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A

FRANKREICH-ALLEMAGNE:
REPRESENTATIONS OF NATIONALITY IN
TWENTIETH-CENTURY FRENCH AND GERMAN LITERATURE

by

ALEXANDER BAUMANN

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in French in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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Introduction

The importance of the Franco-German question in the course of European history is as self-evident a phenomenon as we are ever likely to come across. Both countries trace their respective national histories back more than a millennium to the person known as Charlemagne in France and as Karl der Große in Germany. Since then, Europe's division, as well as its most recent attempts at some sort of political and economic unification, have hinged crucially on whether France and Germany were divided or united, at war or at peace. To say that without peace between the two countries there can be no peace in Europe is to radically simplify the issue, to be sure. Yet it is also to approach the very heart of modern Europe's tragedy. In the space of seventy years, France and Germany fought three catastrophic wars, two of which engulfed the rest of the world, and one of which eventually culminated in the Holocaust.

Literature has of course also played its part in the overall history of Franco-German relations. Yet while even the most casual observer would no doubt have to admit that the place occupied by the literary interplay between the two

nations is just as central as the political one, the subject has in the past not seldom been neglected by many critics and literary historians. Fortunately, it has received increased attention over the last few decades, due in part to the overall rising interest in that broad and somewhat vaguely defined field commonly known as "comparative studies."

There can be no question that much is to be learned by examining a nation and its literature through the eyes of another national literature. Writing nearly half a century ago, Henri Peyre contended that "the French and German specialist would understand his subject more fully and deeply if he related it to the neighboring province which he has often considered as an uncharted or as an enemy land" (15). His statement still holds true to this day. Jean-Marie Carré in Les écrivains français et le mirage allemand, 1800-1940 (1947), Konrad Bieber in L'Allemagne vue par les écrivains de la résistance (1954), and George Pistorius in L'image de l'Allemagne dans le roman français entre les deux guerres (1918-1939) (1964) are three of those who have tried to tackle this vast and complex issue after 1945. And while there are a number of details one might object to in all

three of these studies¹, one thing they have in common is that by examining the "image" of Germany in various forms of French writing, they reprise a tradition begun by Madame de Staël early in the last century.

Germany has been an object of French literary interest at least since 1813, when Germaine de Staël's De l'Allemagne was published in France - just three years after Napoleon had censored the book as "un-French"². As we know, Madame de Staël offered her French readers a view of the country that was all but outdated by the time her work appeared in print because she had focused almost exclusively on the German romantic movement, which was already in its waning years

¹ Bieber's, for instance, is basically limited to Camus and Vercors, although its title suggests a far greater scope. It is more of a moral appraisal rather than a textual analysis. Written a mere ten years after the end of the war, it suffers noticeably from that temporal proximity. Pistorius's book is burdened by an enormous load of second- and third-rate authors, as he himself refers to them (17-18). He admits choosing his writers without regard to their literary merits, which seems to be a rather questionable approach, to say the least.

² His Minister of Police, the Duc de Rovigo, wrote to Madame de Staël on October 3, 1810: "Il m'a paru que l'air de ce pays-ci [la France] ne vous convenait point, et nous n'en sommes pas encore réduits à chercher des modèles dans les peuples que vous admirez. Votre dernier ouvrage n'est point français" (Staël I, 39).

while she wrote the book³. In addition, much of the material she gathered came to her by way of an intermediary. Since she did not speak nor understand German, she had to depend on her traveling companion, the critic August Wilhelm Schlegel, to interpret for her along the way.

In spite of the book's various shortcomings, Madame de Staël must be considered the first person who tried to expose the French in a systematical and concerted way to what she perceived to be German civilization. In large part because of her, the word "Germany" would for years to come (and occasionally up to the present time, as we shall see in the course of our study) be linked in French minds in almost Pavlovian ways to the word "romantic." Her book became one of the major texts responsible for the spread of French romanticism, which would reach its high point in the years around 1830. In the aftermath of De l'Allemagne, a veritable wave of "germanolatry" and "teutomania" (Leiner 98) swept over France. Numerous nineteenth-century French writers

³ For more detailed discussions on Staël's anachronisms see Wolfgang Leiner's Das Deutschlandbild in der französischen Literatur (Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1989), in particular pages 96ff, and René Cheval's Anstöße und Rückwirkungen: literarische Begegnungen zwischen Frankreich und Deutschland (Bouvier, 1990), in particular pages 31ff. Leiner's book contains a very useful analysis of French writers' images of Germany from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries.

would travel to Germany in search of the idealistic place described in Staël's book: Châteaubriand, Nerval, Renan, Hugo, Michelet, Taine, Stendhal, and Balzac were just a few of those tourists. Some of them used their experiences in Germany as material for their works. Hugo, to name but one example, published an account of his travels under the title Le Rhin in 1842.

The nascent Prussian militarism in the second half of the century entailed a correction of the image first put forth by Madame de Staël; her idyll was displaced by reality. During the Franco-Prussian war of 1870/71, the French philosopher Elme Caro first used the expression "les deux Allemagnes" to describe the country's perceived split personality⁴. He thus summed up what would remain one of the most important *topoi* in French writing on Germany well into the twentieth century: the supposed antithetical nature of the nation. This antithesis was usually expressed in any number of contradictory couplets, such as romanticism versus utilitarianism, dreamy backwardness versus technical efficiency, art versus militarism. In his Dictionnaire des idées reçues Gustave Flaubert pithily reduced this cliché to

⁴ "On pourrait même dire, qu'il y a deux Allemagnes: l'une idéaliste et rêveuse, l'autre pratique à l'excès sur la scène du monde, utilitaire à outrance, âpre à la curée" (cit. Leiner 168).

its essence: "Allemagne. - Toujours précédé de blonde, rêveuse. Mais quelle organisation militaire!" (20-21).

While France's literary interest in Germany was catalyzed by Madame de Staël's 1813 text, no comparable work exists to incite German interest in France. It is true that many Germans at the time already had more knowledge about and contacts with the French than had been the case the other way around. For example, numerous French Huguenots who were trying to escape religious persecution, as well as French aristocrats who were fleeing from the political changes in their country after 1789, had settled in Germany. By virtue of its preeminent political and cultural position on the continent France also exerted a considerable hold on the German aristocracy of the eighteenth century and the *Bürgertum* of the nineteenth century. Both of these groups often relied on the French language and imitated French customs and civilization, so that German culture of this era was to a large degree synonymous with French culture. Yet only relatively few nineteenth-century German writers had any direct personal or public involvement with France. Starting in the late eighteenth century, German literature had largely begun to take its cues from English models (Lessing, Schiller, Herder) as well as from Italy and Greece (Goethe, the Romantics), rather than from France. The best known

German Francophile of the nineteenth century was undoubtedly Heinrich Heine, who came to Paris in 1831 as a newspaper correspondent. He stayed there for twenty-five years, until his death in 1856. Heine, who wrote some of his texts in French, exchanged ideas with a good number of France's most important writers, including Balzac, Hugo, Lamartine, Musset, Nerval, George Sand, and Alexandre Dumas père.

This, however, is not a study of the nineteenth, but of the twentieth century, and more specifically of the period from the early 1920s up to the mid-1980s. This era is one of the richest and most varied epochs not only in terms of Franco-German literary exchange, but also in terms of the frequency and intensity of political contact between the two nations. In approaching this issue, it is obviously impossible to attempt to be comprehensive. The vast field of authors who might qualify for inclusion in this study therefore needs to be narrowed down to just a handful.

The four most important criteria I have set for the selection of authors to be analyzed are the following:

1. Most obviously, the authors should have written on Franco-German questions in one way or another, and they should have done so rather extensively in order for a clear picture of their views on the subject to emerge. The issue should play a *primary* and *sustained* role in their work.
2. The authors should be in some way *representative* of a larger body of political thinking on the question of

Franco-German relations during their particular period of time.

3. Their writings should have enjoyed a fairly high degree of *diffusion*, so that we can reasonably assume that their views were well known to a large audience, and not just to an elite few. The question of a text's reception enters into consideration here.

4. They should have a reasonably well-founded *personal knowledge* of the country they are writing about. For example, they should have either lived in the country for some period of time, spoken its language, or at least have been familiar with its culture, history, society, and politics.

I have chosen four French and four German authors who all seem to meet these criteria to a large extent: Jean Giraudoux, Robert Brasillach, Vercors, and Michel Tournier, as well as Kurt Tucholsky, Ernst Jünger, Heinrich Mann, and Patrick Süskind.

Some of these, such as Giraudoux and Mann, may appear to be rather obvious choices, others less so, yet all of them are of equal relevance to the subject. This is not to say that we could not have selected any number of other authors as well. Quite the opposite is true: Rolland, Proust, Gide, Barbusse, Valéry, Romain, Montherlant, Drieu la Rochelle, Rebattet, Céline, Chateaubriant, Curtis, Aragon, Triolet, Eluard, Malraux, Sartre, Camus, Duras, Rilke, Zweig, George, Sieburg, Unruh, Remarque, Hesse, Thomas Mann are just a few of the names that one could conceivably have included. This

list (especially its French component) is almost identical with the canon of twentieth-century literature, which means two things: first, representations of the Franco-German problem, especially as they relate to the two wars, make up a good deal of our century's literature, and a history of those various representations would thus be in large part a history of twentieth-century literature in general; and it means, secondly, that - apart from the fact that the place of Germany or France in some of these authors' works is quite small, and their inclusion here would therefore have been impossible for purely *objective* reasons - any choice among such a vast group must always be a partly *subjective* one, as well.

Of the eight authors chosen, only Giraudoux has been studied extensively in terms of his literary use of the other country: Jacques Body undertook that task in his monumental and generally reliable Giraudoux et l'Allemagne (1975). I say "generally" because a few of the points he makes are somewhat questionable and will need to be amplified.

The situation of the other three French authors looks less promising. Vercors seems to have all but fallen into critical oblivion. And despite the massive recent interest

in the works of Brasillach⁵ and Tournier⁶, the two have received little or no attention in terms of their fictionalizations of the neighboring country. Discussions about Brasillach's position on modernity and about Tournier's use of myth and allegory recur in many of the studies. And while these are, no doubt, major issues in each of the two writers' texts, the common denominator that is either overlooked completely in these studies or is, at best, mentioned in passing, is their personal involvement with and literary use of Germany. Neither Brasillach, the collaborator, nor Vercors, the resister, can be understood without a more in-depth analysis of their relationship with Germany than is usually provided. The same holds true for Tournier, the postmodern myth-maker: his Le Roi des Aulnes loses most of its significance and becomes virtually unintelligible if we do not know about or do not take into consideration his long-running interest in German philosophy, literature, and history.

The situation is much the same on the German side.

⁵ For example by Tame (1986), Brassié (1987), Sipriot (1987), Baldran (1988), Louvrier (1989), Pellissier (1989), Rasson (1991), and Carroll (1992).

⁶ For example by Cloonan (1985), Bevan (1986), Koster (1986), Bouloumié (1988 and 1991), Merllié (1988), Davis (1988), Rosello (1990), Klettke (1991), and Petit (1991).

Tucholsky and Süskind criticism of any kind, let alone the sort that looks at their rapport with France, is virtually virgin territory⁷. Studies of Heinrich Mann's works, on the other hand, constitute an extensively traveled terrain, and Jünger, who had in the past been studied mostly for his writings about World War I, has recently been the object of renewed critical attention which also takes into account his later works⁸. Yet even in these last two cases, the specifically francophile dimension of Mann's and Jünger's writings has often been given short shrift.

In addition to bringing into sharper focus some of those aspects that have so far been neglected in each writer's work, I will also, where appropriate, compare and contrast their various fictional and non-fictional representations of political and cross-cultural matters in order to gain an understanding of how French views of Germany, and German views of France have changed (or not changed) over the course

⁷ The first reliable biography of Tucholsky (Helga Bemann's Kurt Tucholsky: Ein Lebensbild) did not appear until 1990, the year of his 100th birthday. To my knowledge, no book-length analysis of Süskind's works is available at this point.

⁸ Martin Meyer's detailed biography/analysis (1990) of the writer and his vast oeuvre figures prominently among these studies. Although Banine's Ernst Jünger aux faces multiples (1989) and Heimo Schwilk's Ernst Jünger: Leben und Werk in Bildern und Text (1988) are both of a more general nature, they are also quite useful in this respect.

of the sixty-odd years under consideration.

Once the choice of authors has been pinned down, we have to select the specific texts we will work with. In some instances the choices are quite easy to make. For example, Giraudoux's Siegfried cycle comprises two of the earliest twentieth-century French texts dealing with the German question which found both broad critical acceptance and popular acclaim in their time. The texts also represent a crucial turning point in Giraudoux's personal evolution from a moderately successful novelist to one of France's preeminent modern playwrights. A consideration of the various modifications Giraudoux effected in turning his novel into a play will be part of our discussion.

Vercors's Le silence de la mer is another text whose inclusion here does not require much justification. It is not only a landmark of resistance writing, but also one of the central texts to emerge from either of the two World Wars. Vercors was one of the first French writers who fully and consciously confronted the ramifications of the Occupation and thus a crucial moment of modern German nationalism. His response to that moment in history will deserve closer inspection.

Tournier's Le Roi des Aulnes occupies a similarly pivotal position in post-war French literature. Its

representation of Nazism, based largely on the use of myth and semiology, has often been misunderstood and criticized for allegedly exhibiting pro-Nazi sympathies. As we will see in Chapter 5, the opposite is in fact true.

And finally, Süskind's Das Parfum, set mostly in pre-Revolutionary Paris and Grasse, is another "natural" choice for inclusion in this study. One of the prime examples of the postmodern historical novel, the book was very successful worldwide and especially in France. Its fusion of a critique of Enlightenment with a highly symbolic representation of Nazism, coupled with its refusal to conform to traditional notions of "high" and "low" literature, makes it unique among the texts under consideration in this study.

While the preceding selections were relatively easy to make, the choices are less clear-cut in other cases. For instance, French culture and politics are a pervasive theme in numerous of Heinrich Mann's works. We could look at his play Madame Legros (1913) or at his two allegorical novels about Henri IV (1935 and 1938). However, we will mainly make use of several of Mann's essays about French writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which are very helpful in illuminating his understanding of Franco-German politics in his own era.

Robert Brasillach has also written much about Germany,

especially in his newspaper articles and editorials for *Je suis partout*. However, we will mainly focus on three different versions of an essay he originally wrote in 1937 about his visit to the Nazi Party Congress in Nuremberg. Brasillach's changing position on the question of German fascism will become evident through a detailed comparison of these three versions.

Ernst Jünger's representations of France are quite frequent and manifold, as well, making it once again not easy to choose among the vast offering. The earliest examples of his writing about France can be found in his World War I diaries, and similar references continue to turn up even in his most recent works of the late 1980s. In this study we will look at three of Jünger's World War II diaries which he wrote while he was stationed in France: Gärten und Straßen (1942), Erstes Pariser Tagebuch (1949), and Zweites Pariser Tagebuch (1949).

Perhaps the most difficult case of all is that of Tucholsky. His essays and articles written for various newspapers and journals number in the thousands, and not all of them have even been rediscovered at this point⁹. The

⁹For more information on the specific textual and organizational difficulties involved in establishing an edition of Tucholsky's works, see Fritz Raddatz's foreword to Deutsches Tempo (1985), the first supplemental volume to his Gesammelte Werke.

number of those articles which deal with France (written mostly between 1924 and 1928, while he lived in Paris) is also astonishingly high (a good 300-400). Because Tucholsky's forte was the short form, there is no one extended text that exemplifies his position on France, and in particular on his favorite cause, Franco-German reconciliation. Ein Pyrenäenbuch (1927) is his only major continuous text to deal with France, yet its travel descriptions are only of limited usefulness in this study which is mainly concerned with political and cross-cultural questions. Tucholsky's essays and articles therefore will have to remain our primary sources, and - as we shall see - they actually do constitute something of a continuous narrative if read in chronological sequence.

The study is divided into three main parts: the first part covers the 1920s, in other words the inter-war years, and it comprises the chapters on Giraudoux and Tucholsky. The second part focuses mainly on the 1930s and 1940s, paying particular attention to the Occupation and questions of collaboration and resistance. It consists of the chapters on Brasillach and Vercors on the one hand, and Jünger and Mann on the other. The third part treats the post-war years. It contains the chapters on Tournier and Süskind. None of these

chronological categories are meant as absolute and fixed boundaries, but only as rough guideposts along the way.

As far as the method of my analysis is concerned, this will be a very practically and textually oriented study. The theoretical apparatus will focus mainly on questions of reception and intertextuality. I will try, through a close reading of the works chosen, to establish intertextual relations between various writings of one author, between writings of different authors, and between the writings and the historico-political reality which they all in one way or another reflect.

While each chapter will have a slightly different analytical focus, there are two important overarching aspects I will return to repeatedly: political and cultural images of the neighboring country, in particular the pervasiveness of certain national myths and stereotypes. I will try to ascertain how prevalent those myths and stereotypes are in each writer's depiction of the country and its people, and in what way they are used to represent the two nations. In addition, I will try to discover if an author's specific politico-ideological views bear any relation to the way he perceives the neighboring country. The manner in which the author approaches his subject (seriously or playfully, realistically or mythically, as a contemporary or in

retrospect, in fiction or non-fiction) is one of the variables which will impact on the final picture that each writer paints of the neighbor across the river.

It should be apparent that I have chosen vastly divergent authors of different chronological epochs who are not usually grouped together for purposes of literary analysis. Their writing styles are as varied as their ideological outlooks. In addition, the time frame of this study is relatively large. The list of texts I will analyze is noticeably eclectic, as well. It includes various forms of expression, both fiction and non-fiction: novels, plays, poems, short stories, memoirs, diaries, essays, newspaper articles, and travelogues. As we will see, the lines between these categories are not seldomly blurred.

And so, one of the major problems that we need to keep in mind as we read these works is: how reliable are the texts, in particular the fictional ones, as representations of the extra-literary reality they purport to describe? Can we take at face value what we read? Or, to put it in more general terms, how does fiction anticipate or follow general cultural and political developments? Can it be a barometer of Franco-German relations? We know that it is impossible to assume that fiction unproblematically represents reality (to do so would be to repeat Emma Bovary's unfortunate mistake).

But it seems to me that not all fiction is created equal in this respect, especially as far as certain types of testimonial fiction are concerned. There is no question, for example, that in works such as Henri Barbusse's Le Feu and Erich-Maria Remarque's Im Westen nichts Neues, to name only two of the most famous texts to issue directly from an historical phenomenon (World War I), reality constitutes an immediate and omnipresent subtext to fiction. Of course, it remains for the reader to figure out where one ends and the other begins. The same is true for the fictional texts I will analyze here. I believe that it is important to attempt to read these works as much as possible the way we would read a non-fictional text: as products of their immediate contemporary environment and as reflections of their authors' political positions. To what extent this type of reading is in fact authorized will have to be decided on a case-by-case basis. The potential reward of such a reading, however, is quite clear: "Any interpretation of literature which refuses to divorce literature from life becomes an interpretation of that elusive, but none the less real entity, the soul of a people" (Peyre 2).

Chapter 1

Jean Giraudoux:

Schlemihl in Locarno

"...nous n'avons jamais perdu de vue une idée et un espoir, toujours présents en nous, et qui étaient ceux de l'Europe"

Albert Camus, Lettres à un ami allemand, 56.

I

"La question franco-allemande est la seule question grave de l'univers" (UP 94) - that is how Jean Giraudoux, in an article for *Entracte*, the magazine of Louis Jouvet's stage company, summed up the impetus behind his first play, Siegfried, when it premiered on May 3, 1928 at the *Théâtre des Champs-Élysées* in Paris. Even though the statement no doubt demands to be read largely as a piece of hyperbole and polemics, it nonetheless directs our attention to the primordial place this question held in Giraudoux's universe. This was, after all, not the first time he had approached it: his 1922 novel, Siegfried et le Limousin, upon which the play is partially based, addressed the same issue.

But whereas the play was generally well received by

audiences and critics alike, the same cannot be said for the novel. Starting in 1922 and continuing until the present day, it has led a rather sad life of ridicule and neglect. It was called "monstrueux et impubliable" even before it came out (cit. Body 1982, 1147), and it is still subject to an occasional lashing at the hand of contemporary critics such as Jeanne Bem, who, in 1986, called the book "démodé" and "un roman daté, si daté qu'on peut se demander s'il est encore lisible" (125). Apparently it was never perceived as very readable in the first place. Although it was awarded the *Prix Balzac* for 1922, it remains doubtful whether many people bothered to pick it up. Those who did, did not read it the way Giraudoux thought they would. It is no secret that the lack of public enthusiasm for the novel was one of the reasons why Giraudoux attempted a stage version, which, so he hoped, would reach a larger and more receptive audience. In an interview published in *Candide* on June 23, 1927, he commented on the critics' failure, in particular, to grasp his argument:

"Le but que je poursuivais quand j'écrivis ce livre était de tenter un rapprochement franco-allemand: je dois dire que la critique, en France, n'a pas saisi la portée du roman qui n'échappa pas aux Allemands. J'ai pensé alors que le théâtre pouvait m'offrir un moyen d'expression plus susceptible d'atteindre directement le grand public" (cit. Teissier 1985, 76).

A year later, he echoed the same sentiment in another

interview: "La critique n'avait point paru comprendre mon idée et je me suis obstiné à la faire réussir" (cit. Teissier 1985, 88). Giraudoux was downright obsessed with this issue, and he continued to bring it up on many occasions (cf. UP 94ff; Teissier 1985, 74ff). In some of those comments he even admitted that he may have been partially to blame for the fact that his ideas got lost in the muddle of odd facts and irrelevant subplots that so encumber the novel. Two days before the premiere of the play, he told a reporter from *Paris-Midi* that "pour la scène, j'ai traité le sujet plus profondément, j'ai poussé le problème" (cit. Teissier 1985, 82).

And things did in fact improve: Siegfried's premiere was hailed as "l'événement théâtral de la saison" (*La Presse*, May 6, 1928), and as "une date dans l'histoire du théâtre contemporain" (*Le Figaro*, June 6, 1929; both cit. Body 1982, 1155). Of course, not all reactions were as welcoming. René Doumic, writing in the June 1, 1928 issue of the *Revue des Deux Mondes* regarded the play as

"[une] pièce allemande par un auteur français, une pièce à l'honneur de l'Allemagne, imprégnée, saturée du sentiment de la grandeur allemande. Sur une scène française l'uniforme allemand... Dix ans après! Il a suffi de dix ans..." (cit. Teissier 1985, 106).

Still, voices such as these were not characteristic at all. And if the number and frequency of performances is any

indication, we can assume that Siegfried's reception, overwhelmingly favorable at the time of its first run, did not deteriorate as time went on. Louis Jouvet's original Paris production was performed no less than 243 times between May 1928 and January 1929. The same production was later performed in Nice, as well as in various cities in Italy, Switzerland, and Belgium, and then in Paris again in 1931 for another 40 shows. After the war, Siegfried had three major new productions - in 1952, 1965, and 1980, all in Paris, as well as a TV version, filmed in 1960 (Body 1982, 1156-1157).

To say that Siegfried's reception in German-speaking areas was less glowing than it was in France is to put the case mildly. To begin with, the German version, called Die Grenze [The Border], was less a translation than it was an excessively free adaptation (cf. Body 301-302). The translator, Hans Feist, truncated most of the Franco-German dialogue, as well as the question of Siegfried's split identity, thereby essentially cutting out the play's heart. In its place he inserted extraneous material of his own invention. The result was a banal melodrama which bore little resemblance to the revolutionary Siegfried that had opened in Paris in 1928.

Nor was this amputated version seen by many people, which, given its deplorable quality, may not be very

regrettable at all. Die Grenze debuted in late 1930 in Hamburg, as well as in two provincial towns (Osnabrück and Brunn) for a combined total of only fourteen performances. In February 1932 it ran in Bonn for five nights. A third round of stagings, this time under the title Der namenlose Soldat [The Nameless Soldier], took place in early 1938 in Vienna and Pressburg, a town in the Sudetenland, just two months before Hitler annexed Austria and nine months before he occupied the Sudetenland. In both cities the play had just one performance each (Body 300, 304). The grand total of pre-war showings of Siegfried (or what passed for it) in the germanophone world came to a rather pitiful 21, none of which took place in Berlin, the political and theatrical capital.

Obviously, we will never know whether a more faithful translation would have met with more approval by the German public. It seems unlikely, though, because

"[au] moment des représentations de Siegfried en 1930, le thème de ce drame n'était plus à la mode. ... Un autre mythe captivait le public, le mythe du *Führer*. ... Le peuple allemand pouvait très bien se passer d'une âme démocratique, et plus encore d'une âme franco-allemande" (Best 750-751).

Indeed, the days of Stresemann and Briand were clearly over by the time the play arrived in Germany. With the rapid advent of Hitlerism in the early 1930s any hope that

Giraudoux's argument for reconciliation, even in its unadulterated form, might have found receptive ears in Germany was almost certainly lost.

Today, with Giraudoux's goal finally achieved, his argument no longer carries the same sense of urgency it did seven decades ago. It is nonetheless instructive to see how this *pièce à thèse* (for that is essentially what it is) innovated the then prevailing theatrical discourse concerning this issue. To understand just how radically new and different Siegfried was in its time, we must bear in mind, as Marianne Mercier-Campiche reminds us¹⁰, that the play should be read within the context of a specific "repertory" of early twentieth-century French plays dealing with Germany.

The number of those plays is surprisingly large: Les Oberlé (1905) by René Bazin, Coeur de Française (1912) by Arthur Bernède and Aristide Bruant, Alsace (1913) by Gaston Leroux and Lucien Camille, Colette Baudouche (1915) by Pierre Frondaie (an adaptation of Maurice Barrès' novel), Les Butors et la Finette (1917) by François Porché, Un soir au front (1918) by Henry Kistemaekers, and La Captive (1920) by Charles Mère are just a few of those plays (cf. Mercier-Campiche 735ff).

¹⁰ In "Originalité de Siegfried dans le répertoire français en rapport avec l'Allemagne (1905-1928)." Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France. September/December 1983.

Most, if not all of them are forgotten today - and for good reason. Often lacking in basic literary and dramatic qualities, their main objective seemed to be to show Germany and the various German characters in the worst light possible. Many were populated with the theatrical equivalent of cardboard puppets and stick figures. Their dialogues consisted of hateful tirades and malignant propaganda (we should not forget that quite a few of them were produced before the backdrop of the Great War). In fact, if the image of Germany on the French stage was bad enough before 1914, it grew even worse afterwards: "[l'Allemand] devient le Boche, tandis que l'idéalisation patriotique de la France ... est poussée ... jusqu'à une véritable sacralisation" (Mercier-Campiche 737).

After the end of the war, German characters, and, perhaps more gravely, German *authors*, for the most part simply disappeared from the stage altogether. The attitude of French theater toward Germany changed from unfavorable to uninterested, from active disdain to passive neglect. Giraudoux, addressing this state of affairs, said that "[un] Français ne doit pas porter, dans ses relations avec l'Allemagne, le plus léger tort, même celui de ne pas la connaître" (UP 94). He not only discarded the traditional image of Germany that was prevalent on the French stage

during the late 1910s, but he also - and this may be his greatest contribution - reopened the dialogue and forced French audiences to at least think about the problem once again: "[en] entreprenant avec Siegfried d'attirer l'attention d'un public mal préparé sur la nécessité d'une réconciliation franco-allemande, Giraudoux a fait oeuvre de civilisation" (Mercier-Campiche 743). To do so was no small feat by any means, even after his way had been smoothed somewhat by the heady atmosphere surrounding the events at Locarno a few years earlier.

The details of what makes this "oeuvre de civilisation" work will be our focus in this chapter. The Siegfried cycle, as we might call it, consists of the 1922 novel and the 1928 play, as well as three published fragments of the play: Fin de Siegfried (the original version of the fourth act ending with Siegfried's death, which Giraudoux decided to replace with a more optimistic ending; it was first published in *Les Nouvelles Littéraires* in August 1934), Divertissement de Siegfried (an early version of Scenes 1-5 of Act 3, first published in the *NRF* on July 1, 1928), and the Lamento (an early version of Scene 5 of Act 1, first published in 1930). These fragments will be included in the discussion where appropriate. We will read the Siegfried texts under five aspects: the use of humor, the use of names, the split

between romanticism and technocracy, the Schlemihl myth, and the question of personal versus national identity. We will see how Giraudoux, a century after Madame de Staël, once again turned the Franco-German question into a legitimate topic of literary contemplation, and, in doing so, paved the way for others to follow.

II

Giraudoux's biography, including his personal connection to Germany, is fairly well known. It has been extensively (and perhaps even exhaustively) documented by Jacques Body in Giraudoux et l'Allemagne (1975) and Jean Giraudoux: la légende et le secret (1986). A few biographical cornerstones, however, are indispensable and therefore ought to be recalled here, especially where they touch directly upon the texts that are part of our inquiry.

Jean Giraudoux was born in Bellac in the Limousin region on October 29, 1882. He was part of a generation which benefited from a sort of early French version of the Sputnik shock: one of the more positive consequences of the defeat of 1871 was the rapid and concerted spread of foreign-language instruction in French schools, which up to that point had been "embryonic" (Body 19). Giraudoux studied German, the

language of choice for the majority of French students at the turn of the century. In Paris the number was around 60%, and at Giraudoux's *lycée* in Châteauroux things were presumably not much different (Body 19).

In 1903, after graduating with honors from the *lycée* and completing his military service, Giraudoux entered the *section des lettres* (the French department) at the *École Normale Supérieure*. A year later he switched to the *section d'allemand*, not, if we are to believe Jacques Body, because of any special predilection for the language, but mainly because the department was less overcrowded. It was headed by Charles Andler, who was not only the most prominent French *germaniste* of the period, but also one of the most well-known and respected university professors in France. He was instrumental in raising Giraudoux's interest in the country and encouraging his further studies of the language. We know that Andler's courses on romantic writers, in particular, left a lasting impression on Giraudoux. Evidence of this is abundant, not just in the Siegfried cycle, as we will see later, but also in several of his other works, such as

Ondine¹¹.

In May 1905, having secured a stipend to spend a year at the University of Munich, Giraudoux set out for Germany for the first time. He took a rather circuitous route to get to his destination, via Belgium and Holland, Cologne, Wiesbaden, Mainz, Frankfurt, and Nuremberg. This itinerary is similar to the one followed by Jean, the narrator of Siegfried et le Limousin as he travels to Munich. In fact, large parts of the novel, as well as some passages of Siegfried, draw on Giraudoux's memories of his stay in Munich. There is, to name just one example, a brief reference to the *café Stefanie*, which both Jean and Giraudoux frequented. It was a gathering place for local writers, including Ludwig Thoma and Frank Wedekind, with whom Giraudoux went on an occasional excursion into the Bavarian countryside. These two figures of real life were also acquaintances of the fictional Jean, who, upon returning to Munich after a 15-year absence went looking for some familiar places and faces:

"...je rentrai à mon ancienne pension... Elle était au-dessus du café Stefanie, où je jetai un dernier regard de recherche... Mais disparu Wedekind et sa gymnote

¹¹ Another indication that Giraudoux has spent much time (maybe a little too much) in the orbit of German writers is the fact that he, and not Marcel Proust, as is widely assumed, is responsible for the longest sentence in the French language. It can be found in Suzanne et le Pacifique, and it numbers 616 words, besting Proust's record by almost 100 words (Body 1990, 57).

pour les rhumatismes, mais disparu Thomas [sic]¹² et son serre-front mécanique" (SL 665).

Yet while the similarities between invention and reality are undeniable at times, it is difficult to agree with Jacques Body, who reads both the play's and the novel's references to Munich as virtual autobiography (50ff). On this point the usually reliable Body strikes out. He regards none of the depictions of Germany in the two texts as fiction and all of them as authentic testimony: "Giraudoux n'invente pas, mais se souvient" (238). Of course, the two concepts are not mutually exclusive. There is no question that personal memories have helped shape the texts, but it would be far too simplistic to believe that they are a faithful recounting of lived experience. Nor does this potential congruence of fictional Jean and actual Giraudoux really mean very much for our understanding of the texts. After all, what is to be gained from knowing that, like Giraudoux, Jean first came to Munich as a student in 1905, and stayed in an apartment above the *café Stefanie*, that Jean and Giraudoux

¹² In the original typescript Giraudoux had spelled the name correctly, i.e. without the final -s. This is also the version which appeared in earlier editions of the text (including the *Livre de Poche* edition). An editorially overzealous Jacques Body, apparently unaware that a writer named Thoma actually lived, assumed it was a typo and erroneously added the -s in the 1990 *Pléiade* edition.

share their year of birth and their first name?

From his base in Munich, Giraudoux traveled quite extensively, not just in the surrounding areas of Bavaria, but also to Austria, Hungary, Italy, and even back home to France. From Italy he wrote a postcard to his parents which contained the much-quoted phrase: "Quand je rencontre un Allemand, c'est comme si je rencontrais un compatriote" (cit. Body 1, 49). But we should probably not take this euphoric phrase too seriously. Giraudoux's warm feelings for his new-found "compatriots" were soon checked by reality - on September 12, 1905, only a week later, he sent his parents another postcard from Venice, describing a certain local landmark thusly: "Le fameux pont, appelé des soupirs parce que de gros allemands [sic] soupirent d'extase devant, sur leur Baedeker." And a year later, during a trip to Denmark, he had this to say on the subject of obnoxious Germans spoiling his vacation: "Voyage qui serait charmant ... si tout n'était pas plein d'Allemands, qui fument, crachent, et mangent" (cit. Body 59, 87).

Giraudoux received his *diplôme d'études supérieures* in German from the ENS in June 1906. In August he was back in Germany again, on a six-week tour of several cities, including Hamburg, Lübeck, Berlin (for two weeks), Dresden, and Munich. For a while he played with the thought of

becoming a teacher, but, as he later admitted, he found the prospect of spending the rest of his life in school unbearable. He signed up for the foreign service test instead, and, after failing the *grand concours*, passed the *petit concours* with flying colors.

In 1910 Giraudoux started his diplomatic career as junior vice consul at the French Foreign Ministry. Mobilized in 1914, he saw combat in Alsace, where he was severely wounded. He spent the remainder of the war recovering in various hospitals. He served in numerous posts in the French government during the 1920s and 1930s. In 1924, for example, he worked at the French embassy in Berlin. Later that year, he was appointed head of information and press services at the *Quai d'Orsay*, where he created a German-language newspaper, the *Pariser Correspondenzblatt*. Its first issue appeared on August 1, 1925. Unfortunately, due to a dearth of qualified French contributors, it never quite managed to live up to its goal of engaging a dialogue with German writers and cultural leaders (cf. Body 273-274). In December 1927 Giraudoux represented the Foreign Ministry at the festivities honoring Heinrich Mann during his visit to Paris. Giraudoux served as inspector general of French diplomatic and consular posts from 1934 to 1939. This position entailed frequent extended voyages to various cities around the world,

mostly in Europe, the United States, and Canada, but also in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia, Australia, and the South Pacific.

