes Graumann so intensely that the man thrashes him. When Renate fails to intervene he knows that she herself is beaten by circumstances. Angelus sums up Renate's progress thus far with the words: "Die Männer haben dich vergiftet mit schlechten Begierden. Werde du nicht begierdelos,"<sup>18</sup> to which she answers: "Ich habe noch Sehnsucht und Erwartung." Neither Wassermann, Frenssen nor Ompteda represent the puritan Christian doctrine that desire is intrinsically evil. Even during his first two years as pastor in Hennstedt (1890-91),<sup>19</sup> Frenssen refused to accept the Pauline doctrine of the division of body and soul, evil and good, and Ompteda is mostly concerned with the social implications of desire: Wassermann considers as evil those desires based on exploitation and blackmail: love, with the physical consummation the natural outcome, is the cherished goal. Renate's desire and hope for this type of love is the sign that salvation is still possible.

Instead of the straightforward advocacy of sexual

freedom such as Frenssen pursues, Wassermann introduces an antagonism between the individual and society which is much closer to the spirit of Expressionist drama. While there are characters in Hilligenlei or Der Pastor von Pogensee who embody a point of view antithetical to Frenssen's, they do not represent society as a whole, whereas in Wassermann's novel society is the adversary which exploits Renate both economically and sexually. It is only through contact with Agathon Geyer, himself an outsider, that Renate can experience an uncorrupted and non-exploiting love. When on the last night of Agathon's life Renate conceives his son, she is transformed by the "niegekannte, unvertilgbare Ruhe"<sup>20</sup> that he imparts to her. The child is symbolic, a vision of a reborn mankind:

Sich selbst und den unsichtbaren Geliebten sah sie neu aufleben in einer vollkommeneren und reineren Gestalt. Das Kind schien ihr der Sonne verwandt; sie selbst empfing Wärme und Leben durch es, und alle Ausserungen seines Daseins erschienen ihr wie die unmittelbaren Kräfte der Natur, die seine wahre Lehrerin wurde, fern von den Städten, den Menschen. 21

Love not only gives Renate a peace which is itself raised above the level of ordinary peace of mind to a religious state, "the peace that passeth all understanding," it makes possible a "new man." Renate and her son, who is so much a symbol that he has no name, live on the Hungarian plains, far from the corrupting influences of urban society. The final scene of Carl Hauptmann's Expressionist drama

Krieg, written in 1913, offers a virtually identical situation, the mother and child alone amid the desolation of war, intending to raise a new breed of uncorrupted man.<sup>22</sup> In Renate Fuchs Wassermann is very close to the rural ideal which became popular at the end of the nineteenth century as an alternative to the industrial cities--in addition to permeating the "Heimatroman" and being a crucial aspect of the ideology of the Bund der Landwirte, it figured prominently in Naturalist literature: nature is the child's true teacher and the city represents a destructive, corrupting influence. There is a utopian element to Wassermann's ending, however, which is not present in the "Heimatroman," for Frenssen always integrates the hero into the village community, whereas Renate appears quite isolated. Wassermann's own isolated position is reflected here, in the way personal salvation is unconnected with the rebirth of society as a whole. The melodramatic tone of Renate Fuchs, with its extremes of degradation and salvation, itself contrasts sharply with Frenssen's down-to-earth presentation of sexual problems. At this point in his career (1900) Wassermann has not yet found his own place in German society, and is concerned only with the individual case.

In the novel Das Gänsemännchen (1915) Wassermann does, at the end, make the hero Daniel Nothafft participate

in village life in Eschenbach, but the dénouement is contrived and unconvincing. It is typical of Wassermann's predilection for theatrical extremes that Daniel lives in a state of constant hostility to the bourgeois society of Nürnberg because he refuses to compromise his principles or moderate his desires in any way to accomodate the morality and the conventions of his fellow citizens. The good burghers take particular offence at Daniel's domestic situation: a grotesque ménage which goes far beyond Frenssen's advocacy of sexual freedom and explains in good part why the novel was never accepted as a "Volksbuch" despite Wassermann's protestations that it depicted the innermost soul of the German people.

By the end of the novel Daniel has children by three women and has had three wives. The first child, Eva, is a consequence of one of Daniel's rare moments of optimism: when Wassermann, who is in no sense an ironic writer, describes him as knocking "mit ungeheuerer Begierde an die Pforten der Götter,"<sup>23</sup> he endows Daniel with the same intensity in his search for truth as Jan Guldt in Der Untergang der Anna Hollmann and the same zest as Klaus Baas. Daniel in his career as a composer is always engaged in the quest for the ultimate breakthrough, and in this moment, fired by the exuberance of youth, he comes closer to experiencing the natural wonders than he does until he

abandons composing and concentrates on teaching at the end of the novel. At this point, at the age of forty, Wassermann stands with Frenssen in his insistence that only in contact with people can the breakthrough to ultimate truths of existence be made. There is nevertheless a desperation in the way Daniel seizes the opportunity to celebrate New Year with Meta which points up the difference between him and Frenssen's heroes. What for them is a natural outburst of youthful joie de vivre is for him a unique digression into an alien world of experience.

In his relationship with Gertrud and Lenore, Daniel betrays a callousness which is in no way different from the reactions of the townspeople to him. The way in which Gertrud is transformed from an embittered and inhibited girl into a passionate woman by his music awakens his sense of artistic responsibility:

Der sinnliche Zauber war es nicht allein, der ihn zur Erwiderung eines vor der Welt kundgegebenen Gefühles zwang: tiefer berührte ihn, dass sie so kam, als eine Reuige und Bekehrte. Tiefer berührte ihn die erhabene Gewissheit, die sie ihm schenkte, dass er eine Seele zu verwandeln und zu erneuen vermocht hatte. 24

Daniel's appreciation of Gertrud as a woman is clearly subordinate to this idealistic response of his artistic vanity, and her boundless devotion to him is unable to penetrate the wall of his egotistical, self-imposed isolation from the rest of humanity. It is to Lenore that he responds as a lover, and he blithely asks the impossible



of Gertrud: that she abdicate her position as wife to Lenore. Daniel is so totally unaware of the needs of others that he lets Gertrud sink into the depression that prompts her suicide, while at the same time he maintains that his morality, his emotional imperative, is higher than that of the townspeople who criticize him. Lenore is more realistic and retains her moral objectivity despite her own involvement:

Liebster, ach Liebster! Mein Herz ist so wie deins verdunkelt und verzaubert. Ich kann ja nicht mehr von dir lassen. Ich hab mich abgefunden mit allem. Ich bin mir der ganzen Schuld in meiner Seele bewusst. Ich weiss, was ich tue und nehme es auf mich. Es nützt ja kein Sträuben mehr, Über uns schlagen die Wasser zusammen. Ich meine nur, du sollst dir kein Wahnbild vorgaukeln, als ob wir damit emporgestiegen wären Über andere, als ob wir uns einen Dank des Schicksals verdient hätten. Nein, Daniel, was wir tun, tun alle, die sich verlieren, tun alle, die hinuntersteigen. Lass mich bei dir sein, Liebster, küss mich, küss mich zu Tode. 25

Lenore is aware that she is assuming a moral guilt by loving her sister's husband, but her emotion is too intense for her to refuse. In one of his last novels, Die Hörner von Gallehus (1931), Frenssen depicts a similar situation. Bernhard and his cousin's wife Telse fall in love, but despite her husband's encouragement they decide that it would be wrong for them to consummate their love. Whereas Abel Barfood's adultery with Doctor Schack is justified on social grounds, because there is a dearth of young men and the perpetuation of the race is equally as important as

Abel's personal fulfilment as a mother, here there is no such justification, and Bernhard and Telse, being more nordic and less volatile than Daniel and Lenore, are able to control their passion. Frenssen, Wassermann and Ompteda (in Benigna) all stop short of condoning adultery, while at the same time they refrain from moral judgements when it does take place. Wassermann however goes further than the others in his insistence on the freedom of the individual to make his choice unhampered by moral and social considerations. Although Lenore's attitude makes Daniel appear in a less favourable light, Wassermann's depiction of the viciousness of the townspeople ensures that, by contrast, Daniel is not condemned.

The aura of inexorable fate that pervades the triangle Daniel-Lenore-Gertrud is heightened by such devices as Inspector Jordann's forebodings after Daniel's first concert, at which Gertrud's senses are awakened, and the use of words like "Geisterschwester"<sup>26</sup> to describe the relationship of Lenore and Daniel. The added dimension, bolstered by the character of Philippine, removes the bizarre ménage à trois from the realm of realistically depicted relationships between the characters. The narrow streets of the medieval city of Nürnberg and its grotesque inhabitants--the Hadebusch family and their lodgers are described as "Hogarth-schen Gestalten"<sup>27</sup>--provide a different backdrop from the

modernity of Renate Fuchs or Die Masken Erwin Reiners. The illumination of reason and the liberation of choice are conspicuously absent from the novel, submerged in the floodtide of emotional imperatives and hounded by the dark forces of fate. The supernatural elements in Frenssen's novels, such as Wieten Penn, the "Spokenkieker" in Jörn Uhl and Holgersen, the curate of Poggsee, blend more easily into the rural atmosphere, where folksy superstitions are never very far from the surface.

The triangle theme is carried over into the novels of Wassermann's last years, Laudin und die Seinen (1925), Etzel Andergast (1931) and the posthumously published Joseph Kerkhovens dritte Existenz (1934). In the shadow of his own divorce from Julie and marriage to Marta Karlweis, an excruciating and lengthy process that is clearly the inspiration for the story of the author Alexander Herzog in Joseph Kerkhovens dritte Existenz, Wassermann shifted his focus to the problem of marriage. In Laudin und die Seinen he not only tackles the problem but also proposes a specific solution, which indicates that when he felt personally involved Wassermann reacted in the same way as Frenssen and Ompteda.

Laudin's crisis stems however from deeper roots than a bankrupt marriage: it is not so much the marriage itself that is floundering, but Laudin's whole life-style that

is inappropriate to his nature. Although he is the most celebrated divorce lawyer in Vienna, whose secure reputation and financial position enable him to refuse any client whose cause he cannot support, he lacks the "innere Hornhaut"<sup>28</sup> necessary to insulate himself from the sordid spectacle of misery, greed and cruelty with which his profession brings him into daily contact. The encounter with Luise Dercum comes at the crucial moment when Laudin, exhausted by the volume of work, becomes conscious of his "Überdruss am eigenen Wesen, an dem stahlhart und unveränderlich Dauernden, das man den Charakter nennt, das Soudsosein, einmalig, unverrückbar, fortsetzungslos, entwicklungslos."<sup>29</sup> Nothing in his career gives promise of growth or development; Laudin's "seelische Totengräberarbeit"<sup>30</sup> is concerned only with the separation of the two halves of a unit that never had the potential to undergo a fulfilling development. Imprisoned in the spiritual dungeon of a career which poisons even his personal life, even the objects in his bedroom take on the qualities of gaolers "zu denen er in einem Verhältnis von Sklaverei steht."<sup>31</sup> Every night, when he extinguishes the lamp and the objects vanish, the freedom and flexibility of youth call to him.

Luise Dercum represents the diametrically opposite pole to Laudin's fixed character. Every aspect of her

personality is in a constant state of flux. She is an incorrigible liar, but Laudin muses: "Ist da Lüge, wo niemals Wahrheit war, Wahrheit nicht begriffen wird und gar nicht sein kann?"<sup>32</sup> Laudin falls under the spell of the opposite pole, and Wassermann explains his seemingly unmotivated subservience to Luise with the concept that Laudin has met his fate. In fact Luise, apart from her sexual attractiveness, has nothing else to recommend her. She shamelessly exploits those who seek her friendship and it is precisely the lack of any appealing qualities, either in her or her entourage, that shatters Laudin's subservience to her when faced with the facts about the death of Nikolaus Fraundorfer.

Wassermann created several actresses, of whom Luise is the last and the least romanticized. Laudin's remark: "Ist da Lüge, wo niemals Wahrheit war . . ." <sup>33</sup> is a pale shadow of Becker's comment about Eva Sorel: "Ariel ist moralisch nicht belastbar."<sup>34</sup> "Das Leichte, Schwebende,"<sup>35</sup> the hallmark of the dancer and the antithesis of the solidarity of the bourgeois, becomes in Luise unadorned irresponsibility, representative of a social sphere where there are no values of any kind. The dubious nature of this anti-bourgeois society is shown first in the case of Jeanette Lüwengard (Die Juden von Zirndorf), who runs away from home to escape marriage to a rich old man to

become a dancer in a dingy tavern. Walther Voegeli calls dancing "der unmittelbarste Ausdruck des inkarnierten Gefühls. Der Körper wird vom Rythmus des pulsierenden Lebens durchdrungen,"<sup>36</sup> but while this statement expresses a symbolic intent on Wassermann's part, it ignores the fact that these dancer figures are not as positive as such expressions would require. To be filled with the rhythms of life would, in Wassermann's view, have to be a positive attribute, and yet even at its best, in Eva Sorel's case, it has no effect on the moral value of the character.

Laudin's comment about Luise, in the context of the unfavourable light in which she is shown in the novel, appears as merely the excuse of a man for whom the premises of bourgeois society have become questionable. The seductress is an uncomfortable figure for Wassermann. He considered himself part of the "modern" literary movement, and yet he depicts the seductress as a negative character. For him, as for Frenssen and Ompteda, irresponsible hedonism is dangerous and parasitical. His refusal to condemn explicitly indicates Wassermann's greater sympathy for the avant-garde movement of his time, but his implicit attitude reflects his closeness to the philosophical premises of the "Heimatroman." The difference in Wassermann's position stems from his readiness to

question the basic institution of marriage, which is a far more radical step than Frenssen's advocacy of divorce in Klaus Hinrich Baas. For the "Heimatsdichter" the institution is a vital pitprop of society, whereas for Wassermann social considerations are secondary to the happiness of the individual.

Pia, Laudin's wife, is a much more positive figure. Her life is entirely devoted to her home and family, but this in reality amounts to an endless cycle of objects which have to be cleaned, swept, arranged and repaired: "Wenn sie mit Laudin ins Theater oder in Gesellschaft geht, laufen die Dinge plappernd und streitsüchtig wie in einem Märchen von Andersen hinter ihr her."<sup>37</sup> The death of Nikolaus Fraundorfer opens a breach in the wall of objects surrounding her--for the objects are protectors as well as gaolers--and the cold wind from outside penetrates her comfortable, if limited, domestic sphere. The change in Laudin when he falls under Luise's spell increases that cold wind to an icy blizzard, and she can no longer find refuge behind the wall of objects and household duties. She waits in vain for him to visit her bedroom at night, "wartete, Zähne zusammengebissen, die Finger in die Decke gekrampft, zitternd wie Gras, bevor es gemäht wird, wartete, dass sich die Tür auftue, wartete, wie sie nie zuvor im Leben gewartet hatte."<sup>38</sup>

Communication between them has always been on the level of a silent understanding, with each looking after his own realm. Consequently the only course open to Pia, once she realizes the extent to which Laudin is involved in a total reassessment of his life-style, is to give him complete freedom of action. Pia's pride forbids her to stand in his way. She has never done so, and for her to appear now as a "Tigerin der Legitimität" <sup>39</sup> defending her social and material position with the armoury of legal paragraphs, would destroy her self-respect as well as Laudin's respect for her. Despite her apparently limited horizons, Pia offers the solution to the problem of Laudin's soul-destroying career: he should give up his practice and return to the goal of his youth, bypassed in the turmoil of fame and success: the creation of a basis for a new system of jurisprudence. The villa must be sold or rented and Laudin must move to the country. He needs peace to find himself.

This sudden burst of persuasive insight on Pia's part, in contrast to the reserve and limited horizons of her character hitherto, is not quite consistent with the emphasis earlier in the novel on her limitations. She is not aware of the extent to which her world is dominated by objects and petty chores: "So wenig wie sie weiss, wer sie ist, so wenig spürt sie, was sie, vielleicht, entbehrt.