After 1940, he continued to serve in the Foreign Ministry, frequently traveling back and forth between Paris and Vichy. His plays and other works were not prohibited during the Occupation (Body 438). In fact, Giraudoux's behavior during this period, which coincided with the last four years of his life, is a little dubious. He enjoyed a rather privileged position with those who oversaw German cultural policies in occupied Paris, including Karl Epting and Karl-Heinz Bremer, the director and deputy director, respectively, of the German Institute in Paris¹³. While Giraudoux never participated in official functions or receptions at the Institute, he often dined with Bremer and Brasillach (Body 436-437). He also met Ernst Jünger on several occasions in 1943 when they were both guests of Florence Gould in Paris. According to Jacques Body, Jünger was Giraudoux's "friend" and "protector" (438). While none

¹³ Bremer, an example of that most rare of species: a francophile Nazi, had come to France (first to Poitiers, then to Paris) as an exchange student in 1931. He was a lecturer of German at the Sorbonne and at the ENS from 1936 to 1938. He was also the German translator of the works of Henri de Montherlant, as well as a close friend of Robert Brasillach's and other fascists. In early 1940 he wrote two short, rather adulatory articles on Giraudoux for the Nazi monthly *Volkstum* (Body 425).

of this makes Giraudoux a collaborator, his passive acceptance of the Occupation and the occupiers certainly does not put those last years of his life in the most advantageous light. Giraudoux died a few months before the liberation of Paris, on January 31, 1944.

III

Before turning our attention to more serious matters we should take a brief look at Giraudoux's use of humor in the Siegfried cycle. In spite of its essentially un-funny topic, it contains several comic moments that may in fact signify more than is at first apparent. Much of the comedy is directed at differences in French and German customs and language. As such, these moments do little to advance the storyline, yet they provide small and sometimes quite revealing sidelights on the larger points being made in the texts.

One such sidelight, for example, is the description of Zelten. It is one of the few passages that have survived the transfer from the novel to the play more or less intact. In the novel, Jean recalls his pre-war memories of Zelten:

"Zelten avait tous ces défauts superbes et voyants dont on ornait chez nous les Allemands jusqu'en 1870...: il avait des cheveux blonds en boucles, il sacrifiait chaque minute de sa vie à des chimères...: il était l'Allemagne. ... [Il] ne se baignait dans le Rhin qu'en

plongeant du pont d'où Schumann s'était jeté; il sautait à cheval le mur dont était tombé Beethoven dans la chute qui causa, dit-on, sa surdité" (SL 629-630).

In the play, Robineau introduces Zelten to Geneviève in nearly the same terms. He, too, mentions his jump from Schumann's bridge and adds:

"Zelten ... a tous ces défauts sonores et voyants dont on ornait chez nous les Allemands avant 1870, les cheveux blonds, l'intimité avec les chimères, les distances avec les réalités, l'emphase sincère. ... Il avait pris une entorse en sautant du rocher d'où s'était jeté Louis de Bavière. ... Si tu lui trouves le nez brisé ou l'omoplate en large, c'est sûrement la faute de Wagner ou de Frédéric Barberousse" (S 13).

The fact that Giraudoux copied this description from the novel to the play almost verbatim - merely exchanging a few names - should give us some indication as to its significance. It portrays Zelten as a somewhat eccentric, yet good-natured character. It also identifies him as the representative of all things German in the texts. This identification is crucial in order for the basic dialectic "France/Germany" to work on the personal level on which Giraudoux prefers to operate in the Siegfried cycle (Jean and Robineau will be installed as the corresponding personifications of the French side). By injecting some amount of comedy into these two passages, Giraudoux manages to establish the identification quickly, concisely and, most

important, memorably.

There are also some instances of self-deprecating humor. In Siegfried et le Limousin, Giraudoux has Jean comment upon his peaceful "invasion" of turn-of-the-century Germany as part of a group of French language students, an experience shared by author and narrator:

"L'Allemagne est une grande plaine créée pour les invasions, et où la France d'ailleurs, depuis quarante ans, n'a pu expédier que la cohorte semestrielle de huit boursiers d'agrégation, mais j'avais été l'un d'eux et je ne renonçais pas à ma conquête" (SL 629).

Robineau, who takes over a good number of Jean's lines in the play, belongs to the same category of invaders:

"Que venaient faire les Français en Allemagne avant la guerre? De la philologie. Je faisais partie de ce raid de douze sorbonnards que la France lâcha victorieusement, aussitôt après Agadir, sur les dialectes saxons" (S 11).

This is another one of the handful of passages whose content Giraudoux transferred almost unchanged from the novel to the play, indicating that it, too, must have served an important purpose. While the military analogy in this context is mildly amusing, there is a more serious matter behind the humor, as well. The two passages describe precisely the sort of peaceful "invasion" advocated not only by Giraudoux but also by those of his contemporaries who shared his ideas. Kurt Tucholsky and Heinrich Mann, for

example, were strongly in favor of student and worker exchange as one effective means of achieving lasting and widespread reconciliation. All three of them doubted that this goal could be achieved in a purely political arena.

On occasion Giraudoux also plays with certain national stereotypes to achieve a desired comic effect. For example, as Siegfried is about to cross the border into France, he notices a small village not far away and asks Pietri, the Corsican border guard and customs inspector:

Siegfried: "C'est la première ville française qu'on voit là?"

Pietri: "Oui, c'est le village."

Siegfried: "Il est grand?"

Pietri: "Comme tous les villages. 831 habitants."

Siegfried: "Comment s'appelle-t-il?"

Pietri: "Comme tous les villages. Blancmesnil-sur-Audinet" (S 70).

On the flip side of the coin, we find this account of what Siegfried does as he gets out of bed one winter morning:

"[Il] consulta un thermomètre intérieur, un thermomètre extérieur, le baromètre, et tapota un instrument horizontal qui pouvait être un sismographe. Ainsi s'assurent les Allemands du temps qu'il fait. Tout lui indiquant la neige, il la regarda enfin, ouvrit la fenêtre, et, apercevant la trace du loup et de l'élan, l'effaça pour qu'ils pussent échapper aux chasseurs" (SL 669).

And finally, Giraudoux has Zelten volunteer a whole host of what he himself implies are clichés. Asked what happened to him during the war, Zelten replies:

"Il m'est arrivé tout ce qui arrive aux Allemands diaboliques et romantiques, j'ai hérité d'une part dans une fabrique d'objets en caoutchouc, je me suis brouillé avec ma belle-mère, et j'ai une sinusite à l'état chronique... Je suppose par contre que le sort t'a donné tout ce qui est le lot du petit bourgeois français, tu as été aimé d'une princesse régnante, tu as trouvé un nouveau rapport entre les mots et les couleurs, tu as été jeté sur une Cyclade déserte et y as vécu avec Miss Campton et Lénine" (SL 634).

All three of these examples show traces of non-referential language. In particular, the enumeration of actions and events in the latter two quotes has a certain over-the-top quality that should probably not be taken too literally. But regardless of whether or not we take them literally, the main function of all these passages is to provide instances of humor. The readers and viewers are supposed to recognize certain clichés that ring true, that remind them of someone they know, maybe even of themselves. Whether this attempt at cliché-based humor is successful or not depends entirely on the public's ability and willingness to play along. As soon as some of the supposed clichés sound unfamiliar, as in the third example we have given, the humor tends to fall flat. Nor should we be overly concerned with the fact that Giraudoux indirectly helps perpetrate some of the more widespread national stereotypes here, such as the sleepy French backwater, the *petit bourgeois*, and the overly meticulous and romantic German. Giraudoux makes it clear

that he is aware that these are in fact stereotypes. He either tacitly acknowledges them as such or announces their status as stereotypes outright. Because they are presented in this preemptive manner, they lose a great part of their unpleasantness.

The old German custom of embroidering cushions and assorted pieces of furniture with proverbs and tacky sayings is a constant source of comic irritation for all of Giraudoux's French characters traveling to Germany; they are invariably taken aback by it. In Simon le Pathétique (1918), for example, Simon stays with a family in Berlin. Among the many odd things which he notices, "les meubles garnis de devises" rank at the top of the list (Oeuvres romanesques complètes 297). In Siegfried, Robineau tells a bewildered Geneviève that it is "la mode en Allemagne de broder des proverbes. ... C'est le coussin qui parle!" (S 24). In Siegfried et le Limousin, Jean comes across the same phenomenon in Siegfried's office:

"Gravés sur tout ce qui était bois, brodés sur tout ce qui était étoffe, je retrouvais dans son bureau tous ces proverbes et résidus de la sagesse allemande dont le visiteur est abreuvé: 'Qui parle le matin, se tait le soir... Qui aime son prochain aura des fleurs au printemps... Assieds-toi sur moi, je suis un loyal fauteuil de Dessau... L'heure du matin a de l'or dans la bouche...'" (SL 677).

Giraudoux's characters are annoyed by this manifest lack

of good taste and they do not hesitate to say so.

Giraudoux also mocks the German weakness for long and sometimes ridiculous honorifics. For example, Zelten's revolt is announced in a telegram that reads:

"'Révolution Munich. Comte Docteur Artiste Peintre von Zelten a pris pouvoir.' Car il faut, en Allemagne, la moitié au moins du télégramme pour indiquer les titres bourgeois du révolutionnaire" (SL 746).

Simple repetition will obtain the same comic effect:

"Monsieur, dit le professeur Schmeck, je suis monsieur le professeur Schmeck. Mon ami est le capitaine baron de Greidlinger" (SL 710). And when Muck, Siegfried's servant, announces several people who have come to the palace to potentially claim the amnesic as their long-lost son, he duly introduces them all with an appropriate title: "Monsieur l'architecte municipal Schmidt!" is followed by "Madame la rentière Hoepfl!" and "Monsieur le relieur Keller!" (S 9-10). In these instances, the comedy results from Muck's applying the concept of professional or social titles not only out of context (after all, Schmidt's and Keller's occupations are completely irrelevant here), but also to individuals whose occupation or social rank would not normally be indicated by a title in the first place.

Another major object of Giraudoux's humor is the German language, "ce cri étouffé, guttural, émouvant qu'on appelle

la parole allemande" (SL 679), and specifically its various pitfalls involving its syntax and compound nouns. Commenting on his efforts to learn German, Siegfried for example complains about "cette peine que j'avais toujours à rouler le verbe à la fin" (SL 779). As early as 1919, in the novel Elpénor, Giraudoux had already skilfully parodied the postponing of the verb until the very end of the sentence:

"Ô Cyclope, dit-il, ce n'est pas deux, ce n'est pas quatre, ce n'est pas six yeux ou paires ... d'yeux, qui pour contempler celui qu'au centre de ton front par ton cerveau même tu nourris, suffiraient! Bouclier, contre lequel d'Apollon les flèches se brisent, et ton sourcil, comme l'arc noir de l'amazone au-dessus soudain de son bouclier rond, sur lui apparaît et se tend! Ô Cyclope, quand ton oeil tu clignes, il semble que le soleil cligné a! À quoi la beauté reconnaît-on? À ce que les dieux l'envient. Or tu es du plus puissant, de l'Amour lui-même, envié!" (E 403).

This passage is in a similar vein as the one in Siegfried et le Limousin in which Jean receives a letter asking him to leave the country. The letter reads:

"Devons vous prévenir que vos relations avec S.V.K.¹⁴ hautement suspectes nous sont. De votre départ immédiat le désir exprimons hautement. En tout état de cause avertissons hautement que, si troublez S.V.K. dans état calme péniblement obtenu et interrompez d'un jour son travail, il court risque de mort, ainsi que vous, dont

¹⁴ Siegfried von Kleist.

sommes hautement serviteur. Signé: Consul¹⁵" (SL 699).

In both of these instances, Giraudoux writes a couple of French sentences the way they would have to be written if they were to follow German syntax. The result is not only quite amusing but also surprisingly intelligible. It exemplifies on the most immediate level, namely that of language itself, Giraudoux's grand project of approaching and mixing French and German cultures.

The second feature of the German language spoofed by Giraudoux is the compound noun. Robineau, for example, mentions the names of two fictitious companies which manufactured the furniture and decorations in Siegfried's palace: "Kohlenschwanzbader" and "Weselgrosschmiedvater" (S 23). While these words look daunting enough, Giraudoux saves the worst for last. In the original version of the fourth act, he introduces a pitiful French chef who is unable to tell anyone that he is employed in the "warm roast department" (whatever that may be) of the Hotel Four Seasons in Munich, because in German the word turns out to be "Vierjahreszeitenhotelwarmbräatenabteilung" (FS 104), a slightly nonsensical, yet lexically correct concoction.

¹⁵ The "Organisation Consul" was a group of antisemitic and nationalist fanatics. They were responsible for the assassination of Germany's foreign minister, Walter Rathenau, a Jew, in June 1922.

Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately from the point of view of the actor who would have had to deliver the word, Giraudoux dropped this version of the fourth act in favor of a new one which did not include the word.

Yet despite its undeniable richness as a source of comedy, Giraudoux does not stop at German. He also pokes fun at some of the oddities of his own language, as in the scene in which he illustrates Robineau's comments on the French subjunctive with a few well-placed examples:

"...j'ai donné dix ans de leçons et aux étrangers les plus variés. Or, quels qu'ils fussent, Scandinaves, Brésiliens, et même si nos relations jusque-là n'avaient été que celles d'élèves à maître, il suffisait que je leur expliquasse nos imparfaits du subjonctif pour que naquît entre nous une sorte de sympathie" (S 25).

These last few quotes exemplarize Giraudoux's quintessential way of comic writing: subtle and slightly precious, their humor is based on the strategic and intelligent use of words and on the play with language and languages. Of course, Giraudoux's theater overall has a well-known reputation for being heavily verbal and even verbose. This has led most commentators to charge Giraudoux with excessive preciousness, a style whose defining features are the expression of simple ideas in a convoluted manner and the preponderance of finely crafted words over substantive content. The charge is only half true, because for Giraudoux

words themselves often are content. Those many words and their judicious placement are the vehicle with which he conveys a lot of his ideas. Next, we will look at another way he goes about this task.

IV

Giraudoux expresses the basic conflict between Siegfried's two homelands first and most often on the immediate level of words (and to be more precise, a particular category of words: *names*) and only then on the more abstract level of politics¹⁶. Siegfried's struggle to overcome his split identity is represented outwardly by the fact that the other characters, and increasingly he himself, cannot even agree on what to call him: Siegfried von Kleist or Jacques Forestier. There is a constant concern with names as markers of identity, as if solving the dilemma of the protagonist's names could also solve the dilemma of his amnesia and rootlessness. While confusion between the two names reigns throughout much of the texts, on a couple of occasions Giraudoux reduces this confusion to its essence:

¹⁶ In section VII we will show that this fact has important ramifications for how we read the Siegfried texts as a whole: not primarily as a piece of political polemics, but as one character's attempt to reclaim both parts of his identity.

Geneviève: "Jacques!"

Eva: "Siegfried!"

Siegfried: "On m'appelle!" (S 22).

The play's first act ends on these three somewhat abrupt and disconcerting mini-lines. It remains uncertain to which of the two names Siegfried has responded. That is of course precisely the point: Giraudoux conveys Siegfried's dilemma not by stating it outright, but rather by implying it through the juxtaposition of the two names. Another example of this occurs in the middle of the third act, when Geneviève ends scene 4 with the words: "...tu es français, tu es mon fiancé, Jacques, c'est toi," and scene 5 opens with Eva providing the counterpoint: "Siegfried! C'est moi, Siegfried!" (S 54). In addition to opposing the two names again, these two lines work especially well because they use sound wisely: their staccato syntax and their easy rhyme (toi/moi) make them particularly effective for an audience that has to depend solely on the spoken word to make sense of the text.

There are other instances where the problem of naming is addressed. For example, reflecting on his frustrated attempts at finding out his real identity, Siegfried says that

"[un] prénom suivi de son nom, il me semble que c'est la réponse à tout. Si jamais je retrouve les miens, je ne répondrai jamais autre chose à ceux qui me questionneront" (S 29).

And in the Lamento, where the amnesic Siegfried is found not on a battlefield, but at a train station, he recalls envying some of his fellow passengers: "Heureuses gens! Ils ne savaient pas lire, et avaient un nom" (L 90-91). Another prime example comes when Jean talks about a dream of his in which Siegfried "prenait mon nom et je prenais le sien" (SL 700). The two words "mon nom" tell the whole story. Describing a dream about the exchange of names, they form a convenient palindrome which draws the reader's attention precisely to the reversible and confusing quality of names in the Siegfried cycle (where Forestier becomes Siegfried, and Siegfried becomes Siegfried/Forestier). It should come as no surprise that Giraudoux abandoned this palindrome in the stage version where its visual aspect would have been lost on the listeners. We have already seen how he replaced it with an aural equivalent.

Since the question of Siegfried's identity has been framed in terms of nomenclature, it will have to be solved in the same terms. After Eva and Geneviève have once again called him by two different names, Siegfried makes this request: "Vous n'auriez pas l'une et l'autre, pour m'appeler, un nom intermédiaire entre Siegfried et Jacques?" (S 56). The question remains unanswered at that point, but by the end of the play Siegfried will have figured out a solution. He will

be "Siegfried et Forestier" (S 68), combining both halves of his identity into one somewhat unwieldy name. Giraudoux also includes the word "nom" itself in the final lines of both the novel and the play. In the former it refers to Forestier's name on the back of a photograph of him as a child (SL 781). In the latter it is used when Geneviève reminds Forestier that "jamais je ne t'ai appelé par ton nom allemand" (S 76). This way Giraudoux ensures that up to the very end of the two texts, his audience does not lose the problem of naming from sight.

But names in the Siegfried texts also have other functions besides illustrating the protagonist's dilemma. For one thing, they point to a number of historical parallels. After all, we can be quite sure that Giraudoux did not choose his character's two last names, Forestier and von Kleist, by coincidence. The name von Kleist belongs to a line of Prussian aristocrats. It was first documented in the year 1263. If Giraudoux was trying to equip Siegfried with a family name that suggested deep roots in German history, he certainly found the right one. From the eighteenth to the twentieth century, the von Kleists produced several noted military officers. One of them, Ewald Christian von Kleist (1715-1759), served in the army of Frederick the Great. Just as the fictional Siegfried in the play's original version,

Ewald von Kleist died of wounds he suffered during a battle. But it is his nephew, the writer Heinrich (1777-1811), who remains the best known of the von Kleists. He attended the French *lycée* in Berlin and lived in France for a short time. One of the most important German dramatists, Heinrich von Kleist wrote, among other things, an Amphitryon (1807). Giraudoux, of course, would later write his own version of the myth: his second play, following Siegfried, was Amphitryon 38 (1929). Kleist also wrote a play entitled Die Hermannsschlacht (posthumous, 1821). In the novel Giraudoux refers to the *Hermannsschlacht*, the Battle of Arminius in the year 9 AD (SL 717). The name "von Kleist," then, did not come out of nowhere; as a student of German literature and history, Giraudoux was no doubt well aware of its multiple connotations.

The name Forestier seems to have been chosen for good reason, as well. The German versions of this name are *Förster* or *Forster*. Georg Forster (1754-1794) was a scientist and professor who, in the 1770s, accompanied James Cook on his second journey around the world. His political activities after the French Revolution, however, are more significant for Giraudoux's texts. Forster supported the ideas of the Revolution and tried to popularize them in his own country. He was a member of the Jacobin club in Mainz, a

city located about twenty miles west of Frankfurt. After French troops occupied Mainz in October 1792, local leaders decided that the city and its surrounding territory (a free state known as the *Mainzer Republik*) should annex into France. Forster was sent to Paris in the spring of 1793 to negotiate the annexation. In the meantime, however, Prussian troops retook the *Mainzer Republik*, and nothing came of the plans. Forster was branded a traitor by his compatriots. He remained in exile in Paris where he died a year later. Giraudoux may well have had Georg Forster in mind when he selected the name Forestier. Like Forestier, Forster was ultimately at home in both and in neither of the two countries. The fact that he was also an early advocate for a political union between them heightens the possibility that Giraudoux was familiar with him and that his name was the basis for Forestier's.

Finally, there is a third way in which Giraudoux uses names. In keeping with his desire to personalize the geographical and political aspects of the text, Giraudoux has a duo of characters named Durand and Meyer (two of the more common last names in French and German) stand in for all Frenchmen and all Germans. Jean comments on one of them:

"...un gaillard entra ... et poussa le cri que deux ou trois millions d'Allemands rugissent en se présentant... 'Meyer!' J'affectai d'entendre ce nom pour la première fois, et il le fit alors précéder d'un correctif qui réduisait à deux ou trois cent mille le nombre de ses

possesseurs... 'Doktor Meyer!'" (SL 681-682).

The name recurs in the play, as Muck twice announces a "Monsieur Meyer" among the visitors to the palace (S 3, 10). And in Fin de Siegfried, Robineau brings an old lady and a young chef from France to Munich in order to make Jacques feel more at home. Asked by Geneviève who they are, they first introduce themselves simply as "les Français," but later the old lady says of the chef: "J'ai amené M. Durand. Rien que son nom est déjà quelque chose" (FS 103). This line is one more (humorous) piece of evidence that Giraudoux considers names as the main markers of a person's identity. Durand is not just French, he is *le Français*, his Frenchness being the one and only attribute that defines him.

Just as Meyer and Durand are supposed to personify what we might call the "average" German and the "average" Frenchman (there is no such creature, of course), several other named figures also serve not so much as characters but as personifications. The names Ludendorff¹⁷, Stinnes¹⁸, Morgan, and Rockefeller (S 3, 46), for example, symbolize the kind of Germany - industrialized and anglophile - which

¹⁷ A Prussian general and early supporter of Hitler, he participated in Hitler's failed 1923 putsch in Munich.

¹⁸ An industrialist and pro-Nazi member of the Weimar parliament.

Zelten dislikes and tries to combat. Giraudoux uses these and other names as more than simple appellations. On one level, they do designate an actual person, to be sure, but what is more important is that they also stand in for certain abstract concepts and render them tangible. Their textual function is to help define and circumscribe crucial areas of concern, one of which - the question of identity - we have just discussed. Another one is the dichotomy Giraudoux perceives between a technocratic and a romantic Germany.

V

One of the fundamental components of Giraudoux's view of the country is its split between what he regards as a benign, romantic, old-fashioned, peaceful, francophile Germany on the one hand, and a malignant, technocratic, modern, militaristic, anglophile Germany on the other. This is a sort of *idée fixe* which runs through all of the Siegfried texts. Many characters can easily be categorized along those lines: for example, Zelten, Robineau, and Jean are advocates of the "old" Germany, while Eva and the generals, Waldorf and Ledinger, are advocates of the "new" Germany. In addition, two cities and regions also exemplarize this basic dialectic in the texts: Munich, the capital of romantic Bavaria is the

antipode to Berlin, the capital of technocratic Prussia. This geographical divide deserves closer attention because it is a prime embodiment of how Giraudoux's two Germanies differ.

Giraudoux's first allegiance was to Munich, the city he first visited in 1905. In those early years of the century Munich was what Berlin would be during the 1920s: a center of literary and artistic activity. While Giraudoux uses Munich as a backdrop for much of Siegfried et le Limousin, the city makes an appearance in his works even prior to that text. The early short story, Nuit à Châteauroux, published in the *NRF* on July 1, 1919, was already filled with memories of Munich. The selection of locales was very similar to what it would later be in Siegfried et le Limousin. Among them we find, once again, the Hotel Four Seasons (cf. SL 674 and S 104), as well as the *Maximilianeum* (cf. S 11), the *Alte Pinakothek*, the *Englischer Garten*, the river Isar, and the *Tegernsee* (cf. SL *passim*), to name only a few. At this early point Munich had already begun to be "une sorte de nombril de la terre" for Giraudoux; by contrast he regarded Berlin, Prussia, and Wilhelminian Germany as "une coquille gigantesque" (Body 217, 259).

"Berlin est une grande ville dont les rues sont très larges, parfaitement bien alignées, les maisons belles, et

l'ensemble régulier" - this collection of banalities was the nicest thing Madame de Staël managed to say about the Berlin of the early nineteenth century (I, 133). The impression Giraudoux gathered one hundred years later, during his two-week visit to 1906 Berlin, was not much different, and many of his characters, including Zelten, Jean, and Siegfried share his distaste for the city. Siegfried, for example, is "épouvanté" by it (SL 722), and all Jean notices is "son terrain plat, sa banalité, son plâtre neuf" (SL 723).

Ironically, even though Giraudoux disliked Berlin intensely, he returned there more often than to any other German city, witnessing a different environment every time: the relatively bucolic Berlin of 1906 and 1907; the cosmopolitan metropolis of the 1920s he saw during his short stint at the French embassy; and finally the Berlin of the Nazis, which was already in evidence as early as June 1930 and January 1931, when he attended the German premiere of Amphitryon 38, and which was firmly entrenched in late 1935, when he last came to the city during a consular inspection tour.

Giraudoux did modify his view of Berlin somewhat as time went on. While he did not care for the quiet and apparently banal city of the early century, he did manage to discover a few positive aspects about the urban center of the late 1920s

and early 1930s. In his brief 1932 travel account, entitled Berlin, he provides his French readers with a description of the city that is based in part on a comparison between it and Paris¹⁹. One of the themes to which Giraudoux returns repeatedly in this account is Berlin's paradoxical rusticity amidst the urban sprawl:

"Berlin n'est pas une ville de jardins, c'est un jardin. ... Berlin compte 272.900 infirmes de paix, 63.000 infirmes de guerre, 115.000 enfants mal nés, 600.000 chômeurs au moins, mais c'est un jardin. ... Le dernier champ de seigle ou de pomme de terre brandebourgeois touche sans intervalle à la cité modèle la plus hardie et la plus élégante, aux rhododendrons et aux géraniums" (B 31-32, 38).

We cannot necessarily deduce from this short passage that Giraudoux has all of a sudden taken a liking to Berlin. After all, it is precisely the non-urban aspect of the city, its greenery and its surrounding fields, that attracts his interest and meets with his approval.

The second positive impression Giraudoux carries home with him in 1932 is that Berlin seems to provide each of its citizen with all material necessities and that life in general seems more pleasant there than in Paris:

"Les murs de Berlin sont ces citadelles aux murs colorés, où le moindre logement ouvrier comporte ses baignoires, son téléphone.... ... Tout le Berlin

¹⁹ In his reports from Paris intended for Berlin audiences, Kurt Tucholsky used the same strategy, albeit on a much larger scale.

nouveau, de Lichterfeld [sic] à Grunewald [sic]²⁰, est une ville de bains, sans sources particulières, un port de plaisance sans la mer, mais cette notion de vacances qui est écrasée pour le bourgeois français entre les chaleurs de juillet et les pluies de septembre, s'y épand dans chaque journée, dans chaque heure, et le repos y a trois fois par jour l'agrément de la richesse [et] du loisir" (B 38, 41).

Of course, it remains doubtful just how much credence we should give an assessment such as this one, made after only a few brief visits. In Chapter 2, we will see how subjective this sort of observation really is: Giraudoux's contemporary, Kurt Tucholsky, gives similar accolades to Paris and posits it as a role model for Berlin. It seems that the grass is indeed always greener on the other side.

But as we said before, the contrast between Munich and Berlin is merely one manifestation of a much broader dichotomy underlying the Siegfried cycle, that between romanticism and technocracy. Zeltens is the one character who is most worried about the latter. He believes that anglophone industrial interests wield too much power in Germany and that they are bent on destroying the country. The aim of his putsch is to prevent this from happening and instead to tie Germany closer to France. In the wake of the

²⁰ Lichterfelde and Grunewald are two neighborhoods in Berlin's southwest.

putsch, Zelten intercepts two telegrams demanding that he leave Germany:

"...le premier vient d'Amérique et est adressé à Wirth²¹. Je vous le lis: 'Si Zelten se maintient Munich, annulons contrat pétrole.' Le deuxième vient de Londres et est adressé à Stinnes: 'Si Zelten se maintient Munich, annulons contrat Volga et provoquons hausse mark.' Par contre, je n'ai intercepté aucun télégramme disant: 'Si Zelten est roi, musiciens allemands refusent composer et jouer.' 'Si Zelten est président, philosophes allemands incapables penser et décorateurs feront grève.' 'Si Zelten est Premier consul, ...printemps allemand refusera produire myrtilles et narcisses...'" (SL 765-766).

Zelten also fears that Siegfried might eventually come under this technocratic influence. He sketches for Eva the kind of Germany such a Siegfried would institute:

"L'Allemagne de ton Siegfried! Je la vois d'ici. Un modèle de l'ordre social, la suppression de ces trente petits royaumes, de ces duchés, de ces villes libres, ...un pays distribué en départements égaux dont les seules aventures seront les budgets, les assurances, les pensions, bref une nation comme lui théorique, sans mémoire et sans passé. Ce fils du néant a une hérédité de comptable, de juriste, d'horloger. Imposer la constitution de ton élève à l'Allemagne, c'est faire avaler un réveille-matin au dragon de Siegfried, du vrai, pour lui apprendre à savoir l'heure!" (S 6).

Zelten says that he has done everything he could "pour empêcher l'Allemagne de devenir une société anonyme" (S 46). In the end, however, he has to admit defeat; his putsch is a

²¹ Josef Wirth was chancellor of the Weimar Republic from May 1921 to November 1922, in other words during the time the novel takes place.

failure. Reading those two passages, we might be tempted to believe that Zelten's concerns are the same as those harbored by Giraudoux. It is true that Zelten can sometimes be read as a mouthpiece for Giraudoux's own opinions. Yet if we were to pursue the identification of character and author in this case, it would entail a bit of a problem. Zelten deplores what he perceives to be the loss of the romantically benign Germany he once knew (no matter that it may have existed only in his mind). For him, this loss is concomitant with Germany's turning away from France and toward England and the United States. The problem is that even as Giraudoux wrote these scenes in the late 1920s, anglophobia was already a factor in some French fascists' advocacy of closer Franco-German relations and would gain increasing importance during the early 1930s. Pierre Drieu la Rochelle is the most prominent proponent of this school of thought. That is why Giraudoux's thrust in this direction is somewhat disconcerting. It makes Zelten's motives for a Franco-German approach appear less than pure. It makes Zelten himself look like a fascist (whether or not he really is one remains uncertain). And, if we did not know any better, it would also make Giraudoux look like a fascist and an anglophobe. Since Giraudoux was neither, the proposed congruence between him and Zelten is unworkable in this case.

Still, there is a definite anti-modernist element in much of what Giraudoux's characters have to say. The contemporary real-life Germany of the 1920s is constantly challenged by and effaced in favor of a romantically idealized, pre-modern fantasy land. Not surprisingly, Zelten is behind most of these attempts. For example, one of his pet projects is trying to move Siegfried away from the modern big city (be it Munich or Berlin) and into the Bavarian countryside. For Zelten, this geographical change of location goes along with a beneficial chronological displacement:

"Au lieu de promener Siegfried dans les cités modèles, amène-le seulement là-bas, sur les premiers contreforts de nos Alpes. Va surprendre l'aube avec lui. Tu y verras si l'Allemagne du Saint-Empire ne survit pas dans l'air gelé, à cette heure où les ruisseaux, tout en glace, sont sillonnés d'une rigole à leur *thalweg*²² où l'on ne rencontre encore que les humains et les animaux qui n'ont pas changé depuis Gustave-Adolphe.... Tu y verras le paysage même de notre Allemagne d'autrefois, ...si chargé à la fois de poésie et de vérité, que tu t'attendras à apercevoir soudain, flottant dans l'air, comme dans les gravures du moyen âge, un gros petit enfant céleste, tout nu ou des mains seules priant... C'est là, l'Allemagne..." (S 6-7).

The same linkage between alpine scenery and pre-modern timeframe can already be found in the novel, where Jean discovers

"[pas] un lapin, pas un lièvre, pas un genièvre et un noyer..., pas un ruisseau gelé et sillonné d'une rigole

²² A foot path leading through a valley.

à son *thalweg*, pas une croix, que je ne connusse déjà par le Petit ou le Grand Testament²³. J'étais dans ce temps épique du Saint-Empire qui continue à vivre en Allemagne le matin, alors que l'époque romantique n'y reparaît que vers midi, et, au crépuscule et dans les environs des villes celle du *Sturm und Drang*. Je prenais dans l'air le plus frais ce bain de Moyen Âge que donne la Bavière à son réveil, quand ne sortent encore que les êtres et les animaux qui n'ont pas changé depuis Wallenstein. ... Un paysage vu tant de centaines de fois, monticule par monticule, dans Altdorfer ou Wohlgemüth qu'on s'attend à apercevoir soudain dans l'air, comme dans leur dessins et leurs gravures, un gros petit enfant tout nu, ou des mains seules priant, ou des gibets célestes. J'étais, non dans un pays, mais dans une aube de conjuration, de pillage, et qui s'obstinait à ne rien révéler de l'Allemagne moderne" (SL 653).

As he does on a few other occasions, Giraudoux transfers this passage from the novel to the play with only minimal changes in wording and meaning. The key words in both instances remain the same. They refer to a supposedly idyllic time (the Middle Ages, the Holy Roman Empire) and place (virginal, almost prelapsarian nature). One point that is of particular interest, however, is the slightly different ending Giraudoux appends to the second passage. Zelten says that the cherub and the praying hands are Germany ("C'est là, l'Allemagne"). Jean says that they reveal nothing of *modern* Germany, implicitly recognizing that there is in fact such a thing as modern Germany. Zelten simply refuses to consider

²³ Titles of wood engravings by Albrecht Dürer dating from 1498-1511.

this possibility, or rather: this reality. For him the only admissible Germany is his own medieval/romantic fantasy land, which is more a state of mind than a physical place, and which he might ideally share with someone like King Ludwig of Bavaria. It is no coincidence that King Ludwig's pseudo-romantic kitsch castles, Chiemsee, Linderhof, and Neuschwanstein all figure in the text (SL 682).

On a later occasion even Jean, who before had admitted that modernity is real, tries to erase it in favor of a mythical past. He equates several visitors to Siegfried's palace with the guardians of the mythical Rhinegold: "Tous les Allemands que j'avais vu passer ce seuil ... n'étaient autres que ceux qui gardent depuis des siècles l'or du Rhin" (SL 672). He also comments upon "cette ressemblance vraie ou factice de l'Allemagne d'aujourd'hui à celle du Saint-Empire" (SL 672).

Another manifestation of this three-way flight from the present, from modernity, and from reality, is the texts' heavy reliance on the Nibelungen myth. We know that the Romantics often adapted medieval literature for their own purposes, and the Nibelungen epic, dating from around the year 1200, is a prime example of this process. In the early nineteenth century a number of romantic writers showed renewed interest in the myth, rescuing it from relative

obscurity. In the second half of the century Richard Wagner wrote and composed what has to rank as the most well-known adaptation of the Nibelungen saga: the Ring cycle. Bavaria's King Ludwig provided Wagner with money and a place to work. The four operas making up the Ring (Das Rheingold, Die Walküre, Siegfried, Götterdämmerung) premiered in 1876.