Sie fragt nicht, sie hadert nicht, sie philosophiert nicht; sie schaut, sie wirkt; und abends ist sie müde."<sup>40</sup>

"Schauen" is for Wassermann an attribute of the highest order: Etzel Andergast for example has it, his father does not. Later in the novel Wassermann elaborates on this ability of Pia's: "Pias Herz gleicht einer photographischen Platte, die aufnimmt und zur Wahrnehmung bringt, was das schärfste Auge nicht zu erspähen vermag."<sup>41</sup> The sensory perception is followed by a spiritual processing which alone gives the proper dimensions to what is seen. The inconsistency in Wassermann's presentation of Pia amounts to the question whether one possessed of such an ability can become walled-in as she is by humdrum details. Will the ability to perceive thus not raise one to see above the wall?

Laudin explains to Fraundorfer where his marriage to Pia has ceased to provide the satisfaction and the possibility of growth that he seeks desperately in his relationship with Luise. Although Pia is the model wife, who shields him from all domestic problems, her constant care and consideration has become a set attitude, unchanging and accepted without question. In the same way he protects her from all external unpleasantness: "Man hat die Frau beständig auf dem Arm und trägt sie über die Pfützen hinüber."<sup>42</sup> He worships Pia and has placed her on a pedestal above the

mundane filth of the world, but "die anbetende Haltung wird zum Petrefakt."<sup>43</sup> She accepts this protection as the natural order, and surrounded by the problems of her domestic sphere, never realizes the enormous effort and strain that grinds away at his vigour: "Und so wird alles, was man schafft und kämpft, zur Selbstverständlichkeit."<sup>44</sup> The result of this petrification is that the two spheres cease to have any contact:

Aber eines Tages steht man da und fragt sich: wie soll das weitergehen? Kein Schwung mehr; kein Aufrütteln; kein Nachfolgen oder Begleiten; kein gemeinsames Wegsuchen; nur noch Selbstverständlichkeit und friedliche Arbeitsteilung. 45

Although the marriage is without conflict, it is also without enthusiasm, "wie ein Topf mit geronnener Milch, sauer und dick, drin du ersäufst wie eine Fliege, ohne Rausch, ganz nüchtern."<sup>46</sup>

It is the flexibility of youth that Laudin seeks to retain, but only Pia realizes this. After his conversation with Fraundorfer, Laudin goes to her room. The death of Nikolaus has jolted her, and she feels the cold wind from outside in the world. Laudin takes her hand and she murmurs: "Ach, Friedrich, wir sind doch alte Leute."<sup>47</sup> The revocability of youth's decisions is his ideal, in contrast to the shackles of responsibility and the social order. Laudin's bold suggestion that couples should live together without the pressures of a legally binding union,

citing as an example the statistical success of such arrangements in Siberia, is based on the premise that for each man and woman there is only one proper mate, and that in order to remove from the social scene the misery caused by countless thousands of squalid, unhappy marriages, the individual must have the freedom to experiment and find this ideal partner:

Männer wie Frauen dürfen nicht gehindert werden, weder durch das moralische Odium noch durch die Paternitätslast, weder durch Mutterschaft noch durch die Tugendprämie, alle im Bereich ihres Wunsches und ihrer Phantasie stehenden Erscheinungs- und Erlebnisformen der Liebe durchzuprobieren und auszuleben. 48

The goal of this plan, which reflects a philosophy identical to Frenssen's, is the happiness of the individual and the cleansing of society through the removal of the rigid letter of the law from the marital sphere. Laudin appears however to overlook one crucial factor, because he refuses to apply the theory, as May Ernevoldt asks, to specific people. Had he applied it to himself, he would have seen that it is not legal or social pressure that binds him to Pia, since Pia explicitly renounces the use of compulsion: their marriage is the ideal union. Any human situation will atrophy if the lines of communication are allowed to fall into disrepair: the fatal weakness of the domestically convenient "friedliche Arbeitsteilung."<sup>49</sup>

In Laudin's own case the problem is more basic than the insufficiency of the legal system. It is a human, not

a social one. Legal reform would have no bearing on his marriage, which has fallen victim to the less sinister but equally deadly virus of monotony. The solution of the novel, a withdrawal from the world's business into a contemplative existence where he can discover his own self again and begin once more the "gemeinsames Wegsuchen" with Pia, is possible only because of Laudin's financial independence, and in any case Wassermann leaves unanswered the question of whether the boredom will recur.

The weakness of this novel lies in its attempt to analyze both the institution of marriage and the specific case. By making Laudin a divorce lawyer, an expert on the institution, Wassermann provides the framework within which he can tackle the social question of whether marriage should exist at all as anything more than a free association: this he answers in the negative. However, the introduction of the concept of the ideal partner undermines this logical approach. The depiction of such a union, overcoming the dangers of a hardening of the emotional arteries by withdrawing from the world, confuses the issue altogether. The final scene, where Laudin and Pia are greeted on the steps of their villa by their children, representatives of a new, less rigid view of the world, is a trite happy ending which has nothing to do with the original problem. It is a thoroughly romantic cliché that constitutes not

only an avoidance of the problem of petrification but also a complete negation of the perfectly valid question as to the institution of marriage.

Wassermann's last five novels, Faber oder die verlorenen Jahre, Laudin und die Seinen, Der Fall Maurizius, Etzel Andergast and Joseph Kerkhovens dritte Existenz, are in large measure concerned with marital relationships. The figure of Dr Joseph Kerkhoven, the central character of the last two novels, is illuminated and analyzed over a space of almost twelve hundred pages; from the crucial role played in his life by Marie it is clear that in his mature work Wassermann regarded marriage as the pivotal relationship in the life of the modern European. Whilst autobiographical pointers do not greatly advance the process of literary criticism, they do shed light onto the obscure reaches of an author's motivation in selecting a particular character or theme, and in Wassermann's case they explain his preoccupation with marriage.<sup>50</sup>

The root cause of the marital misery that fills these novels is the unworldly idealism of the middle class in Wilhelminian Germany, with its distorting influence on the development of young people. The genteel prudery which forbade discussion of the realities of marriage in any other framework than that of romantic clichés ensured that both partners entered marriage quite unprepared for its

challenges. The marriage of Ernst and Marie Bergmann (Etzel Andergast) fails because Ernst's sensuality is never awakened, and when Marie's is, his refined, anaemic adoration of her is totally inadequate. Kerkhoven himself reacts identically to Klaus Baas when Nina's limited horizons become the prison wall separating him from the fulfilment of his potential. Though Frenssen uses the undiminished sensuality of the Dithmarscher as a cornerstone of his contrast between unspoiled rural vitality and the decadence of certain other groups, and in consequence imbues the comparison with a dogmatic quality which is lacking in Wassermann's novels, both authors are in agreement not only as to the underlying cause of the problem, but also the intellectual basis for its eradication. The unreality of the middle class concept of man's needs which springs from the primacy of ideals over natural laws is opposed in the writings of both by recognition of man's place in nature. Wassermann approaches the problem through Kerkhoven the scientist, Frenssen through the countryman's unbroken ties to his natural environment, but ultimately their assessment is identical: man's physical drives may not be crippled by middle class morality without disastrous consequences for his development. The obligation rests upon society to abandon the moral code that thus impedes the welfare of its members.

Man and Society

Wassermann's race, his unhappy childhood with his stepmother and the utter lack of sympathy he encountered among his uncle's bourgeois circle, all combined to reinforce his sense of being an outsider. His experiences as an apprentice gave him an awareness of the tension between the materialistic, bourgeois atmosphere of Wilhelminian Germany and his own creative aspirations. His major novels all have as heroes characters who in some way challenge the society around them: from Agathon Geyer in Die Juden von Zirndorf to the Ahasver novel that he was planning at his death, the crux of every work is the opposition of the central character to existing conditions.

The figure that captured the imagination of the young Wassermann was a historical one which had fired several creative imaginations, including Trakl's: that of Caspar Hauser, the foundling of Nürnberg, who appeared in the city in 1827. Caspar's position is analogous to that of Renate Fuchs (in the novel written eight years previously) in that, as an outsider, he receives no protection from society and is ruthlessly exploited by almost everyone with whom he comes in contact. Through the depiction of these characters Wassermann achieves a condemnation of society, not as a political or social order, although these aspects are involved, but on the more fundamental plane of

the selfishness and complacency of men and women. "Die Trägheit des Herzens," as the novel is subtitled, is the aspect of the human character against which Caspar Hauser is "ein Anklagebuch vom ersten bis zum letzten Satz."<sup>51</sup> Rudolf Kayser defines it as "die Gewöhnung an das Unzulängliche, die kleine Selbstzucht der schwachen Gemüter, die Zufriedenheit mit den privaten Schmerzen und der Verzicht auf das Leiden der Welt."<sup>52</sup>

The only two characters to escape condemnation are Feuerbach and Klara von Kannawurf, and both are destroyed as a result of their involvement with Caspar. The others, Daumer, Tucher, Frau Behold and especially Quandt, represent the corruption and dehumanization of bourgeois society and its brutality to the unspoiled, innocent and vulnerable outsider. Klara von Kannawurf represents the loving commitment transformed into a living character, and this individual commitment forms the basis of Wassermann's vision of a reborn society.

In Das Gänsemännchen (1915) Wassermann continues his attack on the Wilhelminian middle class, and in this novel he uses the "Heimatroman's" favourite framework of the contrast between town and country. Although Daniel Notthafft is by no means a "Heimatroman" hero and the attack on the bourgeoisie assumes a different form from that found in Frenssen's works, Daniel's eventual reconciliation



to his fate in the village of Eschenbach affords a vantage point from which Wassermann's approach can be compared with that of the "Heimatsdichter."

In describing Daniel's unscrupulous uncle Jason Philipp Schimmelweis as "ein Mann, der die Zeit verstand,"<sup>53</sup> Wassermann adopts at the outset a position critical of the ethos of Wilhelminian Germany. He is however far more conscious than either Frenssen or Ompteda that the problems of the new age must be faced rather than simply avoided:

Da erwachte die alte Reichsstadt aus ihrem romantischen Schlummer. Hatten die erhabenen Kirchen, die schöngeschwungenen Brücken und verwinkelten Häuser ehemals ein sinnreich Lebendiges gebildet, so waren die jetzt nur noch Überbleibsel, und Burg und Wälle und die gewaltigen Rundtürme wurden zu Ruinen einer glücklich Überstandenen Zeit der Träume. Schienen wurden durch die Strassen gelegt und verrostete Ketten, an denen unförmliche Laternen aufgehängt waren, vom Eingang enger Gässchen entfernt. Fabriken und Schlöte umgaben das ehrwürdige und pittoreske Weichbild wie ein eiserner Rahmen das Gemälde eines alten Meisters. 54

Whereas Frenssen and Ompteda seek to imbue the new age with the spirit of the old, Wassermann is aware of their irreconcilable natures. He regards the bygone era with a nostalgic affection for its aesthetic values, but he has none of the passionate personal involvement with it that characterizes the other two authors. Wassermann's attitude to the industrial age is similarly ambivalent: unlike Frenssen and Ompteda he feels part of it and his vision of a desirable future contains no elements of former times, but

his appreciation of the consequences of industrialization is even less positive than theirs. They can glory in Germany's economic might even while decrying the misery of the factory worker: Wassermann is too nationally uncommitted to see beyond the poverty and exploitation. With the increase in the means of generating wealth, all three see an increase in greed, aggression and exploitation, and Jason Phillip Schimmelweis is merely one small, crass example of the way in which the removal of the chains across the dark alleys, symbolizing the emancipation of the ghetto Jews, has in fact meant no eradication of medieval superstition. Men have not been changed by the passing of the "Zeit der Träume;" rather the new age has unleashed aggressions previously held in check by traditions. Carovius, "der Nero unserer Zeit," is "ein Kleinbürger mit entfesselten Instinkten."<sup>55</sup> In his impotent rage at a world which makes its decisions without consulting him, Carovius is a grotesque example of the malignant resentments of the Wilhelminian bourgeoisie.

In Das Gänsemännchen Wassermann's own bitterness at the bourgeoisie is exaggerated to the point of almost pathological hatred in Daniel's attitude, which he expresses in these terms to Lenore:

Siehst du nicht, wie sie mir die Zähne weisen? . . .  
Ist ihnen etwas heilig von dem, was dir oder mir  
heilig ist? Werden sie durch deine oder meine

oder irgendeines Menschen Not um Millimetersbreite von der Stelle gerückt? Klebt nicht an jedem ihrer Mäuler der Schlamm der Verleumdung? Ist ihnen nicht dein Lachen ein Dorn im Auge? Neiden sie mir nicht den bitteren Bissen, um den ich mich schinde, und die Musik, die ihnen unbegreiflich ist und die sie hassen, weil sie ihnen unbegreiflich ist? 56

By the very force of his own argument, Daniel falls victim to the same sin as the citizens of Nürnberg: loathing as a result of misunderstanding. Although Wassermann's own position, as the end of the novel demonstrates, is more moderate, the passionate language of this attack illuminates why Das Gänsemännchen failed to find the general acceptance for which Wassermann had hoped: a society thus vilified is not likely to take to heart the medium of its vilification. Frenssen was capable of such bitterness only towards Germany's enemies: Daniel's cri de coeur underlines Wassermann's lack of this essential identification of "Heimatdichter" and "Volk." The reconciliation of Daniel and the townsfolk is an attempt to bridge the gulf between the creative spirit and the bourgeois, and at the same time elucidates Wassermann's conception of the artist's position in society. In their first conversation the Gänsemännchen goes straight to the heart of Daniel's problem. His art has isolated him from the rest of humanity, and has coated him with an impenetrable armour to protect him from the joys and sorrows of other men: "Unmenschen, die das Kreuz der Welt auf sich nehmen und doch im Schmerz über ihr eigenes

Schicksal hinüberwachsen."<sup>57</sup> Daniel replies that he does not understand, and then by interrupting the conversation with the sound of his children's voices, Wassermann underlines the Gänsemännchen's point: in order to live fully one must participate in the actions and emotions of the surrounding world. With a striking simile, the Gänsemännchen curses Daniel's ivory tower and insists that his imperviousness to real emotion robs even his creation of its value:

Hättest du doch gelebt, gelebt, gelebt, ganz wahr  
und ganz nah wie ein Nackender im Dornendickicht . . .  
da wäre dein Werk nicht im Ringen gegen deine Finsternis  
und beschränkte Qual gewesen, unfrei vor den  
Menschen, ungesegnet von Gott. 58

Wassermann here stands shoulder to shoulder with Frenssen and Ompstedt in insisting that art reflect, and be a product of, the reality of everyday life. The artistic "Übermensch" is ultimately an "Unmensch," in whom neither God nor man can find favour. As a result of his day on the Gänsemännchen's pedestal Daniel comes to accept Lenore's verdict on the townspeople:

Wie auch sonst die Menschen beschaffen sind, wenn  
er in ihre Augen sieht, ergreift es ihn mit Über-  
irdischem Gefühl. In allen Augen ist das Gleiche;  
das gleiche Feuer, die gleiche Angst, das gleiche  
Bitten, die gleiche Einsamkeit, das gleiche Los,  
der gleiche Tod; in allen ist Gottes Seele. 59

Daniel at this point sounds very like Frenssen's pastor Adam Barfood. "Ganz wahr und ganz nah wie ein Nackender im Dornendickicht" is precisely how Adam lives,

and this way of living, coupled with a belief in man as well as in the divine power, is what gives him the strength to rise above the loss of his sons. When Adam sees the boy crossing the wintry heath to fetch medicine, he is struck by the nobility in man, the courage and tenacity in adversity. Daniel's insight is less uplifting: he becomes aware of the common bond of humanity. To speak of the brotherhood of man would be to go too far however, for the townsfolk crossing the square remain alone, each with his own burden of troubles, his own struggle for existence. Daniel does not so much feel at one with them as realize the nature of their burdens, which removes the evil and malice with which he had previously credited them.

Freed from his misanthropic isolation, Daniel moves back to the village where he was born, and becomes a beloved teacher to a small group of his former students. The description of him at this stage of his life sounds like an enthusiastic critic's comment on Frenssen: "die selbstleuchtende Persönlichkeit, der Einklang zwischen Wort und Tun, der Menschenernst, der Menschenblick, die Hingebung an eine Sache und das grosse Gefühl von ihr."<sup>60</sup> Like Frenssen in Barlt, Daniel becomes an adviser to the villagers but--in total contrast to the "Heimatsdichter"--instead of drawing authentic artistic inspiration from the down-to-earth countryfolk, Daniel abandons creativity altogether.

There is a degree of banality in this end to a stormy career of significant creativity, for Daniel, in losing his music, gains an effectiveness to help his fellow man, which in turn gives him peace of mind. The transformation of a misanthropic genius into an understanding father who only becomes angry when he sees animals mistreated is not only unconvincing but also the rather trite converse of the thesis, which is a constant theme for example in the work of Thomas Mann, that an artist's creativity can only flourish in isolation from the world. For Daniel, the price of creativity is not only the lack of social effectiveness, but it amounts to a complete inability to relate to his fellow men. Frenssen's Otto Babendiek, by contrast, is in fact only creative when he is in contact with the life of the village: this aspect of the "Heimatroman" is at odds with Wassermann's concept of the artist. Despite all the "Heimatroman" themes of rustic simplicity and contentment on the soil of home, Daniel's reconciliation with humanity is artificial. The metamorphosis is too sudden, and Wassermann does not show the villagers' acceptance of the returned prodigal son. The village itself is a sanitized, deodorized city-dweller's idyll, more reminiscent of Marie Antoinette's Petit Trianon than Frenssen's Barlt. As a refuge from the insupportable reality of bourgeois society, Daniel's Eschenbach shares with Otto Babendiek's Stormfeld that

retreat from the twentieth century which characterizes the "Heimatroman," but the fact that Eschenbach can provide no creative impetus sharply separates Wassermann from the "Heimatsdichter." Wassermann's position is not as clear, however, as Mann's, for both Daniel and Joseph Kerkhoven, to whom a similar loss occurs at the end of Joseph Kerkhovens dritte Existenz, choose to abandon their ivory tower and their creativity in favour of social involvement within a limited sphere.

In the novel that follows Das Gänsemännchen, Christian Wahnschaffe (1919), the hero similarly turns his back on isolation; this time however the isolation is the externally imposed barrier of social privilege. Christian, the glittering son of an immensely rich industrialist, renounces his fortune and descends by stages into the abyss of poverty and human degradation. The favoured, secure and protected world of the European upper class in the last years before the Great War was already no more than a memory when Wassermann began the novel in 1916, but the experience which gave rise to it, his triumphal tour through Germany in 1912, dated back to a time when the fabric of society, hallowed by tradition and supported by so much wealth and power, seemed outwardly unassailable, if threatened by the rising tide of unrest. A year before he made this journey Wassermann noted in his diary:

Ich bin mir darüber klar, dass die Welt grossen und im Verlauf der nächsten zwanzig Jahre entscheidenden Ereignissen entgegensteuert; dass die sozialen Gegensätze sich in einer unheilvollen Weise zugespitzt haben, dass die Menschheit in einer hohen, ja fieberhaften Spannung lebt. Krieg? Mag sein. Obwohl mir keine Art von Krieg erlösend scheint für diese Spannung. Der Übermut der Besitzenden steigt beinahe von Tag zu Tag; das Elend der Armen nicht minder. Die Mittelklasse muss dabei zerrieben werden. 61

Nevertheless Wassermann was not impervious to the seductive glitter of high society. Marta Karlweis speaks of his enthusiasm during the tour: "Diese Bezauberung ist in seinem Leben ebenso wichtig und fruchtbar gewesen wie die harten Wirklichkeiten, obgleich der Zweifel in seinem Innern sicher nicht ganz zum Schweigen gebracht war."<sup>62</sup> Since her relationship had not begun in 1912, Marta's account is based on Wassermann's own recollections, and it is possible that his doubts were not as "sicher" as she says. Four years passed before he began work on the novel, and the intimations of impending doom for the Wahnschaffes and their class must have been influenced to some extent by the course of the war. In 1910 Wassermann tried to present in the character of Erwin Reiner an example of the jeunesse dorée, but the novel never rises above the level of Melusine as a tedious story of virtue triumphant, and has no contact at all with the problems of the poor. Christian Wahnschaffe on the other hand moves in stages from the pinnacle to the depths of society, and the social message of the novel is driven home in the



conjunction of the nadir of Christian's social progression and the culmination of his development as a man.

Christian is introduced through the eyes of Crammon, a cynical playboy who spends his life travelling between the capitals of Europe and the country estates of his friends. Instead of the spoiled weakling he expects, Crammon finds Christian to be "einen durch und durch gesunden, blonden jungen Athleten, der ihn um anderthalb Kopflängen überragte, sich seiner Kraft und Schönheit ohne eine Spur von Eitelkeit bewusst war und von froher Laune strahlte."<sup>63</sup> Without a hint of irony, Wassermann makes Christian the embodiment of "la belle époque." Physically he could pass for one of Frenssen's farmers or one of Ompsted's cavalry lieutenants, from whom he is differentiated only in the total unproductivity of his existence. From the outset, the novel is weakened by the uneasy juxtaposition of realism and allegory, for Christian charms hunting dogs and stands untouched by falling trees: Wassermann's predilection for extremes robs Christian Wahnschaffe of its effectiveness as a work of social criticism and reduces it to the level of an intellectually pretentious melodrama.

At the beginning of the novel Christian is the brightest star in the glittering cosmos of the new aristocracy of money. It is significant that Wassermann, whose origins

are almost at the opposite end of the social scale, uses the new monied aristocracy as his example of the upper class. The old aristocracy has become an irrelevant atavism in the context of the Reich as a whole, as Ompteda fears that it will in Prussia, and the task for Wassermann is to expose the decadence behind the facade of wealth and power in the new families. In Eysen Ompteda indicates that at least one branch of the Gideon family has already succumbed to decadence: both authors are fully aware that the new aristocracy is no more impervious to the inner hollowness that precedes decline than the old. Indeed the absorption by the new families of the culture of the old transmits the virus of decadence even while their fortunes are ostensibly still rising.

Christian's mother regards him as the acme and the example for their entire class, and rejects his father's complaints when Christian spends over half a million marks on a diamond:

Es gibt viele Söhne aus reichem Hause, die ihr Leben in derselben Weise verbringen wie Christian. Sie bezeugen, meiner Ansicht nach, den Hochstand einer Entwicklung; sie betrachten sich selbst als Ausgezeichnete, und das mit vollem Recht. Sie sind durch Geburt und Vermögen der Mühe des Berufs enthoben. Warum sollen sie sich nicht auf aristokratische Art von der Masse unterscheiden? 64

Albrecht Wahnschaffe, Christian's father, has no appreciation for this concept of an aristocracy based on aesthetic excellence. He is also a realist and feels that

extravagances like the diamond are dangerous for the existing social order. Wahnschaffe has worked ceaselessly to achieve his position, and feels that the results of his labours have contributed to the benefit of the nation as a whole:

Ein solches Ausmass von Arbeit bedeutet natürlich Verzicht auf allen Linien. Man ist Brennstoff, der Helligkeit gibt und verzehrt wird. Ehe, Familie, Freundschaft, Kunst, Natur, sie existieren kaum für mich. Ich habe gelebt wie der Bergmann im Stollen . . . . Als ich anfang, war unser Land noch ein armes Land. Heute ist es ein reiches Land. Ich will nicht behaupten, dass meine Leistung dem ganzen gegenüber hoch in Betracht kommt; aber sie ist einzurechnen. Sie ist ein Symptom unsres Aufschwungs, unsrer jungen Macht, unsres wirtschaftlichen Gedeihens. 65

For Wahnschaffe, only a life of productive service is worthy of respect. Although he says nothing against the old aristocracy, his comment: "Der Weltzustand ist immer gefährdet, wenn Männer aus dem Bürgertum exzentrisch werden,"<sup>66</sup> implies that the old families are now so peripheral to the mainstream of German life that it is irrelevant if they are eccentric. For his own class, however, he insists on productivity, even from its most privileged members. He describes Christian's playboy existence as "eine Kette von Nichtigkeiten"<sup>67</sup> and tries to persuade him to take a position in the diplomatic corps like his brother Wolfgang or in the firm.

Wahnschaffe's concept of the responsibility of the new aristocracy, although he, like Baron Gideon's industrialist

father, still thinks of himself as a "Bürger," is identical to Ompfeda's view of the old nobility. He feels the same pride as Rudolf von Eysen in the contribution of his class to the present glory of the nation, and has the same blind spot in thinking that the mass of Germany's citizens would tolerate indefinitely the maintenance of their privileged position, and the concomitant gulf between rich and poor, even if the privileges are earned by superhuman industry. He does not see that he himself has been the main recipient of the fruits of his labours, and as Christian becomes acquainted with the poverty of the proletariat, Wassermann clearly implies that a more equitable distribution of wealth is essential for the creation of a society in which all men can live with dignity. It is significant that, along with the ethic of service to the nation, Wahnschaffe has taken over from the old nobility one of the characteristics which Rudolf von Eysen sees as contributing heavily to the weakness of the old families: their preference for positions in the service of the state rather than in industry. Even Christian's ruthlessly ambitious brother Wolfgang is a diplomat and not an industrialist. The "feudalization of the bourgeoisie" reflected in this aristocratic preference implies that the glory of families such as the Wahnschaffes is likely to be of short duration when the qualities that built the fortune are not transmitted to succeeding

generations.

Whereas in Thomas Mann's Buddenbrooks Johann Buddenbrook passes on to his heirs a position of power tempered by a paternalistic concern for his workers, Albrecht Wahnschaffe is unable to transmit anything to his children but his money. Lübeck is small and personal; the Wahnschaffe empire is of another time and on another scale. That the intervening fifty years have changed society out of all recognition can be seen from the contrast between the confrontation between Thomas and the mob in 1848, where a joke, couched in familiar "Plattdeutsch" and addressed to an old acquaintance, is sufficient to defuse the situation, and that between Otto Kapeller and strikers in Etzel Andergast, where a company of soldiers faces the crowd with rifles raised. For Wassermann the Wahnschaffes are representatives of their class, as the Buddenbrooks are for Thomas Mann, but Wassermann's are more one-sided and their representative quality is in consequence less subtle. The Wahnschaffes lack the warm humanity of the Lübeck patricians. Where Mann has Tony Buddenbrook, with her eternal youthfulness, Wassermann has the sado-masochistic character of Judith Wahnschaffe. In the relative unsubtlety of his characters, Wassermann shares the same failing as Frenssen and Ompstedt.

Since Albrecht Wahnschaffe's children offer not the

slightest promise that they will face up to the responsibilities of power by attempting to improve social conditions, Wassermann seems to have no hope that the revolutionary confrontation between the upper class and the proletariat can be avoided. Christian's actions scarcely fall within the realm of practical social solutions, and the example of the Russian Revolution looms in the novel as a possible antidote to a desperate situation.

The "feudalization" of the Wilhelminian bourgeoisie is apparent in Wassermann's failure to differentiate between the non-noble plutocrats and the aristocracy. The incident of Randolph von Stettner, who leaves for America because he has been ostracized by the other officers in his regiment for refusing to fight a duel, is a condemnation of the entire upper class and its aristocratic code of honour. Von Stettner's account of army life forms an interesting counterpart to Ompsted's verdict on the duel in Der zweite Schuss, and exemplifies the way in which Wassermann condemns an entire class without concern for a balanced analysis. A friend of Stettner's is killed in a duel demanded by another officer, whose fiancée he kissed after the annual celebration for the Kaiser's birthday. In the officers' mess Stettner expresses his revulsion at the code that requires such conduct: "Die Kaste, die fossile Kaste hatte einen Mord verlangt . . . nun und nimmer könne ich einen

Ehrbegriff gutheissen, der in krankhafter Übersteigerung ein Menschenleben wegen einer Bagatelle vernichtet."<sup>68</sup>

The officer in question obliquely calls him a coward, but Stettner refuses to issue the obligatory challenge. His reasons are precisely the ones expounded by Ompteda in Der zweite Schuss: human life is worth more than the preservation of a code. Where Wassermann and Ompteda differ is in the epithet "die fossile Kaste." For Ompteda the caste itself still has life and vitality: he only concedes that certain traditions, among them the duel, are atavisms, whereas Wassermann, the outsider, condemns the caste in general. The reaction of the Officer Corps to the ban on duelling makes Ompteda's position appear remarkably enlightened for a member of the caste, and at the same time makes Wassermann's outright rejection of militarism in German life seem all the more radical in the context of the age. It represents yet another aspect of the class structure that must be eradicated before German society can become both just and humane.

The feelings of boredom and futility that sour Stettner's attitude to his profession in the first place would have been fully understood by Sylvester von Geyer, whose stubbornness is similarly aroused by the military hierarchy. Stettner rejects the justification that the system and its discipline promote a higher freedom and

have a morally beneficial effect, as well as the notion that his service fulfils a socially useful function:

Die Leistung ist, von einem menschlichen und geistigen Gesichtspunkt aus betrachtet, gleich null. Gewährt wurde mir dafür ein Privileg, vielmehr eine Summe von Privilegien, die zusammen eine hohe soziale Rangstufe ausmachten, allerdings um den Preis des vollkommenen Verzichts auf Persönlichkeit. 69

In human terms the price of social position is too high, and the position itself undeserved. To attain it one must abdicate all claim to the unhampered development of character, or even to the assertion of individuality. Man is reduced to the level of a switch in a complicated electrical circuit, and the achievement itself is worthless from a human and intellectual standpoint. Those who are satisfied with the life are powered by base motives: to utilize their connexions for greater social prestige, to make an advantageous marriage, or simply to exist in the hedonistic futility of sport or gambling. Only in war would it be possible to prove oneself and justify one's existence, but war seems an unlikely prospect in the security of the Wilhelminian era. War, in any case, is neither humanly nor intellectually satisfying, although Stettner stops short of making this ultimate point. Wassermann's diaries<sup>70</sup> in fact show that his initial reaction to the events of August 1914 differed little from that of Frenssen, or indeed the majority of Europeans.<sup>71</sup> He did not at that time share the revulsion against war expressed



in many Expressionist dramas.

The difference between the attitudes of Stettner and Sylvester von Geyer to military life lies in the pre-eminence given by the former to the importance of the individual, which the latter accords to the demands of the state. Wassermann here shows the opposite blind spot to Albrecht Wahnschaffe and Rudolf von Eysen in that he sees only the privileges of the superior position, where they see only the obligations. Wassermann ignores the idealism of duty which is present along with the privileges in the traditional system, and which Ompteda makes Sylvester von Geyer realize in the course of that novel. Wassermann sees only the fossilized caste, but Ompteda stresses the obligations of privilege to society at large. Instead of one of exploitation of the rest of the population, Ompteda views the position of the officer-aristocrat in terms of the ethic of service, and here he indulges in the Rousseauistic fantasy, which had become a basic tenet of conservative faith, that the state and the national community are synonymous.

Albrecht Wahnschaffe cites "Treue gegen die Sache"<sup>72</sup> as the driving force behind his dedication to a joyless life--the same reason that gives Daniel Nothafft satisfaction at the end of Das Gänsemännchen--and inspires Ompteda's officers--and the cause in this case is work for its own sake and for the good of the nation. When he speaks of

Germany's growth and present power however, the nation is reduced to an industrial statistic, and is consequently even more impersonal than the view of Ompteda's officers, whose immediate responsibility is for the welfare of the men under their command. For the new aristocracy of money there is no tradition of "Adel verpflichtet:" personal ambition is the only trait that Wahnschaffe transmits to his children.

It is not a social duty but a human one that transforms Christian Wahnschaffe from playboy to saint. Aesthetically jarring as the whole concept is, it nevertheless reveals the underlying thrust of Wassermann's ideas for Germany's rebirth. He believes, as did the Expressionists, in the essential goodness of man, without the "Heimatluchters'" hierarchy of racial values. The artistic level however, for all the novel's pretentiousness, is no higher than that of Frenssen's novels. The distortion that takes place to produce a character like Niels Heinrich Engelschall must therefore be a result of society's failings, but Wassermann is unable to decide what kind of society will eradicate injustice. He has a vision of the "new man," but even he is swallowed up in the abyss of human misery.

For Christian Wahnschaffe, "der Siegreich-Vollendete,"<sup>73</sup> The bridging of the gulf between rich and poor entails the self-imposed isolation from the mainstream of society. He

vanishes from Berlin and his friends never see him again, but there are reports that he has been sighted wherever human misery is most acute: at a mine disaster in the Ruhr, in the East End of London, and in New York's Chinatown.