Giraudoux not only borrowed his play's title from one of those operas, he also inserted several other Wagnerian allusions into the play, including two conspicuous references to Lohengrin and the Valkyries (S 4, 5). Curiously enough, those are the same names Giraudoux once mentioned in jest as potential sequels to Siegfried: "Continuer? ... Par quoi? Il me reste sans doute à écrire Lohengrin et la Walkyrie" (*La Liberté*, September 28, 1928; cit. Teissier 1985, 105). In addition, the Wagnerian characters Hagen, Mime, Tristan, and Parsifal, as well as the mythical Rhinegold (SL 672, 741) are all alluded to in the novel, and Jean takes note of "les quatre salons des soixante panneaux des Nibelungen" (SL 762) in the *Residenz* palace in Munich. In fact, the Nibelungen turn up in the most unexpected and mundane places, such as Siegfried's office, as Geneviève discovers when Robineau shows her how to light a cigarette:

"...tu prends l'allumette dans cet écureuil, tu la frottes sur le dos de Wotan, et tu allumes la cigarette prise à ce ventre de cygne. Les cendres, tu les jettes dans cette Walkyrie et le mégot dans l'ours... Cette ronde d'animaux légendaires ou de héros que les

Allemands aiment à mettre en branle pour chacune de leurs fonctions les plus banales, c'est de la vie après tout" (S 24).

Giraudoux also adapted certain plot elements from the Nibelungen story, most notably Siegfried's amnesia. In Götterdämmerung, the fourth and final part of the Ring cycle, Siegfried drinks a magic potion which induces amnesia. He forgets his love for Brünnhilde and proceeds to marry Gutrune instead (Wagner 1, 7ff). His amnesia is cured by a second magic drink Brünnhilde gives him (Wagner 1, 24ff), but he is killed soon afterward. While Giraudoux dispensed with Wagner's blood-thirsty finale, he did follow his lead in most other respects: Brünnhilde is Geneviève's equivalent, Gutrune is Eva's; the war injury assumes the function of the first magic potion, Geneviève's appearance in Germany assumes the function of the second.

Giraudoux's evident propensity for Wagner's version of the Nibelungen myth seems to be an indication that he takes no particular interest in the realities of contemporary Germany, and that he prefers to believe instead in the fantasy of a country that is stuck in a never-never land somewhere between chubby cherubs, Valkyries, and a mad king. This impression may be partially true. But fortunately, as we will see next, there is also a more practical and down-to-earth side to Giraudoux's texts.

VI

Apart from expounding on the supposed split between a romantic and a technocratic, a medieval and a modern Germany, Giraudoux also has a few interesting things to say about the political relations between France and Germany. However, it turns out that politics *per se*, in spite of Giraudoux's own assessment of its place in the texts, is not necessarily his main concern.

Giraudoux once said that he wrote Siegfried in order to "annoncer les possibilités d'un accord, d'une entente entre deux nations" (*Candide*, May 24, 1928; cit. Teissier 1985, 90), and because "[il] y a une grande oeuvre de rapprochement à faire; si ma pièce pouvait la servir en faisant voir aux deux peuples quelques-unes de leurs ressemblances et dissemblances, je serais heureux" (*L'Intransigeant*, May 8, 1928; cit. Teissier 1985, 88). If these sound like rather lofty and perhaps naive goals for a simple piece of fiction, we should remember that Giraudoux's timing was very fortunate: Siegfried arrived on the French stage in the wake of the Locarno treaties. It benefited immensely from the goodwill they had generated.

The treaties had been signed about two and a half years

before, in October 1925, by the foreign ministers of France and Germany, Aristide Briand and Gustav Stresemann. Representing a first, and in its time revolutionary, attempt at post-war reconciliation, one of Locarno's main provisions was Germany's formal recognition of France's eastern border as it was drawn up at Versailles. This meant that Germany gave up any and all claims on Alsace and Lorraine.

Today we know that in the end the treaties were not worth much, but in 1925 they produced a wave of euphoria and hope in both countries. Briand and Stresemann shared the 1926 Nobel Prize for Peace. The term "Locarno" became shorthand for any kind of peaceful attempt at bringing the two nations closer together. Siegfried itself was called a "Locarno intellectuel" (Body 1986, 147) and a "Locarno en trois actes" (Body 292). It was even performed for a few days, with Louis Juvet in the title role, at the *Comédie de Genève* to celebrate the opening of the 1928 session of the League of Nations (Body 296). As we might expect, questions of politics and geography as well as observations about the state of Franco-German affairs constitute a good part of the Siegfried texts and they will be our subject in this section, but as we indicated earlier, they do take a back seat to the more personal dilemma of Siegfried's identity.

In order to bring the political issues into sharper

focus on the stage, Giraudoux eliminated many of the ornamentations that had surrounded and encumbered the novel's main storyline. He removed almost all passages that did not impact directly on the Franco-German intrigue. He also drastically reduced the number of characters. Besides the handful of main characters (Siegfried, Eva, Geneviève, Zelten, Jean), the novel contained numerous minor ones, including approximately 60 who were taken from real life (Body 238). Virtually all of them have disappeared in the play.

Giraudoux modified and tightened the geographical parameters as well. No longer does any part of the play take place in France; the novel's episodes involving the Limousin and Paris are gone. The rest of the action has been moved from Munich to Gotha, a town in central Germany, not far from Weimar. Like Munich, Gotha and Weimar are both part of what Giraudoux would have called benign (meaning non-Prussian) Germany. For the stage he also introduced the crucial device of the border. It runs through the middle of the train station from which Siegfried leaves for France²⁴. This setting allows Giraudoux to visually underscore the non-committal solution Siegfried chooses at the end (more on that

²⁴ There are already two passing references to "les douaniers" and "gares frontières" in the novel (SL 623, 625), but they are not developed further.

choice in the next section).

Apart from these changes, there are a number of elements Giraudoux did not modify as he adapted his novel for the stage. Among them is Zelten's role as the text's main advocate for a Locarno-like policy of reconciliation and normalization. The principal aim of his revolt is to establish a political alliance between the two nations (SL 753). The fact that the revolt is unsuccessful does not diminish this ambition. Nor does it really matter at this point that his motives for such an alliance, as we saw earlier, may not be quite as pure as they seem.

It is possible that Giraudoux modeled Zelten's putsch, dated January 1921 in the play and June 1922 in the novel, on actual events. In April 1919, following the assassination of socialist leader Kurt Eisner, a Soviet republic was proclaimed in Bavaria. It was short-lived, however, collapsing after just one month. In June 1921, another Soviet republic was established in the provinces around Gotha (Saxony and Thuringia). It did not last more than a few days either. On the opposite extreme of the political spectrum, Hitler's November 1923 revolt in Munich was also unsuccessful. He and his cohorts, including General Ludendorff, tried to take over the national government, but were arrested immediately. Probably in order to avoid any

confusion with Hitler's putsch in the minds of the Siegfried audience, Giraudoux moved Zelten's putsch away from Munich and its date back by one year.

Giraudoux was well informed about most aspects of contemporary German politics. Among other things, he recognized that those who were determined to support the Weimar constitution were in the minority. He illustrates this fact in a short scene in which Muck, the servant, asks about the visitors who came to see Siegfried. A palace guard informs him that forty presidents of various choral societies have arrived, but only seven defenders of the constitution (S 43). Giraudoux realized that this lack of support for democracy (and attendant support for extremists) was one of the reasons why the idea of Franco-German, let alone European, cooperation never quite gained acceptance beyond the ranks of an elite few.

Zelten and Robineau are the two main characters who discuss the possibilities of normalized political relations between the two countries. They remind the audience that understanding between nations is achieved not primarily by politicians but by citizens, an idea which was also dear to Giraudoux himself. It may not sound like much of an insight today, but we have to keep in mind that we are talking about the 1920s here. For Giraudoux's audience it was probably

something they had not thought about before, had maybe not even wanted to think about. Contact between ordinary French and German citizens, especially after the war, was close to non-existent, and things did not look much better on the governmental level, at least before Locarno.

But Zelten is not the only one worried about the prospects for normalizing Franco-German affairs. Some of the other characters voice similar concerns. Muck, for example, follows Zelten's lead and asserts that even during the war the French and the Germans did not necessarily hate each other on a personal level: "Aux tranchées, entre les assauts, nous bavardions quelquefois avec les Français" (S 8). And it is Geneviève who delivers what has to rank as one of the more memorable lines on the topic: "Je ne soupçonnais pas aux guerres franco-allemandes cet intérêt de guerres civiles" (S 36). Her remark implies that the two people are actually citizens of the same country (Europe, no doubt). It is reminiscent of that notorious postcard written by Giraudoux in which he more or less seriously proclaimed Germans to be his "compatriots." A third character who must be mentioned in this respect is the prince of Saxony-Altdorf. He tells Robineau: "Vous savez ce que je pense de nos deux pays. La question de leur concorde est *la seule question grave de l'univers*" (FS 99, my italics). Those are the same

hyperbolic words Giraudoux used in his *Entracte* article accompanying the play's premiere which we quoted at the beginning of the chapter. While he did not include this line in the final version of Siegfried (it figures in Fin de Siegfried), he apparently thought it too salient to eliminate altogether, so he simply recycled it for his own article. It is indeed striking how the prince's and Geneviève's lines, and even some of Zelten's speeches, verbalize thoughts that closely resemble Giraudoux's own opinions on the issue. While we should normally be careful not to confuse an author and his characters, in this case Giraudoux almost begs us to read these phrases as though they were his own, dropping clues to that effect left and right (not only in *Entracte*, but also in all the interviews he gave in conjunction with the premiere, some of which we quoted earlier). If there is indeed a *thèse* emanating from the author of this *pièce à thèse*, it is to be found here.

There is, however, another more unpleasant facet in Giraudoux's discussion of nationalities. In the process of comparing the two countries and its citizens, the usually lucid Giraudoux resorts to using some of the more banal and meaningless stereotypes propagated by Madame de Staël. The attributes "reason" and "emotion" are two of those stereotypes, the former being categorized as a "French" and

the latter as a "German" quality. That this sort of categorizing is profoundly meaningless, that it is pure nonsense should have been clear even to Madame de Staël's contemporaries, let alone to a Jean Giraudoux. But instead we find Robineau, for example, saying that "[introduire] la poésie en France, la raison en Allemagne, c'est à peu près la même tâche" (S 16), and Zelten: "[j'ai] découvert que celui qui juge avec son cerveau, qui parle avec son esprit, qui calcule avec sa raison, que celui-là n'est pas Allemand" (S 48). And even Eva gets in on this inanity when she pleads with Siegfried not to go back to France:

"Je t'en supplie, ne va pas changer ce coeur sans borne que nous t'avons donné contre cette machine de précision, ce réveille-matin qui réveille avant chaque émotion, contre un coeur de Français!" (S 59).

Siegfried himself is described as "romantique, comme il le devait à sa race" (SL 621), whereas Jean is defined by "le peu de romantisme de [sa] race" (SL 656). Giraudoux clearly portrays them as representatives of a larger group, namely their respective nations. In this scheme the ideal German has to be unwaveringly romantic, the ideal Frenchman has to be boringly unromantic. Finally, Giraudoux's description of the train station also teeters on the brink of being a worn-out cliché: the German side is clean and well-appointed, and it has central heating; the French side is "typical"

(whatever that is supposed to mean) - its main features being an old stove and a jail cell.

What is especially disconcerting here is that Giraudoux evidently uses all these stereotypes without being aware that they are in fact stereotypes. Their use in these cases differs markedly from the way we have seen him use them elsewhere (cf. section III), where they were part of an attempt at comedy, and where Giraudoux self-consciously pointed out their status as stereotypes, thereby blunting their unsavoriness considerably. These clichés here are not mitigated in any such manner.

In the end, the novel and the play are both quite optimistic about the chances for a political normalization. La guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu, seven years later, and two years after the advent of Hitlerism, will be much more pessimistic in its assessment of the possibility of preventing another war. But what is even more important is just how secondary politics really are in both texts. The actual center of interest lies elsewhere, as Geneviève tries to explain to Eva:

Geneviève: "La grandeur de l'Allemagne, la grandeur de la France, c'est évidemment un beau sujet d'antithèses et de contrastes. Que les deux seules nations qui ne soient pas seulement des entreprises de commerce et de beauté, mais qui aient une notion différente du bien et du mal, se décident, à défaut de guerre, à entretenir en un seul homme une lutte minuscule, un corps à corps figuré, c'est évidemment un beau drame. Mais celui-là, Jacques, c'est le drame de demain."

Eva: "Peut-on savoir quel est celui d'aujourd'hui?" (S 58).

We will find the answer to her question next.

VII

In his appendix to Giraudoux et l'Allemagne (470-482), Jacques Body has assembled a detailed list of books Giraudoux borrowed from the library at the ENS between November 1903 and July 1907. The list includes works by, among others, Goethe, Lessing, Schiller, Nietzsche, Hauptmann, Kleist, Hoffmann, Brentano, Chamisso, La Motte-Fouqué, Klopstock, Herder, Hartmann von Aue, Tieck, Grillparzer, Platen, Bettina von Arnim, Achim von Arnim, Uhland, Eckermann, Wieland, Fichte, Eichendorff, Wackenroder, Novalis, and Heine.

Obviously, these names as such do not yield any insight into Giraudoux's literary "models," as Body seems to try to imply. There are several major problems with his list: firstly, we do not know whether Giraudoux actually read all of the books he borrowed; secondly, we do not know what his reaction was to the books that he did read; and thirdly, we do not know which of the books he read because he had to, and which he chose to read voluntarily. It is however undeniable that the list is heavily slanted toward the German romantics,

who constituted a good part of the literary diet Giraudoux was fed by Charles Andler. We also know that Giraudoux's personal library (certainly a more accurate barometer of his preferences) contained volumes by, among others, Brentano, Chamisso, Hoffmann, Novalis, Tieck, Jean-Paul, and Heine (Teissier 1979, 151-152). Little wonder, then, if some of the romantic writers left more than a passing impression on him. One who merits closer inspection is Adalbert von Chamisso.

Louis Charles de Chamisso (he later took the name Adalbert) was born in 1781 in Boncourt in the Champagne region. In 1789 his family fled the Revolution, first to the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg, then to Germany, settling in Berlin in 1796. There, Chamisso attended a French-language *lycée* before joining the Prussian Army. He did not return to France until 1809, eight years after the rest of his family. He lived as a guest of Madame de Staël's at Coppet for two years. In 1812 Chamisso returned to Berlin, where he died in 1838.

Jacques Body speculates that a friend of Giraudoux's, André du Fresnois, who disappeared during the war of 1914, may have served as the model for Jacques Forestier (227). However, this clue does not really lead us anywhere useful. A more promising place to look, if indeed we are determined

to find a "model" for Forestier, would be Chamisso's 1814 tale, Peter Schlemihls wundersame Geschichte [Peter Schlemihl's Amazing Story], about a man who loses his shadow²⁵. It is very likely that Giraudoux was familiar with it, having no doubt come across this rather well-known text in one of Andler's classes at the *ENS*. Its liberal use of romantic *topoi*, including a few well-placed allusions to the Nibelungen epic²⁶, probably caught Giraudoux's attention in particular. In addition, his interest may have been drawn to the Schlemihl myth by the Bavarian writer Ludwig Thoma, whom Giraudoux met in Munich in 1905, and who signed a number of his texts with the pseudonym "Peter Schlemihl."

Chamisso was acquainted with both E.T.A. Hoffmann and

²⁵ Schlemihl trades his shadow to the devil in exchange for unlimited material wealth. But as soon as people notice that he has no shadow, they start to laugh at him and treat him as an outcast. Schlemihl begins to regret the trade he made. Unable to recover his shadow from the devil, he becomes a virtual recluse until he happens upon a pair of magical boots which enable him to cover seven miles in one step. Schlemihl spends the rest of his life wandering the world in these boots, circling the globe several times a day.

²⁶ For example, Chamisso refers to the dragon Fafnir (152), who guards the mythical Rhinegold and is slain by Siegfried, and to the magic hood which Alberich uses to disguise himself (165, 169).

Friedrich de la Motte-Fouqué²⁷. Hoffmann's 1815 story, Die Abenteuer der Silvester-Nacht [The Adventures of the Night of Saint Sylvester], contains a chapter entitled "Die Geschichte vom verlornen Spiegelbilde" [The Story of the Lost Mirror Image], which closely resembles Chamisso's tale, substituting the lost mirror reflection for the lost shadow. Giraudoux may have been familiar with this story as well, drawing upon both of them as he sketched the figure of Jacques/Siegfried. The characters in all three texts lack something that everybody else possesses and takes for granted: a shadow, a reflection, an identity²⁸.

Those deficiencies are in fact closely related. It is perhaps no coincidence that there is a conspicuously large number of references to shadows (and also, though more sporadically, to mirrors) in the Siegfried cycle. For example, the first thing Jean sees of Siegfried is his shadow behind the closed drapes (SL 658). Eva refers to the old Jacques as a shadow when she asks Siegfried not to go back to France: "C'est toi-même, toi-même en inconnu, ignoré, perdu

²⁷ Fouqué was a German-born descendant of French Huguenots. Best known for his fairy tale Undine (which Giraudoux later adapted for his play Ondine), he also wrote an adaptation of the Siegfried material entitled Der Held des Nordens [The Hero of the North] in 1808.

²⁸ As we shall see in Chapter 6, the main character in Patrick Süskind's Das Parfum, Grenouille, qualifies as a fourth candidate in this series: he has no scent.

pour toujours. Ne te sacrifie pas à ton ombre" (S 59). When Siegfried announces his refusal to choose, Ledinger asks him: "Vous préférez vivre entre deux ombres?" (S 68). And Robineau mentions "ces ombres qui vont flotter tout à l'heure autour de nous." Asked what he means by that, he answers: "Nous avons le choix, de Vercingétorix à Blücher, pour ne parler que des ombres en uniforme" (S 14). We cannot be sure if Giraudoux did in fact have Schlemihl in mind when he inserted all these references to shadows, nor does it really matter whether or not he did. What does matter is that in his texts, as in Chamisso's story, the concrete phenomenon of the shadow can be read as a metaphor for the abstract notion of identity - the lost shadow indicates a lost identity, Schlemihl's or Siegfried's²⁹.

Identity, as Giraudoux defines it, is composed of three main elements: one's childhood, personal ties, and nationality. Jacques has lost all three of these elements. The Siegfried cycle is in large part the story of his quest to recover them. As Jacques goes about this task, Giraudoux argues that the third component, nationality, takes a back seat to the first two.

²⁹ Giraudoux also offers another metaphor for this phenomenon: Siegfried, carried away on a stretcher, realizes with dismay that he leaves no footprints in the snow, whereas all the people around him, even those who have no material possessions, at least still have footprints (L 90-91).

To begin with, Jacques's amnesia has erased all memories of his childhood. As Siegfried, he has to go in search of that lost time. But before he can do so, he is forced to start his life all over again, beginning with his birth. Eva refers to the date on which she rescued the wounded Jacques (March 4, 1915) as "cette date [qui] est portée sur son livret, à la place de sa naissance" (SL 707). Siegfried himself recognizes the abnormality of his second birth and reproaches Eva: "[ce] que vous appelez mon anniversaire, c'est le jour où je suis mort et non celui où je suis né!" (L 90). He also refers to "cette larve informe et opaque qu'était mon enfance" (S 52), and calls himself "un enfant allemand de six ans" (S 32).

Since Siegfried looks at himself as a child, it is no surprise that the question of motherhood plays a significant role for him. Like Wagner's Siegfried, who grows up as an orphan and is constantly trying to find out who his mother is (Wagner 2, 4-5, 20), Giraudoux's Siegfried, too, is in search of his mother. Eva suggests that since she gave life to Siegfried, she is now his mother:

"Ne suis-je pas un peu ta mère, Siegfried? N'est-ce pas moi qui t'ai appris à parler, à écrire? ... En une semaine il a fallu tout te nommer, des animaux aux étoiles. C'était une seconde création. [J'ai] eu à te soigner de la rougeole, comme un enfant" (L 89).

Giraudoux's choice of names seems to support her claim.

After all, Eva is not only the biblical *Ur-Mother*; she also personifies Germany in both the novel and the play, and as such she would be "notre mère à tous," if we are to believe Nerval. And finally, Geneviève's claim that she resembles her mother prompts this answer from Ottilie, the prince's daughter:

"Oui, je sais, on peut répondre cela. C'est même une bonne réponse. Votre mère répondait que de loin, de très loin, elle ressemblait à votre grand-mère. On arrive ainsi à faire de sa première ancêtre au monde quelque chose d'incomparable. On fait Ève" (FS 101).

Ottilie casts Ève/Eva as Geneviève's "mother," on top of Eva's self-proclaimed role as Siegfried's "mother." The considerable amount of attention paid by all these characters to issues of birth, motherhood, and childhood is a direct consequence of Siegfried's amnesia. It is necessary for him to be re-born in order to be able to recover the forgotten half of his identity. Geneviève is the one who eventually revives that half, who once again "gives birth" to Jacques, and is therefore yet another "mother" to the protagonist (his third one).

Personal ties are the second component making up Jacques's identity. He has lost those ties as well. Eva reminds him that in France no one knows him and no one is awaiting his return, whereas in Germany 60 million people are expecting him to be their leader. But Geneviève disputes

that claim. She informs Jacques that his dog is waiting for him to come back:

Geneviève: "Lui n'a pas renoncé. Il t'attend."

Eva: "C'est ridicule..."

Geneviève: "Il est plus ridicule que vous ne pouvez même le croire: c'est un caniche. Il est blanc, et comme tous les chiens blancs en France, il a nom Black. Mais Jacques, Black t'attend. ... Il t'attend tout entier" (S 57).

This "ridiculous" poodle is of more than passing interest. We can assume that Giraudoux came across it in Chamisso's story as well³⁰. Both authors use the dog in a similar manner. The only creature who does not treat Schlemihl like a pariah after he loses his shadow is his poodle. He waits patiently for Schlemihl's return (183, 186), just as Black waits for Jacques. Giraudoux's poodle serves Geneviève as a symbol for Jacques's numerous connections to his lost home and his past:

"Le drame, Jacques, est aujourd'hui entre cette foule qui t'acclame, et ce chien, si tu veux, et cette vie sourde qui espère. Je n'ai pas dit la vérité en disant que lui seul t'attendait... Ta lampe t'attend, les initiales de ton papier à lettres t'attendent, et les arbres de ton boulevard, et ton breuvage, et les costumes démodés que je préservais, je ne sais pourquoi,

³⁰ A poodle also plays a prominent role in the first volume of Goethe's *Faust* (1808). He follows Faust home after a walk (56), and later reveals himself to be Mephistopheles (64). While Giraudoux knew *Faust*, and may have remembered this scene, there is really no connection between his poodle and Goethe's, except perhaps the fact that Giraudoux's is called Black and Goethe's is black.

des mites, dans lesquels enfin tu seras à l'aise. Ce vêtement invisible que tisse sur un être la façon de manger, de marcher, de saluer, cet accord divin de saveurs, de couleurs, de parfums obtenu par nos sens d'enfant; c'est la vraie patrie, c'est là ce que tu réclames. ... Tout t'attend ... en France, excepté les hommes. Ici, à part les hommes, rien ne te connaît, rien ne te devine" (S 58).

Eva may have 60 million people on her side; Geneviève has the poodle and everything else. Initially, Siegfried had regarded Geneviève as a bearer of bad news. He complained to her about "ce fardeau d'années d'enfance, d'adolescence, de jeunesse que vous m'avez apporté en entrant dans cette maison" (S 31). Only later does he realize that the poodle and everything it represents is precisely what he had been searching for. They are his personal "baggage," a term Giraudoux uses as a recurring metaphor. For example, after Siegfried's departure, Waldorf says that "[il] est parti seul, sans bagages" (S 63), and a short exchange between Geneviève and Pietri also hinges on the subject:

Geneviève: "Nous n'avons pas de gros bagages."

Le Douanier: "Vous les avez envoyés d'avance?"

Geneviève: "Oui, sept ans d'avance."

Pietri: "Sept ans? Alors ça ne regarde plus la douane. Ça regarde la consigne" (S 71).

Geneviève remains on the same semantic field when she says that she wants to return to Siegfried "tout ce que j'ai de vous, tout cette consigne de souvenirs, d'habitudes, que

j'ai gardée fidèlement" (S 72). The baggage in all these instances is meant to be taken as intellectual and cultural baggage consisting of personal history and memories.

Before Geneviève arrives and jogs Siegfried's memory, his true home is neither Germany nor France; it is nothingness. Eva tells Siegfried that he came not from any particular country but from a "néant," a place he seems to prefer to his current abode: "[ce] pays a des charmes" (S 54). On the same note, Geneviève says that "Jacques doit choisir entre une vie magnifique qui n'est pas à lui, et un néant qui est le sien" (S 56). Siegfried is defined by nothingness; his amnesia erases his identity. It has been suggested that Siegfried's amnesia "a le sens d'une infidélité au passé" (Mauron 173). This is clearly inaccurate, since amnesia is involuntary, whereas infidelity is voluntary. Siegfried wants to be true to his past, but in order to do so he would have to be able to remember it.

He gradually discovers all the facts about this past. As a first step he asks: "Suis-je allemand, Eva?" (S 49), a question which indicates that he suspects the truth. Eva is forced to grudgingly answer in the negative. A few moments later, when Geneviève asks him: "Un étranger apprend vite l'allemand?", he answers "J'ai mis six mois..." (S 51). This answer implies that he has already accepted the truth and

regards himself no longer as German but as an "étranger." He verbalizes this fact in a third step: "Eva vient de me l'avouer. On m'a trompé. Je ne suis pas allemand" (S 51). The fourth and final step in this process is the acknowledgement of the choice now before him. Told that Eva had no choice in determining his new homeland, Siegfried realizes: "Je l'ai maintenant" (S 53).

At first he thinks that it will be a simple choice, that it will be possible for him to just get out of his post-amnesic life the way he would take off a pair of shoes, for example:

"Je ne suis plus allemand. Comme c'est simple! Il suffit de tout changer. Mes jours de victoire ne sont plus Sedan, Sadova. Mon drapeau n'a plus de raies horizontales" (S 52).

But of course things are not quite so easy. As Eva reminds him: "tu ne te débarrasseras pas plus qu'un arbre des sept cercles que tes sept années allemandes ont passés autour de toi" (S 58). As he comes to understand that any choice would entail eliminating either the first part of his life (before his amnesia) or the second part (after), Siegfried refuses to choose. In order for Jacques to be re-born Siegfried would have to be killed. That was in fact Geneviève's plan when she first arrived in Germany. She was determined to find Jacques Forestier. She wanted nothing to

do with Forestier's new incarnation as Siegfried von Kleist; she actively tried to eliminate that aspect of Forestier's life: "...que viens-je faire ici? Je viens tuer Siegfried. Je viens poignarder le roi ennemi sous sa tente" (S 25). But while she thinks that this would have been merely "un assassinat sans blessure et sans cadavre" (S 26), and not an actual murder, Siegfried thinks differently. For him, eliminating his second life is indeed tantamount to murder. If Jacques had to die in order for Siegfried to be born, then in order for Jacques to live again, Siegfried must die. He refuses to consider that option. The option he finally does choose is really a non-choice:

"...je vais mourir devant vous maintenant. D'une mort factice, évidemment. ... Il y aura un monument Siegfried Kleist en Allemagne. Il paraît qu'il y a un monument Forestier en France. Me voici bien inutile entre ces deux cadavres" (FS 99, *my italics*).

He kills Siegfried and Jacques as individuals, but they continue to live on in some sort of symbiosis, bearing a new name that consist of two old ones:

"Je vivrai, simplement. Siegfried et Forestier vivront côte à côte. Je tâcherai de porter, honorablement, les deux noms et les deux sorts que m'a donnés le hasard. Une vie humaine n'est pas un ver. Il ne suffit pas de la trancher en deux pour que chaque part devienne une parfaite existence. Il n'est pas de souffrances si contraires, d'expériences si ennemies qu'elles ne puissent se fondre un jour en une seule vie, car le coeur de l'homme est encore le plus puissant creuset. ... Il serait excessif que dans une âme humaine, où cohabitent les vices et les vertus des plus contraires,

seuls le mot 'allemand' et le mot 'français' se refusent à composer. Je me refuse, moi, à creuser des tranchées à l'intérieur de moi-même.... Adieu. ... Siegfried et Forestier vous disent adieu" (S 68).

We should be careful not to confuse this newfound duality of "Siegfried et Forestier" with the concept of the *Doppelgänger*. "The *Doppelgänger* is a second self, or alter ego, which appears as a distinct and separate being apprehensible by the physical senses" (Herdman 14). Siegfried and Jacques however are the same person at all times; there is no separate being - "je" is not "un autre" in this case.

At first this congruence of self and other is confusing for Siegfried. He sometimes vacillates in the use of the first and third person when referring to himself. He is prone to think of Jacques as "he" and of Siegfried as "I," and he is worried about how to fit the pieces of the puzzle together:

"Il n'est pas encore là, Geneviève. ... Son appartement existe-t-il encore? ... Ses vieux papiers sont là? Je vais avoir à les lire, à apprendre à lire mon écriture. Ses vieux habits? Je vais les essayer. J'hérite de moi-même, Geneviève, mais je ne me retrouve pas. Il y a des vêtements noirs dans ma garde-robe, j'espère? M'as-tu trouvé très différent de moi, Geneviève?" (FS 101-102).

Once "Siegfried et Forestier" has taken his decision not to eliminate either half of his life, he believes there are

no further choices to be made, least of all choices about his new homeland:

Eva: "Choisis, Siegfried." ...
Geneviève: "Choisis, Jacques." ...
Eva: "On illumine en ton honneur. On t'acclame. ...
 Entre cette lumière et cette obscurité, que choisis-tu?"
Siegfried: "Que peut bien choisir un aveugle!" (S 59).

A similar exchange he later has with Waldorf and Ledinger (S 64) confirms this refusal to choose a nationality to go along with his new identity.

In fact, Siegfried's nationality, be it French or German, plays no role at all in determining his eventual identity. By negating the importance of nationality, Giraudoux negates the importance of nations and consequently of borders. The play's conclusion is therefore the only one that is logically possible: Siegfried straddles the border both literally and metaphorically, signifying his committed non-committment and refusal to choose between the two countries and the two halves of his life. For him, a *patrie* is not defined in terms of geography, but in terms of memories of childhood, customs, objects, and people of his past. It is made up of concrete and not abstract notions.

The border and the choice it represented were the cause of much anxiety for him. Like a latter-day Hamlet, Siegfried agonized over whether to cross it or not, and what that choice might mean. But in a final paradoxical twist it turns

out that it really means nothing at all: the border has lost all meaning for Siegfried. He reserves the right to simply ignore it.

Ironically, the liberating formula *Siegfried et Forestier*, at which he arrives only after hundreds of pages of self-analysis and soul-searching was there all along, on the novel's title page: Siegfried et le Limousin. While the protagonist and the reader were under the impression that those were two people, Giraudoux could have clarified the situation from the outset if he had added just one more letter to the title, because *Siegfried est le Limousin*.

Chapter 2

Kurt Tucholsky:

Paradise Lost?

I

His name and his work may be little known outside of Germany, yet Kurt Tucholsky was one of the most widely read writers of the Weimar Republic. As a pacifist, humanist, committed democrat, and, not least, as a Jew, Tucholsky despised Hitler and his cohorts passionately and warned of them earlier and more pointedly than almost anybody. He relentlessly condemned the twin evils of militarism and nationalism. For today's readers, his writings constitute a meticulous and informative chronicle of the rise and fall of democracy. Tucholsky also worked tirelessly for a rapprochement between Germany and France, a country he knew well because it was his physical home for five years and his spiritual home for much longer. The nature of Tucholsky's connection to France could be described as an "elective affinity" (Philippoff xiv). We will explore this affinity in this chapter.

There are several likely reasons for Tucholsky's relative international obscurity. To begin with, much of his work is tied very closely to a specific time and place: the Germany of the *entre-deux-guerres*. This represents a bit of a problem, even for the germanophone reader. Tucholsky sometimes alludes to contemporary events and personalities which are not always instantly familiar to a modern audience. Also, some of his texts are written in Berlin dialect and depend on that dialect for their full argumentative weight and humoristic punch. This makes them difficult and sometimes downright impossible to translate.

An even bigger obstacle to Tucholsky's gaining his due recognition may be his perceived levity. Tucholsky did not often labor in the traditional domains of literature. While he did write two novels, most of his work is non-fictional, and it originally appeared in newspapers. This means that his texts were by definition designed as perishable goods. They also had to be written in an accessible manner so that even the moderately interested and averagely attentive reader could grasp them without expending too much mental effort. It is one of Tucholsky's supreme achievements that he managed to write accessibly without sacrificing intelligence (neither his nor the reader's). Moreover, writing for newspapers meant that Tucholsky produced hardly any piece of prose

longer than a few pages. Due to organizational and spatial constraints imposed by his publishers, he was often forced to lay out his ideas in piecemeal fashion, to pick up and develop a thought months or even years after the point where he had left off.

Tucholsky became very adept at handling the short form and the fragment, and he turned what could have been a potentially paralyzing limitation into one of his most formidable strengths. It is precisely because nearly all of his texts were brief without being simplistic, that they were so incisive and effective. Greater length might have dulled them. In fact, a postmodern audience, accustomed to ever increasing fragmentation and supposedly suffering from reduced attention spans, may find these texts even more appealing than Tucholsky's own contemporaries did. At least that is one possible explanation for the fact that interest in and esteem for Tucholsky have dramatically increased since the late 1970s. The fact that his work has, as we will see, remained topically relevant to this day does not hurt either.

The circumstances under which his texts appeared, and the outward form they took, have in the past netted Tucholsky a reputation for being a writer who - while talented - could not be taken quite seriously. Possibly a victim of fatuous snobbery, he was perceived as not worthy of critical or

academic consideration because he wrote "only" for newspapers, and perhaps also because his work had so much popular resonance, in its time and today. He was seen as a writer one might read purely for entertainment. It is true that Tucholsky's texts are often entertaining (they are meant to be), but this does not mean that they are trivial. The contrary is true. Nonetheless, for a long time Tucholsky was regarded as too frivolous to merit serious investigation.

Only recently have critics and editors begun to address this lacuna of literary history. The first major scholarly biography, Helga Bemann's Kurt Tucholsky: Ein Lebensbild, did not appear until 1990, the year of his 100th birthday, and the first comprehensive analysis of his work, Michael Hepp's Kurt Tucholsky, followed in 1993. Starting in the 1950s, Mary Gerold - Tucholsky's widow - and Fritz Raddatz assembled what has become the standard, ten-volume edition of Tucholsky's collected works. It was published in 1975, and was followed by two supplemental volumes in 1985 and 1989.

Although, as we said, Tucholsky wrote mainly for newspapers, he never wrote a single news story. He was not a journalist or a reporter in the conventional sense. But while it is relatively easy to determine what he did not write, it is much harder to define what exactly he *did* write. His work resists convenient pigeonholing. Some of his texts,

for example, are miniature satires of certain political and social conditions, others are studies in public and private, national and individual psychology (cf. Belvianes 220). His prose and his poetry take many different forms and tones, from the humorous, satirical, and playful, sometimes even the silly, to the earnest, the serious, and the combative. His language, however, is always clear, precise, intelligent, and witty. On those occasions when he does take a current news item as the starting point for an essay, he invariably builds it into something larger, something that has relevance beyond the moment.