In Das Gänsemännchen society is a single unit, despite the existence of classes, and Daniel at the end moves into it, forsaking his isolation. The fact that he does this in a village, far from the pressures of mass industrial society, indicates the common ground between Wassermann and Frenssen. Christian Wahnschaffe marks Wassermann's turn towards greater social involvement, his surmounting of the problems of his youthful isolation and recognition of the need to work for social improvement. Instead of an individual against society, this novel is concerned with a society irremediably split between the privileged and the under-privileged: the "new man," "der Siegreich-Vollendete" builds a bridge of compassion between the two sections, but in order to do so he has to separate himself from his own group and work as an individual.

Within the belief in the distorting effect of environment on the character of the individual, there exists the possibility of another solution besides the utopian spiritual salvation presented in Christian Wahnschaffe: if the environment is changed its effects will no longer be detrimental. Change can either be gradual or sudden, as

occurs in a revolution. The essential results of gradual change, which is the solution broadly advocated by Frenssen, are an equitable distribution of wealth assuring all a reasonable standard of living, and the possibility of upward mobility. The figure of Amadeus Voss, to whom Christian's liberality gives both, reflects Wassermann's lack of hope for significant betterment from this direction. The sudden betterment of Voss's position makes him no happier, for the scars of his former poverty have twisted his character permanently. Some form of social democracy, which would, given Wassermann's ideas of social justice, be the form that Germany would take in this gradual improvement, is therefore not the answer for him. The spiritual aspect of injustice must be eradicated by other means. His hopes for sudden change through revolution are equally low: the mutinous sailors who attack Eva's castle are just as bestial--although with more justification--as Grand Duke Maidanoff.

Wassermann avoids advocating specific, practical remedies for social ills, even when he deals with a specific problem, because he believes that only a fundamental reformation of the ethical priorities of European society will strike to the root of the problem. The rebirth of society can come only from the hearts of men. If however, as Wassermann maintains, external pressures have distorted

the basic goodness of human nature, the attempt to influence society by reawakening that goodness is an impossibly utopian vision, requiring literally millions of saints because of the individual nature of the conversion process. It is a measure of Wassermann's own isolation from his fellow Germans that he shied away from the arena of practical politics and remained an uncommitted observer as the decisive events which he foresaw actually took place.

The pessimism with which Wassermann viewed the social and political situation during the Weimar years is most strikingly reflected in the mention of the need for a strong leader to impose justice. The Princess in Faber oder die verlorenen Jahre (1924), when faced with the insuperable problem of the situation among the children of the poor, is the first of Wassermann's characters to voice these sentiments, which belong among the commonplaces of conservative writers<sup>74</sup>:

Was das ist, was es bedeutet, die Welt verelendeter Kinder. Sie haben ein Blick hineingetan heute: aber das ist nichts; dahinter liegen Greuel himmelhoch; die Marter ist nicht auszusagen, nicht auszuschöpfen, eh nicht einer von neuem auftritt, der die Menschheit auf die Knie zwingt. 75

The vision of a new leader who will force mankind to abandon the cruelty and greed that cause so much misery approaches the call for a new Caesar expressed by other writers in the postwar period, "Jahre der Zersetzung aller Schicksale."<sup>76</sup> The philosopher Melchior Ghisels tells

Etzel Andergast in Der Fall Maurizius that a new Caesar may well be necessary to right the injustices of society, "obgleich mir graut vor dem Chaos, das ihn hervorbringen soll."<sup>77</sup> The vital difference between the Caesar envisioned by these two characters, and the "Führer" of works like Arthur Moeller van den Bruck's Das dritte Reich, lies in the supranational nature of Wassermann's vision. Although she does not explore the situation more fully, the Princess talks of forcing "die Menschheit" to its knees, and Melchior Ghisels makes no mention of a national leader, although in Der Fall Maurizius, as in virtually all his novels, Wassermann depicts problems in a German context. The saviour of mankind will enforce justice in the name of suffering humanity and the starving children, whereas the national leader whom Adam Barfood mentions in his speech at the end of Frenssen's Der Pastor von Poggsee will restore dignity to the life of both the individual and the nation.

The leader envisioned by the Princess seems to be a composite figure made up of Jehovah's administration of justice and Christ's championship of the weak and helpless. At any rate he is a utopian figure, just as the phrase "Greuel himmelhoch" is emotional and non-analytical. The despair expressed four years later by Melchior Ghisels reflects a more realistic appraisal of the nature of a new Caesar and the conditions that would produce him. In

the chaos of defeat, revolution and inflation, however, Faber reflects the same degree of pessimism as is present in Christian Wahnschaffe. The perennially optimistic Frenssen can portray his ideal man as a realizable composite of desirable traits: "der Siegreich-Vollendete" is a utopian, unworldly vision born of despair that present circumstances can bring forth the leader necessary to change fundamentally the fabric of society.

In his last novel, Joseph Kerkhovens dritte Existenz (1934), Wassermann not only abandons hope that activism will solve the problems of society but goes further, despairing in his deepening pessimism of even utopian solutions. Marie Kerkhoven is so appalled at the conditions under which children live in the slums of Berlin that she takes a dozen into her own house. She throws herself into this "Seelenwerk"<sup>78</sup> with her customary passion, for like Christian Wahnschaffe she is not interested in simple philanthropy. She finds however that it is impossible to do more than feed, clothe and amuse the children: beyond that lies an unbridgeable chasm, the nature of which she tries in vain to analyze:

Das eisig Trennende war nicht zu überbrücken. Es lag nicht an den Jahren oder an dem Kastenunterschied oder den eingefleischten Vorurteilen oder an der Bequemlichkeit hier und der geschlechterlangen Unterdrückung und Entbehrung dort; es lag tiefer. 79

Wassermann is also unable to account for this gulf. He feels

that practical social reasons are inadequate to explain it, an attitude which runs parallel to his lack of faith in practical solutions to the problem.

The squalor and misery of their environment have made of these children creatures of another sphere, with a frame of reference that is totally foreign to Marie. She does not possess the gift of grace by means of which Christian Wahnschaffe and Agathon Geyer bridge the gulf by assuming the burdens of the under-privileged. Marie can give them no moral or spiritual guidance, for her conventional Sunday School platitudes evoke no response against the experiences of their lives. It is a measure of Wassermann's despair at the end of his life that in this novel he does not attempt a solution, even a utopian one. By bringing Kerkhoven back from Java, where he has been doing research on tropical diseases, he enables Marie simply to turn her back on the problem. The success which she has later with a school for village children suggests that Wassermann felt his limitations in dealing with the colossal problems of industrial society: far removed from these pressures, human contact can be re-established, but he has no answers for the problems of the cities.

The evasive nature of Wassermann's response to social problems has its roots in the vagueness of his whole approach and his inability to analyze. Instead of a reasoned assess-



ment of, for example, the plight of Germany's children, which might be expected to lead to concrete conclusions, Wassermann presents the reader with melodramatic tableaux of child abuse and starvation, and then backs away from advocating a solution, preferring instead to take refuge in some unidentifiable and unconvincing "gulf" between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The mythical qualities of this gulf are quite as nebulous as the equally mythical racial solidarity of the "Heimatsdichter," and the propagation thereof is equally irresponsible in a writer purporting to be a "Volkserzieher."

Both in Der Fall Maurizius and in the Alexander Herzog episode in Joseph Kerkhovens dritte Existenz, Wassermann excoriates the upper bourgeoisie and the social system in which they hold the reins of power. "Die Gier, die Besitzwut, die Rachsucht, die Verblendung, die Selbstgerechtigkeit, der Dünkel, der Paragraphenwahn"<sup>80</sup>--these are the qualities of the bourgeoisie, personified by Ganna Herzog. Wassermann's vituperation contains the same elements of paranoia that he discerns in the possessiveness of the bourgeoisie: here as elsewhere in his work the constant extremes of language and insistence on depicting every character and almost every scene in the starkest light reduce the novels to the level of trivia.

The most constant aspect of Wassermann's attitude to

social problems is his condemnation of the bourgeois society as he knew it, controlled by the generation born around 1880, whose supreme representative in the novels is Andergast, the Public Prosecutor in Der Fall Maurizius. In the post-war years when the Maurizius case is reopened, the spirit of the Wilhelminian era, "eine abgelebte Vergangenheit,"<sup>81</sup> with its belief in the sacrosanct nature of the institutions of society, prevents Andergast from accepting the possibility of a miscarriage of justice. His refusal to question the system destroys Maurizius as an individual because it reduces the outsider to a symbol endangering the entire structure. As with the Herzog family in the Kerkhoven novel, the Wilhelminian bourgeoisie is so preoccupied with defending itself that it assumes the characteristics of the "Kral," the egocentric ruthlessness of an African village. Andergast is himself destroyed when he realizes that the "truth" which he proclaimed at the trial and which the system sanctified by the sentence, is in fact false, a fiction which he invented to win the case by twisting every piece of evidence to fit a pattern of predetermined guilt. His belief in the system of justice and the society of which it is a fundamental part is shattered, for the injustice in this case becomes a mocking gargoyle<sup>82</sup> that negates the value of his entire career. At the end of the novel even his son totally rejects his

justification for releasing, but not acquitting Maurizius, and Andergast collapses, "ein niedergebrochener, schuldiger Mensch."<sup>83</sup> The justification itself, in its monstrous callousness, illustrates with stark clarity Wassermann's lack of faith in systems and his lifelong insistence on the pre-eminence of the individual's rights:

Es sind Rücksichten zu nehmen, schwerwiegende Rücksichten, Existenzen stehen auf dem Spiel, der Staatskasse wären enorme Kosten aufzubürden, das Ansehen des einschlägigen Gerichtshofes wäre geschädigt, die Institution als solche der zersetzenden Kritik preisgegeben, die ohnehin die Fundamente der Gesellschaft unterminiert . . . Lass ab von der Vorstellung, dass Gerechtigkeit und Justiz ein und dasselbe sind oder zu sein haben. Sie verhalten sich wie die Symbole des Glaubens zur religiösen Übung. Du kannst mit dem Symbol nicht leben. Doch in der strengen und gewissenhaften Übung das ewige Symbol über sich zu wissen, das . . . absolviert. Eine solche Absolution ist natürlich notwendig. Dass man sich mit ihr beruhigt, ist gleichfalls notwendig. 84

The primacy of a symbol, one that can be degraded until it is no more than a meaningless decoration to disguise the crimes committed in its name, is confronted by Wassermann with the primacy of the individual's claim to happiness. Under the traditional hierarchical, authoritarian system the power of interests vested in the status quo is such that there are no adequate safeguards for the rights of the individual, and Wassermann sees no improvement deriving from the Weimar constitution. Since the prospects are no better in a revolutionary society, he sees the only hope in the commitment of those individuals who have the grace

of "cortesia" to convert others, expanding their influence in ever-widening circles until society is changed:

Bei all seiner Heimlichkeit und Geräuschlosigkeit ist er (Humanus: the man filled with "cortesia") doch eine Art Exorcist, und es gefällt ihm, Dämonen auszutreiben. Humanus zeugend, Humanus in Abertausenden wiederholt und gesteigert: tröstlicher Ausblick! . . . Kann man sich nicht vorstellen, dass dann der schreckliche Quader, der Berg des Jammers, der seit eh und je die Sonne von uns nimmt, Würfel um Würfel abgetragen wird? . . . und dass unter den monströsen Lügen barbarischer und grausamer Epochen zum Beispiel auch die verschwindet, die aus Barbarei und Grausamkeit eine durchtrieben konstruierte Staatsraison ad maiorem hominis gloriam macht. 85

To reduce the mountain of human misery is the task of all Wassermann's major heroes at the end of their development. Each in his own field, they restrict their horizons until they can be effective on a personal, man-to-man level. Agathon Geyer on the Hungarian puszta, Daniel Nothafft with his little band of disciples in Eschenbach, Christian Wahnschaffe in the world's worst slums, Etzel Andergast in his quest for justice for Maurizius, all work towards a rebirth of society on the simplest possible level: that of kindness, compassion and service to their fellow man. Although, like the Expressionists, Wassermann believes that man in his natural state is good--it is the mountain of misery that has obscured the sun--a rebirth is necessary because only thereby can man return to his natural goodness. Only the reborn man can act to remove the mountain of misery, and the example of Christian Wahnschaffe, with its consciously Christian symbolism, underlines the

spiritual element in Wassermann's concept of rebirth, which in the final analysis is not a social programme like that of Frenssen and Ompstedt. Joseph Kerkhoven finds his eventual fulfilment, not on the frontiers of medical research, but in ministering to the needs of his neighbours in a Swiss village. Wassermann writes of him: "Er übte auch nicht Kritik, weder an den Menschen, noch an ihrem Schicksal, noch am Zustand der Welt."<sup>86</sup> By the time he reaches this stage, Kerkhoven knows that he is near death, as did Wassermann when he wrote the final chapters of the novel less than six months before he died. Even so, beneath the outward calm of a man at peace with his destiny and with himself there is clearly discernable the defeated idealist's anguish over his impotence, an impotence so potentially destructive to his peace of mind that it must be camouflaged with the serenity of the philosopher-recluse.

In only one major figure, that of Johann Irlen in Etzel Andergast, does Wassermann place his exemplary man close to the seat of power. Through Irlen he issues his commentary on the foreign policy of Wilhelminian Germany and on the outbreak of the Great War. Although a part of the power elite as a major in the General Staff, Irlen is fully aware of the catastrophic course on which Germany is set. He is a representative of a new course for Germany, a combination of the Prussian military tradition, for which

Wassermann here manifests a residual admiration, and a cosmopolitan open-mindedness which would lead the nation to a new level of humanitarian idealism while retaining its practical efficiency. In this he appears to be a reincarnation of Christian Wahnschaffe, shorn of allegorical excesses, but the career of Lord Mountbatten of Burma provides an historical example that such a union of military tradition, practical effectiveness and idealism is not entirely unknown.

Irlen kills the son of the industrialist Kapeller in a duel, despite the fact that this feudal atavism is repugnant to him, because the nature of Otto Kapeller is of the utmost danger for society. In comparing him to Gore von Groothusen, an officer who became an unbearable tyrant in the small town where he was garrison commander, Irlen says to Kerkhoven that Kapeller underwent a similar transformation from a young man of unusual talent into a degenerate tyrant. Kapeller however is "ein viel gefährlicherer Gore, ein viel unheilvollerer, einer, der sich auf ein Postament gestellt hatte und auf der öffentlichen Bühne den Heros mimte."<sup>87</sup> If unchecked, such a character, when in possession of unlimited power, poses a grave threat to all around him. Otto Kapeller is the epitome of the Wilhelminian spirit, and stands as a symbol of Germany itself, with its promise and its perils. Indeed, the image

of the bombastic stage hero conjures up visions of Kaiser Wilhelm with his posturing and braggadocio. The clash between the reality of Wilhelminian Germany, exemplified by Kapeller, and Irlen's ideals impels the latter to go to Africa to discover "ob er es war, der versagt hatte, oder seine Welt, seine Erziehung, seine Ideale."<sup>88</sup>

Irlen's ideals of the German Empire are betrayed by the bombastic, sabre-rattling self-assertion of Wilhelminian policies, both internal and external: "Das Reich war ihm eine Idee, in einem anderen Sinn, als sie die Bismarksche Welt verwirklicht hatte, in einem alten, hohen Sinn, wobei die Geschichte ein weiterzeugendes war und die Pflicht des gegenwärtigen Augenblicks den Jahrhunderten die Verantwortung von den Schultern nahm."<sup>89</sup> Instead of this responsible disposition of the heritage of the past for the benefit of the future, Wilhelminian Germany squandered the gifts of its predecessors in the intoxication of newly-won power: "Finesse, Bildung, Erziehung, Anmut, Phantasie" were still present in 1900, "aber das alles war durch die ungeheuere Last von Besitz und Macht zu einem Brei von Trivialität zerquetscht worden."<sup>90</sup> Here the familiar attack on the bourgeoisie is directed at the state itself.