Taking a look at where his work was printed may help us define what it was that was printed. Most of Tucholsky's work originally appeared in the liberal weekly *Die Weltbühne*. This paper occupied a rather unique position among the German press during the first half of our century. It was founded in 1905 in Berlin by Siegfried Jacobsohn under the title *Die Schaubühne* [The Show Stage]. Originally conceived as a theater review, it soon expanded its focus to include political and general cultural stories as well. In 1918 its name was changed to *Die Weltbühne* [The World Stage]. After World War I, it was one of the few papers that made a point of trying to present an accurate and unbiased view of France to the German reader. During the 1920s this task fell almost

exclusively to Tucholsky³¹.

Tucholsky wore at least three hats as a *Weltbühne* contributor: those of feature writer, poet, and book reviewer. He was more or less allowed to choose what he wanted to write about. Jacobsohn imposed few, if any, topical restrictions. Consequently, Tucholsky's features reflected his own extremely wide range of interests. He was able to write intelligently about almost any subject imaginable. His most frequent concerns, however, were politics and politicians (domestic and international, with particular attention to the fledgling Weimar Republic), Berlin, literature, film, theater, legal affairs (mostly questions of penal reform and censorship), as well as problems of language and translation.

When Tucholsky was not writing, he was reading. The chronological and thematic diversity of books he reviewed, as well as their number, is staggering. The authors he wrote

³¹ After Jacobsohn's death in 1926, he also acted as interim publisher for a few months until Carl von Ossietzky, the prominent pacifist and recipient of the 1935 Nobel Peace Prize, succeeded him in 1927. In 1931 *Die Weltbühne* was put on trial for allegedly revealing military secrets. Ossietzky was sentenced to 18 months in jail. In 1933 he was arrested again, this time by the Nazis, and deported to the Papenburg concentration camp. The paper itself was forced to move to Prague. When Hitler annexed Czechoslovakia in 1938, the paper had to move again, this time to Paris. It ceased publication in 1939 and was revived in East Berlin in 1946.

about were mostly German, French, and anglophone. They included Barbusse, Brecht, Büchner, Busch, Chesterton, Döblin, Dorgelès, Dos Passos, Dreiser, Fallada, Feuchtwanger, Freud, Giraudoux, Goethe, Gogol, Gorki, Grosz, Hamsun, O. Henry, Hesse, Joyce, Kafka, Kästner, Kisch, Kraus, Laforgue, D.H. Lawrence, Sinclair Lewis, Heinrich Mann, Thomas Mann, Mauriac, Pagnol, Radiguet, Remarque, Renard, Roda-Roda, Romain, Shaw, Upton Sinclair, Stendhal, Strindberg, Thoma, Traven, Valentin, Verlaine, Villon, Voltaire, Walser, Wedekind, Wilde, Zille, and Arnold Zweig.

Tucholsky signed very few of his contributions with his own name. He signed the majority of his texts with any of his four pseudonyms: Peter Panter, Theobald Tiger, Kaspar Hauser, or Ignaz Wrobel. The pseudonyms started out as a purely practical necessity. Jacobsohn wanted to disguise the fact that in many weeks as much as three quarters of the material in the *Weltbühne* was written by just one man: Kurt Tucholsky. In 1924, for example, Jacobsohn printed 94 feature articles by Tucholsky, followed by 140 in 1925 (which works out to about three articles per week), as well as numerous shorter, often unsigned contributions (Bermann 278-279). The public quickly figured out who was behind the pseudonyms, and Tucholsky himself made no secret of it either. Nonetheless, he never abandoned the pseudonyms. In

fact, it might have been hard to do so, had he wanted to, since the foursome had almost taken on identities of their own. There was a well-defined division of labor among them. "Theobald Tiger" only wrote poetry. "Kaspar Hauser" wrote humorous material, most notably the *Herr Wendriner* stories. "Ignaz Wrobel" wrote political stories that often had a strong socialist bend. Approximately three out of five Tucholsky texts, however, were signed with the name "Peter Panter," who was responsible for everything that did not fit into one of the other categories.

Tucholsky was a prolific writer by any standard. His collected works comprise roughly 2,000 feature articles (averaging about 1,000 words each), as well as countless poems and song lyrics. There are also several volumes of correspondance. Many other texts located in the Tucholsky Archives have not yet been reprinted. We should keep in mind that Tucholsky could usually only spend a day or two, at best, on each of his articles. This limitation was due to the weekly deadlines and the time required to deliver a finished text from Paris to Berlin, and, most of all, due to the quantitative regimen imposed on him by his employers (as we mentioned earlier, Tucholsky contributed an average of three features for each week's issue of the *Weltbühne*). He also wrote another 30 to 35 original essays every year for

the *Vossische Zeitung* (Bemmann 278-279, 306). In addition, he wrote occasional articles for other publications, as well as two novels - Rheinsberg (1912) and Schloß Gripsholm (1932) - and the text for Deutschland, Deutschland über alles (1929), a book of anti-Nazi illustrations and photo montages by the Dadaist John Heartfield.

In the March 1930 issue of the *Revue d'Allemagne*, Marcel Belvianes wrote an eighteen-page essay on the occasion of Tucholsky's 40th birthday. Belvianes mailed a copy of it to Tucholsky's home in Sweden, where he had moved the year before, after his departure from France. Tucholsky said that he was very pleased with the essay, not because he had been lauded in it, but because someone had finally understood him (Bemmann 440). That this someone was a Frenchman only increased his pleasure. Tucholsky was quite aware that, despite his high profile in Germany, he and his work were largely unknown in France. Indeed, in his essay Belvianes lamented the fact that most of his countrymen had never heard of Tucholsky. This state of affairs was particularly unfortunate because his writings should have borne special significance for the French:

"De tous les écrivains allemands ... Kurt Tucholsky est un de ceux que les Français auraient le plus intérêt à connaître. ... Il s'efforce de connaître personnellement les Français.... Il cherche avec eux les points de contact dans 'l'humain, trop humain.' Il voit bien que

les gens ont d'une frontière à l'autre des opinions-bloc, et que ceux qui voudraient juger ce qui se passe de l'autre côté de la borne patrimoniale n'ont pas toujours leur lanterne allumée" (Belvianes 219, 228).

Tucholsky's work is in large part the struggle to turn on at least some of these lights, to "enlighten" his readers - a term to be understood very much in the eighteenth-century philosophe sense.

If Tucholsky follows in the tradition of the French Enlightenment, he also and simultaneously tries to emulate another writer for whom that moment of literary history served as a model as well: Heinrich Heine. Just like Tucholsky, Heine found a second home in France and worked for peace between his two countries. In Ein Pyrenäenbuch [A Pyrenees Book], Tucholsky's account of his 1925 trip to the Pyrenees, he makes it clear that he was quite conscious of this connection. He muses about how he stumbles upon literary associations almost everywhere on his journey: Huysmans in Lourdes, the Chanson de Roland in Roncevaux, Marguerite de Navarre's Heptameron and Heinrich Heine's Atta Troll in Cauterets. Tucholsky says that if he were to follow convention he would have to quote from these texts at each location. He refuses to do it. Instead, he says, a different type of writing should be resurrected:

(1)³²

"Besser wäre, die Reisebriefe Heines wären bekannter als sie sind, auch die aus den Pyrenäen, und alle seine Berichte aus Paris, in denen er sich als einen Jahrhundertkerl seltnen Formats, als einen Propheten und als einen Allesüberschauer zeigt. ('Man müßte wirklich mal abends den Heine wieder herausuchen...!' Ja, man müßte wirklich einmal.)" (V, 93).

The characterization he gives of Heine can just as well be applied to Tucholsky himself. In his reports from Paris he, too, grasped the confusing totality of his era like few others, and he also anticipated a good number of historical developments, including World War II (which he warned would break out sooner rather than later) and an evolving European union.

If Tucholsky, in the above quote, exhorts his imaginary interlocutor to take a look at those volumes of Heine again, we, in turn, should take a closer look at Tucholsky. We will focus on three areas in particular: Tucholsky's personal impressions of France, his struggle to educate his readership, and his fight against nationalism. Throughout the chapter we will be guided by the question of finding and losing paradise, a concept that is central to understanding the evolution of Tucholsky's reactions to France.

³² Consult the Appendix for translations of this and all subsequent numbered quotes.

II

Kurt Tucholsky was born in Berlin on January 9, 1890. From 1899 to 1903 he attended the francophone *Collège Français* in Berlin³³, before transferring to a German-language *Gymnasium*. In 1907 his first short piece of writing was published in *Ulk*, a humoristic supplement to the *Berliner Tageblatt*, one of the city's large daily papers. Tucholsky studied law in Berlin and Geneva, obtaining a Doctor of Law degree from the University of Jena in 1914.

Starting in 1911 and continuing until his death in 1935, Tucholsky worked as a contributor to several publications, including *Vorwärts* (the paper of the Social Democratic Party), *Simplicissimus* (a satirical weekly), *Pan* (an arts magazine), the *Prager Tagblatt* (Prague's German-language daily), and, most importantly, the *Schaubühne* and *Weltbühne*. Tucholsky was drafted in 1915 and served until the end of World War I, mostly in Romania, Lithuania, and Latvia (where

³³ The school had been established by exiled French Huguenots in 1689. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century it was attended by many of Berlin's Jewish children (Bermann 27).

he met his future wife, Mary Gerold³⁴). From 1918 to 1922 he was a member of the USPD, one of the Weimar Republic's two Social Democratic parties.

In April 1924 the *Weltbühne* sent Tucholsky on a long-term assignment to Paris. Other papers to which he contributed during the Paris years included the *Vossische Zeitung*, *Berliner Illustrierte*, *Tempo*, *Die Dame*, and *Uhu*. While the liberal *Weltbühne* was Tucholsky's ideological home and the recipient of most of his work, it could not afford to pay him very much. Therefore his arrangement with the other papers, some of which belonged to the moderately conservative sector of the political spectrum, was a matter of financial necessity for a writer permanently short on cash. Not surprisingly, Tucholsky's well-known and well-articulated liberal views were the cause of occasional friction between him and the publishers of those papers. For example, the Ullstein publishing house, home of the center-right daily

³⁴ Mary Gerold (1899-1987) was married to Tucholsky from 1924 to 1933. She was the sole heir to his estate and his copyrights, which she administered until 1987. We already mentioned her role as co-editor of his collected works. But we should also remember that it is thanks to her that these works have even physically survived to this day, since Tucholsky himself never saved any copies of his manuscripts nor kept any records of what he had published when and where. After her husband's death, Mary Gerold tracked down, assembled, and organized as many of his writings as she could and built up what would eventually become the Kurt Tucholsky Archives.

Vossische Zeitung, objected to texts in which Tucholsky explained why he found life in France so much more pleasant than at home. Ullstein, worried about its circulation numbers, told him that it regarded this sort of writing as a "malicious challenge" to its readers (Bemmann 304). Of course, nothing could have been further from Tucholsky's mind. He had simply written a personal assessment of his experiences in France - exactly the sort of thing he thought he was supposed to deliver for the paper. He saw no reason to change the tone of the articles he sent to Ullstein, and was not prepared to compromise his political views to placate the publishers. He told them so, and in the end they relented and continued their association with him.

Although he had spoken French since childhood, Tucholsky initially had a few problems with the language. The French of 1924 Paris was not always the same as the French he had learned in 1899 Berlin. He worked diligently at improving and updating his language skills, a task for which he set aside one or two hours each day. He adhered to that schedule throughout his five years in Paris. In addition, he read and re-read a lot of French literature, working through the texts sentence for sentence, and word for word (Bemmann 273).

Tucholsky became something of an unofficial ambassador of the German peace movement in France. He gave more than

forty lectures about the political situation in his country and about the prospects for a rapprochement. He held all of these speeches in French and all of them without the benefit of any notes (Bemmann 345-346). He also took part in the meetings of the *Ligue pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen*, the organization that had originally been founded to defend Alfred Dreyfus in 1898. Tucholsky was acquainted with a number of French writers and politicians, including Henri Barbusse, Paul Morand, Aristide Briand, Edouard Herriot, and Raymond Poincaré.

Tucholsky left France for good in 1929 and settled in the small town of Hindås in Sweden, after having already traveled back and forth between France and Sweden during much of 1928. He spent the last eleven years of his life abroad (1924-1935). After 1924, he had been back to Germany only on sporadic business trips. Even these visits became impossible after the Nazis took power in January 1933. In May of that year his works were among those destroyed during the book burnings. On August 23, 1933 Tucholsky was one of the first Germans whom the Nazis stripped of their citizenship. The 32 others expatriated on that day included a number of liberal politicians and several writers, most notably Lion Feuchtwanger and Heinrich Mann (Schulz 158). Tucholsky subsequently applied for Swedish citizenship, but no action

was taken on his application during his lifetime.

In 1935 the now stateless Tucholsky tried to visit France one last time, but French authorities denied him entry (Philippoff 132-133). This refusal was a major disappointment for him. He took it almost as a personal affront by a country he had always considered his spiritual home and had held up, to himself and to his readers, as humanity's last best hope against Nazi Germany. France's shutting its doors to him compounded other devastating blows he had suffered in recent years on the private front (the death of his mentor Siegfried Jacobsohn in 1926, his divorce from Mary in 1933, the fate of two of his friends and ideological brothers-in-arms: Carl von Ossietzky's incarceration in 1931 and 1933, and Henri Barbusse's death in 1935), as well as ominous developments he had witnessed in the political arena (the book burnings, continuing expatriations of Jews and liberals, the passing of the 1935 Nuremberg race laws, and the rapid entrenchment of Hitlerism at all levels of German society). Increasingly discouraged and depressed by this agglomeration of painful events, Tucholsky, at the age of 45, committed suicide in Hindås on December 21, 1935.

III

Tucholsky's initial reaction to Paris was nothing less than euphoria. For him, being away from a country which had just gone through devastating inflation, away from a country still enduring food shortages, away from a country mired in constant political and economic crises, in short, being away from Germany, was paradise. At least that is the term he uses to describe the situation in a letter to his wife: "Es ist ein Paradies, daß man nicht in Deutschland ist. Über Frankreich läßt sich reden - über diese Tatsache gar nicht" [It is paradise not to be in Germany. France may be debatable - this fact is not] (cit. Bemann 270).

But being away from Germany was only one half of the equation. Being in Paris was the other. Quite simply, and quite remarkably, Paris restored Tucholsky's will to live. He had been on the verge of depression in the months before his departure for France. He was frustrated with the apparent lack of immediate political results generated by his work, and he doubted whether there was any point in carrying on with writing and with living. The move to Paris, in April 1924, could not have come at a more suitable time. Tucholsky said that it gave meaning to his life again. He expressed this renewed sense of purpose in numerous exuberant texts, both public and private, written during the first days and

weeks in the city. The tone of many of these early texts can best be described as giddy and gushing. He was in awe of Paris and everything in it. France seemed like a land of plenty, most immediately in material terms, but also, and more importantly, in emotional terms:

(2)

"nicht das erschüttert bis zu Tränen, daß es Butter und fröhliche Menschen und Seide auf der Welt gibt, sondern daß niemand ein Wesens davon macht, und daß alle es selbstverständlich finden" (III, 382).

He also was in tears, as he told Mary,

(3)

"weil es auf einmal wieder einen Sinn hat, auf der Welt zu sein - weil einmal wieder Wolke Wolke ist, Stein Stein, Sonne Sonne. Ich bin umhergegangen wie verzaubert" (cit. Bemmman 269).

Tucholsky was overwhelmed. He experienced an elemental sense of joy and liberation. After having been virtually cut off from the outside world for the last ten years, he rediscovered that world and saw it as if for the first time. We find these and other sentiments summed up in a poem entitled "Pariser Dankgebet" [Parisian Prayer of Thanks], which was written in the spring of 1924, as well, but was not published until 1926:

(4)

"Hier tritt mir keiner auf die Stiebeln. Hier sind die Leute höflich und nett.
Und wenn mir doch mal einer rauftritt, dann sagt er: 'Ah pardon, monsieur!' überall, in Malakoff und in der rue Lafayette.

...
 Hier kann man sich noch freuen, weil eine Markise so
 schön gelb leuchtet. Hier hat jeder Arbeit und doch
 Zeit,
 ein Mensch zu sein, aufzuatmen, allein und zu zweit.
 ...
 Hier hat es noch einen Sinn, am Leben zu sein.
 ...
 Ein ganzes Land steckt friedfertig die Arme aus.
 ...
 Wie schön ist es, hier zu leben...
 Zehn Jahre zu spät! Und doch darf ich nicht klagen.
 Es tut so wohl, auch einmal Ja zu sagen" (IV, 446-447).

While a number of themes we will rediscover in later texts (for example, France's will to peace and the kindness of its people) are already alluded to here, it is the poem's final line which is of particular interest: "It feels so good to say Yes for a change." Having the opportunity to affirm, to be positive, rather than negative, held crucial importance for Tucholsky. The political situation in France, for example, was one of the areas in which he was able to say "yes" (we will get to the others shortly). French politics had taken a turn to the left at about the same time Tucholsky arrived in Paris. The *Cartel des Gauches* had won the parliamentary elections of May 1924, and Edouard Herriot, a Radical Socialist, became Prime Minister. Tucholsky, exasperated by more conservative governments at home, finally found himself in the unfamiliar but pleasant position of not having to fight and criticize politicians. This made life

easier for him; it even made life *possible* again. It is precisely the eventual lack of things to which he could say yes, and the attendant abundance of things to which he had to say no, which ultimately led to his suicide. Had it not been for his move to Paris, that suicide could conceivably have come a decade earlier than it did.

The poem "Park Monceau" was printed in the *Weltbühne* on May 15, 1924, four weeks after Tucholsky's arrival in the city. In it, Tucholsky covers some of the same ground as before, but also adds a major new dimension:

(5)

"Hier ist es hübsch. Hier kann ich ruhig träumen.
Hier bin ich Mensch - und nicht nur Zivilist.
Hier darf ich links gehn. Unter grünen Bäumen
sagt keine Tafel, was verboten ist.

Ein dicker Kullerball liegt auf dem Rasen.
Ein Vogel zupft an einem hellen Blatt.
Ein kleiner Junge gräbt sich in der Nasen
und freut sich, wenn er was gefunden hat.

Es prüfen vier Amerikanerinnen,
ob Cook auch recht hat und hier Bäume stehn.
Paris von außen und Paris von innen:
sie sehen nichts und müssen alles sehn.

Die Kinder lärmten auf den bunten Steinen.
Die Sonne scheint und glitzert auf ein Haus.
Ich sitze still und lasse mich bescheinen
und ruh von meinem Vaterlande aus" (III, 378).

Idyllic Paris has become the antipode and the antidote to gloomy Berlin. The possibility that this idyll may not be quite as unproblematic as it appears to be, does, at least

for the time being, not faze Tucholsky. He saves any potential negatives for later. Paris has become "a privileged place ... where he feels in unison with himself and the world" (Giraud 50). While France is no less than a "Garten Gottes" [garden of God] (VI, 310), Berlin is best enjoyed from a safe distance. The poem "Place des Vosges," printed on July 17, 1924, amplifies this sentiment. In it, Tucholsky describes how he is sitting in the sun, relaxing, eating a bag of peanuts, and speculating on what might be happening in Berlin right at that moment. He comes to the conclusion that everyone is no doubt working, hurrying about, and being short-tempered and rude, and he proclaims: "Wie lieb ich dich! Von weitem. Mein Berlin-!" [How I love you! From afar. My Berlin-!] (III, 413).

But Paris provides more than just a respite from Berlin. It becomes his home, at least temporarily. Tucholsky calls himself a man "der endlich heimgefunden hat" [who has finally found home] (III, 385). This feeling is somewhat paradoxical, because Tucholsky never quite managed to settle down in one place while he lived in France. He was constantly in search of larger and more affordable living quarters. After just one year in Paris, he moved to suburban Le Vésinet in May 1925. In June 1926 he rented a house in St.Valéry-en-Caux (Normandy). In October 1926 he moved to

Fontainebleau, and in July 1927 he moved back to Paris (Hepp 552-555). Thus, when Tucholsky says, "so zu Hause habe ich mich in Berlin nie gefühlt" [I have never felt this much at home in Berlin] (III, 416), it is evident that being "at home" in France is not primarily a question of real estate for him, but one of spiritual and psychological comfort.

Of course, Tucholsky had not really come to Paris to take a break from Berlin. He had been sent there to work. His job was to show, to describe, to explain Paris and France to the German readership, to paint a city, a nation and its citizens in words. Nothing could be simpler, nothing more difficult. Tucholsky was quite aware of the enormity of the task. He told Mary that first of all he had to try to do away with a "garbage heap of wrong associations and beliefs" in peoples' minds, and that many among his readers either despised all things foreign, or "crawled before them on the stomach" with undignified adulation. He said that it was going to be difficult for him to find the right tone, and he admitted to having "considerable stage fright" (cit. Bemann 272). Still, Tucholsky was at first rather confident that the assignment would be feasible. As time went on, however, his doubts increased. In October 1927, for example, he wrote:

(6)

"Wenn man zwei Monate in einem fremden Land lebt,
versteht man es gewöhnlich herrlich - es ist ja so

klar... Dann wirds dunkler, und ich befinde mich zur Zeit in jener Periode, die jeder kennt, der reist-: ich verstehe fast gar nichts mehr. Alles, was ich gelernt habe, kommt mir falsch vor - alles, was ich von den Franzosen weiß, zu wissen glaube, dünkt mich schief... Ich tappe so herum. Was ist das für ein Volk?" (V, 348).

A few months later, in July 1928, Tucholsky modified this concern:

(7)
 "Jetzt sitze ich ... vier Jahre in Frankreich. In den ersten acht Tagen ging ich im Taumel umher, die eisernen Ketten der Inflation waren gerade gefallen, und mir war mein Schwergewicht abhanden kommen. Nach zwei Monaten verstand ich alles.... Nach einem halbem Jahr begann das Bild sich langsam zu verdunkeln, die Fäden liefen wirr, da waren Widersprüche, die ich nicht zu lösen vermochte.... Nach drei Jahren verstand ich gar nichts mehr. ... Es ist nicht zu Ende. Ich stehe nach vier Jahren - auf einer kleinen Anhöhe, hinter mir liegen einige bezwungene Täler, und ich will weitergehen, auf eine weite Wanderung" (VI, 166, 168).

Tucholsky rambled metaphorically, to be sure, but also quite literally, for walking was his favorite means of experiencing Paris up close. A latter-day *flâneur* on a mission, his eyes and his mind wide open, he strolled along city streets, taking mental notes which he would turn into articles upon returning home. He commented on just about everything that intrigued him, from the obvious and immediate (people, neighborhoods, cinemas, theaters, restaurants, museums), to the more unusual (the Paris Olympics, courts and prisons, traffic), to the offbeat (the shape of French coat

hangers), and the abstract (the social conditions of the French working class, the state of French theater).

But these excursions were by no means limited to Paris. Tucholsky once said that "wer nur Paris kennt, der kennt Paris nicht" [whoever knows only Paris, does not know Paris] (VIII, 267). Following his own advice, he traveled through much of the rest of the country, including, among other places, the Côte d'Azur, the Pyrenees, Provence, Brittany, and Normandy. Tucholsky enjoyed the scenery and the climate in southern France, in particular as compared to the cold and dark Berlin winters. Nevertheless, he found that none of the places he visited could compete with Paris and he was always glad to return: "Paris ist nie so schön wie in der französischen Provinz" [Paris is never more beautiful than in the French provinces] (V, 127).

Tucholsky emphasized, however, that no matter where he went, the people he met seemed more polite than those in Germany: "In Deutschland sind die Menschen zunächst einmal unhöflich - hier zunächst einmal höflich" [In Germany people are initially impolite - here they are initially polite] (III, 378). He also thought the French were less irritable than his compatriots, more even-tempered, and, as best he could tell, happier. He believed that life was easy in France and unnecessarily hard in Germany:

"Der Franzose ... lebt sein Leben mit einer leichten Freude, mit einer Innigkeit, mit einer herzlichen Liebe zur Natur und den anderen Menschen, die wir fast vergessen haben. ... [Man merkt] daß alles glatt und angenehm vonstatten geht, daß das Dasein gleitet und nicht hakt - man empfindet wie einfach im Grunde das Leben ist" (III, 397, 399).

Although Tucholsky was no doubt quite sincere when he wrote these phrases, it does not necessarily mean that he was right. More than a hundred years before, Madame de Staël had said essentially the same things about Germans. The statements were overly general and hence incorrect then, and they are overly general in this case, too. Tucholsky, however, was not one to let generalizations like these stand without any qualifications. A few years later he will be the first to admit that he was too idealistic when he wrote them. Still, he does not retreat from his basic premise:

(9)

"Franzosen sind keine besseren Menschen - denn Engelsvölker und Teufelsvölker gibt es nicht. Sie scheinen mir aber eines herauszuhaben, was uns gänzlich fehlt: sie sind im Umgang mit dem Nebenmenschen *praktischer*; sie verschwenden nicht diese ungeheure Energie, die wir vergeuden, um recht zu haben, recht zu behalten, zu triumphieren. ... Treffen zwei Deutsche zusammen, so entsteht fast immer ein stummer Streit: wer mehr ist. Die Franzosen sind ... wahre Demokraten...: sie leben miteinander und nebeneinander. Sie leben koordiniert, nicht subordiniert" (DT 498, Tucholsky's *italics*).

Tucholsky correlates this greater maturity, this "democratic" behavior in the private realm with what he

perceives to be a greater political maturity, a more firmly entrenched tradition of democracy in France. He illustrates this opinion with a concrete example when he describes his first trip back to Germany in the summer of 1926, after having spent two years in France. He is astonished at the childish and nerve-wracking behavior of his countrymen on the train:

(10)

"Auch machen sie eine unendliche Wirtschaft aus allem, sich und den andern das Leben schwer und das Reisen zu einer Dienstpflicht, der sie mit zusammengepreßten Lippen und angestrengtem Gesichtsausdruck obliegen; noch nie habe ich auf einer französischen Bahn einen solchen Trubel um nichts erlebt. Wo einer sitzt, ob das Fenster auf oder zu ist, und wie der Handkoffer liegt, und was es da alles gibt... es sind typisch deutsche 'Probleme': anderswo gibt es sie gar nicht, oder sie sind keine. Muß das Dasein hier Kräfte kosten-! Kostet es auch. Die Luft ist geladen mit Spannung - man empfindet das nie so stark, wie wenn man von draußen kommt, wo das Leben *keineswegs paradiesischer*, aber geölter dahinläuft, auch da, wo es stockt. Ein französisches Verkehrshindernis erfordert von den Beteiligten weniger Nervenkraft als der deutsche glatt abgewickelte Verkehr" (IV, 480, my italics).

It is hardly a coincidence that Tucholsky returns to the concept of "paradise" in this passage. Just as he had admitted before that the French were no more "angels" or "devils" than anyone else, here he says that life is no more "paradisical" in France than anyplace else. However, as in the earlier passage, he is unwavering as far as his main point is concerned: he still considers life to be smoother,

easier, and more humane in France than in Germany. It is this point which will survive even the most sweeping revisions Tucholsky will later make to his view of France.

Whether or not these observations about the character of the two peoples are correct or not (they are not, at least not in this stereotyping generality), does not really matter for the moment. What matters is that Tucholsky *perceived* these things the way he did. This perception of life lived with ease presented him with yet another object of affirmation. We have already stated how vitally important the need to affirm was in Tucholsky's universe. It is inconsequential, at least for now, that he may have affirmed something that existed only in his imagination. In this case, perception was reality. Of course, as we will see, once Tucholsky realizes that his perceptions were indeed too idealistic, the letdown to reality will be all the more severe.

We have indicated that in the first few months in France Tucholsky overlooked or at least excused any negatives he may have come across. It will, however, eventually turn out that there are in fact a number of things Tucholsky does not like about the country, and he does not hesitate to mention them, in some cases repeatedly. Some of these are relatively minor

vexations: he finds the architecture in the *banlieue* of Paris ugly (DT 618, 658-659; RW 316) and the design of the French currency tacky (DT 654-655). Others are a bit more substantial: the telephones never work as well as they should, and, being accustomed to the avant-garde stages of Berlin, he has little use for the sort of theater played at the *Comédie Française*, which he deems too dusty and old-fashioned for his tastes (DT 356-360).

Tucholsky occasionally portrays his irritation at certain aspects of French life in rather jocose fashion. For example, he comments on the awarding of the *Légion d'Honneur*; he finds the ritual circus surrounding the event slightly ridiculous and thinks that most of the time the award is much ado about very little. Tucholsky jokes that the honoree, after having received his ribbon,

(11)

"darf ... denn dieses Wort sagen, das, mit einer leichten Handbewegung, fast jeder Franzose gleichmütig den gratulierenden Freunden hinwirft, die ihn, je nachdem, ob sie es haben oder nicht, herablassend oder ehrfurchtsvoll begratulieren, ein Wort, das sich auf die stets vorausgesetzten bitteren Kämpfe um das Bändchen bezieht, und das ein Courteline ersonnen haben könnte, weil es so humoristisch-doppeldeutig ist: 'Et vous savez - je n'ai rien fait pour cela!'" (V, 308).

Another instance where Tucholsky employs this kind of jocular criticism is in expressing his opinion of French novels: "Da sitze ich nun und lese meinen französischen

Roman, in dem unweigerlich vorkommt: 'Il huma l'air frais'" [So there I sit, reading my French novel which invariably contains the phrase: 'Il huma l'air frais'] (V, 123). This remark is meant to draw attention to his professed dislike for a certain type of French literature he considers to be antiquated and socially irrelevant - attributes much like the ones he bestowed upon the *Comédie Française*. However, he never actually specifies what authors might fall into that category. (He does, on the other hand, express great admiration for a number of French writers, including the above mentioned Courteline, as well as Marcel Proust, Anatole France, and Paul Morand.)

Another more extended example of a text which details unfavorable impressions by being humorous is the essay entitled "Riviera." It was printed on March 6, 1928 in the *Weltbühne*. Tucholsky prefaces it by saying that he is being deliberately nasty and cranky and irreverent in it, just to spite all those who automatically and compulsively rhapsodize about the French Riviera. Tucholsky is determined not to like anything about it. He finds the streets dusty and the whole area "dirty without being picturesque" (VI, 64-65). He is vexed by the *coup de fusil*, the massive overcharging, particularly in the local restaurants, where the food he is served is astronomically expensive but of less than stellar

quality:

(12)

"wenn es eine dünne Suppe, ein Pastetchen, bejahrten
Fisch und ein bejammernswertes Huhn mit Kartoffeln gibt,
so sieht das Menü so aus:

Potage à la Potage
Vol-au-Vent à la Valéry
Sole à la Reine de Portugal
Volaille à la Poule
Pommes à la Pomme
Fruits

Der letzte Plural ist eine Übertreibung" (VI, 64).

Tucholsky is also annoyed by the syrupy kindness of the *maître d'hôtel*, who interrupts his meal at every bite, asking him if everything is alright. It is not, and the harried diner plots his defense, maybe only half-jokingly: "Lieber Gott, gib mir doch den Mut, daß ich ihm einmal, nur ein einziges Mal, mit der Gabel in den Bauch pieke" [Dear Lord, give me the courage, once, just one single time, to poke him in the stomach with a fork] (VI, 65). Nor are the other guests in Tucholsky's hotel spared. He tartly remarks that "[in] der *hall* stehen Palmen und vielhundertjährige Engländerinnen" [palm trees and multi-centenarian English women are standing in the *hall*] (VI, 64).

The point of the article is that Tucholsky believes that many tourists visiting the French Riviera simply do not dare admit to themselves that it is mostly overcrowded,

overpriced, and not as nice as it should be, and that other vacation spots are more beautiful: "Sie erliegen rettungslos der Zwangsvorstellung 'Riviera'" [They irrecoverably succumb to the compulsive concept 'Riviera'] (VI, 65).

Two of Tucholsky's biggest complaints about life in Paris concern apartments and concierges. He notes that housing in the city is scarce and expensive. This is one of the few areas where he actually prefers the situation in Berlin. He says that Parisians pay high rents for what often are tiny, out-of-the-way places, whereas in Berlin one can get a larger, more comfortable apartment for less money (RW 312-316; IV 530-533). He also bemoans the fact that, in order to get any apartment at all, one usually needs the right connections, which he does not have. Tucholsky is speaking from personal experience when he complains that concierges have an inordinately large say in deciding who is allowed to move into an apartment and who is not.

Disparaging comments about concierges are, in fact, widespread in Tucholsky's writings. He resents their universal intrusion into residents' private affairs. He feels that they treat everybody as subjects: "Paris zerfällt in lauter kleine Königreiche, in denen überall König Concierge I. regiert" [Paris is divided into many little kingdoms which are all ruled by King Concierge I] (DT 413).

When Tucholsky travels to Lyon he tells his readers that he does not like the city: dark, sooty, joyless, boring, indifferent, and inhospitable are some of the adjectives he uses to describe it (DT 411). The only bright spot he discovers is that in Lyon there are no concierges who handle the mail and poke their noses where they don't belong. He is happy to report that "die Lyonesen haben wie richtige erwachsene Menschen einen Hausschlüssel" [the people of Lyon have a key to their house, like real grown-ups] (DT 413).

In later years Tucholsky will also take increasing note of other, more seriously unpleasant aspects of French reality. For example, he will have to admit that nationalists and xenophobes are just as common there as they are in Germany, and that the economic conditions of the lower strata of French society are just as miserable as those of their German counterparts (more on this in section V).

All these negatives we have quoted, major and minor, come increasingly to the fore after Tucholsky's first few weeks and months in France. He gradually realizes that the paradisaal idyll he had initially envisioned did not quite stand up under closer scrutiny. It was a mirage, at least in part. He conceded that some of his early impressions were plainly wrong, because he was too "intoxicated" when he collected them. He said that he had been "lying on [his]

knees" in those days and hence could not see very well (IV, 443).

What, we have to ask ourselves, is the ultimate relevance of all these seemingly disconnected observations about France? Since all of them are based exclusively on Tucholsky's personal knowledge and experience, since they contain anecdotal and empirical evidence only, since Tucholsky does not pretend to be methodical nor objective in his analyses, is there - can there be - any larger interest to them, other than a purely private one? The answer is "yes." While none of the texts are ostensibly political, all of them do indirectly serve a purpose that could (and should) be termed "political." Tucholsky always thought that Franco-German rapprochement, the great and frequently unspoken political *raison d'être* behind these texts, was best achieved on the private level. Its foundation had to be concrete, not abstract. First-hand experiences and face-to-face contacts between French and Germans were invaluable in this regard. Unfortunately, they were not widespread at the time. One of the merits of Tucholsky's texts was that they allowed his audience to experience France vicariously through him. Tucholsky hoped to express what his readers might have expressed had they been able to live in France the way he was

able to. This does not mean that he wrote what he thought they wanted to hear. Instead, he believed that what he was interested in and wrote about was similar to what anyone else in his position would have written about. Not unlike Montaigne, Tucholsky (in a radically different arena and scope, of course) tries to be an Everyman by focusing - paradoxically, it seems - on himself. When Montaigne prefaces his Essais by warning the reader that he has set himself no other goal than a purely private one, he is of course right, but the result of his work will be a very universal and public one. The same holds true for Tucholsky's dispatches from France. The difference is that Montaigne's readers can observe and duplicate his experiences on their own selves; Tucholsky's readers, for the most part, could not, due, among other things, to the wars, as well as financial and cultural restraints.

IV

Another area in which Tucholsky's texts were crucially valuable was education. It may not seem like much today, but when Tucholsky showed the German reader that the French were people like everyone else, and when he emphasized their commonalities instead of their differences, it was a

groundbreaking endeavor (Heine was the last writer before him who had attempted something similar). Tucholsky tried to let the truth, as he saw it, be known, which is why he was so upset with himself when he realized that his initial euphoria was not universally truthful. He constantly tried to debunk myths and to counteract the insidious lies and distortions promulgated elsewhere in Germany about France. He wanted to correct the ready-made image which the majority of his compatriots had of France.

That image consisted of two basic components. For many Germans, in particular for those who had never been to the country and who had to (or chose to) rely on second- and third-hand hearsay, France was synonymous with decadence, debauchery, and laziness. Many other Germans' perception of France was colored primarily by their war experience: "Nachbarn sind wir und kennen uns nur aus dem Graben" [We are neighbors and know each other only from the trenches], is how Tucholsky sums up the situation (VI, 137). He says that those Germans who think the French hate them are wrong. Instead, he says, the French are "unsre Erbfreunde" [our hereditary friends] (DT 617), a term which refers to the supposed "hereditary" inimity between the two nations. Tucholsky claims not to have experienced any significant animosity toward himself as a German:

"Oft, wenn wir an die Frage kamen: 'Und sie sind... Engländer?' und ich sagte dann das Wort, dann entstand eine winzig kleine Pause, und eine Welt war in der Stille. Eine Welt von vier Jahren. Aber nie, nie, nie mehr als das - nie ein böses Wort, nie eine heftige Anspielung, ein Versuch, den Krieg nun noch einmal unter vier Augen zu gewinnen" (V, 134).

Tucholsky says he encountered "viel Gleichgültigkeit, [dumpfe] Unaufgeklärtheit, Unwissenheit und [politische] Unkenntnis" [much indifference, dull unenlightenment, ignorance, and political unawareness] among the French, but not hatred. He admonishes his readers: "Man sollte ihn auch in Deutschland abbauen" [It should be eliminated in Germany, as well] (DT 502-503).

This desire to enlighten his audience predated Tucholsky's arrival in France. As early as August 1922, two years before his Paris assignment began, he had already outlined the need for a German view of France that was based on more than images of *poilus* and the *Folies Bergères*:

(14)

"Durch eine Wolke von Haß, Unverstand, Verachtung und Kabalen sehen wir das Bild Frankreichs nur verschwommen. Frankreich und wir: Es ist an der Zeit, durch sachliche und ruhige Arbeit die Luft zu reinigen" (DT 318).

This work was to be carried out in large part by Tucholsky himself. As a first step, he had to find out what exactly he was up against. Since he was convinced that the problem was essentially one of *perception* and of *knowledge*,

he turned his attention to those quarters of German society which shaped public perception and public knowledge. In the pre-television age that meant: the press, or at least large portions of it, and the schools.

Tucholsky sees the press as the major culprit for the deliberate distortion of French reality that was filtered to the German public. In December 1925 he gets a chance to peruse a few samples of this sort of misinformation. He is dismayed at what he finds:

(15)

"...wenn ich heute die deutschen Zeitungen lese - was muß ich da alles über das Land erfahren, wo ich lebe! Die Frauen bekommen nie Kinder, die Mädchen sind nur für wenige Stunden des Tages vertikal anzutreffen, die Männer schießen sich Löcher in den Bauch oder stehlen Geschmeide" (IV, 276).

Just two months later Tucholsky returns to the subject. He says nationalist German papers inform him that

(16)

"Paris ist eine Stadt, deren weibliche Bewohner meistens in horizontaler Lage anzutreffen sind, und deren männliche, champagnerbesoffen, hysterisch nach dem Kopf Hindenburgs rufen. Das degenerierte Volk der Franzosen wälzt sich in nackten Paaren auf den Boulevards, ruft abwechselnd 'Gloire!' und 'à Berlin!' und hat überhaupt kein Nationalgefühl, darum wird es nächstens untergehen, und viel zu viel Nationalgefühl, darum wird Deutschland nächstens untergehen" (IV, 341).

Tucholsky is appalled at these caricatures of the city he is living in. He accuses the press of not allowing any

true and substantive information about France to reach Germany.

He is also saddened to find out that the situation is not any better on the other side. He had assumed it would be, but in this matter, too, a gradual disillusionment about the "paradisaal" qualities of France sets in, paralleling the development we have already observed elsewhere. For example, the title of an August 1927 article poses the question: "Was weiß der Franzose vom Deutschen?" [What does the Frenchman know about the German?]. "Nothing" is Tucholsky's answer, or at least not very much which is accurate. Nothing, because, just like the German reader, the French reader, largely dependent on a deliberately misinforming press, is not even given the *opportunity* to know anything (V, 280-281). The German papers, for one, are to be held directly responsible for helping incite the last war, says Tucholsky, because

(17)

"sie fälschen den wahrhaft friedfertigen französischen Volkswillen, der seine Ruhe haben will, zur Mentalität eines heulenden Irrenhauskandidaten. So geht das jahraus, jahrein, und der von der Republik reichdotierte Pensionsoberst in Prenzlau spürt seine Hämorrhoiden weniger, wenn er mit Wonne liest, wie verderbt, wie degeneriert, wie verkommen Frankreich sei. ... Sie haben uns schon einmal in den Krieg hineingehetzt, sie werden es wieder tun. An uns ist es, den verderblichen Einfluß dieser Presse mit den äußersten Mitteln zu bekämpfen" (IV, 342-343).

The ideal way to do that would be to circumvent the

press entirely and neutralize its power over public perception. This could be accomplished, says Tucholsky, by giving all citizens money to travel so they can see and experience the country for themselves first-hand, much like Tucholsky did, and can disabuse themselves of the misinformation and hatred planted in their minds (III, 419). Since that is not really a feasible solution, accurate and relevant reporting is the next best remedy.

What is needed in both countries, according to Tucholsky, is a totally different kind of press, one that writes not primarily about political developments, and certainly not about the unusual and the outrageous, but rather about the usual and the mundane, about the everyday lives of the people next door, about their economic situations, about how they live, work, and play, about what they eat, drink, and read, about what they say, hope, and fear. He sees a dire need for a "well-writing traveler," for someone who is able to convey the foreign culture to the audience at home on their terms and make it accessible to them, and for a mediator, "[den] wir nach dieser grabendurchfurchten Zeit nötiger haben denn je" [whom we need more than ever after this trench-furrowed era] (III, 423-426).

Not surprisingly, these words describe Tucholsky

himself. Also not surprisingly, this project is doomed to failure almost from the start, even if entrusted to the extremely capable hands of a Kurt Tucholsky. It must fail because, unless one is willing to put up with paralysing generalities, it is impossible to portray a people in all their individuality. Tucholsky mostly (not always) managed to avoid generalities precisely by focusing on his own personal experiences and by making it very clear that they were just that: personal, and hence not necessarily (but possibly) representative. However, Tucholsky also soon recognized the limitations of such an approach. The realization that he was not going to be able to complete, in a manner that would satisfy his own high standards, the project he had set for himself and to which he had devoted so much of his life - the creation and nurturing of understanding between his two home countries - was no doubt one reason why he eventually despaired to the point of becoming suicidal.

Tucholsky was of course not so simplistic as to think that the press (or, for that matter, any other single entity) alone was to blame for the climate of forced ignorance and the spreading of blatant lies. Newspapers carried the lion's share of responsibility, but not all of it. Another major culprit was the educational system. In 1928, for example,

Tucholsky comments on a Bavarian textbook in which history is distorted at every turn: former German colonies lost at Versailles a decade before are still labeled as belonging to Germany, some French and Polish towns which used to be part of Germany are still labeled by their German names, and the fact that World War I has been lost is perversely not accepted as fact:

(18)

"es ist eine hervorragend deutsche Eigenart, ein weltgeschichtliches Geschehnis dadurch aus der Welt schaffen zu wollen, daß man es in Anführungsstriche setzt. Frankreich ist nicht als 'Sieger' aus diesem Kriege hervorgegangen, sondern als Sieger, und Deutschland hat diesen Krieg verloren" (VI, 260).

The textbook also portrays the French as hate-filled, uncivilized monsters. It barely stops short of inciting *revanche*. Tucholsky speculates about the harmful effects of such a book:

(19)

"Jahraus, jahrein wird aufnahmefähigen Kindergehirnen ein Lehrstoff eingetrommelt, den sie wahrscheinlich nie wieder vergessen werden und den auszuradieren nur wenige Gelegenheit und Kraft haben. ... Jenes Buch steht in der sechsten Auflage. Wann also, so dürfte unsre Rechenaufgabe lauten, haben wir den nächsten Krieg-?" (VI, 262).

The question is merely rhetorical. The answer is obvious: very soon - unless real education has a chance to prove itself, to produce a real body of knowledge, not the

lies, myths, and misconceptions that pass for knowledge. For Tucholsky, the connection is quite clear: ignorance impedes peace; knowledge prevents war. Achieving peace is an epistemological problem.

V

In March 1929, the *Neuer Deutscher Verlag*, a German publishing house, organized a Tucholsky Day in Berlin. The keynote speaker was Henri Barbusse, who was in town for the International Anti-Fascist Congress. Tucholsky took the opportunity for one of his last visits to his native city. The event was well attended. Hundreds of potential listeners had to be turned away due to lack of space (Bemmann 401). In his speech, Barbusse warned the audience about the dangers of nationalism, a concern that was also very close to Tucholsky's heart.

He regards nationalism, and even the very concept of nations itself, as detrimental and as a dangerous obstacle on the way to peace. He believes that borders are useless anachronisms. He compares Europe's nations to little fortresses whose leaders insist on being "maître chez soi" (VI, 348). He thinks that geographical divisions are arbitrary and artificial, and that the real borders among

people run along social and class lines, and right through nations (VII, 254). For him, business and industry are to blame for sustaining national borders, because they are the only ones who are able to draw any profit from them. As he is traveling the Basque country during his voyage through the Pyrenees, Tucholsky illustrates this opinion by explaining why the old cliché of the Basques as habitual smugglers is outdated:

(20)

"Vorbei Romantik, zerrissenes Abendgewölk, durch das der bleiche Mond die heimlichen Contrebandiers bescheint, Schmugglerliebe und Schmugglertod..., vorbei. Vor allem deshalb, weil ja heute keinem vernünftigen Menschen die Grenze noch eine solche herzklopfenverursachende Ehrfurcht einflößt. Wir wissen doch. Wir wissen doch, wer da für wen wacht. Das Getreide soll nicht daher kommen, wo es billiger ist, die Klaviere nicht daher, wo man besser versteht, sie zu machen - künstlich hochgehalten werden Industrie, Kapital und Erwerbsmöglichkeit. Ein wirtschaftlicher Vorgang. Streicht eure lächerlichen Grenzpfähle doch nicht so feierlich an! Setzt drauf: Müllers Fettvaseline ist die beste! Das käme der Wahrheit schon wesentlich näher" (V, 40).

National antagonism is not a question of France versus Germany, but of French and German capitalists on the one hand versus French and German workers on the other³⁵. Tucholsky, whose ideological home is socialism, believes that solidarity and the discovery of a common social interest among the

³⁵ In Chapter 4 we will see that Heinrich Mann had exactly the same opinion on this subject.

working classes of both countries can make war impossible.

He expresses this hope as early as January 1912:

(21)

"wenn die Hunderttausende erst einmal ... gelernt haben, für welche Schemen (oder wessen Portemonnaie) sie sterben, dann ist es aus. Dann werden auch die Schlagworte: Ruhm, Vaterland, Ehre nicht mehr ziehen, dann wird der französische Arbeiter nicht mehr auf deutsche Kollegen schießen" (RW 23).

Tucholsky is certain that the people of each nation do not hate each other, but that they are forced to kill each other in the name of their governments. In April 1925, on a visit to Enghien, he notices plaques, commemorating citizens who died in the last war, affixed to almost every other house in town. One of them reads: "Ici vécut le Caporal Marcel Laurent, tué pour la patrie en 1916," which prompts Tucholsky to remark: "...die Tafeln lügen. Es muß nicht heißen: 'tué pour la patrie' - es muß heißen: 'tué par la patrie'" [...the plaques are lying. They should not read: 'tué pour la patrie' - they must read: 'tué par la patrie'] (IV, 100-101). It is telling that France, Tucholsky's hoped-for paradise, is no exception in this matter: French governments are as bad as any others, a realization which represents another stop on the long road toward his disenchantment with France.

Tucholsky was certain that a Europe without borders had to be one of the primary goals if another war was to be prevented. As a first practical step toward this end, he

advocated abolishing the visa requirements between France and Germany (DT 467). His ultimate ideal was nothing less than the United States of Europe : "Ce que nous ne cessons pas de vouloir, c'est l'Europe, ...au-dessus de tous les drapeaux, au-dessus de la mêlée..." (E 505), he writes in a 1925 article published in - appropriately enough - *Europe*. For him, a borderless, geographically and politically united continent is the *conditio sine qua non* of European peace.

The crucial question in his mind was how best to achieve that condition. Tucholsky believed that the only way to do it was on the most immediate, grass-roots level: through face-to-face, personal contacts. The sort of peacemaking Tucholsky advocates is described, for example, in an April 1925 *Weltbühne* text entitled "Deutsche Kinder in Paris," about a group of German children living in Paris for half a year with French families, a visit that was organized by labor unions in the two countries. Tucholsky is convinced that

(22)

"[hier] ist der Beginn eines wahren Friedenswerkes. ... Wenn nicht alles täuscht, so werden diese Kinder schlechte Soldaten werden. Denn was ihnen Bücher und Vorträge nur anzudeuten vermögen, das haben sie nun mit eigenen Augen gesehen: Daß drüben hinter den Schützengräben keine 'Feinde' wohnen, sondern Eltern, sondern Väter, Mütter, Kameraden. Daß man diese Eltern auf beiden Seiten betrogen und belogen hat, wenn man ihnen sagte, auf der andern Seite stehe der Gegner. Er steht ganz, ganz woanders" (IV, 87).

The last line is another stab at Tucholsky's all-purpose bogeymen: capitalists. But socialist rhetoric aside, his basic idea was of course correct and, indeed, would become omnipresent reality several decades later. However, in the 1920s personal contacts were few and far between. Tucholsky recognizes only two groups of people, both minuscule in number, who cultivate those contacts: politicians and artists. Both, he says, are completely useless.

Politicians only see and hear and judge by each other, and not the population at large. They are too isolated to matter. They take themselves far too seriously and overestimate the importance of the political apparatus. They believe that ever increasing numbers of conferences and speeches will lead to peace. Tucholsky, however, thinks that this type of peacemaking, whose paradigm was Locarno, while laudable, is utterly ineffectual (IV, 37).

The second group are writers and artists. They, too, sit in the proverbial ivory tower, moving nothing and no one, and are cut off from those who really matter: the people. Peace is not achieved, Tucholsky says acerbically, "indem man gemeinsam Schmetterlinge sammelt und kunstgewerbliche Gebrauchsgegenstände ausstellt" [by collecting butterflies together and exhibiting *objets d'art*] (IV, 346-347). When

Thomas Mann visited France on a much-heralded lecture tour in February 1926, Tucholsky was predictably sceptical about its potential for meaningful results:

(23)

"Reden deutscher Schriftsteller in Paris; Ausstellung französischer Bilder in Berlin...: alles das bewirkt noch nichts. ... Solange die Staatsmacht, über das Leben der Volksangehörigen zu verfügen, unangetastet bleibt, ist diese Art pazifistischer Annäherung ein harmloses Gesellschaftsspiel. ... Und das ist keine pessimistische Theorie - dafür gibt es einen unwiderlegbaren Beweis. Deutsche Intellektuelle in Paris, französische in Berlin... Genau so weit waren wir im Jahre 1912 auch" (IV, 344-345).

There is of course a great and tragic paradox inherent in this view: Tucholsky says writers have no power whatsoever to bring about any kind of political change, but, being one of their number, he tries to do it anyway. He writes and he lectures. Yet by discounting the power of writing and speaking, Tucholsky invalidates his own efforts. In this light, everything he has ever written and said is nothing more than fodder for the wastepaper basket. It is little wonder that such an attitude would soon lead to severe depression and suicidal thoughts.

The observation which closes the preceding quote ("We had come just as far in 1912") is meant to convey Tucholsky's conviction that the 1920s (like the 1900s and early 1910s) were not a post-war era, but merely an inter-war era.

Unfortunately, he was right. He repeated the prediction elsewhere. For example, Tucholsky wrote several articles for the August 7, 1924 issue of the *Weltbühne*, commemorating the tenth anniversary of the outbreak of World War I. He believed that the reasons which had led to the war (for him essentially capitalism and ignorance) were still in place and that nobody had learned anything from the past. One of the texts printed that day was called "Vision." In it Tucholsky relates a short conversation he had with a Paris bus driver. He muses on how they would have been forced to shoot at each other during the war, and how today it all seems like a bad memory. But, says Tucholsky, there is the frightening possibility that it might start again soon, and that

(24)

"sich morgen alle: Omnibusschaffner, Métrokontrolleur, Universitätslehrer und Milchhändler, in eine tobende, heulende Masse verwandeln, die nur den einen Wunsch hat, aus den Berufsgenossen der anderen Seite einen stinkenden Brei zu machen, der in den Sandtrichtern verfault... Morgen wieder? Morgen wieder-?" (III, 438-439).

What is formulated as a careful and apprehensive question in 1924, becomes a matter-of-fact statement of almost prophetic dimension only six months later. In February 1925, commenting on the lack of progress toward a conciliation between the nations of Europe, and especially between France and Germany, Tucholsky warns: "Wir stehen da,

wo wir im Jahre 1900 gestanden haben. Zwischen zwei Kriegen"
[We are where we were in the year 1900. Between two wars]
(IV, 41). The statement was as bleak as it was accurate.

Because Tucholsky abhorred nationalists passionately it is all the more surprising that he so gravely misjudged the nature of French nationalism, and in particular that version of it which prepared the soil on which French fascism would later thrive: the *Action Française*.

Tucholsky consistently underestimated and idealized the *Action Française*. In early 1926, for example, he called its younger followers, those who would soon provide the core of French fascism, "ehrlich Suchende" [honest searchers] (RW 299). He emphasized what he believed to be the organization's serious and substantial intellectual foundation, which, he said, was the reason why the *Action Française* compared so favorably to the Nazis (DT 489-496). Also in 1926, Tucholsky witnessed an *Action Française* campaign stop at his vacation place in Brittany. While he did comment disapprovingly on the unsavoriness of the characters he observed sitting in the audience, he was convinced that the group and its old leaders were far too inept to ever pose a real threat to France: "so tief kann der Franken gar nicht fallen, daß diese kleinbürgerlichen

Spektakelmacher wirklich zur Macht kommen könnten" [the franc cannot possibly fall so low that these petty bourgeois spectacle-makers could actually come to power] (IV, 517).

In an article entitled "Herr Maurras vor Gericht" [Mr. Maurras in court], printed in September 1925, we find one of the few outright condemning remarks Tucholsky would ever make about the organization: "in der *Action Française* wird statt mit dem Federhalter oft mit der Klosettbürste geschrieben" [the *Action Française* is often written with a toilet brush rather than with a pen], he said, referring to the group's newspaper (IV, 218). In the same text, he also warned that the *Action Française*'s view of their enemy was "strangely primitive," and dangerously outdated because the Germany they were fighting (the country of the *Kaiser*) no longer existed. The leaders of the *Action Française* were not familiar with their real enemy:

(25)

"sie kennen den neudeutschen, gefühllosen, skrupellosen Typus überhaupt nicht. Der ist kalt - das verstehen sie nicht. Der ... hat sein Gewissen in der Garderobe abgegeben.... Von der wahren Gefahr, die Frankreich von Deutschland droht, ist in der *Action Française* nichts zu lesen" (IV, 217).

The "true danger" was of course Hitlerism. While its threat, even at this early point, was already quite manifest, Tucholsky once again overlooked the attendant threat posed by French nationalists and anti-semites. He seemed to be under

the impression that they were somehow less menacing, less injurious to humanity, and, indeed, with the proper guidance, capable of combatting Hitlerism, which is why he so helpfully pointed them in the right direction in order to locate their "true" enemy.

What Tucholsky failed to see was that they had no desire to find that enemy. He failed to see that he - and other decent people like himself - had become the enemy, not because he was German, but because he was not a fascist. He failed to see the fundamental change in the nature of French nationalism: the germanophobe Maurras of earlier years would soon give way to the younger, germanophile (or rather naziphile) generation of a Drieu and a Brasillach, who were not exactly interested in helping to contain the spread of German fascism. Tucholsky may have been blinded by the *Action Française's* pseudo-intellectual rhetoric and by the very fact that they were French. It must have seemed hard for him to believe, at least for the longest time, that anything French could be harmful and negative. His own wishful thinking, his obstinate hope of finding a "paradise" in France may have gotten the better of him and clouded his judgment. It was not until much later, until it was much too late, that Tucholsky would realize that French nationalists were in fact just as threatening as all others.

The final and in many ways deciding question raised by Tucholsky's dispatches from and about France is: has the paradise which he thought to have entered in 1924 been lost? Has disillusionment taken over completely? The word "disillusionment" implies that there was an "illusion" to begin with. That illusion was Tucholsky's belief that it would be possible to actually *find* paradise. It is of course not possible - not even in the metaphorical sense in which he understood it. It is impossible because "paradise" connotes an ideal of perfection, hence not a reality. Yet it is crucial to distinguish between reality and perception. Initially, the two were identical in Tucholsky's mind. Or rather, Tucholsky overlooked unpleasant aspects of reality and (knowingly or not) substituted pleasing perceptions for them. Tucholsky thought he had found paradise, when he really had not. Since he never found it in the first place, he cannot have lost it. He only lost his *perception of reality as paradise*. He lost, precisely, an *illusion*.

The disillusionment would be nearly universal, were it not for his enduring allegiance to Paris. For what Tucholsky did find, and not just in his mind, but quite physically, was a second home, in many respects a better one than the one he had left behind. Under the circumstances, this was the best

he could have hoped for. He would never lose that home, not even after he had left it, not even after he had become fully cognizant of its shortcomings. Just how strong his feelings for Paris were, and remained, is evidenced in the last chapter of the Pyrenäenbuch, entitled "Dank an Frankreich" [Thank you to France]. In it Tucholsky describes his return to Paris after a two month absence and the sentiment of gratitude that washes over him. The text, published in 1927, is essentially Tucholsky's final word on Paris:

(26)

"Dank, daß ich in dir leben darf, Frankreich. Du bist nicht meine Heimat.... Ich habe deine Kinderverse nicht auswendig im Kopf, ich muß mir erst vieles übertragen; nicht bei dir habe ich Männerchen auf die Zäune gemalt und eine lange ungehörige Zeichnung auf das Häuschen an der Ecke. Nicht bei dir bin ich verliebt durch die Straßen gelaufen, mit einem kleinen Brief in der Brusttasche und einem großen Schauder über dem Rücken. ... Und doch bin ich bei dir zu Hause. Du warst gastlich vom ersten Tage an. Du hast niemals den Fremden verspottet, wenn er Vokabeln, Bräuche, Stadtviertel verwechselte. ... Du hast gegeben und gegeben, geliehen und verschenkt.... [Ich] war so arm. Ich bin so reich. Und nun gibt es keine Vorbehalte mehr, keine Kritik und keine Betrachtungsweisen: da stehe ich auf der Brücke und bin wieder mitten in Paris.... Da fließt das Wasser, da liegst du, und ich werfe mein Herz in den Fluß und tauche in dich ein und liebe dich" (V, 133-135).

Chapter 3

Robert Brasillach and Vercors

Part 1:

Repulsion, Attraction, Retraction

I

During the Occupation Robert Brasillach and Vercors, like all of their countrymen, were forced to confront and come to terms with the ideology the invaders carried in tow. Their divergent literary representations of the Nazi state, appearing publicly in Brasillach's case, clandestinely in Vercors's, both found large audiences in France. Their political responses to the Occupation were characteristic of the two categories into which French reaction in general fell: collaboration and resistance. While both Vercors and Brasillach at one point or another advocated some kind of cooperation between France and Germany, their ideas about how, why, and, crucially, when to obtain it differed fundamentally. Vercors understood that in order to achieve a

politically and morally acceptable cooperation at some future point, collaboration had to be fought. Brasillach and Vercors, as well as countless other French writers of the period - such as Drieu la Rochelle, Rebatet, or Montherlant on one side; Camus, Duras, Triolet, or Eluard on the other - were soldiers in the "war of words and images" (Attack 3). For both parties winning this war, winning the battle for public opinion, was a crucial step on the way to winning the military battle. Brasillach and Vercors held relatively exposed positions within each of these groups. Brasillach's trial and execution in February 1945, the first of its kind to attract wide attention in the country, was designed in part to serve as vicarious punishment for other fascists. Vercors, as co-founder of the *Editions de Minuit*, was instrumental in providing an organized and highly effective voice to the Resistance. As the anonymous author of Le silence de la mer he helped crystallize France's will to resist.

After decades of silence, not only about Brasillach, but also about the reasons for and the history of French fascism overall, there has been a resurgent interest in both. Judging by the large number of books and articles that have

been written about him during the last few years³⁶, it appears that Brasillach has become "fashionable." Yet even half a century after the fact, "fascist writers are still 'argued' rather than read" by too many people (Kaplan 43). This is all the more puzzling because there really should not be any need for arguments in this matter: there is nothing to be said in favor of fascism. More specifically, it should not be a matter of arguing whether to condemn or sanction Brasillach's actions and choices - of course they deserve condemnation. Instead, it ought to be a matter of finding out why he did what he did and how he went about it. But it is precisely because the issue is so strongly charged in moral and emotional terms that simply and objectively *reading* a fascist text becomes almost an impossibility:

"The principal obstacle to analyzing 'literary fascism' in a way that is not predominantly accusatory and moralistic is that we today *know* the consequences. ... The moral superiority we feel, however, ... can also be a trap. Because fascist intellectuals and writers weren't all irrational, demented, evil, ... our problem

³⁶ For example, Peter David Tame: La mystique du fascisme dans l'oeuvre de Robert Brasillach (1986); Anne Brassié: Robert Brasillach, ou encore un instant de bonheur (1987); Pierre Sipriot (ed.): Robert Brasillach et la génération perdue (1987). Jacqueline Baldran (ed.): Brasillach, ou la célébration du mépris (1988); Pascal Louvrier: Brasillach: l'illusion fasciste (1989); Pierre Pellissier: Brasillach, le maudit (1989); Luc Rassin: Littérature et fascisme: les romans de Robert Brasillach (1991); David Carroll: "Literary Fascism or the Aestheticizing of Politics: The Case of Robert Brasillach" (1992).

today is to try to understand fascism's ... attraction for so many" (Carroll 693).

Doing so is not merely an exercise of historical interest. After all, the attraction continues, always and everywhere. Although fascism has been defeated once, it has not gone away, and it is unlikely to go away anytime soon. Fascism is "a product of modernity" and it is hence "not something we dominate or transcend today" (Carroll 718). We would do well to remember this as we read Brasillach's texts.

What, then, did fascism mean for Brasillach, and what motivated his decision to collaborate? As we will see at the end of this part of the chapter, the question of *motivation* is a central one. We could opt to let Brasillach himself answer the question:

"Le fascisme n'était pas pour nous ... une doctrine politique, il n'était pas davantage une doctrine économique. Il n'était pas l'imitation de l'étranger, et nos confrontations avec les fascismes étrangers ne faisaient que mieux nous convaincre des originalités nationales, donc de la nôtre. Mais le fascisme, c'est un esprit. C'est un esprit anticonformiste d'abord, antibourgeois, et l'irrespect y avait sa part. C'est un esprit opposé aux préjugés, à ceux de la classe comme à tout autre. C'est l'esprit même de l'amitié, dont nous aurions voulu qu'il s'élevât jusqu'à l'amitié nationale" (NAG 291).

But of course we have to take such a statement with a good amount of scepticism. It can only be of limited usefulness for us, since it lacks the requisite amount of

objectivity. It is, after all, hardly surprising that Brasillach would try to put a positive spin on his activities by clothing them in unoffensive, benign, and even laudable terms. Nonetheless, his marked insistence on the intrinsic Frenchness of his fascism is one point we need to keep in mind.

The reason why we should do so is to be found on the opposite side of the political spectrum, in Jean-Paul Sartre's landmark appraisal of French fascism, "Qu'est-ce qu'un collaborateur?". This essay was written in August 1945, shortly after the Allied victory. It has for a long time determined how the question at hand was perceived. For Sartre the issue was quite simple. He believed that fascism was a foreign object, that it was non-French, and that the French people were therefore not responsible for any of the evil that resulted from fascism's reign in their country. He believed that the collaborators had been compromised and led astray by outside forces:

"Sans liens réels avec la France contemporaine, avec nos grandes traditions politiques, avec un siècle et demi de notre histoire et de notre culture, ils n'étaient protégés par rien contre la force attractive d'une communauté étrangère" (Sartre 48).

Sartre refused to allow any discussion on why fascism, no matter what its provenance, held so much appeal for a considerable number of his compatriots.

To be sure, blaming some unspecified, mysterious foreign influence is too simplistic a way out. It is also a potentially dangerous solution because it lets collaborators off far too easily. Sartre denies the possibility that they might be responsible for their own actions and choices (a curious and paradoxical denial, to say the least, coming from the godfather of existentialism). Instead, Sartre considers collaborators to be weak and helpless, having no mind or willpower of their own. A simple observation of the facts, however, ought to suffice to convince us that while many French collaborators were indeed puppets of Nazi Germany, for the most part they themselves chose to attach the strings. This was certainly true in Brasillach's case.

Several analysts have recently questioned Sartre's method of inquiry, among them Russell Berman³⁷ and David Carroll. Carroll, in particular, has argued that the "foreign object" explanation of French fascism does not work for Brasillach, who was precisely not attracted by foreign ideas or cultures. During his first visit to Germany in 1937, for example, Brasillach found the country to be too strange and exotic for his tastes (RU 73, JHO 103). It was its very foreignness that displeased him. Even before this visit he had approached Germany only hesitantly and

³⁷ In the foreword to Alice Kaplan's Reproductions of Banality (University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

reluctantly. Until well into the 1930s it occupied an ancillary position, at best, in his philosophical universe. He had written little about the country, even after the fascists had taken power there, and, as a member of the *Action Française*, he had more or less accepted Charles Maurras's anti-Germanic stance without giving much thought to it himself (cf. Tame 150). Belgium, Italy, Spain, and Portugal were the countries and cultures with which he was most familiar and whose versions of fascism he had examined for clues as to what French fascism should look like³⁸.

In all these cases, however, it was never a question of copying or imitating these nations or of voluntarily enslaving France to them, as Sartre suggests, but instead of extracting from their various ideologies what he deemed universally valid, and of improving on those aspects and adapting them for French use. Instead of embracing it or succumbing to it, Brasillach thought that "the foreign must in all instances be kept at a distance and under control" (Carroll 703). And at his 1945 trial an unapologetic Brasillach

"defended both the literary and political positions he had taken as those of someone completely loyal to France and working at all times in France's best interests: a true nationalist, a *French fascist*" (Carroll 697, his

³⁸ For example in Léon Degrelle et l'avenir de "Rex" (Plon, 1936) and Histoire de la guerre d'Espagne (Plon, 1939).

italics).

Contrary to the way Sartre would have it, Brasillach was, as we will show later, especially sceptical about the usefulness and the viability of Hitlerism. He believed that France, even a fascist France, needed to assert its independence from Nazi Germany. Or rather, he believed it until the Occupation. And here we must make an important distinction, between Brasillach the fascist and Brasillach the collaborator. While the two attributes are closely related, they are not necessarily identical. As a fascist Brasillach was somewhat of a xenophobe. As a collaborator he supported a foreign nation's attempt to annex and destroy his own. The distinction is primarily one of timing. Brasillach was a fascist well before he was a collaborator. In his essay Sartre uses these two terms interchangeably, a logical inaccuracy that is in part responsible for his slightly confused analysis of the matter.

Sartre's assessment of Brasillach and other fascists is more accurate, however, in pointing out that they were all dissatisfied with liberal democracy in general and with the Third Republic in particular. They regarded it as a decadent society ruled by the ossified and the senile. But they were not the only ones who held this point of view. During the 1930s the Third Republic had a good number of detractors, not

all of them fascists. Desire for some kind of "national revolution" - however ill-defined - was widespread and was catalyzed by the defeat of 1940 (cf. Paxton 143, 145). The reasons for this desire reach back far beyond the twentieth century:

"Industrialization and urbanization had accompanied the long decline from the most powerful and populous state in the world under Louis XIV to the uneasy and doubting status of one major power among many in 1939. It was only natural that many Frenchmen attributed their past greatness to a balanced society and economy, the virtues of craftsmen and peasants, and essentially preindustrial values, and they attributed their decline to departures from these values. ... From this perspective, the defeat of 1940 was a punishment for whoring after modernity" (Paxton 268).

This is the sentiment Brasillach and others like him seized upon: a somewhat inarticulate but all the more forceful desire to avoid confrontation with modernity, a wish to return to supposedly simpler and purer times. Fascism converges with certain aspects of romanticism at this point. We will explore that convergence in section III of this chapter.

In section IV, we will examine two other concepts that bear special relevance to Brasillach's representations of Germany: repulsion and attraction. We will look at a text entitled "Cent heures chez Hitler," which Brasillach originally wrote in 1937. He reused it twice thereafter,

first in 1939, then in 1941. Both times significant changes occurred with respect to the original. We will see how Brasillach eliminated, modified, or otherwise retracted many of the original statements he had made, and how those retractions document Brasillach's evolution from one French fascist among many during the 1930s to a fervent collaborator during the 1940s.

II

Robert Brasillach was born in Perpignan on March 31, 1909. From 1912 to 1914 he lived in Morocco, where his father served as an officer in the French colonial army. After his father's death, Brasillach and his mother returned to France. He received much of his education in Paris, where he attended the *Lycée Louis-le-Grand* (1925-1928) and the *Ecole Normale Supérieure* (1928-1932). While at the *ENS*, Brasillach joined Charles Maurras's *Action Française*. Originally and nominally a royalist group advocating the restoration of the monarchy, the *AF* was the main incubator of fascism in France. Brasillach's association with the group was at least in part prompted by opportunism. He aspired to be a writer, and Maurras provided him with the means to achieve that goal. In April 1930, Brasillach's first article

was published in the *Action Française's* eponymous newspaper. In 1931 Maurras asked him to write for the paper on a full-time basis, and Brasillach, having just failed his *agrégation*, gladly accepted. While at *Action Française*, from 1931 to 1939, Brasillach became one of the most widely read literary critics in France. In addition, he also contributed material to other papers, including *Candide*, *La Revue Universelle*, and *Je Suis Partout*. Brasillach failed the *agrégation* again in June 1932.