His despair at the arrogant irresponsibility of Germany's ruling circles leads Irlen, in July 1914, to make a final journey to England in an attempt to avert the

outbreak of war. His position in Germany is so compromised by the "Kral" instincts of his own class, who regard him as an outsider, that he can do nothing there, but centuries of experience with the responsibility of world power have mellowed England:

Selbst bei Männern, an die er vor einem Jahrzehnt noch geglaubt hatte, vermisste er die höhere Verantwortlichkeit, jene Zauberstimme, die in die Zukunft hinaustönt, auch wenn sie nur dem Tag zu gelten scheint. Sie hatten keine Demut mehr, warum nannten sie sich dann noch Deutsche; sie erlagen einem Lügentraum von der Macht des Schwerts. Drüben aber hatten sie gelernt, mit Tatsachen zu rechnen und Geschichte zu leben. 91

From a political point of view, Irlen's choice of England rather than France or Russia is a logical one. England, with her wealth and her command of the seas, was the cornerstone of the Entente, and her intervention was decisive. The fact that Wassermann not only sends him there but in addition compares the attitude of the English elite favourably with that of Germany's is of broader significance. Wassermann appears to share Frenssen's view that England more than any other nation is the example that Germany ought to emulate, although the racial similarity to which Frenssen frequently alludes is irrelevant to him. This attitude was common at the time, as evinced by the attempts of Wilhelm II to compete with England with his fleet and colonies. Irlen's view of Germany's predominant guilt for the outbreak of war is however a product of historical hindsight: at the time Wassermann believed, as



did Frenssen and Ompstedt, that Germany's enemies had first encircled and then fallen upon her. Wassermann's patriotism, being less rooted in nationalism and love for Germany as a political unit, was able to accept the notion of Germany's guilt more readily than the other two, and he is consequently more vehement than Frenssen in his rejection of her innocence. In Der Pastor von Poggsee Adam Barfood never goes further than admitting that Germany's posture contributed to the outbreak of war, whereas Irlen never mentions that other nations also shared in the responsibility.

In his consideration of social and political questions, Wassermann does not analyze a problem to arrive at a reasoned conclusion. His interest is emotional: to attack the causes of human suffering and on occasion to pillory the instigators. Although he takes his material from the German world, and to this extent can be considered a "Heimatdichter," his sympathies take no account of racial background or national allegiance. The plight of the urban proletariat or his attacks on the bourgeoisie are only incidentally in a German setting. The twin implications of Irlen's view of Germany illustrate this lack of commitment on Wassermann's part to Germany as a national entity: he asserts that the arrogant irresponsibility of Germany's leaders was the direct cause of the war, whilst maintaining that the chief traditional virtue of the German

people was their humility. The debate among historians as to the extent of Germany's war guilt is still raging, almost sixty years after 1914, and so no completely objective yardstick exists against which Irlen's contention can be measured: of much greater significance is the fact that in the 1920's Wassermann's lack of commitment to cherished national myths is such that he can accept the most extreme opposite pole: the version of the war guilt question propounded by Allied propaganda.

The romantic notion of humility as the greatest national virtue seems totally out of place in this context, and yet the fact that Wassermann includes it here provides the key to his whole position in relation to his country. Despite his rejection of nationalism, Wassermann is fully conscious that he is first and foremost a German, and though he excoriates the injustices of German society, the intent is to reform, not to destroy. The myth of "das Reich . . . in einem alten, hohen Sinn" contains two distinct and in fact incompatible traditions: that of the medieval Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation and that of the "Volk der Dichter und Denker." That the Holy Roman Empire was a conglomeration of feuding, despotic princes bent on personal aggrandisement is ignored by Wassermann, as is the equally uncomfortable fact that the people of poets and thinkers were ruled by eminently practical men

whose goal was the mobilization of the total resources of the nation in the service of the Prussian state.<sup>92</sup> Even the vocabulary, "das Reich . . . in einem alten, hohen Sinn," is that of Adam Barfood's last speech in Frenssen's Der Pastor von Poggsee, and Wassermann's romantic idealization of a mythical past is a product of the same emotional view of the national community as Adam's call for a shift of emphasis from the militarism of Potsdam to the intellectual humanism of Weimar. Adam, who is here the spokesman of Frenssen's most cherished beliefs, also considers humility a primary German virtue, and its use by Wassermann illuminates the latter's equally emotional attitude to social and political questions. It is this pre-eminently emotional approach, this idealistic rejection of pragmatism, that gives Wassermann's vision of the new Germany its exclusively utopian flavour.

#### Deutschtum and Judentum:

Two of Wassermann's early novels, Die Juden von Zirndorf (1897) and Caspar Hauser, on which he worked from 1902 to 1908, illuminate the twin poles of his heritage, "die polaren Punkte, zwischen denen ich mich suchend und grenzenziehend bewegte, das eine nach der Seite des jüdischen, das andere nach der des deutschen Problems."<sup>93</sup> Die Juden von

Zirndorf, which Wassermann wrote at the age of twenty-three, "war Aussprache, Bekenntnis, Befreiung von einem Alp, die meine Jugend zermalmt hatte."<sup>94</sup> The character of the hero, Agathon Geyer, betrays many autobiographical traits as he struggles to establish himself as a bridge between the Jewish and Christian worlds. His first act, which is significant in view of the young Wassermann's angry rejection of superstitious prejudice and hatred, is to kill Sürich Sperling, "das Urbild des Germanen,"<sup>95</sup> a Jew-hating innkeeper who despises all the trappings of civilization: law, government, the Church and authority:

Er war ein Sohn der grossen Natur rings umher, der grossen Ebene, die sich riesenleibig dehnt. Doch war sein Gemüt kindlich, und er war leicht zu lenken. Oft war er rätselhaft in seinem Wesen, schrie und tobte und war innerlich traurig. Sein Vater soll ein Riese gewesen sein. 96

Sperling is a personified caricature of the Germanic ideal transposed into the nineteenth century. The proud independence of the warrior becomes ludicrous as a village innkeeper who rails at the government, but his physical strength and the unpredictability of his childish, somewhat retarded mind make him dangerous. There is a distinct echo of the story of David and Goliath in Agathon's killing him, as well as a certain note of envy at his inborn unity with the land around him. The story of his ancestry has the suggestion of Wagnerian myths. The death of Sperling symbolizes for Agathon that "der böse Geist in diesem Volk,

durch den es hassen musste und Blut vergiessen und wusste nicht darum und war selber gequält dadurch,"<sup>97</sup> has been eradicated. The first edition of the novel is even more challenging, for there "der böse Geist" reads "der christliche Geist."<sup>98</sup>

Before he can commit this symbolic act of liberation, Agathon must cut himself loose from the Jewish community. He tells his father that he is now neither Jew nor Christian, but free and ready for his mission. In the burning church he blocks the door so that the blood-crazed soldiers cannot enter, and cries that the people should let the church burn. The scene is apocalyptic: the populace, crazed by the rumour that the alchemist Baldewin Estrich has made gold, crowd into the church: soldiers try to control the frenzy, and lightening sets the church on fire. Agathon dreams of rebirth for man amid the confusion:

Er dachte, dass nicht nur das Alte stürzen müsse, damit das Neue komme, sondern dass es gestürzt werden müsse. Er dachte, dass die Städte zerstört, niedrigerissen werden, verlassen werden müssten, damit der Mensch wieder sich selbst finde. 99

Agathon raises a dead man, and the crowd protects him from a fanatical priest, who tries to attack him as he cries out to let the church--the symbol of the gulf between Christian and Jew--burn: "und er dünkete sich wie der Vater eines neuen, freien, Gott-losen Geschlechts."<sup>100</sup>

Although the notion that man can only find himself

again, that the rebirth of German society can only take place away from the corrupting influence of the cities, is also a fundamental belief in the canon of the "Heimatroman," its combination with a call for the total destruction of the existing order puts an entirely different complexion on it. Despite the use of the verb "dünken" with its implications of arrogance and illusion, which suggests that Wassermann is here distancing himself somewhat from Agathon's vision, Agathon is such a consistently positive figure in the novel that Wassermann himself is clearly calling for a much more radical reappraisal of society than either Frenssen or Ompstedt. Agathon's call is a precursor of the Expressionist attitude to religion a decade and a half later. What is peculiar to the young Wassermann is the figure of Agathon Geyer himself, assuming a Christ-like role in raising a man from the dead while crying out for the destruction of Christianity's perversion into an instrument of oppression. Like the Expressionists, Wassermann differentiates sharply between the ethic and the institution of Christianity, applauding the former while condemning the latter.

Between the two worlds, tied to neither, Agathon Geyer stands as bridge between the defenceless subservience of his father and Sürich Sperling's elemental hatred. Out of the decadence and misery of the Nürnberg of the novel he

rises as a symbol of a new humanity that transcends the traditional divisions. For the enthusiasm and impatience of youth the process of transformation "Würfel um Würfel" is too slow: Agathon feels, when confronted with the mountain of misery, both Christian and Jewish, around him, "als ein Kind, das mit seinen Händchen Gebirge abtragen will."<sup>101</sup> For the fifty year old Wassermann the same metaphor represents the only possible type of progress. Agathon Geyer's stance is Promethean in its insistence on the abolition of religion and the reduction of the entire Judeo-Christian tradition to no more than an ethical code. This sense of mission, although it loses the fervour of fanaticism in the course of his career, remains the central attribute of Wassermann's heroes. Agathon's radical disavowal of ties of blood or faith, though similarly modified in later novels, sets the tone for all Wassermann's visions of rebirth. The rejection of the heritage is of course a fundamental departure from the concept of national rebirth of the "Heimatsdichter," and yet since Germany remained for Wassermann both the source of his inspiration and the focus of his vision of rebirth, he himself clearly was incapable of this kind of disavowal. Wassermann felt neither the need nor the desire to divorce himself from his German heritage, which became on the contrary a more conscious part of his nature in his middle

years.

Die Juden von Zirndorf was a reckoning with the problem of his youth, leaving Wassermann free to pursue his task of combating inhumanity in the German world as a German. The realization grew within him that the decision whether to be German or Jewish was unnecessary for him, since his environment, his heritage for six hundred years, was German:

Die Trennung der Begriffe wollte mir nicht in den Sinn, nicht aus dem Sinn . . . Worin besteht das Trennende? . . . Im Glauben? Ich habe nicht den jüdischen Glauben, du hast nicht den christlichen. Im Blut? Wer will sich anmassen, Blutart von Blutart zu unterscheiden? Gibt es blutreine Deutsche? 102

This claim to be as German as any gentile is an obvious rebuttal to anti-semitic superpatriots like many members of the Bund der Landwirte, for whom Christianity was a necessary ingredient of "Deutschtum." The total exclusion of Jews from the Wilhelminian Officer Corps reflects not only the extent of anti-semitism before 1914,<sup>103</sup> but also demonstrates by contrast the depth of Wassermann's desire to be accepted as a fully-fledged German. Indeed his literary output after 1896 abjures any Jewish connexion almost as strongly as Agathon Geyer's pronouncements. Only in a certain feeling for the eastern cradle of the Jewish people did his Jewish heritage make itself apparent to Wassermann. The novel Alexander in Babylon, with its fullness of oriental atmosphere, is indicative of this side of his nature, but the important novels of his mature period



deal with the problems of Germany from a German standpoint.

In Caspar Hauser Wassermann thought that he had given to Germany "ein wesentlich deutsches Buch, wie aus der Seele des Volkes heraus,"<sup>104</sup> and he was bitterly disappointed at its reception. Astonishingly enough after so long a time, much of the criticism was directed against Wassermann's interpretation of the historical figure of Hauser, and was based on the books by the teacher Meyer (Quandt in the novel) in Ansbach, and Professor Mittelstädt, both of whom condemned the foundling as a swindler. Meyer even went so far as to attribute his death to suicide by mistake! In an essay entitled "Meine persönlichen Erfahrungen mit dem Caspar Hauser Roman," Wassermann recounts how he was inundated with threats and anonymous letters, some even from the ruling house of Baden, to which, in the opinion of Feuerbach, Bismarck and many other informed members of the European aristocracy, Hauser belonged.<sup>105</sup>

In Caspar Hauser and Das Gänsemännchen, which together occupy a time span of twelve years from 1902 to 1914, from Wassermann's thirtieth to his forty-third year, his intention is to create literature of the people for the people. Although the emphasis on the "Volk" and German virtues is of course absent, the intention of the novels is much closer to "Heimatkichtung" than the end result indicates, or than writers such as Frenssen were prepared to concede.<sup>106</sup>

Despite the success of Das Gänsemännchen, which far exceeded that of any of his previous novels, Wassermann felt that he was not accepted as a German by Germans, and Christian Wahnschaffe (1919), his next novel, represents a much more international attitude. Even the action of the novel is not limited to Germany. Wassermann in the final analysis lacked the unequivocal commitment to Germany, which characterized the "Heimatsdichter," not only as a random collection of individuals, but as a national entity composed of citizens united by a common heritage of race and culture, symbolized by the institutions of the state. Because of this he remained an outsider, a solitary voice at a time when national consciousness in Europe was stronger than ever before.

This in large measure accounts for the nature of Wassermann's heroes, who exist in a constant state of war, or at the very least armed neutrality, with the society around them. Caspar Hauser, Daniel Nothafft, Klara von Kannawurf and Friedrich Benda, the Jewish scholar in Das Gänsemännchen who is driven abroad by racial prejudice, are exemplary characters for Wassermann, but they are society's antagonists, out of step with the average reader. This is in sharp contrast to the heroes of Frenssen and Ompstead, or for that matter Dickens, who represents for both Wassermann and Frenssen the epitome of a "Heimatsdichter."

Although Wassermann maintains that the world of these two novels is "innerste deutsche Welt und . . . gültige deutsche Menschen. Deutsch die Stadt, deutsch der Weg, deutsch die Nacht, deutsch der Baum, deutsch die Luft und das Wort,"<sup>107</sup> the heroes, about whom the novels ultimately revolve, are antithetical to this world. Daniel Nothafft is indeed rooted in his native soil, and the geese in the tall grass around Eschenbach are as evocative as the seagulls in Frenssen's "Watt" but one would not expect to meet Daniel on the village street as one finds Jörn Uhl striding through the fields of Dithmarschen. For all the authenticity of the reproduction of the Franconian countryside, these two novels have little with which the reader can identify.

Wassermann's heroes have other values than Frenssen's, who share the concerns of their class and community. The ideals of characters such as Agathon Geyer and Christian Wahnschaffe are those of a higher humanity, which does not in the novels undergo a translation into practical terms. The idealism of their careers is too utopian for practical application, and the absence of a concrete grounding in everyday reality undermines the likelihood that the reader will identify with them. Otto Babendiek is less programatic in his values than any other of Frenssen's heroes, but he still displays a basic minimum of the standard qualities

for the hero of a "Heimatroman:" love of his native land, optimism about its political and social institutions, and the conservatism of a man basically at peace with his environment and himself. With the exception of Daniel Nothafft's fondness for the Franconian countryside--the emotion is no stronger than that and does not extend to the inhabitants--all these aspects are missing in Wassermann's heroes.

Wassermann's ambivalent attitude to German society is most clearly displayed in Christian Wahnschaffe. The novel resulted from his triumphal tour of Germany in 1912, which showed that in some circles at any rate, he had achieved the acceptance he desired, and for all the criticism of the rich in the novel, there is a feeling that he was both impressed by that society and flattered by his acceptance. Kasimir Edschmid wrote of Christian Wahnschaffe in 1920: "Wem diese Welt so masslos imponiert, wer innerlich fasziniert ist von ihr wie Wassermann, kommt nicht frei. Der zieht keine Schlüsse."<sup>108</sup> Edschmid's purpose in this review appears to be the relegation of Wassermann to a lower level of literary merit than the Expressionist writers, who, he says, have more blood and soul, and the description of the Wahnschaffe clan in the novel shows that the adjective "masslos" is in itself a huge overstatement of Wassermann's fascination with the life of the upper classes.

It is however true that Wassermann draws no conclusions from the crass juxtaposition of immense wealth and grinding poverty, and in the face of such a desperate social situation the trite melodrama of Christian's descent constitutes a reaction of such woeful inadequacy that failure to draw a conclusion must be deemed an act of moral cowardice.

This tour, which coincided with the beginning of work on Das Gänsemännchen, gave Wassermann the feeling of being "Mitglied einer Nation, gleichgeordnet als Mensch, gleichberechtigt als Bürger."<sup>109</sup> The desire of his childhood, to be accepted as an individual, was fulfilled: "Angewoben war mir das Verlangen, in einer gewissen Fülle des mich umgebenden Menschlichen aufzugehen."<sup>110</sup> His experiences with eastern European Jews in Vienna had shown Wassermann that his outlook was basically German, and he had no sympathy whatever for Zionism:

Ich fühlte nicht die Solidarität, auf die sie (the Zionists) mich verpflichten wollten, nur weil ich Jude war. Die religiöse Bindung fehlte, aber auch die nationale Bindung fehlte. <sup>111</sup>

In the 1920's anti-semitism ultimately caused him more shame for the Germans than suffering for the plight of the Jews: "Leidet man nicht immer am meisten dort, wo man am tiefsten liebt, wenn auch am vergeblichsten."<sup>112</sup>

Although Wassermann felt as a German, his attempt to write a "Volksbuch" failed because he stressed always the

primacy of the individual in conflict with the community where the "Heimatsdichter" stressed the individual's inseparability from the community. Racial differences are of course not the only reason why a man feels an outsider, and in Wassermann's case his experiences as a Jew did no more than reinforce this aspect of his nature. The pre-eminently supranational humanitarianism of his philosophy would have precluded him from writing a true "Heimatsroman," complete with national and racial myths, even if he had been a Prussian officer or a Dithmarschen farmer. Wassermann's vision of Germany's future contains no attempt to define the peculiar nature and needs of the German people, although when he polemicises, as in his discussion of anti-semitism in Mein Weg als Deutscher und Jude, he does lapse into national generalizations. Qualities such as narrowness, arrogance, incurable prejudice and murderous hatred are listed as characteristic of the Germans, and those who are different, "die Besten," are "stolze Einsame; Tapfere, die gegen den Strom schwimmen."<sup>113</sup> Wassermann was caught in the tragic dilemma of desperately longing to be accepted by the very people whose attitudes he hated. It is therefore hardly surprising that he failed to draw any conclusions in his novels as to the specific form that a rebirth of German society should take.

### The Ethical Foundation

From the religious point of view, Wassermann retained no ties with Judaism, and at the turn of the century Christianity in Germany possessed few qualities which would tempt him to take the ultimate step of conversion. The anti-semitic history of Christianity caused Wassermann to view it with deep suspicion, and although Agathon Geyer defends the New Testament to his father with the words: "Was Millionen gläubig wissen, kann doch nicht für irgend einen Sünde sein,"<sup>114</sup> Die Juden von Zirndorf does not show the institutions of Christianity in any favourable light.

In the majority of Wassermann's works, religious questions are of little importance, since "cortesia," the high ideal of humanity, is the goal and the ultimate answer to the world's problems along the long road from Die Juden von Zirndorf to Der Fall Maurizius (1928). That "cortesia," the love of humanity that Christian Wahnschaffe and Agathon Geyer display is in the noblest tradition of Jesus Christ and St. Francis of Assisi, shows the extent of Wassermann's veneration of the ideal of humanity: it encompasses for him the quintessence of Christianity, but is by no means restricted to the adherents of one particular faith: "Sind es doch gerade die edlen Juden heute, die

Allerstillsten freilich da und dort im Lande, in denen die christliche Idee und christliche Art in kristallener Reinheit ausgeprägt ist."<sup>115</sup>

Wassermann makes a clear distinction between the Christian ethic, which he considers the noblest expression of "cortesia," and the institutions of Christianity, the pernicious influence and sordid political machinations of which have caused so much misery. Basically uncommitted as he is, he can see the Jews' virtues in terms of Christianity, whilst at the same time criticising those who have made of institutionalized Christianity a rationale for murderous hatred. In this separation of the ethic and the institution, Wassermann is very close to Frenssen's position in Hilligenlei. There too the Church as an institution is rejected, while the ethic and Jesus as a man receive favourable treatment. The key difference in the positions of the two authors lies in Frenssen's attempt, which becomes much more extreme thirty years later in Der Glaube der Nordmark, selectively to adapt parts of Christianity, as transmitted by the New Testament, rejecting those elements which he considers inimical to the German character, such as the Pauline doctrine of chastity. Wassermann, concerned more with mankind as a whole than with differences in national character, rejects only the man-made distortions of the religion. For each author, the



religious foundation is an essential ingredient of society's rebirth, and each applies it in accordance with his credo: for Frenssen it is a German form of Christianity and for Wassermann a general humanitarian ethic of compassion.

Just as Wassermann's criticism of Christianity is limited to its misuse as a justification for injustice, one of the primary questions of Der Fall Maurizius centres on the fallibility of human justice as it usurps the divine prerogative "ohne Ansehung der Person zu strafen."<sup>116</sup> The great debate between Andergast and Maurizius culminates in the story of Klakutsch, the gaoler who hanged himself upon realizing that the justice he served was fallible. Human courts allot punishment without consideration for the degree to which the accused is responsible for his own actions, and this leads constantly and inevitably to injustice. Wareme's shattering argument to Etzel is that there is no justice in the world, since the great crimes against humanity--war, genocide, slavery--go unpunished and unrepented. Wareme has no hope of an eventual divine reckoning for those untouched by earthly law, and Wassermann nowhere mentions this possibility: God does not intervene in the novels to make the cause of justice triumph.

In his despair at the prospect that justice is unrealizable, Etzel seeks out the philosopher Melchior Ghisels.<sup>117</sup> A metaphor of his: "Auch auf dem vollsten

Glas schwimmt noch das Blütenblatt einer Rose, und auf dem Blütenblatt haben zehntausend Engel Platz,"<sup>118</sup> gives Etzel hope that its author possesses the wisdom to answer the question whether justice is possible. Ghisels agrees on the primacy of justice, but adds that "Gut und Böse entscheiden sich nicht im Verkehr der Menschen untereinander, sondern ausschliesslich im Umgang des Menschen mit sich selbst."<sup>119</sup> To this Etzel asks whether he can therefore abandon Maurizius to his fate: "Was ist denn die Gerechtigkeit, wenn ich sie nicht durchsetze, ich, ich selber, Etzel Andergast?"<sup>120</sup> To the ethical imperative of this question, Ghisels has nothing but resignation: "Verzeihen Sie mir, ich bin ein ohnmächtiger Mensch,"<sup>121</sup> and Etzel realizes that the metaphor is simply a mysterious image, unrelated to reality. He can derive no practical help from it, except for the spiritual support provided by the recognition that there does exist a higher truth than that expressed in the history of man's inhumanity to man. It points to the unfathomable secrets behind the universe which are so central a component of Frenssen's concept of God.

Side by side with this truth there exists, as Anne-Liese Sell points out, the power of fate,<sup>122</sup> both are forces beyond the control and comprehension of man. Despite Etzel's uncompromising commitment, the pardon that Maurizius receives renders his striving for justice point-

less, since it merely adds a new injustice to the old.<sup>123</sup>  
 In Etzel Andergast, the physical elevation of the mountains, which bracket Etzel's part in the novel, symbolizes the existence of levels of truth inaccessible to man:

Über jeder Welt gab es noch eine andere Welt, Über jedem Tal ein höheres, Über den Firnen noch den Azur, und das Ganze war schliesslich ein einziger Leib, so wie er sich als Kind vorgestellt hatte, das Universum samt allen Gestirnen sei vielleicht nur der Blutstropfen eines unbegreiflich ungeheueren Wesens. 124

All of creation, organic and inorganic, is part of a mystical union, in contact with and controlled by the unfathomable divine power. Through contact with this union, with the physical manifestation of a truth undistorted by man, Etzel recovers from his despair over the outcome of the Maurizius case and from his guilt feelings over the affair with Marie. Two of Ompteda's heroes, Fritz (Herzeloide) and Harff (Die Sünde) also find solace in the mountains, but Ompteda goes no further than to cite the healing and elevating powers of nature. Wassermann goes beyond this cliché to imbue the cosmos with an equally unoriginal organic mysticism.

Four and a half years after his first retreat into the mountains, Etzel finds an unopened letter from his mother, saying that she has moved to the Engadin. He abandons his frenzied flight across Germany, pursued by his conscience, and finds peace in his mother's house, "im Grund der Welt."<sup>125</sup>  
 The introduction at this point in the novel of Etzel's mother

as a kind of earth-mother, mystically connected with and attuned to the creative and regenerative powers of nature, is a pseudo-romantic commonplace which is not only emotional but quite out of place. The reader is jarred by the sudden change of key from the starkly realistic portrayal of the turbulent cities through which Etzel travels to the unreality of the house in the mountains: "Der Weg zu ihr (his mother) ist wie eine Brücke zum andern Ufer."<sup>126</sup>

This escape from guilt is contrived, for it is not rooted in Etzel's character. The silence and the snow are like a grave for his guilt: "Alles Gewesene ist der Erdverhaftung entbunden und schwebt in eine reinere Region."<sup>127</sup> Sloughing off the old skin, Etzel prepares, passively, for a new existence.

The totally earthbound outlook of Etzel in this novel, rooted exclusively in the sensually perceivable present, is only a "Winterschlaf der Seele,"<sup>128</sup> a spiritual cul-de-sac that leads to guilt, doubly crushing for the youth who felt his mission was to further justice. What Rudolf Kayser writes about Caspar Hauser is reaffirmed twenty years later at the end of Etzel Andergast: "Gerade wenn man stürmisch und liebend das Leben bejaht, muss man erkennen, dass selbst aus der Schuld noch das Leben keimt."<sup>129</sup> In his attempt to expose more than superficial emotion, Wassermann heaps cliché upon cliché as he hurriedly seeks to redeem

Etzel at the end of the novel, until finally, "im Hause der Mutter," only a hair's breadth separates him from the mawkish sentimentality of the "Gartenlaube"--and the hair's breadth is a factor of style, not content.

Since Etzel represents postwar youth in the novel, Wassermann's inability to break new ground in the search for an ethic appropriate to the time is particularly important, although hardly surprising in view of the general level of his writing, which only rarely rises above that of a pretentiously presented cliché. All he has to offer as a palliative for guilt is a vague, romantic sense of cosmic unity, achievable only in remote fastnesses unsullied by man. Even if guilt can be overcome by such means--and Etzel is presented as much too hard-boiled and prematurely experienced for this to be convincing--there is no mention of a way to avoid subsequent guilt or to construct a serviceable ethical system. Wassermann's philosophical bankruptcy is perhaps most strikingly reflected in Etzel's subsequent career: in Joseph Kerkhovens dritte Existenz he goes off to Russia. Though no details are given as to his motives, it would be quite out of character for Wassermann to imagine him working to build the new Soviet state, and in any case this is the era of Stalin's reign of terror, so the most likely possibility is that he goes as Agathon Geyer did, to help the people in

remote areas. In view of the time and the place, such a vision is disastrously inappropriate, and yet any other alternative runs afoul of Wassermann's loathing of coercion and oppression.

While the nature of the higher truth up to the end of Etzel Andergast defies more accurate description than that of Sell: "Der Glaube selbst ist heilig, nicht das, was geglaubt wird,"<sup>130</sup> it is subjected to much more painstaking analysis in Joseph Kerkhovens dritte Existenz. The "biological conscience" that Kerkhoven describes to a sceptical Etzel in Etzel Andergast is a form of regulatory mechanism activated by the *hormé* or life force which combats acts that are harmful to the individual body or to the collective survival of the species. In the theory of Monakow, the Russian-Swiss pioneer of cerebral surgery who appears as Kerkhovens unnamed mentor in the novel,<sup>131</sup> continued violation of this "biological conscience" may lead to neurosis "and the breakdown of the nervous system and of the higher moral sense."<sup>132</sup> This synthesis of the physiological and the psychological becomes all-encompassing when extended, as in Monakow's works, into the supernatural realm of religion, the roots of which are also to be found in the *hormé*:

The roots of religion do not lie, as civilised man likes to imagine . . . in his feelings and his pre-occupation with the uncertainty of his fate, in the

fear of death and the quest for security . . . but far more in those remote levels of development prior to the emergence of the conscience and the ideas which belong to it, where the biological-psychological instinctual urges (which are directed towards the maintenance of the plan of life) pre-determine the psychic growth of nature and of man. 133

G.V. Jones notes that Kerkhoven, in explaining to Bettina Herzog the last chapter of his Geschichte des menschlichen Wahns, uses Monakow's language "so faithfully as to suggest plagiarism,"<sup>134</sup> and so it can be assumed that Wassermann found in Monakow's theory a fruitful source for the orientation of his own attempts to come to grips with human experience. Monakow's theory of the instinctual origins of religion is however no more than an apologia for religion on the basis of Darwin's theory of the survival of species: a religious counterpart of the Social Darwinism that influenced the "Heimatroman." For all the scientific terminology, it is no more susceptible to empirical proof than the conventional explanation of the religious urge. It does demonstrate the omnipresence of the scientific method in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the widespread desire to bridge the gulf between traditional morality and religion on the one hand, and the growing body of scientific knowledge on the other. That Wassermann adopted this theory as the philosophy of the central character of his last two novels, some fifty years after it had become a cliché shows the

utter lack of original thought in the novel as well as his inability to break out of the intellectual landscape of the Wilhelminian era, a failing that he shares with Frenssen and Ompteda.

In providing Kerkhoven with an example of a biological conscience unadulterated by European civilization, Wassermann, who had never visited the Far East, stoops to one of the weariest clichés in European literature, that of the "noble savage":

Die bedeutsamste Erfahrung war für ihn die Ruhe ihrer Seelen und dass die Seelen von allen wie eine einzige waren und dass Erschütterung des Geistes und Krankheit des Leibes wie Schuld empfunden wurden. Versündigung an der Gemeinschaft. Verrat an der Gottheit. 135

Not only the language but also the idea behind this enthusiastic endorsement of a society unsullied by civilization and its discontents is strikingly reminiscent of Frenssen's vision of a future Germany in the Tagebuch des Amtmanns zu Wittschild, which was written at about the same time as Joseph Kerkhovens dritte Existenz. The fundamental aspect of both visions is the unity of the society, a true community instead of a conglomeration of feuding groups like twentieth century Germany. Such a community possesses a remarkable degree of harmony within itself and between its life-style and its ethical-religious system. Whereas in Frenssen's vision of the twenty-first century there is implicit an element of coercion for those members



of the community who refuse to accept the values of the majority, Wassermann's utopia ignores this unpleasant aspect, assuming that the entire community accepts the religious-ethical system because it is incontrovertibly true--the manifestation of a divinely ordained universal plan. In theory, evidence of this truth is empirically determined by the observation of harmony between natural imperatives for safeguarding the survival and well-being of the community and the moral commandments of the ethical system. In fact, the existence of a wide divergence of moral imperatives among the same species, as for example, in the laws governing monogamy and polygamy, testifies to the intrusion of other than natural imperatives into the morality of even primitive peoples.

In Frenssen's vision of twenty-first century Dithmarschen, those with incurable mental, moral or physical infirmities are sterilized to prevent the transmission of undesirable traits. Although Wassermann does not relate in what way the Javanese deal with those guilty of "Versündigung an der Gemeinschaft" and "Verrat an der Gottheit," the natural imperative must surely demand that they be similarly neutralized. The natural law of survival is morally neutral--except that as an element of the divine plan it cannot be immoral--and cannot recognise the quality of mercy. Unlike Frenssen, who justifies his vision of

the future on the grounds that it is in harmony with the natural law, as well as his subjective assessment of the character of the German people, Wassermann does not attempt to construct a new Germany around this uncorrupted ideal. Kerkhoven's leap into faith, his acceptance of the unfathomable nature of the divine purpose, is purely individualistic and leads to no generally applicable conclusion other than personal peace of mind.

German society meanwhile is hurtling towards catastrophe. The despair that Wassermann feels about the situation is reflected most vividly in one of Alexander Herzog's dreams. A forty year old man, with no obvious illness, vomits constantly. Kerkhoven calms him and covers him with a coat, saying: "Es ist der Ekel. Er stirbt vor Ekel. Es ist der Tod von neunzehnhunderteinunddreissig."<sup>136</sup> Nausea and disgust at modern society is a common theme in twentieth century literature, and Knut Hamsun's Hunger (1890) is an early manifestation of the rejection by modern authors of bourgeois society and its values. That Hamsun and Frenssen admired each other's works illustrates again the way in which the "Heimatroman" offered one solution to late nineteenth century mal de siècle, and also shows the extent to which Wassermann, no less than the "Heimatchdichter" remained a captive of the intellectual climate of his youth.<sup>137</sup> In the ineffectual gesture of

covering the suffering man with a coat, Kerkhoven relects Wassermann's own feeling of impotence in the face of this universal malaise.