In 1932/1933 he completed his military service in Lyon. While in Lyon he met a young Jewish boy and his family who had recently fled from Germany. In several of his later writings, Brasillach would relate at some length the story of how the boy sang to him the *Horst-Wessel-Lied*, a well-known Nazi song that served as one of two German national anthems during the Third Reich. Brasillach claims that this was the first time he had heard the song and, in the process, had been made fully aware of the presence of Nazism in Germany. Whether this anecdote is actually true in all its cruel irony (a Jewish refugee introducing a French fascist to Hitlerism) is of course doubtful. It certainly casts, or at least tries to cast, a very ingenuous and innocent-looking sheen on what we are led to believe were the beginnings of a less than innocent political career.

In 1935 Brasillach and his brother-in-law, Maurice Bardèche, wrote L'histoire du cinéma, one of the first histories of film. The book was quite successful and went through numerous revised and updated editions during subsequent years. Brasillach became editor-in-chief of the right-wing weekly *Je Suis Partout* in June 1937. Whereas his contributions to *Action Française* were mostly of a literary nature (book reviews and criticism), his articles and columns for *Je Suis Partout* generally had a more political focus. He was in part responsible for the paper's vastly increased circulation during the immediate pre-war years. He instituted, for example, a far more aggressive policy, including contests and give-aways, to recruit new subscribers. Subscriptions to *Je Suis Partout*, which had already doubled between 1936 and 1937, increased another 30 percent between 1937 and 1938 (Tucker 161). Along with a larger readership Brasillach also secured a noticeable increase in advertising volume, which was crucial for the paper's economic viability. The car makers Renault and Peugeot, SNCF (the French national railways), Thomson (radios), Singer (sewing machines), Byrrh (liquor), Persil (laundry detergent), and Olympia (typewriters) were some of

the regular advertisers between 1937 and 1939³⁹. The fact that the paper was supported financially by these and other companies suggests that Brasillach understood how to make its right-wing message digestible to the mainstream, and that it had thus managed to gain some measure of respectability beyond the radical fringe.

Almost every issue of *Je Suis Partout* contained articles about the Nazi state, most of them written by the paper's regular reporter in Germany, Claude Jeantet. And while virtually all of these articles portrayed Nazi Germany in positive or at least in uncritical terms, the paper never actually took an openly pro-German political position during the two years with Brasillach at the helm (cf. Dioudonnat 153). Brasillach himself visited Germany for the first time in September 1937 on the occasion of the annual National Socialist Party Congress in Nuremberg. He was one in a group of about one hundred international guests who had been invited to the event by the German government. While in Nuremberg, Brasillach attended a reception during which he met briefly with the leadership of the Nazi party, including

³⁹ They were on occasion joined by the town of Vichy, which took out ads to promote its tourist attractions and mineral springs. The ironic implications of those ads appearing where they did (in France's leading fascist paper) and when they did (just a few years before Marshal Pétain and his cohorts moved into town) should be obvious.

Hitler, Goebbels, and Himmler.

In early 1939 Brasillach's novel Les sept couleurs was published and later nominated for the *Prix Goncourt*. In September 1939 Brasillach was mobilized and had to give up the editorship of *Je Suis Partout*. In June 1940 he was captured by the Germans and imprisoned, first in Neuf-Brisach, then, from September 1940 to April 1941 in two camps in Germany. An account of his captivity is included in Journal d'un homme occupé, which was published posthumously in 1955.

In the fall of 1941, only half a year after his release from prison, Brasillach voluntarily returned to the country of his captors to attend the European Writers Congress in Weimar. Brasillach resumed his position as editor-in-chief of *Je Suis Partout* for another two years, until August 1943. By now the paper was under direct German control, and Brasillach's ability to make independent editorial decisions (if he had wanted to make any) had been greatly curtailed. In August 1944, with Allied troops advancing on Paris, Karl Epting, the head of the city's German Institute, offered Brasillach the chance to flee to Germany, but he refused. He was tried and convicted for treason and collaboration with the enemy and was sentenced to death. He appealed the decision. A request for favorable action on Brasillach's

appeal was signed by fifty-nine French writers, including Camus, Valéry, Cocteau, Claudel, Mauriac, Duhamel, Anouilh, Colette, Aymé, and, not least, Vercors (Tucker 272, ADV 105). Charles de Gaulle turned down the petition. Brasillach was executed in Montrouge on February 6, 1945.

III

Brasillach's 1941 memoir Notre avant-guerre contains a chapter in which he discusses the various national manifestations of European fascism. The chapter is called "Ce mal du siècle, le fascisme." In using this title Brasillach draws attention to the parallels between fascism and romanticism, the original "mal du siècle." While both were pan-European phenomena, they found their apex in Germany. Both emanated from and thrived in the same area of the country: the south, in particular Bavaria, the province which was home to two key cities of Nazi mythology (Nuremberg and Munich) as well as to Hitler's summer retreat in the Alps. In addition, romantics and fascists both cultivated a certain anti-modernism. They shared a discontent with contemporary politics and disliked the multifariousness and fragmentation evident at all levels of modern society and culture. They had in common a "will to unity" (Carroll 698),

a desire to recapture an alleged paradisaical wholeness, a longing to return to rusticity⁴⁰. In Le romantisme fasciste Paul Sérant reminds us that while it was possible to be a romantic without being a fascist, it was hard to be a fascist without being a romantic to some degree (10).

Perhaps not surprisingly, then, Brasillach's initial observations about Germany often followed romantic literary convention, despite his occasional claims to the contrary. Although he maintained that "[on] ne veut pas faire de romantisme" (RU 71), he proceeded to do the opposite. For example, he insisted on calling the country "médiévale et féodale" (RU 55), and, in describing his arrival in Nuremberg in 1937, he reused many of the same *topoi* other French writers had used before him:

"Ces petites villes, ces villages bavarois que traversent le train et l'automobile, ils sont posés, au milieu de paysages charmants et verts, comme des objets enfantins et comme des décors. Les toits pointus ou ronds, le croisillon brun des poutres visibles, les fleurs à toutes les fenêtres, c'est l'Allemagne chère aux romantiques et à Jean Giraudoux qui nous accueille la première" (RU 55).

⁴⁰ While those were Brasillach's sentiments as well, they do not fully define his stance on this issue. Modernism and anti-modernism went hand in hand in his universe. His interest in film and radio, for example, can hardly be called anti-modernist. As Alice Kaplan has pointed out in Reproductions of Banality, thinking solely in terms of modernism and anti-modernism may not be very meaningful nor particularly helpful for an understanding of Brasillach's work.

The self-conscious allusion to Giraudoux, along with similar ones to Madame de Staël and Nerval elsewhere (RU 56, JSP 1, 1), indicate that Brasillach was well aware that he was treading much-traveled ground with depictions such as these. There is hardly anything that is new, original, or remarkable here. In fact, the passage we have just quoted seems to be a sort of all-purpose description, because four years later, as he visited another town, Brasillach would repeat it essentially unchanged:

"A Weimar, c'est tout d'abord l'ancienne Allemagne qui nous accueille. Ces maisons à pignons renflés, ces croisillons de bois, ces places pavées, ce charme merveilleux, nous en retrouvons à chaque pas l'esprit" (JSP 1, 1).

Brasillach would continue to employ romantic *topoi*, even when he wrote about the months he spent in German prison camps. Contrary to what one might expect, he described this period in glowingly positive terms. He referred to the weeks at Neuf-Brisach, the first camp, as "notre captivité romantique" (JHO 107, 109). While being transported from Neuf-Brisach to the second camp, Warburg, Brasillach said that "nous riions, nous plaisantions sur le beau voyage" (JHO 109). And upon being shipped up the Rhine, on his way to the third camp, Brasillach commented that he would have missed out on many things if he had not been captured:

"Les plus illustres cathédrales, les burgs noirs et déchiquetés au-dessus des coteaux, le rocher de la

Lorelei, je n'aurais peut-être jamais vu cela" (JHO 110).

Looking back on his time as a prisoner in Germany, he is grateful for "le souvenir nostalgique de ces heures que j'ai passées là-bas" (JHO 138). Brasillach seems to regard his imprisonment not as a time of deprivation but of exhilaration. The joy of experiencing nature and moving about in it seems to eclipse the obvious reality of the situation. The reader gets the impression that this is not so much a prison camp as it is summer camp.

In fact, the picture that emerges from all of these quotes has little to do with the German reality of the 1930s and 1940s. It is instead the picture of an unreal dream world. It appears that just like the romantics of the nineteenth century, Brasillach is trying to flee from contemporary society and to escape chronology. The romantics' preferred means for doing so were displacements in time and space, which accounts for their (often superficial) interest in such things as medieval history, folklore, and foreign cultures. The difference, and it is a seminal one, is that the romantics seldom understood that their attempts at escape were by definition futile and doomed to failure. Brasillach, ready though he was to embrace the *idée reçue* of "romantic Germany," did understand it. Contemporary German

reality does eventually enter into his representations, albeit through the back door, as for example when he comments on

"le ciel humide de Bavière, ...les petites villes romantiques, avec leur fossés, leurs tourelles, leurs sculptures gothiques et leurs drapeaux rouges à croix gammée" (SC 107).

Here, the symbols of the Nazi state (the flags) are integrated into the surrounding landscape as though they were a natural part of it. A similar, but rather more ghastly moment of integration occurs when Brasillach describes his visit to the Weimar cemetery where Goethe and Schiller are buried:

"Voici encore une fois l'Allemagne de Nerval, avec ses mythes et ses magies. C'est là que nous voyons s'avancer, dans ses uniformes rouillés et rouges, pareils aux couleurs qui les entourent, M. Goebbels et ceux qui l'accompagnent. Ils vont déposer leurs couronnes sur les cercueils jumeaux des poètes, au fond de la crypte princière, mariant ainsi l'Allemagne d'hier à celle d'aujourd'hui" (JSP 1, 1).

In both of these scenes, and similar ones elsewhere (RU 56, SC 112, NAG 274), the unreal fantasy land of a Nerval or a Madame de Staël blends seamlessly into the very real land of Hitler and Goebbels. By combining romantic imagery and fascist symbolism in this manner, Brasillach may well be pursuing an ideological purpose. He first evokes the image of Germany most familiar to French audiences and then

positions it as the conceptual and semantic equal of Hitler's Germany. For the French reader, the former image is charged in positive terms. Brasillach hopes that this positive charge will transfer to the presumably still neutral latter image.

The exploration of exoticism was one of romanticism's main preoccupations, especially of early nineteenth-century French romanticism (one need only think, for example, of the American virgin forests in Chateaubriand's René and Atala; many portions of De l'Allemagne also fall into this category). The willingness to seek and find the exotic represented one means of escape for the romantics. It was the spatial equivalent to the temporal displacements sought on other occasions. Brasillach stands in a long tradition of French writers who came to Germany and were all too eager and prepared to see the supposed strangeness, the alleged otherness of the country. Evidence of this willingness abounds. For example, Brasillach refers to the country as "ce pays surprenant, plus loin de nous peut-être que le plus lointain Orient" (RU 60). He says that "l'Allemagne ... [est] ... un grand pays étrange, plus loin de nous que l'Inde et que la Chine" (RU 73), and that "on est accablé par les impressions du dépaysement et de l'exotisme" and "cette étonnante impression orientale" (RU 73). He carries this

theme through to the final paragraph of "Cent heures chez Hitler" where it provides him with his last word, so far, on what he has seen:

"Quand on essaie de se remémorer ces journées si pleines, qu'on évoque les cérémonies nocturnes éclairées de biais par la lueur des torches et des projecteurs, les enfants allemands jouant comme des loups autour de leurs souvenirs de guerre civile et de sacrifice, le chef soulevant en larges houles, avec des cris plaintifs, cette foule subjuguée, on se dit qu'en effet, ce pays ... est d'abord, au sens plein du mot, et prodigieusement, et profondément, et éternellement, un pays étrange" (RU 74, Brasillach's italics).

Several years later, in the early 1940s, he takes up the same theme but now appends a call for eliminating the mystery:

"Nous regardons toujours l'Allemagne - au moins la plupart d'entre nous - comme un étrange pays mystérieux, plus lointain que la Chine, plus inconnu et que, bon gré, mal gré, il faudra bien apprendre, justement, à connaître" (JHO 103).

This aspiration is what sets Brasillach's modern version of romanticism apart from, say, Chateaubriand's. Whereas Chateaubriand had no intention of exploding exoticism and of clarifying the alleged mystery he found in America and elsewhere (it is of little consequence here that there really is no mystery, just a Francocentric point of view), Brasillach, or to be more precise: the post-Occupation, collaborationist Brasillach, demanded that the mystery be

exploded and more knowledge be gained about it.

In "Cent heures" Brasillach allocates much space to a discussion of the role imagery plays as part of Nazi political strategy. For Brasillach successful politics and appealing imagery are inseparable. He believed that "[il] n'est pas de politique qui ne comporte sa part d'images, il n'y a pas de politique qui ne soit visible" (NAG 253)⁴¹. He considered fascism to be the politics of the visible and concrete, and democracy the politics of the invisible and abstract, and he was convinced that one of democracy's greatest mistakes was to have

"privé la nation d'images, d'images à aimer, d'images à respecter, d'images à adorer, - que la Révolution du vingtième siècle lui a rendues. ... [L]a séduction que ces Révolutions ont opérée sur les masses, et particulièrement sur la jeunesse, vient de ce qu'elles ont su créer une poésie" (JSP 2, 8).

Brasillach looks upon politics, or rather the public representation of politics, as a form of art. Those responsible for political representation are therefore, he claims, artists, and their visual and musical creations should be judged on their own merits, independently of the politics they represent:

⁴¹ Which is actually a very modern view, as any political campaign in the television age will demonstrate. Again, the usefulness of the modern/anti-modern dichotomy is questionable in this case. We refer once more to Alice Kaplan's book for an in-depth discussion of this topic.

"Les fêtes de Nuremberg, les cathédrales de lumière, les défilés géants à la lueur des torches, les fleuves rouges et bruns sous les projecteurs, la musique et les chants, ont composé des spectacles inoubliables à ceux qui les ont contemplés, et qui sont la plus haute création artistique de notre temps, indépendamment même de toutes opinions" (JSP 2, 8).

"Et poète aussi, poète allemand, cet Hitler qui invente des nuits de Walpurgis et des fêtes de mai, qui mêle dans ses chansons de marche le romantisme cyclopéen et le romantisme du myosotis, la forêt, le Venusberg, les jeunes filles aux myrtilles fiancées à des lieutenants des sections d'assaut, les camarades tombés à Munich devant la Felderenhalle! [sic]" (JSP 3, 1).

Brasillach pronounced himself overwhelmed by the "beauté monumentale" of this "théâtre des masses," as he called it:

"Je ne crois pas avoir vu de ma vie spectacle plus prodigieux" (RU 60). He realized of course what this spectacle was intended to accomplish. Hitler's strategy of relying on visual distractions in order to sell his politics, of ceding center stage to emotional images that should at best be peripheral, altered the way his political message was received. What this "aestheticizing of politics" (Carroll 691) did was to take away or at least to obscure the immediate reality of the ideology driving the visual information; it was to transform evil into entertainment. Brasillach was not opposed to this strategy. After all, he had called upon French fascists to use it in their own country as well. But there is a major paradox here that

Brasillach never really acknowledges: he says that one should appreciate these so-called artistic creations without judging their political merits, yet he himself is never quite able to do so. Brasillach only permits himself to be taken in by the alluring images to a certain degree. As we will see next, he also harbors much scepticism about them.

IV

Brasillach has been called a "manic recycler of prose" (Kaplan 45). In his books he would often reuse excerpts from articles he had written for *Je Suis Partout* or other newspapers, and vice versa. As Alice Kaplan has pointed out, the changes in detail which accompany each recycled version of an original text "are rich in ... ideological content" (45). One pivotal text which exemplifies this process very well, and to which we have already referred a number of times, is Brasillach's account of the 1937 Nazi Party Congress. Its original version was printed in the *Revue Universelle* on October 1, 1937, just a few days after Brasillach's return from Nuremberg. The twenty-page article was entitled "Cent heures chez Hitler" (RU 55-74). Two years later, in 1939, a revised version was incorporated into the chapter "Journal" of the novel Les sept couleurs (SC 112-

126)⁴². A third version appeared in 1941 in Notre avant-guerre, where it was part of the chapter "Ce mal du siècle, le fascisme" (NAG 273-286). This last version was published during the Occupation and with the approval of the Nazi censors.

We have seen how Brasillach made heavy use of romantic imagery and supported Hitler's strategy of "aestheticizing" politics. However, in the original version of "Cent heures" Brasillach was more ambivalent about these images than our (deliberately selective) quotes may have suggested so far. While he was enthralled and fascinated by the spectacle presented to him, most notably the parades and light shows, he did see the substance behind the façade, and he often did not like what he saw. He was well aware that images do have meanings and that

"tout cela n'est point vide, mais signifie. ... C'est parce que ces cérémonies et ces chants signifient quelque chose que nous devons y faire attention - et sans doute *nous tenir sur nos gardes*" (RU 61, my italics).

In fact, large portions of the original version of his article detailed his reservations about what he had seen. However most of these moments of doubt were eliminated in the

⁴² The fact that Brasillach used the text as both fiction and non-fiction has little consequence for the purposes of our argument since the central passages of the article remained unaffected by the fictionalization.

two later versions of the text, with the most drastic and significant cuts occurring in the 1941 version. The cuts affected three main areas: firstly, Brasillach's general uneasiness with the new Germany; secondly, his comments about Hitler; and thirdly, his discussion of the Röhm murders.

The italicized warning at the end of the above quote was one of the remarks Brasillach deleted from the 1941 version. There are many similar instances. For example, in 1937 Brasillach had commented on the abundance of flowers everywhere he went:

"Ce peuple aime les fleurs, on le sait du reste, et dans les garages, les ouvriers garnissent dévotement, chaque matin, le porte-bouquet des voitures. C'est même toujours cela qui a attiré les croyants du temps passé, les amoureux de la 'bonne' Allemagne, la grosse Madame de Staël. *Les fleurs n'empêchent point d'autres réalités plus menaçantes*" (RU 56, my italics).

Again, that last phrase is missing in the 1941 version of the text. The same is also true for the following examples: in 1937, Brasillach warned his readers that "l'apparence n'est pas tout, et ... il faut aller au delà" (RU 61); he called the prospect of a potentially ever more powerful Third Reich "inquiétant" (RU 64); he wrote that "[les] Français ont le coeur un peu serré" as they consider the "effrayants progrès des nazis" (RU 59); he said that "[parfois], dans ce pays étrange et irritant, on se sent prêt à l'exaspération" (RU 65), that he remained "plein de doute

et inquiétude" (RU 74), that Hitlerism was not part of European civilisation (RU 73), and that it may soon be merely "une gigantesque curiosité historique" (RU 74), and he asked: "Tout cela n'est-il pas trop?" (RU 74). All of these questions and doubts, and more, have been deleted from the 1941 version, and a few from the intermediate 1939 version as well.

Besides simply cutting out unwelcome words and phrases, the Notre avant-guerre text also censors the original by replacing some words with others that are less ideologically charged. For example, whereas in 1937 Brasillach pronounced himself "agacé, choqué" (RU 60) and "accablé" (RU 73), and his traveling companions "effrayés" (RU 72) by what they saw, in 1941 much weaker adjectives are used instead: "surpris" replaces the first three (NAG 278, 285) and "inquiets" replaces the fourth (NAG 285).

In 1937 Brasillach was convinced that the French could organize such a Congress "aussi bien et mieux" (RU 73) than the Germans, whereas in 1941 he thought they would only be able to do it "au moins aussi bien" (NAG 286).

In 1937 he discounted any potential universal appeal of Hitlerism, an ideology that he said could only thrive in Germany: "le germanisme ... est d'abord un particularisme, qui n'est pas une civilisation universelle" (RU 62, my

italics). In 1941 the corresponding passage reads: "le germanisme ... est d'abord un particularisme, qui ne veut pas *s'imposer* comme une règle universelle" (NAG 279, my italics). The slightly different choice of words is no doubt designed to mollify both Brasillach's French audience as well as the censors. Whereas the first version categorically negates Nazism's claim to universality, the latter version implicitly admits that claim, but promises that it will not be enforced.

At the end of the 1937 version, Brasillach wondered: "de tout cela, qu'est-ce qui est promis à la durée?" (RU 72). In Notre avant-guerre the question has been stripped of its doubting tone and its focus has been redirected: "de tout cela, qu'est-ce qui peut nous être commun un jour?" (NAG 284).

And finally, in the original text we find the sentence: "Tout cela, certes, n'est pas pour nous" (RU 73). It refers once again to Brasillach's conviction that Hitlerism with all its romantic and operatic excesses, is a uniquely Germanic phenomenon and cannot and should not be imported to France. In Notre avant-guerre, with Hitlerism having arrived on French territory, Brasillach writes that "[dans] beaucoup des aspects de cette politique nouvelle, ... tout, certes, n'est pas pour nous" (NAG 285). While the first version is completely exclusionary (none of this is for us), the second,

by omitting the word "cela" and repositioning the remainder of the sentence, admits the possibility of usefulness: not all of this is for us, but some of it may be.

Aside from the numerous deletions and modifications, the 1941 version also contains a few judiciously placed additions. Whereas in 1937 Brasillach had simply referred to "spectacles" and "jeunesse" (RU 74), in 1941 he writes of "beaux spectacles" and "belle jeunesse" (NAG 286). He also finds occasion to mention that life in Nazi Germany is "plus facile qu'on ne dit," and, somewhat banally, points out that the country is "si voisin de nous" (NAG 286). Both remarks do not appear in the original text.

Brasillach's comments about Hitler, whom he met briefly at the Congress, are a second major area in which significant deletions occurred. Brasillach was one of the few people who had read the French translation of Mein Kampf when it appeared in 1934. In a letter he wrote in 1935 he spelled out his opinion about the book. He called its author "le petit Hitler" (cit. Brassié 98) and had this to say about what he had read:

"J'ai rarement vu conneries plus plates et plus désolantes. C'est un grand monument de sottises, profondément ennuyeuses et, surtout, effroyablement primaires. ... [J'ai] rarement vu quelque chose d'aussi bête, d'aussi loin de toute raison. Ce qui ne veut pas dire, hélas! que ce soit pur instinct. Oh non, c'est bardé de mots prétentieux, de fausse science. Je comprends que ça ait ébloui tant d'Allemands. ... C'est très réellement le chef-d'oeuvre du crétinisme excité.

... Cette lecture m'a affligé" (cit. Brassié 98).

In keeping with the tenor Brasillach used in this letter, Hitler is described in the 1937 version of the article as "petit," "triste," "vieux," "insignifiant," as "ce triste fonctionnaire végétarien, sans rayonnement," "un camelot," "un marchand de cravates," and "un petit homme" (RU 70-71), and the sound of Hitler's voice echoing from the loudspeakers is called "un ricanement de canard" (RU 70). Not surprisingly, none of these remarks survived in the 1941 version. They were all either eliminated entirely or strongly modified. Also, Brasillach initially reported that in his speeches Hitler promised his listeners "les privations, la pauvreté" (RU 70). In 1941, the promise of poverty is gone, and the promise of deprivations has been equipped with a purpose: "il leur promet les privations pour conduire à la puissance" (NAG 282).

In "Cent heures" Brasillach discusses in some detail the murder of Ernst Röhm⁴³. This is the third area in which there are considerable changes between the first and the last

⁴³ Röhm (1887-1934), a supporter of Hitler's since the early 1920s, was the head of the SA. Shortly after Hitler's rise to power, Röhm attempted to secure a larger role for the SA within the Nazi hierarchy. This led to a conflict with Hitler and the leadership of the *Reichswehr* (the armed forces). Under the pretext that Röhm was planning to stage a putsch, Hitler had him and several others assassinated in June 1934.

version. To begin with, Röhm's name itself, which is mentioned several times in the original text, has been deleted completely, thus removing the most immediate and most visible reminder of this episode. Brasillach's characterizations of Hitler as "l'ami de Röhm" and of Röhm as one of Hitler's "plus vieux compagnons, et des plus chers" (RU 71) were also eliminated, as was a more oblique reference to June 30, the date of the assassination (RU 64). In 1937 Brasillach correctly described the act in question with the word "tuer" (RU 71). In 1941 the word has been replaced by the expression "supprimer par devoir" (NAG 284) - a formula that reflects the terminology Hitler himself later used for the murders⁴⁴.

Because Notre avant-guerre was published in occupied France, we have to wonder how many of its deletions were due to the Nazi censors, and how many were effected by Brasillach himself. In the months immediately following his trip to Germany, Brasillach had begun to advocate the adoption of some of the National Socialists' policies in France. Three examples, all dating from the year 1938, will give some indication of this: firstly, in a two-part series for *Je Suis*

⁴⁴ Three days after the killings, Hitler had his rubber-stamp parliament pass a law declaring them to be "in self-defense" and hence legal.

Partout in February and March, Brasillach favored creating a series of "nationalist vacation camps" in France to be fashioned essentially after Germany's Hitler Youth⁴⁵. Secondly, in July, Brasillach instituted a new weekly theme page in *Je Suis Partout*, which ran throughout the summer of 1938, entitled "La force dans la joie." It reported on outdoor activities and physical fitness and was an obvious attempt to promulgate and imitate the Nazis' *Kraft durch Freude* [Strength Through Joy] program, one week even featuring an interview with the head of that program. And thirdly, in October, Brasillach proposed the establishment of a public labor service to eliminate unemployment, a proposal that was also based on a German model, the *Reichsarbeitsdienst* [Reich Labor Service]⁴⁶.

Based on Brasillach's evolution toward increased acceptance of Nazi policies in France, and based on the fact that he had already made some cuts and modifications in the intermediate 1939 version which appeared before the Occupation, we can assume that much of the purged 1941 version was in fact due to Brasillach's own desire to retract

⁴⁵ "Pour un camp de vacances nationaliste" and "Verrons-nous un camp de vacances nationaliste?" *Je Suis Partout*. February 25, 1938 (3) and March 18, 1938 (3).

⁴⁶ "Il faut établir un Service du Travail." *Je Suis Partout*. October 21, 1938. (1).

what he had said just four years earlier. Presumably, the censors had not much work to do before they could approve the publication of Notre avant-guerre.

The case of Robert Brasillach is undeniably more complex than it might appear if we relied solely on a reading such as the one proposed by Sartre. Brasillach's reaction to Hitlerism was anything but unambiguous. It was an amalgam of fascination, mistrust, enthusiasm, bewilderment, and doubt. It was a continuous oscillation between attraction and repulsion, with the latter feeling winning out initially. Brasillach was neither a fervent supporter of Nazism from the outset, nor was he coaxed into collaboration by that mysterious foreign "force" Sartre sees lurking behind every corner. He made a conscious choice to keep his relative distance from Nazism until 1940, and he made a conscious choice to embrace Nazism after 1940.

Ideological affinity was no doubt the main reason for this embrace. Yet it is probably not an unlikely scenario to attribute it also in part to opportunism. We know that Brasillach was constantly attempting to gain the attention and favor of those in positions of power who could help advance his own interests. His association with Maurras in 1930 was one such example. In 1940 Brasillach assumed that

the French cause had been lost, and he sought to assure himself of opportunities with the new rulers. The fact that they happened to be German was merely a coincidence. On February 19, 1944, a text written by Brasillach and entitled "Lettre à quelques jeunes gens" appeared in the journal *Révolution Nationale*. It contained the following passage:

"[Je] n'étais pas 'germanophile' avant la guerre, ni même au début de la politique de 'collaboration'. Je cherchais simplement l'intérêt de la raison. Maintenant, les choses ont changé. J'ai contracté, me semble-t-il, une liaison avec le génie allemand, je ne l'oublierai jamais. Qu'on le veuille ou non, nous aurons cohabité ensemble. Les Français de quelque réflexion, durant ces années, auront plus ou moins couchés avec l'Allemagne, non sans querelles, et le souvenir leur en restera doux" (cit. Louvrier 246).

The first sentence of this passage is certainly true. The remainder, written with the prospect of Hitler's defeat looming large (Stalingrad had happened a year before, the Normandy invasion would come three and a half months later), seems to be a rather desperate attempt on the part of the author to ennoble his actions. His claims to the contrary notwithstanding, it is very doubtful indeed whether Brasillach was ever genuinely interested in Germany as a political or cultural entity on its own terms. He was first and always a French nationalist. He was also far too *much* of a French nationalist to be able to call for a good-faith partnership with any foreign nation, least of all with

Germany. We should thus not look to Brasillach's texts hoping to find the sort of idealism evident in Giraudoux's early advocacy for Franco-German cooperation (even though Giraudoux was one of Brasillach's favorite authors).

Brasillach did not discover his new fervor for cooperation until precisely that moment at which it became morally wrong to wish for it, and at which such fervor resulted in personal gain and security for him. This timing renders his motives impure and suspect. Vercors, on the other hand, abandoned his long-held fervor for cooperation at exactly the same moment Brasillach found his, sacrificing personal comfort and security in the process. Brasillach collaborated not *because* he found the foreign culture attractive, as Sartre would have us believe, but *despite* his dislike for it. His collaboration was a triumph of naked ambition, self-interest, private expediency, and opportunism over principle. Brasillach accepted Nazism because it was the most successful form of fascism he had known and because it was the new seat of power. He did not accept it simply because it was German. Vercors rejected Nazism because it was inhumane and evil. He did not reject it simply because it was German.

Part 2:

Le meilleur des ennemis possibles

"...je puis vous dire qu'au moment même où nous allons vous détruire sans pitié, nous sommes cependant sans haine contre vous. Et si même demain, comme tant d'autres, il nous fallait mourir, nous serions encore sans haine"

Albert Camus, Lettres à un ami allemand, 79.

V

Whereas Brasillach has become "fashionable" in recent years, Vercors has been largely ignored by contemporary criticism. Although (or perhaps because) Le silence de la mer, Vercors's most important text, "remains near iconic" (Kidd 1) it does not appear to attract much interest anymore. That an author who posited silence as a paradigm of moral assertion, and for whom surreptitiousness was a necessary means of survival, should be surrounded by silence even after his death is ironic. The importance of Vercors's role as part of the Resistance effort can hardly be overestimated. Together with Pierre de Lescure he founded the clandestine *Editions de Minuit*, which provided Resistance writers with the first outlet that was able to reach the kind of mass

audience necessary for their texts to fulfill their intended purpose. Besides his own short stories, Vercors published works by authors such as Louis Aragon and Paul Eluard. From early 1942 until the Liberation of Paris in August 1944, *Minuit* published approximately two dozen texts. Although only about one thousand copies of each *Minuit* book were usually printed, many of these were in turn copied privately and reached England and the United States. They consequently enjoyed a much wider readership than their small printing run suggests. Also, Charles de Gaulle would occasionally mention *Minuit* texts in his speeches broadcast to France, thus helping to spread word of their existence even further (Atack 5). Yet none of these texts ever managed to equal the enormous impact Le silence de la mer had when it was published as the first volume of *Minuit* in 1942. In 1943 the British Royal Air Force dropped hundreds of thousands of miniaturized copies of the book over French territory (Tolansky 230). It was serialized in *La Marseillaise* and translated into English in 1944. By 1948 it had been translated into sixteen additional languages and sold over one million copies (Severo D24).

Because of Vercors's seemingly sympathetic portrayal of the German officer, some members of the Resistance were skeptical about the book's provenance. They suggested that

it could have emanated from the Nazi propaganda machine (cf. Kidd 2)⁴⁷. What was no doubt bewildering to many of Vercors's contemporaries was the story's marked lack of emphasis on active resistance and its reliance on passivism, as well as the absence of express moral condemnation of the Nazi officer. In fact, Vercors had gone to great lengths not to produce merely a piece of facile anti-German propaganda, the way others had done before him. As he explained in 1967:

"Ce que je désirais, n'était-ce pas que mon livre, s'il était lu encore dix ans après la fin du conflit, n'encourût pas alors le mépris qui engloutit, après 1918, les élucubrations d'un René Benjamin ou d'un Marcel Hutin mangeant du Boche comme du nougat?" (BS 190).

In the following, we will look at some of the strategies Vercors employs in order to distance himself from negative models such as these and to establish, in their place, a new exemplar of engaged wartime writing.

VI

Jean Bruller was born in Paris on February 26, 1902.

⁴⁷ Knowledge of the author's true identity does not appear to have completely quieted these objections. Ebrennac's behavior has been called "implausible" as recently as 1986 (John 197). This charge is a central one, and we shall discuss it shortly.

After graduating from the *Ecole Alsacienne* in 1919, he attended the Sorbonne. In 1924 he completed his military service in Tunisia. Although he was an electrical engineer by training, Bruller worked mainly as an illustrator and engraver between 1925 and 1939. During those years he published a number of "albums" - books of collected illustrations with some accompanying text. 21 recettes pratiques de mort violente (1926) is one of the better-known titles in this series of works.

In 1938 Bruller travelled through the southern half of Germany on his way to the PEN Congress in Prague. Prior to this journey his view of Germany had largely been determined by the experiences and reports of others. As a child, he had perceived it primarily in terms of its status as the enemy. Since he was only twelve years old when World War I broke out, he naturally consumed the wartime propaganda that was fed to him without questioning it:

"...comme tous les garçons ... je me sentais ultra-patriote, mangeais du Boche à chaque repas, faisais du *Kaiser* et du *Kronprinz* des caricatures sanglantes, pleines de têtes de mort" (ADV 58).

"...j'étais un tout jeune garçon, et je croyais bien entendu tout ce qui se disait. ... Le Boche était l'incarnation du mal, je le haïssais donc d'un coeur tranquille. C'était le Hun qui détruisait les cathédrales et coupait les mains des petits enfants" (BS 19).

In 1918, however, he was confronted with some of the horrors of the war when he saw photos his brother-in-law had brought home with him from the front. Bruller realized that "Allemands et Français avaient été ensemble des martyrs fraternels, les dupes d'une entreprise criminelle et stupide" (ADV 58). It was at this point, he would later say, that he became "un farouche partisan ... du rapprochement franco-allemand, pacifiste à tous crins" (ADV 58). He staked his hopes in the policies of Aristide Briand, and his political stance during the 1920s came to resemble that of a Giraudoux, a Tucholsky, and a Heinrich Mann:

"Tandis qu'après l'armistice les années passaient, de plus en plus s'ancrait dans mon esprit la conviction que cette horrible guerre avait trompé les peuples, que l'on avait jeté les uns contre les autres des gens faits pour s'entendre. Je me mis à aimer les Allemands comme des frères égarés, à qui l'opinion française faisait tort. Je n'avais voulu connaître que leurs vices, j'apprenais leurs vertus. ... Cela me confirmait dans ma conviction qu'une amitié franco-allemande ... rendrait en Europe toute guerre impossible. Pendant plus de dix ans, au cours des années vingt, ces sentiments dominèrent mes idées politiques" (BS 21).