Marie's daughter Aleid Bergmann is, like Etzel Andergast in the preceding novel, representative of post-war youth. She is pregnant when she arrives at Kerkhoven's sanatorium after her lover, a patriotic corvette captain named Melchior Bernheimer, has been shot in the back by a Communist.<sup>138</sup> That Wassermann sided neither with the right nor with the left can be deduced from a similar incident in Faber oder Die verlorenen Jahre (1924), in which Fides' husband is murdered by the right wing. For Aleid there are no ideals and there is no higher purpose to maintain order and sense amid the chaos of the present:

Alle Leidenschaft erschöpfte sich in der Ratio, im Greifbaren, im Verfechtbaren; das Schicksal wohnte nicht mehr über den Sternen, es war der Ausdruck für den feindseligen Zusammenprall zwischen sozialem Übel und menschlicher Niedertracht. 139

Although Wassermann speaks of Aleid's "endgültigen Nihilismus,"<sup>140</sup> he does not present her as a nihilist. She rejects ideals in favour of tangible goals which can be attained through effort and struggle: her lover is a political activist, which sheds some light on this side of her nature. She thinks in pragmatic social terms and rejects the high-flown idealism of her mother's youth. In fact Wassermann shows the bankruptcy of Marie's youth-

ful ideals in the collapse of her marriage to Ernst Bergmann, and condemns the unscrupulous use of these ideals as a front to hide ruthless exploitation in the discussion between Maurizius and Andergast.<sup>141</sup> The fact that Wassermann equates the dissimilar qualities of nihilism and pragmatism explains why his heroes never become involved in efforts to improve social conditions in a tangible way, and why an atmosphere of futility surrounds the charitable efforts of Marie or the Princess in Faber, and Irlen's social and political intervention. Wassermann thinks in terms of absolute ideals and rejects the unidealistic means necessary to achieve practical ends.

Through the characters of Alexander Herzog and Kerkhoven, Wassermann elucidates his view of the artist's role which is as strongly coloured with ethical responsibility as Frenssen's is with his social responsibility as a "Volkserzieher." Herzog has no belief in God, "sein Reich ist ganz und gar von dieser Welt,"<sup>142</sup> and yet, through the spiritual naiveté of the artist he is "eine religiöse Natur."<sup>143</sup> He can present the picture of the world with the utmost vividness, as in his description of his marriage to Ganna, and Kerkhoven says of him: "Nach Erkenntnissen zu handeln ist ihm nicht gegeben, dazu ist er nicht berufen . . . Er soll uns Botschaft bringen, nicht wir ihm."<sup>144</sup> Bettina's words to Herzog: "Du hast

mir das Bild der Welt gegeben, Joseph Kerkhoven gibt mir das Begreifen der Welt,"<sup>145</sup> sum up Wassermann's conception of the artist's dual role, for his progress towards an attempted synthesis of the real world and the higher purpose encompasses the development of both Herzog and Kerkhoven. The task of the artist is to use his unsullied integrity of observation and his gift for description to bring the message of the ideal to the world: to act upon it is beyond his competence. In his realization of the artist's inability to change the world, Wassermann at this stage in his career is less optimistic in his idealism than Frenssen or Ompsted, but this attitude is in large measure the result of an awareness, which came late to Wassermann but is always present in the other two, that political and social changes can be brought about only by political and social means. Bettina's observation that Kerkhoven gives her an understanding of the world expands the artist's sphere somewhat, in that analytical insight is brought to bear on the ideal. Although this too stops short of translating the ideal into a programme for action it is at any rate an advance on the completely utopian idealism of Christian Wahnschaffe. Kerkhoven's own adoption of Monakow's theory of the biological roots of religion is an example of this, for the religious ideal is subjected to supposedly scientific examination, until

finally he is left with a reaffirmation of faith, which is still of a vague, idealistic nature. Completely absent is the down-to-earth applicability--and, in fairness to Wassermann, also the moral myopia--of Adam Barfood's belief, which despite war, defeat and revolution at the end of the novel still permits him to foresee Germany's leadership of Europe and Asia as the will of God.

Even the thought of the unborn child cannot shake Aleid's pessimism; in fact she swears she will strangle it. But when, after a difficult birth, she sees the baby, she accepts it as a sign of grace. At the end of the novel this small flicker of hope is all that remains of Wassermann's idealistic vision of a better world. It is no longer the brave hope of salvation through the "new man," as at the end of Renate Fuchs, but simply a residual optimism, a refusal to concede that all promise of salvation is irretrievably lost.

In trying to explain Wassermann's use of the word "Gnade," Jones is forced essentially to Sell's position: there is no orthodoxy which covers Wassermann's theology, despite the echoes in the word "Gnade" of St. Augustine and St. Paul. It is "rather, perhaps, . . . a kind of inner illumination, a mystical inner light, a feeling of harmony . . . . It may not be the irresistible, overruling activity of God in the soul, but it is an experience of the

soul."<sup>146</sup> In her admission at the very end that the baby's birth is a sign of grace, Aleid reaffirms that there is a higher purpose in the world transcending human baseness and degradation. Manifested in the baby is the biological conscience, which sees to the preservation of the species and of the individual: for the naive soul, uncorrupted by the experiences of life, this urge for self-preservation and perpetuation must reflect the divine plan: it cannot be simply a random phenomenon.

Kerkhoven himself moves from mere scientific acceptance of the biological conscience, based on observation, which is already present in Etzel Andergast, to the commitment of faith in its role as part of a divine plan. Reliance on belief has become so suspect among Germans in the post-war era that only those whose souls remain uncorrupted by disillusionment: Marie, Kerkhoven, Bettina and Alexander Herzog, are capable of this leap into the sphere of the unknown and unknowable. Adam Barfood and Otto Babendiek also retain the same spiritual naiveté. The depth of Wassermann's conviction of the importance of this faith--the last bulwark against despair--is reflected in the vehemence with which Kerkhoven treats the representative of the opposite view, the refusal to believe of Martin Mordann. Mordann is a political crusader who dies full of bitterness at having been rejected by his country, and

Kerkhoven regards him as "the enemy": "nicht seines Feindes; des Art-und Blutfeindes, des Gottesfeindes."<sup>147</sup> "Art" and "Blut" refer for Wassermann to the human race and not the German people: similar terminology in Frenssen would be more restricted in its implications. Mordann however is the enemy of mankind because the totality of his commitment to a practical, wordly cause closes his mind to the world of faith, which alone can provide peace of mind. The other character who is described as "der Gottesfeind" is Grand Duke Maidanoff in Christian Wahn-schaffe, whose obsession with the practical leads to the inhumanity of a ruthless dictatorship. The destructive nature of an exclusively pragmatic belief is reflected again in Aleid, who attains a degree of peace only when she accepts the baby as a sign of grace.

Through the influence of Marie and the Herzogs, Kerkhoven at last comes to the point of being able to trust in his belief in a divine plan sufficiently to stand eye to eye with death. His confrontation with Mordann, in which he becomes the "Anwalt der Marienwelt"<sup>148</sup> in his advocacy of a higher purpose than the bankrupt and destructive "gesunde Vernunft,"<sup>149</sup> brings him into Marie's world of faith. Even Mordann's name, with the element "Mord" bespeaks the destructive quality of his philosophy.<sup>150</sup> The final chapter of Kerkhoven's book, Die Geschichte des



menschlichen Wahns, elaborates on the solution, the synthesis of the perceptible, sensory world and the world of belief:

. . . in welchem er . . . die Brücke von der sinnlichen Welt des Wahns zur Übersinnlichen des Glaubens schlug, von der Biologie und Physiologie in die Gewissheit der göttlichen Sphäre, von der Gehirnanatomie zur geisthaften Struktur eines obersten, herrschenden und schicksalsbestimmenden Wesens. 151

This bridge, which is reminiscent of Etzel's "Brücke zum anderen Ufer"<sup>152</sup> in the mountains, consists of the principle of the essential immortality of the individual in the continuity of the race. It is based upon an awareness of the unity of body and soul, creature and creator, which Jones compares to Taulerian mysticism.<sup>153</sup> Finally for Kerkhoven it is a form of being in which biology and religion are united by a victory over illusion (Wahn) on the one hand, and the material body, including death, on the other.<sup>154</sup> Its fundamental attributes are therefore insight into the true nature of life and belief in the existence of a divine plan transcending tangible manifestations.

The case of Selma Imst, who planned her suicide so that her husband and his mistress would be convicted of murder, opens to Marie the abyss separating the tangible, perceptible world from the world where faith is the only guide. She realizes that Selma Imst is one of those people possessed by a single demonic desire, which leads them so

surely that they never make a mistake on the way to their goal: "Es ist, wie wenn sie im Einklang mit einer Macht handelten, die das Böse genauso bejaht wie das Gute."<sup>155</sup> Kerkhoven, and clearly also Wassermann, accept the moral neutrality of the divine plan, recognising that in its unfathomable nature its morality is beyond human criteria. Adam Barfood and Frenssen react in exactly the same to Holgersen, the demonic curate whom Adam calls the "Jäger Gottes."<sup>156</sup>

When, after his acceptance of the existence of the divine plan, Kerkhoven has a vision of Ganna Herzog in a railway carriage, he realizes that, far from being a demon, she is simply a victim of illusion, a pitiful "Exponent der bürgerlichen Ära."<sup>157</sup> Caught up in the circle of possessions and neuroses, the result of an age totally committed to "der sinnlichen Welt des Wahns,"<sup>158</sup> she has transferred her own soulless materialism to Herzog and thereby endangered his sanity. Her lack of faith robs her of any ethical support when the foundations of society crumble, for this is the time of the "Verfall einer Gesellschaft" and "Atrophie des Herzens."<sup>159</sup> The calamitous events of the war and the postwar period not only destroyed the old and, outwardly at least, relatively stable social order, but the embittered disillusionment of the fight for survival emphasizes the spiritual bankruptcy of that

society's pragmatic, materialistic values, and the hollowness of its idealism. Under Kerkhoven's tutelage Marie has escaped the influence of bourgeois idealism, which in its creation of illusory values was dishonest and ultimately destructive for the middle class, and is thereby enabled to make the transition to the world of faith.

Like Kerkhoven's at the end of the novel, Wassermann's health was failing during 1933, and he saw in the political developments in Germany the confirmation of his worst fears. The terrible chaos had produced the Caesar of whom Melchior Ghisels had spoken in Der Fall Maurizius, and Wassermann felt that his life's work had obviously had as much effect in raising Germany to a higher "cortesia" as the lost manuscript of Kerkhoven's book: this last novel is a "Rückkehr zum Einfachen" as Wassermann returns to the problems of the individual in a chaotic world, abandoning the broader social scope of Laudin and Der Fall Maurizius. After the loss of his manuscript, which would make available to the world the results of his work, Kerkhoven does the same when he turns to being an ordinary general practitioner among the villagers:

Es war die Rückkehr zum Einfachen; Aufhebung vielfacher kleiner Not und Gefahr und Verhütung grösserer; es lag mehr Lebensdienst und -lohn darin als in der Behandlung jener komplizierten Fälle, bei denen einem der ganze Reichtum des Wissens nicht hinweghalf über den Zweifel an der Wissenschaft, geschweige denn, dass sich das ewig verhüllte Geheimnis der Natur erschloss,

trotz allem Belauern, Vergleichen, Experimentieren und Messen, trotz aller Kunst und Intuition. Hier konnte er fühlen und befühlen und auch wirklich helfen. 160

As Kerkhoven pulls back from the hopeless battle on the frontiers of science, Wassermann withdraws in this novel from the seemingly futile struggle against social injustice as the Weimar Republic expires amid a welter of chaos and violence. This resignation reflects the disappointment of a man whose work is devoted to raising mankind to a higher ideal, only to have events condemn his efforts to futility. For Jakob Wassermann Germany was that section of the human race with which he was familiar, but important principally for its representative nature, not its peculiarities. His hope and his vision, utopian though it is, is for all men. The emphasis in his last novel on faith in a divine plan, unfathomable but omnipresent, represents an avoidance of the despair of a Martin Mordann by a retreat into the world of ideals, where he had always sought the salvation of man.

### Conclusion

The vision of a reborn Germany that emerges from the novels of Frenssen, Dmpteda and Wassermann varies from author to author, and yet contains one fundamental aspect common to all three, that of national unity. The enormous gulf between rich and poor, with its twin manifestations of strident demands for better conditions from the left and equally strident demands from the right that privileges be maintained, was far more apparent in the industrial Germany of the Wilhelminian era than it had been before the tremendous upsurge of industrialization. The compartmentalization of society and the antagonisms to which it gave rise were seen as the most important factor of Wilhelminian life, casting a baleful shadow over the splendour of "la belle époque."

For the important social and economic thinkers of the 1890's, men such as Oldenberg, Wagner, Weber and Naumann, industrialization was the paramount national problem, and the direction that Germany should take was the crucial decision of the age. The "agrarian romanticism"<sup>1</sup> of Oldenberg and Wagner viewed modern industrial society, and especially parliamentary government as "a condition in which petty vested interests lacking a sense of holism

ruled over the entire nation."<sup>2</sup> To dispel the spectre of discord within the nation they advocated an outright rejection of industrialism and a "return" to a mythical state of feudal contentment, in which Germany was self-sufficient and the aristocratic lion lay down with the labouring lamb under the benevolent gaze of His Imperial Majesty.

Weber and Naumann regarded this dream with scorn and offered an alternative solution to the discontent of the time. Imbued with the worldwide spirit of imperialism, and fearful that the expansion of the three Great Powers, the British Empire, the United States and Russia, would block German expansion and exclude German goods from their markets, they advocated a "policy of national greatness,"<sup>3</sup> an aggressive Weltpolitik to save the Empire's newly acquired place in the sun. Like the "social imperialists"<sup>4</sup> in contemporary Britain, they regarded "internal social cohesion as a necessary prerequisite for a successful Weltpolitik,"<sup>5</sup> and consequently national unity was as vital to Weber and Naumann's nationalism, rooted though it was in the tenet of Social Darwinism that conflict and strife represent the norm for social and international relations, as it was to Wagner and Oldenberg's dream of agrarian contentment.

This debate over Germany's direction in the twentieth century lies at the heart of the novels of Frenssen, Ompteda and Wassermann and their positions in relation to these two philosophies determine the nature of their vision of a reborn Germany. All three regard the industrialization of Germany with deep distrust, and attribute to its pernicious influence all manner of ills, from the decline of the rural population to child abuse and broken marriages. Industrial society, modernity, is the arch-enemy and unity the balm for the nation's wounded soul. With the "overwhelming penchant for concord and synthesis (that) has been the bane of the German mind for the past century and a half"<sup>6</sup> Frenssen, Ompteda and Wassermann synthesize the views of Oldenberg, Wagner, Weber and Naumann to arrive at their own vision of Germany's rebirth.

Although he was a member of Friedrich Naumann's National Socialist party, Frenssen is of the three the furthest from Naumann and Weber's position. His is an "agrarian romanticism" of the purest kind, except that his self-sufficient rural national community demands its place in the international sun and points with pride to German cruisers in the Bay of Biscay and the German banner waving over the deserts of South West Africa. Ompteda's call for a revitalized aristocracy, with the

scions of Junker families older than the Hohenzollerns returning from their lucrative victories on the floor of the Stock Exchange to recharge their spiritual batteries in the sandy ancestral soil of the Mark Brandenburg, concedes that industrial society is here to stay but rejects the "asphalt culture" on which it rests. For all his pretensions of belonging to the literary avant-garde, Wassermann's position is essentially analogous: his heroes all withdraw from the conflicts of industrial society into a sheltered and sharply limited sphere where they can engage in good works on an individual level. The doctrine of "cortesia" is nothing more than a blind to conceal the fact that Wassermann, like Frenssen and Ompstedt, has no answers for the problems of industrial society.