However, Bruller's 1938 journey to Germany showed him why those sentiments were no longer tenable at that point. Like Brasillach, who had been there just nine months before, he traveled to Nuremberg and its environs, and thus had the occasion to observe first-hand the country's political transformation. Interestingly enough (and again not unlike

Brasillach), Bruller, too, remarked at first on the tritely benign and grotesquely exotic aspects of the area, such as

"les quartiers anciens, qui fleuraient bon encore le parfum de la vieille Allemagne" (BS 39).
 "Et puis, sur le quai de la gare de Bayreuth, de plantureuses walkyries offraient aux voyageurs des saucisses tellement gigantesques, que leur consommation prenait un air de caricature. Et la bonhomie germanique effaçait pour un moment les impressions plus redoutables" (BS 31).

That moment, however, did not last very long. In fact, what Bruller carried home with him above all was

"l'impression sinistre de ce Nuremberg nazifié. Si toute la vieille Allemagne hurlait déjà avec ses nouveaux maîtres, quel espoir subsistait-il?" (BS 41).

Not much, as it turned out. Any remaining hopes Bruller may have had for a painless solution to the crisis were dashed a year later when the Germans annexed Czechoslovakia. He was disappointed and disillusioned at France's unwillingness to prevent the carving up of that country in March 1939. Bruller was mobilized in the fall of 1939, serving in Tunisia once again, as well as in France. Walking through the streets of Paris in the summer of 1940, he was struck by how well, how quickly, and how eagerly many Parisians seemed to have adapted to the new rulers and their rules:

"Devant le Sénat, sous le drapeau à croix gammée qui remplaçait les trois couleurs, face aux guérites où veillaient mitrailleuse au poing les sentinelles

casquées, en bottes et en drap vert-de-gris, un kiosque affichait en majorité des journaux et revues allemands, *Signal*, le *Stürmer*, le *Völkischer Beobachter*, et quelques journaux français dont en bonne place un nouveau venu, le *Pilori*, spécialisé dans la chasse aux Juifs. On n'avait pas perdu de temps! Avais-je donc côtoyé sans le savoir, au long de nombreuses années, tant de persécuteurs qui n'attendaient que l'occasion? Sous la douce aisselle de la France grouillait donc tout ce temps une telle vermine?" (BS 108).

Bruller was wounded in 1941 while on duty in the Vercors, a mountainous region near Grenoble that would later become a preferred hideout for many *maquisards*. Spurred in part by what he perceived to be France's rush to prostrate itself before the invaders, he wrote Le silence de la mer in the autumn of 1941, while recuperating from his wounds. Each day he completed about two pages of the story he would later refer to as "un adieu dramatique à tout ce que j'avais souhaité au cours de ma jeunesse: la réconciliation et l'amitié franco-allemandes" (cit. Morita-Clément 174). The story was published in February 1942. *Vercors*, the name on the book's cover, became Bruller's most famous pseudonym and his enduring alter ego even after the war. In addition, he had chosen two other pseudonyms, both of which remained less well-known: *Desvignes*, which was his name as the publisher of *Minuit*, and *Drieu*, which was his name as its printer and binder. The latter name, of course, was a reference to Pierre Drieu la Rochelle who, under German patronage, edited

the *Nouvelle Revue Française* from 1940 to 1943. Bruller chose this pseudonym, as well as Drieu's address (rue Sébastien-Bottin), in order to confuse the Gestapo during any potential investigation of *Minuit* (BS 201). Bruller kept the identity of Vercors, Desvignes, and Drieu a secret as best he could. Not even his wife knew who was behind these names (cf. BS 201ff). François Mauriac, André Gide, and Louis Aragon were some of those who were rumored to be the elusive Vercors. Bruller remained active in the Resistance throughout the Occupation. His principal task was the transfer of messages to and from the British Intelligence service.

After the war Vercors sold his stake in *Minuit*, but continued to write novels, plays, essays, and translations. None of his post-war writings, however, have had quite the same public resonance as his first short story. Some of his more notable works were Les animaux dénaturés (1952) and Sylva (1962), as well as a French translation of Hamlet (1965). Vercors also resumed his activities as a graphic artist, illustrating, for example, editions of Racine and Rudyard Kipling, as well as numerous children's books. He designed sets and costumes for theatrical productions, including several at the *Comédie Française*. Throughout the post-war years Vercors was much in demand as a lecturer all

over the world. One of his first lecture tours took him to Germany in 1948, where he talked about the Resistance, but was met with little interest and even occasional hostility (ADV 126). In 1967, he published La bataille du silence, an autobiographical account of his activities during the Occupation. Vercors was awarded the *Médaille de la Résistance* and was made an Officer of the *Légion d'honneur*. In 1982 he received the *Prix du Conseil d'Europe* for the first volume, entitled Moi, Aristide Briand, of his three-volume Cent ans d'histoire de France (Plon, 1981-1984). Vercors died in Paris on June 10, 1991.

VII

The central question confronting the old man and his niece in Le silence de la mer is how to react to the presence of Werner von Ebrennac, the German officer quartered in their house. They have to decide whether the intruder is a friend or a foe. On the surface the answer seems to be simple enough: of course Ebrennac is a foe. He wears the uniform of the enemy. The interest of the story, and the moral dilemma for its two French characters, lies in the fact that things are not quite as clear-cut. Vercors provides the reader with a series of clues suggesting that Ebrennac may be not be an

enemy at all. These clues (such as Ebrennac's politeness, his naiveté, his name, his knowledge of the French language, and his love of France) can be read as indicators of the officer's non-hostile, non-threatening, amicable intent. Judging by his silent reactions, the old man certainly reads them as such. Ambiguity as to whether Ebrennac is a friend or a foe reigns throughout the text and is its organizing force.

From the beginning of the story, Vercors points out Ebrennac's politeness, his correct manners, and his near constant smile. The very first words we hear Ebrennac speak are "s'il vous plaît" (21), followed by numerous other formulas of politeness, such as "Je suis désolé" (22) or "Je crains que je vous dérange" (25). He repeats one of these phrases, his nightly "Je vous souhaite une bonne nuit," with almost ritualistic frequency (25, 26, 29, 34, 37, 41, 44).

Ebrennac is not only exceedingly polite but also very naive. When he first arrives at the old man's house, he believes that much good will come out of the war ("je ne regrette pas cette guerre. Non. Je crois que de ceci il sortira de grandes choses," 29), and that the intentions of his military leaders are pure ("je sais bien que mes amis et notre Führer ont les plus grandes et les plus nobles idées," 41). Occasionally he does seem to grasp the true nature of

their character, as for example when he says: "je sais ... qu'ils arracheraient aux moustiques les pattes l'une après l'autre" (41)⁴⁸. But these short flashes of insight are not enough to alter his basic convictions. Until shortly before the end of the narrative he does not realize that the ultimate goal of the Occupation is the annihilation of France and of French culture. He believes instead that it will lead to an equal partnership between the two nations. After returning from a two-week leave to Paris, where he had spoken to fellow officers and military leaders and learned of their true intentions, Ebrennac is devastated. As we noted a short while ago, some critics have questioned the plausibility of this naiveté. Knowing whether or not Ebrennac was modeled on an actual person might help clarify the question. There is strong evidence to suggest that Ebrennac is in fact a character who unites traits of at least three Germans with

⁴⁸ This remark is especially interesting if read in light of an anecdote Vercors tells in La bataille du silence about a German nanny whom he had hired to care for his twins. She came to the Brullers one day, holding a mosquito between her fingers, and said: "Voyez, je le punis: je lui arrache les pattes l'une... après... l'autre!" (BS 185, Vercors's ellipses). We should remember that "moustique" not only means mosquito, but can also mean a small child. Vercors eventually dismissed the nanny after she told him of a dream wherein she forgot to take one of Vercors's sons out of his hot bathwater and found him boiled to death. Vercors leaves the obvious implication of this anecdote (the nanny as archetypal Nazi) unspoken.

whom Vercors had come in contact prior to writing his story.

The first of these individuals is a German lawyer whom Vercors met in 1925 while skiing in Montana-sur-Sierre. The two men discovered a number of commonalities between them, including the fact that they had both been lieutenants during the war. Their political beliefs were also similar; both considered themselves pacifists. In La bataille du silence Vercors writes that

"[une] bonne part des propos que je prête à mon von Ebrennac du Silence de la mer, son amour pour la France, son aspiration à voir nos deux pays s'unir et se compléter, je les ai entendus de sa bouche" (BS 23-24).

In an interview he gave shortly before his death in 1991, Vercors pointed to a second model for Ebrennac, and with it to a parallel between the story's fictional characters and his own life. He said that, like the old man in the story, he, too, was forced to provide quarters for a German officer in his house during the Occupation. Like Ebrennac, the officer was very polite and constantly smiled at him, yet Vercors did not reciprocate his politeness. Summing up his moral dilemma regarding the officer, Vercors used words that bear a striking resemblance to those he had attributed to the fictional old man fifty years before. In 1991 Vercors said:

"...je souffre toujours d'outrager un homme, qui de plus s'était montré à moi sous le jour le plus aimable" (ADV 31).

In 1941 the old man had said:

"Je ne puis sans souffrir offenser un homme, fût-il mon ennemi" (25).

The third, and perhaps most intriguing model for Ebrennac is the writer Ernst Jünger. In the summer of 1941, as he was mapping out the characters for his story, Vercors read the French translation of Jünger's Gärten und Straßen, which had just been published with the approval of the censors⁴⁹. As we might expect, he was not quite at ease with what he encountered in its pages:

"Je lus ce panégyrique de la France vaincue par l'un de ses vainqueurs avec un profond sentiment de gêne, d'agacement. ... L'auteur semblait sincère. Mais cette sincérité même soulevait en moi un puissant instinct de défense. Le livre avait pu paraître: par conséquent... ... Si Jünger n'était pas complice, il était dupe. ... L'immense obéissance allemande était le drame de ce pays, et celui de l'Europe. Ernst Jünger aimait la France, mais il obéissait" (BS 180-181, 183).

It was after reading Jünger's diary that Vercors altered the parameters for his main character. Up to this point he had planned to portray the German soldier in a more or less conventional manner: as a one-dimensional foe of France and as the sort of barbaric evil-doer who appeared in wartime propaganda on all sides of the conflict. Vercors now changed

⁴⁹ See Chapter 4 for a discussion of this and Jünger's two other Paris diaries.

his mind and devised a more ambivalent, and hence potentially more interesting character:

"Je mettrais en scène cet officier allemand, mais je n'en ferais pas un ennemi de la France, j'en ferais au contraire un amoureux, un homme séduit par elle comme l'avait été Ernst Jünger, croyant sincèrement au mariage des anciens adversaires dans une Europe heureuse, et que la révélation brutale des véritables desseins nazis plongerait dans la stupeur. ... L'Allemand serait donc sympathique. Le meilleur des Allemands possible" (BS 182).

We should of course be careful not to assume that Ebrennac *is* Jünger. He is not. Jünger simply provided Vercors with a paradigm as to how Ebrennac should appear and act. The fact that Vercors himself confirmed the existence of these three (at least three) real-life models is important because it should alleviate the concerns of those who have doubted the credibility of Ebrennac's behavior. The plausibility of his naiveté is a central component of Vercors's strategy to plant ambivalence about Ebrennac's persona in the minds of his two French characters and in the minds of the readers.

A third component in this strategy is Vercors's use of language. He reflects the German soldiers' military ranks in their degree of fluency in French. The handful of lower-ranking soldiers who precede Ebrennac in order to scout the location speak French badly: "Ils me parlèrent, dans ce qu'ils supposaient être du français. Je ne comprenais pas un

mot," says the old man of their efforts (19). The next soldier, who prepares the house for Ebrennac's arrival, speaks a "français correct" (20). Ebrennac himself speaks French virtually flawlessly. This gradation of the officers in terms of their linguistic abilities serves to set Ebrennac apart from the others. His French language skills are meant to suggest moral superiority. The same holds true for Ebrennac's name. It suggests Huguenot ancestry, and hence distinguishes its bearer from the other (nameless) Germans who populate the story⁵⁰.

The old man's and the niece's reactions to Ebrennac are a final indicator of his moral ambivalence. The old man, for example, notices that it is not cold as Ebrennac arrives, although it is November (21), but that it is cold as he

⁵⁰ It has been suggested that in choosing this name Vercors attempted to draw a parallel between the officer and himself, since the word *Ebrennac* contains the root of the German verb *brennen* [to burn], which in French means *brûler*, which looks and sounds just like Vercors's real name, Bruller (Kidd 28). This speculation seems a bit far-fetched. It is unclear why exactly Vercors would want to suggest a parallel between himself and the officer, rather than, say, between himself and the old man.

leaves, although it is July (49)⁵¹. Obviously, the coldness in question is not so much of a meteorological as of a spiritual nature. The old man likes the soldier but knows he should not. He feels that it is not right to offend Ebrennac on a personal level, but knows that he must do so on a political level.

The uses of silence, and the presence and absence of sounds, take on great importance in this context as well. The noun *silence* and its corresponding adjectives appear 28 times in the text (about once every two pages), as well as in the story's title. Ebrennac is defined in terms of sound and silence from the outset. The young woman and her uncle first perceive him as a sound when they hear footsteps outside their door (21). The only sound emanating from either of them in the whole text is the niece's final and barely audible "Adieu!" (59). Otherwise, neither of the two says a word. It is up to Ebrennac to fill the silence. He is therefore able to determine the content of everything that is being said. Le silence de la mer wants to give a voice to the Resistance, yet, paradoxically, it is a Nazi's voice we

⁵¹ Actually, Vercors's calculations are off by two months. On page 21 we learn that Ebrennac arrived in November. On page 49 Vercors tells us that six months have passed since his arrival, and he calls that point in time July. Yet November plus six months really should put us into May. This oversight does not, however, invalidate the point Vercors is trying to make.

hear most of the time. And yet we also know what the old man is thinking at all times because Vercors tells the story from his point of view. We know that the silence is restraining for him and that he feels a sense of liberation whenever the officer speaks:

"Et quand enfin Werner von Ebrennac dissipait ce silence, doucement et sans heurt par le filtre de sa bourdonnante voix, il semblait qu'il me permît de respirer plus librement" (38).

Asked about the niece's mutism, Vercors compared her dilemma regarding Ebrennac to his own situation regarding the German officer who stayed at his house:

"[Elle] se trouvait, à son égard, dans la même situation que moi à l'égard du mien. Après s'être ostensiblement tue deux jours, cinq jours, dix jours, c'était fini, elle ne pouvait plus, même pendant six mois, rompre ce silence sans se renier, sans renier sa conviction la plus profonde, sans paraître donner enfin raison à l'officier ennemi" (ADV 32).

The French characters' silence, then, by no means signals their acquiescence, as it might appear. Instead their mutism can be seen, if not as a wholesale negation of the existence of the other, then certainly as a negation of the other's words. Vercors posits passivism as a form of activism in this case. The final "Adieu" (spoken as Ebrennac is about to leave for the Eastern front, and thus almost certain death) is the niece's acknowledgement of the enemy's,

and her own, humanity.

Ebrennac uses his monopoly on the spoken word to champion the cause of Franco-German cooperation. He repeatedly frames it in terms of a male-female analogy, suggesting, for example, that the two nations should be considered as "husband and wife" (28, 32, 44). His allusion to the tale of Beauty and the Beast (33) also falls into this category. Of course, the use of gender in this context is hardly a new invention, and it was in fact quite a familiar theme of the period. It was employed, for example, in two of the texts we have already discussed earlier. One is Brasillach's 1944 "Lettre à quelques jeunes gens," in which we find the line about his having "[couché] avec l'Allemagne" (cit. Louvrier 246). The other is Sartre's "Qu'est-ce qu'un collaborateur?", which contains an extended analogy comparing collaboration to seduction. Sartre believed that French collaborators were weak "women" seduced by an aggressive and powerful "male" Nazi Germany⁵².

The concept of seduction is also crucial to Vercors's argument, where it operates in two directions: Ebrennac is "seduced" by Nazism, and Ebrennac "seduces" the niece and her uncle, albeit unwittingly. The notion of ambiguity on which

⁵² Other writers of the era contributed to this debate in similar terms. Only a few years earlier, for example, Jules Romains had published a book entitled Le couple France-Allemagne (1935).

the story rests, the necessity to decide whether Ebrennac is a friend or an enemy, is made possible to a large extent by Ebrennac's ability to seduce. Yet the ultimate point of the story, according to Vercors, is that in order to defeat Nazism "il ne fallait pas se laisser séduire" (ADV 32), not even by a self-proclaimed friend of France. In 1975 Vercors further amplified this conviction when he said that

"[après] que l'Allemagne se fût donnée à un monstre inhumain nommé Hitler, après les horreurs déclenchées par le nazisme sur la France et le monde, aucun Français ne pouvait plus accorder sa confiance même au meilleur des Allemands possibles" (cit. Morita-Clément 174).

It would be justifiable and easy enough to hate and to resist the inhumane monster. Resisting the best of all possible human beings serving the monster is much harder. It is because Ebrennac possesses humanity, and because his hosts possess humanity, that their resolve to resist does not come easily.

The conflict sketched in Le silence de la mer, while revolving around the specific circumstances of the Occupation at its most immediate level, can at the same time be read at a more universal and abstract plateau. It is not only the battle of France against Germany and of democracy against fascism, but also of humanism against barbarism, of good against evil. When someone asked Vercors in the winter of 1943 why the note at the beginning of his book read "publié

sous l'occupation nazie" instead of "l'occupation allemande,"
he answered:

"Ah, c'est que je veux croire encore que l'âme allemande, celle de la vieille Allemagne kantienne et humaniste, ne s'est pas engouffrée tout entière dans le maelstrom nazie; qu'elle résiste sourdement et que nous la retrouverons vivante. Alors ce que je veux marquer, c'est que nous faisons encore la différence, que nous la ferons tant que ce sera possible. Que nous ne menons pas une guerre de puissance à puissance, encore moins de peuple à peuple, mais une guerre de l'esprit contre les crimes de l'oppression" (BS 26).

Le silence de la mer can remind us that the enemy in this ongoing war may not always be who he appears to be, and that even the best of all possible enemies is still not a friend.

Chapter 4

Ernst Jünger and Heinrich Mann

Part 1:

Inside the Cocoon

I

Heinrich Mann lived in France from 1933 to 1940; Ernst Jünger lived in France from 1940 to 1944. If we knew nothing else about the two, we could already surmise a good deal about each writer's personal history simply by looking at those dates. Mann, of course, was forced to flee Germany soon after Hitler's advent to power, and was forced to flee France when the Occupation began. Jünger, on the other hand, came to France as part of the Occupation forces. Not surprisingly, then, the political views held by the two contrast sharply as well; they fall roughly along the same dividing line that separates Vercors and Robert Brasillach. Mann opposed Nazism, whereas Jünger tacitly supported it.

There are, however, also several major differences

between these two pairs of writers. One of the most important ones is the degree to which they were able to reach an audience. While, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, Vercors and Brasillach were both quite vocal during the Occupation, and while their writings reached relatively large numbers of people, Mann and Jünger were, each for different reasons, largely silenced and cut off from their audiences during long intervals of the Third Reich. Mann's books were burned and banned in 1933. None of his literary output during the subsequent decade and a half was allowed to appear in Germany. Jünger was not permitted to publish after 1942. Nonetheless, both of them continued to write, and Mann also continued to publish in exile. Their respective writings represent two important voices describing the Occupation of France from two vastly divergent personal and political positions.

Not unlike Robert Brasillach, Ernst Jünger has been the object of much critical attention in recent years, a development that has accelerated markedly since the late

1980s⁵³. Although this attention may in part be due simply to Jünger's longevity (he was born in 1895) and his continuing productivity, the main reason is to be found elsewhere: as in Brasillach's case, it is probable that Jünger provokes the interest of so many contemporary critics because he cannot be as easily pinned down and pigeonholed as it might seem at first sight. While his political sympathies undoubtedly lay on the far right side of the spectrum, Jünger's writings and his personal conduct sometimes communicated more ambivalent signals. He was, for example, a frequent guest in Parisian collaborators' circles, yet at the same time he was also in close contact with a number of German military officers who were attempting to remove Hitler from power. He was a very willing and eager participant in the German war machinery, and hence a tool of Nazism, yet he also claimed to be personally opposed to Hitler. Jünger belonged to that group of writers who, instead of leaving Germany (such as Heinrich and Thomas Mann and many others), went into an "Innere

⁵³ As evidenced by, for example, the following studies: Richard Griffiths: "A Certain Idea of France: Ernst Jünger's Paris Diaries 1941-44" (1993); Marcus Paul Bullock: The Violent Eye. Ernst Jünger's Visions and Revisions on the European Right (1992); Martin Meyer: Ernst Jünger (1990); Wolfgang Brandes: Der "Neue Stil" in Ernst Jüngers Strahlungen (1990); Julien Hervier: "Ernst Jünger, un francophile vu de France" (1989); Banine: Ernst Jünger aux faces multiples (1989); Heimo Schwilk: Ernst Jünger: Leben und Werk in Bildern und Text (1988).

Emigration" [inner emigration]. This term generally applies to those individuals who remained in Germany during the Third Reich and either did not speak out against Hitler at all or did so only in secrecy⁵⁴. Jünger did in fact keep his anti-Hitler views mostly to himself. He wrote them down in his diaries, knowing that since he had been barred from publishing in 1942, no one would be able to read them as long as Hitler was in power.

The diary is one of Jünger's preferred literary forms. He has been writing and publishing diaries for almost eighty years. His first novel, In Stahlgewittern [In Storms of Steel] (1920), grew out of a private diary he had kept during World War I. Built largely around a collection of purely external facts detailing his activities on the front, the novel contains little express analysis and reflection⁵⁵. It is atypical of most other key texts about this war (such as Remarque's or Barbusse's) because it does not condemn war

⁵⁴ Although Jünger actually spent most of the war stationed in various places *outside* of the country, he still considered Germany his place of residence. In his case, the term "inner emigration" does not necessarily describe a geographical location but rather a state of mind.

⁵⁵ In 1922 Jünger followed up the novel with an essay on combat psychology entitled Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis [Battle as Inner Experience]. It made use of many of the war diary's reflective passages that had been left out of the novel.

wholesale, but, on the contrary, implicitly approves of it and even glorifies it. Jünger sees war as the modern world's last "authentic" experience, as a quest for adventure and heroism.

The glorification of war is a basic tenet of Jünger's world view. It is also one of the themes that emerges from his three French diaries, and we will examine it more closely in this chapter. The other themes we will look at are: Jünger's description of his journey through France, his representation of Paris and of the conditions under which he lived there, and his observations on the issue of moral responsibility for the Occupation and the war. We will also have to consider the question of what is *not* included in the three diaries, as well as the reasons for such omissions. The twin notions of *detachedness* and *sheltering* will play a central organizing role in this context.

II

Ernst Jünger was born in Heidelberg on March 29, 1895, but grew up in northern Germany, in the vicinity of Hanover. In 1913 he ran away from home to join the French Foreign Legion. His intention was to get to North Africa and then desert. After he had reached Algeria, he made two attempts

at desertion, both of which failed. A few weeks later his father bought him out and had him sent back home to finish his schooling (cf. Bullock 21-22). At the outset of World War I, Jünger volunteered to enlist in the German armed forces. He was wounded seven times during the war and was the youngest war participant to be awarded the order *pour le mérite*, which was Germany's highest military honor. Jünger continued to serve in the army until 1923. From 1923 to 1925 he attended the Universities of Leipzig and Naples, where he studied philosophy and biology. He was especially interested in the fields of botany and entomology. These interests are also reflected in many of his writings. The French diaries, for example, contain numerous reports about his hunt for and discovery of rare plants and insects.

Between 1925 and 1931 Jünger edited and contributed to a number of small, nationalist, right-wing journals, including *Widerstand*, *Die Standarte*, *Arminius*, and *Der Vormarsch*. In 1933 the National Socialist Party offered Jünger a seat in the *Reichstag*, but he refused. He also did not join the party itself, nor the Nazi-controlled *Deutsche Akademie der Dichtung* [German Academy of Letters]. In fact, he retreated from public life altogether, moving with his wife and two children from Berlin, where they had lived since 1927, to the countryside and devoting his time to his entomological

studies and to writing.

Jünger's decision not to engage in any public contact with the Nazis may appear to be a paradoxical one. After all, the central elements of the party's nationalist ideology were not very far removed from his own political views. Jünger, however, was accustomed to a somewhat higher intellectual level of political discourse than the one the Nazis engaged in. He had little use for the street fighters and hooligans who made up the core of the party. They were too plebeian and too simplistic for his tastes. He also harbored a personal dislike for many of their leaders, in particular for the lowly Austrian private who headed the party. In Auf den Marmorklippen [On the Marble Cliffs], one of his most important works, Jünger delivers what can be read as an allegorical attack on the Nazi regime. The novel's rather veiled criticism of Hitler initially escaped the censors. Published in the summer of 1939, just before the beginning of the war, it sold out quickly. When the Nazis finally realized the nature of the attack contained in Auf den Marmorklippen, they suppressed the book by not allotting any more paper rations to the publisher⁵⁶.

Jünger was drafted in September 1939. He was stationed

⁵⁶ It is all the more surprising that in 1943 they did allow the printing of a special edition (20,000 copies) for the German armed forces, which had been requested by several of Jünger's commanding officers in Paris.

in France almost continuously from 1940 to 1944. During his assignment at the headquarters of the German army in Paris, beginning in February 1941, he was in charge of, among other things, censoring the mail sent and received by all German military personnel in France. In the winter of 1942/43 the head of the Parisian high command, General Karl-Heinrich von Stülpnagel, dispatched him to the Caucasus⁵⁷. Jünger's task there was twofold: officially, he was to document the Russian campaign; the real reason Stülpnagel sent him there was to assess the potential will of the German officer corps on the Eastern front to cooperate in Hitler's overthrow (Loose 71). Jünger had to leave his post in Paris in August 1944 after receiving a dishonorable discharge from the army because of his association with Stülpnagel and other like-minded officers⁵⁸. After the war Jünger was not allowed to publish

⁵⁷ Stülpnagel (1886-1944), a friend of Jünger's who frequently figures in the Paris diaries, was an early and fervent supporter of plans by a group of mostly aristocratic German officers to assassinate Hitler. On July 20, 1944, while the head of the group, Count Claus Schenk von Stauffenberg, carried out the attempt on Hitler's life in East Prussia, Stülpnagel undertook similar action against the leadership of the SS in Paris. After the assassination failed, Stülpnagel was executed on August 30, 1944.

⁵⁸ It is supremely ironic that this should have been the reason for his dismissal from Paris. Jünger never actually supported Stülpnagel's plans. On the contrary, he had reason to wish for their failure, as we will see later on.

in Germany for four years because he refused to submit to denazification procedures. He claimed that he did not need to be denazified because he had never been a party member.

In 1948 Jünger completed the final volume of his six-part diary about World War II and the years immediately following. Only the first of these volumes, Gärten und Straßen [Gardens and Streets], which covers the period April 1939 to July 1940, was published during the Third Reich (in 1942). The censors prohibited the release of any further installments after they came across a rather innocuous-looking reference in the first diary: in the entry for March 29, 1940, his 45th birthday, Jünger mentions having read the Bible's 73rd psalm. He does not quote the psalm. But apparently somebody in the censorship office looked up its wording and found out that it contained what could be construed as a condemnation of the Nazis, as well as a prediction of their imminent downfall:

"I saw the prosperity of the wicked. ... They are not in trouble as others are; they are not plagued like other people. Therefore pride is their necklace; violence covers them like a garment. Their eyes swell out with fatness; their hearts overflow with follies. They scoff and speak with malice; loftily they threaten oppression. They set their mouths against heaven, and their tongues range over the earth. Therefore the people turn and praise them, and find no fault in them. ... Such are the wicked; always at ease, they increase in riches. All in vain I have kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence. ... But when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task, until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I perceived their end.

Truly you set them in slippery places; you make them fall to ruin. How they are destroyed in a moment, swept away utterly by terrors! ... Indeed, those who are far from you will perish; you put an end to those who are false to you" (The New Oxford Annotated Bible 735-736).

The language of this passage is obviously rather vague. Nonetheless, the Nazis, believing that the shoe fit, asked Jünger to delete the reference to the psalm. Jünger refused to do so, and Gärten und Straßen was subsequently banned (Loose 74). The remaining diaries were not allowed to appear either. They included: Erstes Pariser Tagebuch [First Paris Diary], which runs from February 1941 to October 1942, Kaukasische Aufzeichnungen [Caucasian Notes, October 1942 to February 1943], Zweites Pariser Tagebuch [Second Paris Diary, February 1943 to August 1944], Kirchhorster Blätter [Kirchhorst Pages, August 1944 to April 1945], and Jahre der Okkupation [Years of Occupation, April 1945 to December 1948]. The six volumes, together spanning approximately one thousand pages, were not published as a whole until 1960, under the title Strahlungen (a term that can mean both "Radiations" and "Radiancies").

Jünger has been awarded numerous honors in recent years, including Mannheim's *Schiller Preis* (1974), Nice's *Aigle d'Or* (1977), Verdun's *Medaille de la Paix* (1979), Frankfurt's *Goethe Preis* (1982), Montpellier's *Medaille de la Ville* (1983), and Germany's *Bundesverdienstkreuz* (1985). In 1984

he was among the veterans invited by President Mitterrand and Chancellor Kohl to participate in the commemorations of the 70th anniversary of the battle of Verdun. Jünger continues to write quite prolifically to the present day. One of his most recent texts, entitled Zweimal Halley (1987), is an account of the second time he was able to observe Halley's Comet (in 1986), after already having seen it during its previous appearance in 1910. Jünger turned 100 years old in March 1995.

III

The narrative of Gärten und Straßen begins on April 3, 1939 in Kirchhorst, the village near Hanover where Jünger lived at the time. The text's first half chronicles Jünger's activities during the months leading up to the war and his conscription in September. After his unit enters France, on May 26, 1940, there is an immediate and persistent emphasis in the diary on the discovery and consumption of large amounts of wine, champagne, and food. The following passage is part of Jünger's diary entry on his first day in France. It describes his arrival in a small town called Bouillon. After remarking briefly on the heavy damage the town sustained during the fighting, Jünger turned his attention to

things that were apparently of greater interest to him:

(27)

"Leute kamen mit Weinflaschen vorbei; ich entsandte Rehm mit dem Fahrrad, um die Quelle aufzuspüren; er kam mit einigen Bouteillen Burgunder zurück. Wie er erzählte, war er in einem Heeresmagazin gewesen, in dessen Keller eine stark angeheiterte Gesellschaft beisammensaß. Überhaupt ist die Vormarschstraße von Sekt-, Bordeaux- und Burgunderflaschen gesäumt. Ich zählte wenigstens eine auf den Schritt, abgesehen von den Lagerplätzen, die aussahen, als ob es Flaschen geregnet hätte" (GS 149-150).

Similar scenes recur with great frequency throughout the remainder of Gärten und Straßen. The reader learns, for example, about one village's drunken mayor (GS 152) and another's huge wine cellar from which Jünger removed two barrels for distribution to his troops and one bottle for himself (GS 156). He reads how Jünger helped himself to the provisions he found in private homes (GS 153, 164, 210), and how his unit, upon hearing news of the ceasefire, consumed champagne "in großen Mengen" [in large quantities] (GS 198). In Bourges, where Jünger spent several days, he visited the house of one Madame Cécile, who taught him all about

(28)

"die gute Küche, so über die Zwiebelsuppe, wie man sie alltags und wie man sie sonntags ißt. Dann über Pastete aus Wildkaninchen: bevor man sie mit Brotteig zustreicht und gratiniert, drückt man mit dem Daumen Löcher hinein und füllt sie mit altem Cognac aus" (GS 205).

There can be little doubt that Jünger's repeated and

detailed emphasis on culinary matters during the first few weeks of his stay in France is, at least to some degree, simply an expression of a received idea about what defines France. These and other passages recount, and thus perpetuate, the familiar clichés of French gastronomy.

Several of the passages concerning wine and food, however, go a step beyond the clichéd. They are revelatory of something more pertinent for our reading of the French diaries, because they give us a first hint as to how Jünger perceives his own presence in France. For example, in Bourges, where Jünger was quartered in a *château*, the reader finds him breakfasting on *escargots*, fruit salad, and Veuve Clicquot, all served by a chef summoned from a local restaurant. After describing this meal in some detail, Jünger commented on the good fortune that had befallen him and his unit in France so far: "Wir sind hier nach den Strapazen der Märsche in ein laues Bad getaucht und leben als Normannen, die in ein Weinland eingedrungen sind" [After the hardships of the marches we are immersed in a warm bath here and are living like Normans who have entered a wine country] (GS 204). Elsewhere in the diary Jünger writes that he has found in France "einen Grad des Lebensgenusses, wie er in Deutschland seit langem unbekannt geworden ist" [a degree of *joie de vivre* which has long since become unknown in Germany]

(GS 168).

In both instances Jünger portrayed war as an experience to be literally and physically *enjoyed*. He repeated and expanded on the idea (expressed already in a different setting in his first novel, In Stahlgewittern) that war is not to be condemned and avoided but should instead be welcomed and sought out. As the victor in this particular war, at least for the time being, Jünger made full use of the attendant privileges, yet he gave no consideration to the circumstances that had led up to and enabled all of these culinary feasts. In other words, he did not reflect on *why* he found himself in the relatively fortunate position he was in, nor on who may have had to pay for his good fortune. He seemed to believe that the war and the Occupation existed solely for his personal amusement. We will discover that Jünger's near total disregard for the larger realities surrounding him is one of the most important characteristics of the French diaries, and we will have several more opportunities in this chapter to return to this issue.

We have just seen how Jünger compared himself and his troops to "Normans." With this in mind, let us consider also the following few diary entries, written around the same time:

(29)

"Das gehört ja wohl bei einem Feldzug in Frankreich zur Überlieferung. Jeder Einmarsch germanischer Heere ist

von einem Tieftrunk begleitet, wie ihn die Götter der Edda taten, und dem kein Vorrat gewachsen ist" (GS 150, *my italics*).

(30)

"Wir sind wahrhaft die Sansculotten, die Sieger, wenn auch nicht ohne Hosen, so doch mit Hosen aus Holzfasern, und sehen halb mit Staunen, was es noch in der Welt an Schätzen gibt - wie etwa den Keller meines unbekannten Wirtes mit einer Sammlung von Burgunderweinen" (GS 168).

(31)

"Wir beschlossen den Tag mit einer Flasche Aloxe-Corton.... Dabei erwogen wir, ob es zum *Schicksal dieses Platzes* gehöre, daß Heere an ihm vorüberziehen und er *hin und wieder* preußische Offiziere zu beherbergen hat, so 1814, 1870, 1914 und nun ein neues Mal" (GS 188, *my italics*).

In reading these three excerpts, it becomes evident that Jünger saw himself and his march through France in some kind of historical continuity. Within the space of a few pages he referred, in no particular order, to the Normans, Prussians, *sansculottes*, Germanic armies, nordic mythology (the *Edda*), and three different nineteenth- and twentieth-century wars. In this context, World War II and the Occupation were primarily historical, as opposed to personal, phenomena for Jünger. As such, they were essentially perceived as remote abstractions. The contrast between the abstract and remote on the one hand and the concrete and immediate on the other is one to which we will also have to return at a later point in the chapter.