None of these three authors belongs aesthetically in the first rank: their novels are epigonal in style, rambling in structure, and generally far too long. Artistic mediocrity is not however the root cause of the problematic nature of their works, although it springs from the same source: since they were not first-rate thinkers, they could neither produce first-rate literature nor subject their vision to the kind of consistent, penetrating analysis that the importance of the subject matter demanded. Had there been no Third Reich, the "Heimat-



roman" would have been merely a transitory phenomenon of dubious literary merit and worthy of scant attention forty years after the last representative of the genre left the printing press. The justification for its retrospective analysis lies in the fact that millions of Germans read these novels over a period of forty years and found in Adolf Hitler's rejection of liberal parliamentary democracy a sympathetic and familiar echo of the "Heimatroman's" rural idyll.

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> This development is discussed fully in Gerhard Ritter, The Sword and the Scepter, trans. Heinz Norden (Coral Gables, 1970), pp. 93-104.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Erich Eyck, Das persönliche Regiment Wilhelms II (Erlenbach-Zürich, 1948), p. 147.

<sup>3</sup> Kenneth D. Barkin, The Controversy over German Industrialization 1890-1902 (Chicago and London, 1970), p. 273.

<sup>4</sup> Barbara Tuchmann, The Proud Tower (New York, 1966), p. 269.

<sup>5</sup> Barkin, p. 37.

<sup>6</sup> Arthur Rosenberg, Imperial Germany, trans. Ian F.D. Morrow (1931; rpt. New York and London, 1970), p. 77.

<sup>7</sup> Koppel S. Pinson, Modern Germany, 2nd ed. (New York and London, 1966), p. 224.

<sup>8</sup> Rudolf Heberle, From Democracy to Nazism (Baton Rouge, 1945), p. 37.

<sup>9</sup> Gustav Frenssen, Von Saat und Ernte (Berlin, 1933), p. 13.

<sup>10</sup> Hans-Jürgen Puhle, Agrarische Interessenpolitik und preussischer Konservatismus im wilhelminischen Reich (1893-1914) (Hannover, 1966), p. 16.

<sup>11</sup> Heberle, p. 27.

<sup>12</sup> Barkin, p. 120.

<sup>13</sup> Frenssen, Lebensbericht (Berlin, 1941), p. 28.

<sup>14</sup> Heberle, p. 26.

<sup>15</sup> Heberle, p. 24.

<sup>16</sup> Puhle, p. 97.

<sup>17</sup> Puhle, p. 92.

- 18 Ritter, p. 131.
- 19 Ernst Keller, Nationalismus und Literatur (Bern and München, 1970), p. 16.
- 20 Julius Langbehn, Rembrandt als Erzieher, von einem Deutschen (Leipzig, 1890), p. 16.
- 21 Gustav Frenssen, "Grübeleien IV," section 2, p. 3 (unpublished typescript in the Schleswig-Holsteinische Landesbibliothek, Kiel.)
- 22 Erika Jenny, Die Heimatkunstabewegung, Diss. Basel 1934 (Basel, 1934), p. 47.
- 23 Jenny, p. 44.
- 24 Hans Schwerte, "Deutsche Literatur im wilhelminischen Zeitalter," Wirkendes Wort, XIV (1964), 261.
- 25 Jenny, p. 45.
- 26 Meino der Prahler (Berlin, 1933), p. 331.
- 27 Jenny, p. 70.
- 28 Puhle, p. 306.
- 29 Wolfgang Claus, "Die neue Agrarwirtschaftspolitik," National-Sozialistische Monatshefte, Jg. 5, Heft 48 (March 1934), p. 228.
- 30 Horst Rechenbach, "Blutfragen des deutschen Bauerntums," National-Sozialistische Monatshefte, Jg. 5, Heft 48 (March 1934), p. 211.
- 31 Rechenbach, p. 211.

### Gustav Frenssen

- 1 Gustav Frenssen, Lebensbericht (Berlin, 1941), p. 116.
- 2 Hans Beeck, Mein Begegnen mit Gustav Frenssen (München, 1969), p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Ludwig Schröder, "Gustav Frenssen," Monatsblätter für deutsche Literatur, Jg. 6 (October 1901), 251.

<sup>4</sup> Friedrich Düssel, "Jörn Uhl von Gustav Frenssen," Westermanns Illustrierte Monatshefte, 92 (1902), 411.

<sup>5</sup> Der Kunstwart, Jg. 16, Heft 1 (October 1902), 33.

<sup>6</sup> "Grübeleien IV," section 2, p. 19.

<sup>7</sup> Die deutsche Dichtung der Gegenwart (Leipzig, 1910), p. 358.

<sup>8</sup> Lebensbericht, p. 170.

<sup>9</sup> Lebensbericht, p. 168.

<sup>10</sup> Möwen und Mäuse (Berlin, 1927), p. 14.

<sup>11</sup> Lebensbericht, p. 12.

<sup>12</sup> Wilhelm Johnsen, Gustav Frenssen: Art und Ahnen (Heide in Holstein, 1934), p. 31.

<sup>13</sup> Lebensbericht, p. 347.

<sup>14</sup> Lebensbericht, p. 1.

<sup>15</sup> I am indebted to Frau Elise Bruhn, who was for seventeen years schoolmistress in Barlt, and to Herr J. Altenburg, owner of the general store in the village, for their impressions of Gustav Frenssen.

<sup>16</sup> Rev. of "Kulturelle Ziele im Werk Gustav Frenssens," by Frank X. Braun, Germanic Review, 23 (1948), 63.

<sup>17</sup> Jenny, p. 69.

<sup>18</sup> Lebensbericht, p. 10.

<sup>19</sup> Lebensbericht, p. 111.

<sup>20</sup> Otto Babendiek (Berlin, 1924), p. 938.

<sup>21</sup> Jörn Uhl (Berlin, 1901), pp. 38-39.

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- 71 P.v.P., p. 253.
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- 73 Frank X. Braun, "Kulturelle Ziele im Werk Gustav Frenssens," Diss. Ann Arbor 1946, p. 185.
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- 78 Vorland, p. 4.
- 79 Der Untergang der Anna Hollmann (Berlin, 1912), p.  
190.
- 80 Hauser, p. 24.
- 81 Die Brüder (Berlin, 1917), p. 494.
- 82 Brüder, p. 494.
- 83 Brüder, p. 330
- 84 Brüder, p. 331.
- 85 Brüder, p. 542.
- 86 Brüder, p. 547.
- 87 Brüder, p. 548.
- 88 Brüder, p. 548.
- 89 Hans Beeck notes that Frenssen's novels were translated into more than forty languages: Mein Begegnen mit Gustav Frenssen, p. 9.

90 P.v.P., p. 292.

91 P.v.P., p. 371.

92 P.v.P., p. 371.

93 P.v.P., p. 364.

94 P.v.P., p. 364.

95 P.v.P., p. 367.

96 P.v.P., p. 406.

97 P.v.P., p. 363.

98 P.v.P., p. 407.

99 P.v.P., p. 407.

100 P.v.P., p. 523.

101 P.v.P., p. 569.

102 P.v.P., p. 568.

103 P.v.P., p. 569.

104 Lütte Witt, who dies while still a child in the novel of the same name, is the exception.

105 G. Bohne, "Das Ich und die Wirklichkeit," Eckart, Jg. 6, Heft 5 (1930), 241.

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108 P.v.P., p. 292.

109 P.v.P., p. 253.

110 P.v.P., p. 252.

111 Anna Hollmann, p. 198.

112 P.v.P., p. 253.



- 113 P.v.P., p. 253.
- 114 Recht oder Unrecht, mein Land (Berlin, 1940), p. 57.
- 115 c.f. pp. 52-57.
- 116 P.v.P., p. 372.
- 117 P.v.P., p. 377.
- 118 P.v.P., p. 601.
- 119 P.v.P., p. 602.
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- 123 P.v.P., p. 605.
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- 129 P.v.P., p. 611.
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- 131 P.v.P., p. 615.
- 132 P.v.P., p. 618.
- 133 P.v.P., p. 627.
- 134 P.v.P., p. 619.
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- 137 P.v.P., p. 621.

- 138 P.v.P., p. 621.  
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 143 P.v.P., p. 472.  
 144 P.v.P., p. 631.

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- <sup>1</sup> Das literarische Echo, Jg. 12, Heft 5 (December 1909), 358.  
<sup>2</sup> Rev. of Eysen, Die Gesellschaft, Jg. 16, 3 (1900), 194.  
<sup>3</sup> Schwerte, pp. 254-255.  
<sup>4</sup> Clara Viebig, rev. of Die Schöne Gräfin Cosel, Die Literatur, Jg. 35, Heft 1 (October 1932), 17.  
<sup>5</sup> "Meistgelesene Autoren von 1903," Der Kunstwart, Jg. 17, Heft 8 (January 1904), 502.  
<sup>6</sup> Gustav Freytag, Gesammelte Werke (Leipzig, 1911), IV, quotation on the title page by Julian Schmidt.  
<sup>7</sup> Ernst III (Stuttgart, 1925), p. 24.  
<sup>8</sup> Jakob Wassermann, Etzel Andergast (1930; rpt. Hamburg, 1960), p. 12.  
<sup>9</sup> Heimat des Herzens, rev. ed. (Stuttgart, 1923), p. 27.  
<sup>10</sup> Heimat, p. 109.  
<sup>11</sup> Heimat, p. 127.

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13 Arthur Schurig, rev. of Heimat des Herzens, Das litterarische Echo, Jg. 7, Heft 4 (November 1904), 289.

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- 49 Schuss, p. 52.
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- 52 Schuss, p. 24.
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- 83 Sünde, p. 174.
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- 96 Ernst, p. 483.
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Jakob Wassermann

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<sup>2</sup> Julie Wassermann-Speyer, Jakob Wassermann (Wien and Leipzig, 1923), p. 28.

<sup>3</sup> Jakob Wassermann, Mein Weg als Deutscher und Jude (Berlin, 1921), p. 98.

<sup>4</sup> See Marta Karlweis, Jakob Wassermann: Bild, Kampf und Werk (Amsterdam, 1935).

<sup>5</sup> "Grübeleien IV," section 2, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Sonntagskind, pp. 292f.

<sup>7</sup> Mein Weg, p. 78.

<sup>8</sup> Mein Weg, p. 126.

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<sup>10</sup> Selbstbetrachtungen (Berlin, 1933), p. 9.

<sup>11</sup> Adolf Bartels, "Literarische Afterkunst?" Der Kunstwart, Jg. 11, 11 (April 1898), 6.

<sup>12</sup> C.f. Baumgartner, Gustav Frenssens Glaubensbekenntnis.

<sup>13</sup> Julie Wassermann-Speyer, p. 24.

<sup>14</sup> Melusine, 2nd ed. (Amsterdam, 1935), p. 216.

<sup>15</sup> Melusine, p. 23.

<sup>16</sup> Die Geschichte der jungen Renate Fuchs, 2nd ed. (Berlin, 1925), p. 275.

<sup>17</sup> Renate, p. 321.

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<sup>20</sup> Renate, p. 380.

<sup>21</sup> Renate, p. 382.

<sup>22</sup> Carl Hauptmann, "Krieg: Ein Tedeum," in Schrei und Bekenntnis: Expressionistisches Theater, ed. Karl Otten, 2nd ed. (Neuwied and Berlin, 1959), pp. 165-175.

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- 27 Gänsemännchen, p. 93.
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- 36 Walter Voegeli, Jakob Wassermann und die Trägheit des Herzens (Bern, 1963), p. 99.
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- 41 Laudin, p. 271.
- 42 Laudin, p. 105.
- 43 Laudin, p. 105.
- 44 Laudin, p. 105.
- 45 Laudin, p. 105.
- 46 Laudin, p. 106.



47 Laudin, p. 113.

48 Laudin, p. 289.

49 Laudin, p. 105.

50 Wassermann's volume of letters An seine Braut und Gattin Julie (1900-1929) (Basel, 1940), contains references to projects and arguments which appear almost verbatim in the section of the Kerkhoven novel entitled "Ganna oder die Wahnwelt."

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52 "Jakob Wassermann: Gestalt und Glauben," Die Neue Rundschau, Jg. 45, 1 (1934), 449.

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54 Gänsemännchen, p. 19.

55 Gänsemännchen, p. 68.

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57 Gänsemännchen, p. 590.

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61 Quoted in Karlweis, p. 224.

62 Karlweis, p. 224.

63 Wahnschaffe, p. 34.

64 Wahnschaffe, p. 156.

65 Wahnschaffe, p. 177.

66 Wahnschaffe, p. 176.

67 Wahnschaffe, p. 177.

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- 69 Wahnschaffe, p. 321.
- 70 Karlweis, pp. 244f.
- 71 Barbara Tuchmann, The Guns of August (New York, 1963), pp. 148f.
- 72 Wahnschaffe, p. 176.
- 73 Wahnschaffe, p. 755.
- 74 For a full discussion of this theme, see Fritz Stern, The Politics of Cultural Despair.
- 75 Faber oder Die verlorenen Jahre (Berlin, 1924), p. 255.
- 76 Faber, p. 254.
- 77 Der Fall Maurizius (Berlin, 1928), p. 391.
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- 83 Maurizius, p. 577.
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- 93 Mein Weg, pp. 75-76.
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- 96 Juden, p. 108.
- 97 Juden, p. 259.
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- 108 "Der neue Roman und Wassermann," Die Weissen Blätter, Jg. 7, 7 (1920), 135.
- 109 Mein Weg, p. 45.
- 110 Mein Weg, p. 19.
- 111 Mein Weg, p. 106.

- 112 Mein Weg, p. 124.
- 113 Mein Weg, p. 171.
- 114 Juden, p. 112.
- 115 Mein Weg, pp. 122-123.
- 116 Maurizius, p. 495.
- 117 In a lecture entitled "Wassermann und Heimann: Tagesruhm und Dauerwirkung," given in June 1971 at the Schiller National-Museum, Marbach-am-Neckar and hitherto unpublished, Ernst Simon asserts that Heimann was the model for Melchior Ghisels. Wassermann is quoted by Karlweis as referring to Heimann as "Praeceptor Germaniae." (p. 173.)
- 118 Maurizius, p. 379.
- 119 Maurizius, p. 392.
- 120 Maurizius, p. 392.
- 121 Maurizius, p. 392.
- 122 Das metaphysisch-realistische Weltbild Jakob Wassermanns (Bern, 1932), pp. 47f.
- 123 Schnetzler, p. 94.
- 124 Etzel, pp. 326-327.
- 125 Etzel, p. 608.
- 126 Etzel, p. 603.
- 127 Etzel, p. 608.
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- 129 Kayser, p. 449.
- 130 Sell, p. 47.
- 131 Geraint V. Jones, "Joseph Kerkhovens dritte Existenz," German Life and Letters, N.S. III, 3 (April 1950), 179f.

- 132 Jones, p. 181.
- 133 Konstantin Monakow, Religion und Nervensystem (Zürich, 1930), quoted in Jones, p. 182.
- 134 Jones, p. 184.
- 135 Kerkhoven, p. 49.
- 136 Kerkhoven, p. 514.
- 137 Numme Numsen, Gustav Frenssen: Entfaltung eines Lebens, p. 29.
- 138 A few pages later Bernheimer is called Hildebrand (p. 462), reflecting the fact that Wassermann died before he could revise the novel. Hildebrand, with its allusion to the old Germanic lay, embodies more clearly the idea of the warrior.
- 139 Kerkhoven, p. 458.
- 140 Kerkhoven, p. 458.
- 141 Maurizius, pp. 297f.
- 142 Kerkhoven, p. 500.
- 143 Kerkhoven, p. 495.
- 144 Kerkhoven, p. 496.
- 145 Kerkhoven, p. 488.
- 146 Jones, p. 172.
- 147 Kerkhoven, p. 411.
- 148 Kerkhoven, p. 134.
- 149 Kerkhoven, p. 135.
- 150 In David Copperfield Dickens gives David's step-father the name Murdstone, containing the elements of murder and stony-hearted.
- 151 Kerkhoven, p. 534.

- 152 Etzel, p. 603.
- 153 Jones, p. 170.
- 154 Kerkhoven, p. 535.
- 155 Kerkhoven, p. 134.
- 156 Der Pastor von Poggsee, p. 570.
- 157 Kerkhoven, p. 490.
- 158 Kerkhoven, p. 490.
- 159 Kerkhoven, p. 490.
- 160 Kerkhoven, p. 555.

### Conclusion

<sup>1</sup> Kenneth D. Barkin, "Conflict and Concord in Wilhelminian Social Thought," *Central European History*, 5, No. 1 (March 1972), 58.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

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