Although he did not state it explicitly, Jünger's

language in these three passages gives us some indication as to how he viewed the Occupation in relation to the other historical events he alluded to, and in particular in relation to the previous Franco-German wars. The phrase "Schicksal dieses Platzes" [destiny of this place] (GS 188) suggests that he regarded the current invasion, as well as those preceding it, as inevitable and predetermined occurrences, as acts of fate. Judging by his use of the indeterminate article ("einem Feldzug in Frankreich" [a French campaign]), and the implied enumeration contained in the expression "jeder Einmarsch" [each invasion] (GS 150), we can presume that Jünger considered 1940 to be merely the latest in a series of many other invasions, past and perhaps future. The latter possibility is one he did not specifically exclude. In fact, he *included* it by saying that these invasions happen "hin und wieder" [every now and then] (GS 188), a throwaway turn of phrase whose nonchalance insinuates that the invasions are little more than slight nuisances or inconveniences France has to contend with. According to the version of history Jünger offers in these three excerpts, German troops do not bomb, shoot, destroy, or pillage; they merely "march past" (GS 188) the various towns and villages, their worst "offense" being public drunkenness.

But of course many of the small towns and much of the surrounding countryside Jünger traversed in the summer of 1940 had in fact already been pillaged by advancing German troops. Thus they offered a picture of widespread destruction and desolation, which Jünger does describe in great detail in other parts of the diary. His comments focused in particular on the near total absence of people, as well as on the large number of rotting animal carcasses he saw lying alongside the roads. Virtually everywhere he went he found villages that had been reduced to ghost towns:

(32)

"Im Ort starke Verwüstungen; oft waren an den Stellen, an denen die Häuser gestanden hatten, nur ungeheure, mit gelbem Wasser angefüllte Trichter zu sehen. ... Weiter durch diese erstaunlichen Landschaften. In den Dörfern und Städten rauchte kein Herd, kreuzte kein Kind, kein lebendes Wesen unsere Bahn. Oft drückte ich mein Gesicht gegen die Fensterscheiben und sah dann in den Zimmern gedeckte Tafeln mit Tellern und Gläsern, doch keine Gäste - den Anblick jäh unterbrochener Mahlzeiten. In den Kirchen standen noch die silbernen und goldenen Geräte auf den Altären, und in den Palästen schien das Leben entschlafen wie in Dornröschens Schloß - tot, tot, tot" (GS 150-151).

(33)

"Tote Tiere: vor allem Pferde, stark aufgeschwollen.... Blaue, grüne und goldene Fliegen spielen auf ihrem straff gespannten Fell, auch Wespen nagen an ihrer Haut. ... Ferner tote Hunde, überfahren oder an der Kette verhungert; Kühe, Hühner, Schafe" (GS 156).

(34)

"Am Wege Massen von toten Pferden.... Die Lippen mit einem Ausdruck des Leidens halb aufgeworfen, so daß die großen weißen Zähne sichtbar sind" (GS 189).

These passages are once again of a purely descriptive nature. Jünger tells the reader what he *sees*, but he offers not a single moment of reflection on what it all *means*. There are no comments on who was responsible for the destruction, and there is no discernible emotion in the face of death. Instead, Jünger expended great care and almost clinical precision on describing the gory and surreal grotesqueness of the deformed bodies. The language here, as well as in later scenes describing aerial attacks on the Paris suburbs (ZPT 35, 37), is marked by dispassion and lack of interest. Jünger seemed to consider himself merely an uninvolved and distant *spectator*. He seemed to ignore the fact that he was in some form a *participant* in these scenes, that he played a role in them, even if that role was just a minor one.

Throughout the three French diaries, in fact, the reader will find that while Jünger registered and took note of a multitude of events, sights, people, and things, he analyzed hardly any of them (cf. Taureck 257). He almost always remained in the role of the detached bystander. In Gärten und Straßen, for example, there is only one point at which Jünger communicates to the reader any sort of noticeable reaction to the destruction he saw as he moved across the

French countryside. This moment occurred in June 1940, when he quartered himself and several troops in La Rochefoucauld's old castle at Montmirail. A number of windows had been broken in the castle, a pavilion had burnt down, and several bombs had hit the grounds. Noting that the Maximes had long been part of his "eiserne Ration" [iron ration], Jünger ordered his soldiers to guard the place, clean it up, and restore it as best they could, calling his decision "einen Akt der geistigen Dankbarkeit" [an act of spiritual gratitude] (GS 182). A cynic might claim that Jünger's act was not really rooted so much in concern for the castle as an important artifact of cultural history, as it was rooted in concern for his own physical comfort and security. Since Jünger usually ordered only those places to be cleaned up and guarded where he intended to spend the night, the cynic might be right. The impression is reinforced when, a few years later, in the first Paris diary, Jünger mentions how happy and grateful he was that Paris had not yet been destroyed and expresses the hope that, "gleich einer mit alter und reicher Fracht bis an die Borde beladenen Arche" [like an ark loaded to the brim with ancient and rich freight], the city would emerge intact from the war, which he compared to the "Sintflut" [the biblical flood] (ZPT 122). In both of these examples, Jünger positions himself as the loving guardian of

French cultural treasures (first La Rochefoucauld's castle, then the capital), yet he apparently forgets that he was part of those who had endangered those treasures and wreaked havoc with them in the first place. His concern, then, is at best disingenuous.

One of the most curious aspects of the way Jünger depicted his stay in France is his reading of the local population's reactions to his presence. Not surprisingly (or so it would seem), their reactions ranged from quiet scepticism and silent reserve to expressions of overt hatred and loathing. Jünger, however, *did* appear to be genuinely surprised when he discovered that he was not being welcomed with open arms wherever he went. For example, late on the evening of June 1, 1940 Jünger and his unit reached the town of Gercy looking for a place to sleep: "Wir wurden zu dritt bei einer alten Dame untergebracht, die uns empfangt, als ob das Schlimmste von uns zu erwarten sei" [The three of us were put up in an old lady's house; she received us as though the worst was to be expected of us] (GS 158). The words "als ob" [as though] show that Jünger did not fully grasp how this moment must have presented itself to the old woman in question: it was dark, the town was nearly deserted, and there were three armed strangers standing at her door

demanding entry into her house - of course the worst was to be expected of them. A similar example can be found in the second Paris diary, where Jünger mentions that whenever he walked past groups of people lined up in front of shops or offices he was greeted by "Blicke des tiefsten Widerwillens ..., den Mordgier würzt" [stares of deepest revulsion, peppered by lust for murder] (ZPT 167). And on a third occasion, as Jünger entered a stationery shop in the Avenue de Wagram, he noticed how the young sales girl behind the counter looked at his uniform: "es wurde mir deutlich, daß es mich mit *erstaunlichem Haß* betrachtete" [it became clear to me that she looked at me with *amazing hatred*] (EPT 384, my italics). It is indeed amazing that Jünger would find the girl's hatred of him "amazing." We have to marvel at his obvious naivety and have to wonder what other kind of reaction he expected to receive. One of the reasons why Jünger was so surprised at the lack of welcome accorded to him by the locals could be that he simply did not come across these people very often. As we will see next, he was largely sheltered from them and from the conditions under which they lived.

IV

The outward parameters of Jünger's French diaries changed significantly when he arrived in Paris in February 1941. Whereas Gärten und Straßen detailed his meanderings through the French countryside, the two subsequent diaries take place almost exclusively in the capital. Jünger's days became much more structured, and he was able to spend considerably more time than before on non-military pursuits. Paris, which he called the "Stadt der Städte" [city of cities] (ZPT 122) and his "zweite geistige Heimat" [second spiritual home] (EPT 399), was primarily a capital of culture for him. This definition is of course not an unusual one. It is an *idée reçue* that has had currency since long before Jünger came to town and proclaimed it to be the "Inbild dessen, was an alter Kultur mir lieb und teuer ist" [embodiment of those parts of ancient culture which are valued and dear to me] (EPT 399). What is rather unusual, though, is the way Jünger used that culture to his advantage.

Books were the central component of his concept of culture. He devoted much of his time in Paris to them. When he was not reading books, he walked through the city looking for them and at them, usually during his many free afternoons. He spent copious amounts of money on the acquisition of antique books. In his diaries Jünger

documented the progress of his readings and the results of his book-hunting trips with great precision and regularity. The authors he favored during his stay in France were a combination of some well-known and many quite obscure ones. They included, among others, Gide (ZPT 239), Maupassant (GS 169), Bernanos (GS 164), Giono (EPT 260), Montherlant (EPT 353), Huysmans (EPT 277), Bloy (who was one of his favorite writers, EPT 412), Edmond de Goncourt (EPT 314), Dumas (he does not say which one, EPT 353), Lautréamont (EPT 364), Conan Doyle (one of the few non-French authors, EPT 410), Crébillon (EPT 411), Joinville (ZPT 287), a biography of Goya (GS 189), an essay on Marie Laurencin (GS 189), and volumes entitled Fumée d'Opium (EPT 291), Le martyrologe de l'église du Japon (EPT 352), and Journal d'un interprète en Chine (ZPT 239), as well as many others. On May 28, 1944 he also finished a complete reading of the Bible, which he had begun three years before (ZPT 281).

A few exceptions notwithstanding, Jünger generally made a point of avoiding books that were familiar and widely known, and instead searched out books that were both rare and thematically obscure. The more arcane the subject matter, the higher the price of the book, and the more elaborate and beautiful its physical appearance, the higher the degree of

enjoyment he derived from it⁵⁹. Hunting for and reading those books was "eine Oase in der Zeit" [an oasis in time] for him (ZPT 26). On October 22, 1942, as he was about to leave for his brief assignment in Russia, Jünger, anticipating a bibliophile wasteland, wrote: "Die Welt der Bücher wird mir fehlen; ich verbrachte köstliche Stunden in ihr, Oasen in der Vernichtungswelt" [I will miss the world of books; I spent delicious hours in it, oases in a world of destruction] (EPT 424). Upon returning to Paris in February 1943, books were again the first thing on his mind:

(35)

"Paris erscheint mir, nachdem ich Städte wie Rostow gesehen habe, in neuem, unerhörtem Glanz, obwohl die Verarmung weiter fortgeschritten ist. Allein die Bücher, *mit denen ich Wiedersehen feierte*, indem ich eine schöne Monographie über Turner erstand" (ZPT 11, my italics).

Paris was impoverished, a fact that is relegated to a brief subordinate clause, yet it still contained rare and expensive books and was thus shining brightly in Jünger's eyes. Books almost seem to take on human proportions in the preceding quote. He celebrates a "reunion" "with" them, as though they were long-lost friends who are able to

⁵⁹ Which is one of the reasons why Jünger has sometimes been compared to writers like Huysmans, Baudelaire, Wilde and other representatives of that nineteenth-century world view generally known as dandyism (Brandes 217, 220-221).

reciprocate the feeling. Jünger's books essentially replaced human contact. As we will see in more detail shortly, they specifically sheltered him from contact with *suffering* humanity. His passion for recondite bibliophilia permitted him to keep a certain distance from the realities of the time and place surrounding him. The ability to reach these "oases" amid the destruction with such frequency and ease as he did was of course dependent on the availability of ample leisure time and sufficient economic means. As such it was a luxury afforded only to an elite few in the occupied city.

Jünger was unquestionably a part of that elite. His life in Paris was one of great privilege. He was a frequent guest in the homes of many prominent members of 1940s Parisian society. On most Thursdays in 1943 and 1944, for example, Jünger could be found in Florence Gould's salon. Among the regulars he met there, as well as in other salons, were Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, Jean Giraudoux, Jean Cocteau, Paul Morand, Pierre Drieu la Rochelle, Henri de Montherlant, Louis-Ferdinand Céline, Marcel Déat, Abel Bonnard, Marcel Jouhandeau, Jean Schlumberger, and Sacha Guitry. The latter was one of Jünger's closer acquaintances. He first met him on October 8, 1941, when he and Hans Speidel were invited for lunch by Fernand de Brinon, a prominent

collaborator⁶⁰:

(36)

"Das kleine Palais, in dem er uns empfangt, soll seiner jüdischen Frau gehören, was ihn nicht hinderte, sich bei Tisch über die 'Youpins' zu belustigen. Ich lernte dort Sacha Guitry kennen" (EPT 270).

One week later Jünger and Speidel visited Guitry at his home. In the course of the afternoon Guitry presented Jünger with three handwritten letters by Octave Mirbeau, Léon Bloy, and Debussy. Then they all proceeded to look at some of the old books and rare manuscripts Guitry owned, including the original, handwritten version of Flaubert's Education sentimentale and a suitcase that had belonged to Molière and contained the complete first editions of his plays. Finally they lunched on salad and ice cream served on dishes that had once belonged to Sarah Bernhardt (EPT 273-274).

This is just one of many examples which is meant to demonstrate that Jünger did not lack any material or physical comfort during his stay in Paris. He frequented the city's finest restaurants; he dined with Nazi kitsch sculptor Arno

⁶⁰ Speidel (born 1897) was a close friend of Jünger's and a high-ranking member of the German military leadership in France. He was also active in the anti-Hitler movement among the officer corps. After the failed assassination of July 20, 1944, he was arrested and imprisoned until the end of war.

Brinon (1885-1947) was Vichy's "ambassador" in occupied Paris. Together with Otto Abetz he had founded the *Comité France-Allemagne* in 1935. He fled to Germany in 1945, and was executed in Montrouge prison in 1947.

Breker and his wife at the *Ritz* (EPT 312); he discussed Proust with Cocteau (EPT 318), Malraux with Drieu la Rochelle (EPT 271), Bernanos with Jouhandeau (EPT 336), and war and peace with Picasso (EPT 365-367). Throughout the Paris diaries Jünger seemed impervious to the fact that all around him the city he claimed to love and treasure was threatened by disaster, and that its citizens were suffering. In those rare instances (a handful, at most) when he did take note of the gloomy reality surrounding him, it was usually in a rather cursory and offhand fashion. For example, he appends the following remark to the description of a lavish dinner he was invited to in the fall of 1942: "Übrigens ist das reine Beschaffen der Nahrung ... ein Kunststück geworden, denn in den Läden gibt es fast nichts mehr, und der Hunger breitet sich aus" [Incidentally, the mere gathering of food has become very difficult because there is almost nothing available in the shops anymore, and hunger is spreading] (EPT 410). This sentence comes as a mere afterthought to the more detailed report Jünger gives about the preparation and consumption of his dinner. He does not elaborate on who and what had brought the food shortage about, nor on the fact that he himself was not the least affected by it.

Jünger was not only sheltered from the actual material and physical deprivations and other forms of misery endured

by the city's population, he was also sheltered from the very *sight* of that misery. This becomes especially clear in two diary entries written shortly after the deportations of Jews and others had begun. The first of these is dated July 18, 1942:

(37)

"Gestern wurden hier Juden verhaftet, um deportiert zu werden - man trennte die Eltern zunächst von ihren Kindern, so daß das Jammern in den Straßen zu hören war. Ich darf in keinem Augenblick vergessen, daß ich von Unglücklichen, von bis in das Tiefste Leidenden umgeben bin" (EPT 363).

And ten days later, on July 28, after commenting on a neighborhood pharmacist whose wife had been deported, Jünger repeats: "Nie darf ich vergessen, daß ich von Leidenden umgeben bin" [I must never forget that I am surrounded by people who suffer] (EPT 372-373). Both times Jünger has to actively and consciously *remind* himself that he is surrounded by so much suffering because he does not normally see any of it. In the first instance Jünger also avoids any reference to who is doing the arresting and who is witnessing it. The respective verbs are used in impersonal or passive forms without concrete subjects. This sort of language contributes to the overall sense of remoteness and detachedness we are confronted with in the diaries. It allows Jünger to eschew any involvement in what he witnesses. If the children's moaning and wailing in the streets can simply "be heard" (as

is the case here), the arrests are a much more remote affair, for both the writer and the reader, than they would be if Jünger had expressly identified himself as the listener. As it is, he can more easily evade making an emotional or moral commitment in the face of the suffering. We will come across another example of this style a little later on.

Moreover, these two brief entries dealing with misery and desperation seem to be mere distractions from more important things: both of them are embedded into far longer passages detailing how Jünger spent yet another afternoon looking at and buying more rare books for his collection (EPT 362-363, 373). In describing one of those books, a particularly colorful one, he remarked: "Der Anblick von Bildern tut mir besonders in der Verstimmung wohl" [Looking at pictures makes me feel good, especially when I am ill-humored] (EPT 373). Jünger's choice of the word "Verstimmung" is quite revealing in this context - apparently that was all the sight of the deportations inspired in him: a slight feeling of unease, of irritation at the unwelcome interference with the business of hunting for books.

Throughout the Paris diaries the here and now of suffering humanity registers little more than a fleeting blip on Jünger's radar screen. He shows a perpetual "inability to involve himself. He remains an observer, outside the events

that he portrays" (Griffiths 102). Nowhere is this fact more succinctly epitomized than in the following scene, which takes place on May 27, 1944. In it Jünger describes a long night of bombing raids over Paris:

(38)

"Alarme, Überfliegungen. Vom Dache des 'Raphael'⁶¹ sah ich zweimal in Richtung von Saint Germain gewaltige Sprengwolken aufsteigen, während Geschwader in großer Höhe davonflogen. Ihr Angriffsziel waren die Flußbrücken. Art und Aufeinanderfolge der gegen den Nachschub gerichteten Maßnahmen deuten auf einen feinen Kopf. Beim zweiten Mal, bei Sonnenuntergang, hielt ich ein Glas Burgunder, in dem Erdbeeren schwammen, in der Hand. Die Stadt mit ihren roten Türmen und Kuppeln lag in gewaltiger Schönheit, gleich einem Kelche, der zu tödlicher Befruchtung überflogen wird. Alles war Schauspiel, war reine, von Schmerz bejahte und erhöhte Macht" (ZPT 280-281).

This paragraph sums up like no other Jünger's protected and aloof position in Paris. From his vantage point, war is a spectacle, war is an exercise in aesthetics, war takes place solely for his diversion, war is entertainment.

While Jünger profited extensively from his privileged status as the occupier and victor, he was either unable or unwilling (the latter option seems more likely) to recognize that circumstance. In fact, during the entire three and a half years covered by the two Paris diaries, there is only

⁶¹ The *Raphael* was one of two Parisian hotels housing members of the German military administration (the other one was the *Majestic*).

one moment where Jünger comes even close to acknowledging his privileged position:

(39)

"Obwohl ich in diesem zweiten Weltkrieg zum größten Teile von den Kulissen des Komforts umgeben bin, lebe ich doch in größerer Gefährdung als während der Somme- oder der Flandernschlacht" (ZPT 174).

Yet this acknowledgement is rendered all but meaningless, because by using the word "Kulissen," Jünger implies that his comfort was not real at all, that it was only an illusion. Obviously, nothing could be further from the truth. Compared to those who were not able to spend the war stowed away in salons, hotels, and high commands, Jünger's comfort as well as his safety were in fact quite real. Since he was far too intelligent not to recognize this situation, Jünger apparently felt the need to justify his privileges to himself and to his readers. He thus artificially and disproportionately magnified the potential danger emanating from the top of the Nazi hierarchy. In reality, that danger was only relatively minor at this point in the diary (prior to the assassination attempt). It is true that Jünger was likely regarded with some suspicion by the party leadership because he was, as we mentioned before, a personal friend of several anti-Hitler officers. But since he never really supported their plans for Hitler's removal, he was hardly a primary target for violent retribution, and

therefore had no reason to claim (as he does in the preceding quote) that he was living in greater peril than he did as a soldier in World War I. This contention is borne out by the fact that after the failed assassination attempt of July 20, 1944, Jünger was *not* executed, but was simply forced to leave his post in Paris and was discharged from the military (as opposed to, say, Generals Stülpnagel and Stauffenberg, both of whom were executed by the Nazis).

The last few pages of the second Paris diary chronicle Jünger's parting visits to various people and places around town (ZPT 303-304). Only the very *fact* that those visits took place is communicated to the reader. What is once again conspicuously absent from these final remarks is any reflection on *why* Jünger had to leave Paris, and what the reason for his forced leaving (the failed assassination) meant for the larger world around him (a continuation of the war).

V

On another front, the failed assassination also meant a continuation of the Holocaust. This subject, and the moral questions surrounding it, occupied Jünger on several occasions. Although his staff position at the Paris

headquarters was purely a military and not a policy-making one, it did allow him to gain a good amount of first-hand insight into the formulation of National Socialist policies. He was thus well aware of the decisive phase of Hitler's Jewish policy almost from the moment it was formulated. On February 8, 1942, only two weeks after the Wannsee Conference and its adoption of the so-called Final Solution, Jünger met with Speidel, who had just returned from Berlin, presumably bearing news about the Wannsee results. After the meeting Jünger speculated on where Nazi policies were headed and who might be responsible for them:

(40)

"Kein Zweifel, daß es Einzelne gibt, die für das Blut von Millionen verantwortlich sind. Und diese gehen wie Tiger auf Blutvergießen aus. Ganz abgesehen von den Pöbelinstinkten⁶² ist in ihnen ein satanischer Wille, ein kalter Genuß am Untergang der Menschen, ja vielleicht der Menschheit ausgeprägt. ... Entsetzlich war, was Jodl ... über Kniébolos Absichten äußerte⁶³. Auch muß man wissen, daß viele Franzosen solche Pläne billigen und

⁶² We have already remarked on Jünger's distaste for the culture of the mob and the hooligan prevalent at the lower levels of the Nazi party.

⁶³ General Alfred Jodl (1890-1946) was one of Hitler's closest advisers. *Kniébolo* was Jünger's code name for Hitler.

Henkersdienste zu leisten begierig sind⁶⁴. Nur hier im Hause walten Kräfte, die die Verbindung der Partner zu verhindern oder doch aufzuhalten fähig sind" (EPT 315-316).

Although the wording of this passage is somewhat oblique, it most likely refers to what Jünger had just learned about the Wannsee results. His allusions to "bloodshed," to Hitler's "intentions" and to "such plans" bear this out. The excerpt shows that Jünger recognized the importance of individual responsibility in these plans - both on the part of those who formulated them and those who helped carry them out. He also recognized that it was up to the individual to thwart these plans, and that there were internal "forces" in the Paris headquarters building (probably an allusion to Stülpnagel and Speidel) who were secretly trying to accomplish just that. This passage is the first of several in which Jünger addresses the question of

⁶⁴ It is interesting that Jünger would include this disparaging comment about the role of French collaborators, considering that he was on personally friendly terms with many of them. Obviously, there is a gap here between his public actions and his private words. We will elaborate on that gap shortly.

guilt and responsibility for the impending exterminations⁶⁵.

As the months went on, the references to the Holocaust became a bit more overt. The reader discovers that Jünger had relatively comprehensive knowledge of the concentration camps. On April 6, 1942, for example, he talked with the new chief of staff who had arrived from Berlin: "Er teilte mir fürchterliche Einzelheiten aus den Lemurenwäldern im Osten mit" [He informed me of terrible details about the forests of lemures⁶⁶ in the east] (EPT 338). And a year later, on April 21, 1943, he learned from a visiting colonel about Jews being

⁶⁵ Oddly enough, at the same time Jünger extolled the virtues of individual action, he also negated its potential. In comparing the war to such events as floods (ZPT 122, 175), earthquakes, and meteor showers (ZPT 201), Jünger implied that it was an unavoidable occurrence beyond human control. Especially during his final weeks in Paris he would repeatedly claim that the war was an act of quasi-biblical predetermination, and that, consequently, a successful assassination of Hitler could not have stopped it and would not have ameliorated anything (ZPT 298-299). Jünger did not appear to realize that he was thus combining two mutually exclusive strands of thought. In light of the fact that his dismissal of the potential power of individual action came to the fore most strongly after July 20, 1944, it is conceivable that his change of heart was yet another act of self-justification: by trying to convince the reader (and himself) that killing Hitler would have had no beneficial effect, Jünger may have hoped to divert attention away from his own inaction in this matter.

⁶⁶ A term borrowed from Roman mythology. Ancient Romans believed that the souls of their dead relatives and ancestors erred through the night as evil spirits. They called these spirits *lemures*.

shot and otherwise executed (he does not specify where). After expressing dismay at this news and after voicing his feeling that the executions may be a premonition of worse things to come, Jünger concludes by saying: "Übrigens sollen diese Erschießungen nicht mehr stattfinden, da man zur Vergasung der Opfer übergegangen ist" [Incidentally, these shootings are said to no longer take place, because there has been a move toward gassing the victims] (ZPT 51). This one perfunctory sentence is all Jünger has to say about the issue of gassing; the term does not appear again after this point. Since the sentence begins with the word "übrigens" (meaning *incidentally* or *by the way*), it once again marks itself as merely an afterthought. Moreover, by using the impersonal "man" [one], Jünger avoids any reference to who is doing the gassing and in the process accords the sentence a detached and utterly clinical tone⁶⁷. Jünger also offers no personal judgment on the moral ramifications of the killings. Finally, it is quite revealing that he immediately follows this very brief and impersonal sentence by a more detailed and personal remark about how much he enjoyed the sight of a particular fig tree at the *église de l'Assomption*. The latter matter is evidently closer to his heart and mind than the news of his government's Jewish policy. In spite of the

⁶⁷ We have seen him use the same strategy of remoteness earlier when he described the arrests of Jews.

detailed knowledge he had gained about it, that policy remained essentially an abstraction for him⁶⁸.

We should remember that in the overall context of the Paris diaries, references to the Holocaust are quite rare. The few sentences we have quoted here represent almost the totality of what Jünger had to say about it. He did, however, seem to be rather occupied by the question of responsibility, to which he returned several more times. On October 28, 1943 he mentioned a discussion he had with other staff members about the extent to which "der Einzelne sich für die Untaten Kniébolos verantwortlich zu fühlen hat" [the individual has to feel responsible for Kniébolo's crimes] (ZPT 189). And earlier that month Jünger had entered into his diary one of his longest and most reflective paragraphs on the question:

(41)

"Die großen Vernichtungspläne können nur gelingen, wenn ihnen Veränderungen in der moralischen Welt gleichlaufen. Der Mensch muß weiter im Werte sinken, muß metaphysisch gleichgültig werden, ehe der Übergang von der Massenvernichtung, wie wir sie heute erleben, zur Totalvernichtung möglich wird. Wie unsere gesamte Lage, so ist auch dieses Verhältnis in der Schrift vorausgesehen, und zwar nicht nur in der Schilderung der Sintflut, sondern auch in der des Untergangs von Sodom: Gott drückt es dadurch aus, daß er die Stadt verschonen will, solange sie noch zehn Gerechte birgt. Dies ist

⁶⁸ Jünger's only actual personal encounter with one of the manifestations of Hitler's anti-semitic policies occurred on June 7, 1942, when he was walking down the rue Royale and saw three girls wearing yellow stars (EPT 351).

auch ein Symbol der ungeheuren Verantwortung des Einzelnen in dieser Zeit. Für ungezählte Millionen kann Einer Bürge sein" (ZPT 175).

Jünger himself, however, was not that one individual. And it is here that the gap between what he wrote and what he did becomes most apparent. His moralizings took place strictly in the abstract and in private. Even though he recognized that the key to stopping the Holocaust and the war lay in personal responsibility, he never assumed that responsibility himself. He benefited from the goodwill and the protection of people such as Speidel and Stülpnagel, but he never openly supported them or joined their cause. Jünger had a unique chance to be the "guarantor" for the countless millions he talks about, a unique chance to help stop the man ultimately responsible for the killings, yet he did not grasp that chance, choosing instead to retreat to the safety of the salon.

As we indicated at the outset, and as we have seen at various points throughout our discussion, Jünger managed to remove himself from most of the unpleasant manifestations of the war and the Occupation, as well as from efforts at ending both. This removal is hardly surprising since an end to the Occupation would have meant an end to his sheltered life of privilege. Jünger, the amateur entomologist, lived inside a cocoon and did not want to leave it.

Part 2:

Exile in Utopia

VI

Heinrich Mann, the older of the two Mann brothers, was born in Lübeck on March 27, 1871. He completed an apprenticeship as a book dealer in Dresden, then worked for two years at the prestigious Fischer publishing house in Berlin. When Mann's father, a wealthy grain merchant and prominent local politician, died in 1893, he left much of his fortune to his two sons, which enabled them to focus on their literary aspirations. Heinrich Mann quit his job at Fischer and traveled around Europe, visiting France (Nice and Paris) as well as Italy, where, together with his brother Thomas, he would spend much of the next five years. He moved to Munich in 1898 and to Berlin in 1925.

The first of the two novels that helped put Mann in the public eye appeared in 1905. Entitled Professor Unrat, it took aim at what Mann perceived to be the suffocating and hypocritical *petit bourgeois* atmosphere of small-town Wilhelminian Germany. The second novel, entitled Der Untertan, was first published as a serial in 1911-1914. When

it finally appeared in book form after the war, it sold 100,000 copies in the first year (1918) alone.

During the 1920s Mann entertained a number of personal connections with France and was a frequent visitor to the country. In 1923, for example, his close friend Félix Bertaux, a well-known Parisian *germaniste*, invited him to be the first German participant at the *Entretiens de Pontigny*, where Mann met, among others, André Gide and Roger Martin du Gard. He was also well acquainted with numerous French politicians, including the leaders of the *Front Populaire* (Noth 83). In December 1927 he was Prime Minister Edouard Herriot's guest of honor in the Trocadéro Palace where he participated in the festivities commemorating Victor Hugo's 125th birthday.

In 1930 a film version of Professor Unrat was released under the title *Der blaue Engel* [The Blue Angel]. Directed by Josef von Sternberg and starring Marlene Dietrich in the role of Lola, it was Germany's first talking picture. It met with much critical and popular acclaim. The Hitler press, for whom Mann had long been a major source of irritation, vehemently attacked him for the contents of the film and even threatened him personally. Around the time of these threats, Mann attended a reception at the French embassy, during which the ambassador, André François-Poncet, offered him refuge in

France (Banuls 1970, 18). Mann declined, but would be forced to accept the offer just three years later. The attacks leveled against Mann by the National Socialists did not significantly reduce his standing in the eyes of the general public, however. On the contrary, after the furor over The Blue Angel had quieted down somewhat, it was even suggested that Mann should challenge Hindenburg and put forth his name as a candidate for the 1932 presidential elections.

In February 1933 Mann had to flee Berlin. He settled in Nice, the city he had first visited forty years earlier as a 22-year old. During the 1930s, Nice was one of two cities on the Côte d'Azur where German political refugees congregated; the other was Sanary, situated about halfway between Marseille and Toulon. Lion Feuchtwanger, among others, had taken up residence there. The town became so populated with exiles that locals, irritated by the unexpected influx of strangers, took to calling it "Sanary-la-Boche" (Noth 78). In May 1933 Mann's books were burned, and in August he was stripped of his German citizenship.

While he lived in France, from 1933 to 1940, Mann was a regular monthly contributor to the left-leaning *Dépêche de Toulouse*, which provided him with his only constant source of income during this period, paying him 1,000 Francs for each of the 77 articles and editorials he wrote for the paper

(Jasper 280; Banuls 1970, 20). He also wrote about 400 essays and articles for other papers, such as the *Pariser Tageblatt* and the *Neue Weltbühne*. In addition, he was very active in the political arena and participated in numerous conferences and congresses. In 1935, for example, he spoke before the League of Nations in Geneva and attended the International Writers' Congress in Paris, where he headed the delegation of exiled German writers. At various points during his exile Mann served as president of such Paris-based anti-fascist organizations as the *Schutzverband Deutscher Schriftsteller* [Federation for the Protection of German Writers] (1933), the *Weltkomitee gegen Faschismus und Krieg* [World Committee against Fascism and War] (1935), and the German *Volksfrontkomitee* [Popular Front Committee] (1938).

In 1940, with German troops invading France, Mann fled once again, first to Spain, and finally to California, where he settled in Los Angeles. His brother Thomas had already moved there two years earlier, and Lion Feuchtwanger, his old neighbor on the Côte d'Azur, would follow a year later. Heinrich Mann, who was nearly 70 years old when he arrived in California and who spoke almost no English, had extreme difficulty adjusting to life on the new continent and complained about this situation at length. He devoted much of his time in Los Angeles to writing his memoirs (entitled

Ein Zeitalter wird besichtigt [Inspecting an Era], 1945), as well as a number of other texts, some of which would remain unfinished. In 1949 he received East Germany's highest civilian honor, the *Nationalpreis*, and in 1950 he was elected president of the East German Academy of Arts. Heinrich Mann died in Santa Monica, California, on March 12, 1950.

VII

Whereas Ernst Jünger's French diaries were essentially of a non-political nature and staged a supreme non-involvement in contemporary affairs (although we have seen that the ideological slant inherent in them can be deduced by analyzing their language), Mann's numerous writings about France were relentlessly and overtly political in nature. Their focus, however, was almost never directed toward France, but virtually always toward Germany. They consistently posited France, and in particular a certain idealized version of French history, which we will define in due course, as a utopic ideal and as the countermodel to contemporary Germany. Mann's texts about France - mostly essays, speeches, and other non-fictional writing - contain at least two distinct strands of thought. One concerns his stance on the problem of national antagonism; the other

concerns his views on his own presence in France.

Mann's position on the question of nationalism and Franco-German antagonism is virtually identical to the one held by Kurt Tucholsky, with whom he corresponded on a regular basis between 1913 and 1935. Mann had argued for a reconciliation between France and Germany as early as 1892. He saw the two countries as the center of a future united Europe, an idea that formed the cornerstone of his political belief system. In 1916 Mann referred to Europe as "unser gemeinsames Haus" [our common house] (E2, 260), a phrase that is reminiscent of the terminology much in use in current European politics. He advocated a turn away from the nation state as it had existed for the last few centuries and instead argued for the establishment of a trans-national, pan-European confederacy with Germany and France at its core. He was convinced that individual countries were no longer viable on their own, "weder wirtschaftlich noch politisch und erst recht nicht sittlich" [neither economically, nor politically, and least of all morally] (E2, 527). He was also convinced that the idea of Europe would have to grow organically from the bottom up. He was extremely skeptical about the possibilities of bringing about a united Europe by means of conferences and treaties, such as Locarno, if those

treaties were not supported by the people and accompanied by a change in attitudes about questions of nationality (E2, 351).

In Chapter 2 we have seen that for Tucholsky nationalism was not so much defined as a contrast between two nations, but as a contrast between certain individuals in each nation. Again, Mann held essentially the same point of view. He, too, was convinced that the question was not one of France versus Germany, but of French nationalists versus German nationalists (E2, 249, 342). Like Tucholsky, Mann was also very concerned about the persistence of national clichés and stereotypes on both sides. In a December 1930 article he deplored the fact that "Deutsche wie Franzosen zu lange in der Hauptsache nur Schlechtes voneinander gedacht haben" [Germans as well as Frenchmen have for too long mainly thought bad things about each other], and that the few good things each people had to say about the other were either "Nebensächliches" [trivialities] or "historische Verdienste" [historical merits]. As examples of these two categories he cited German beer and Goethe on the one hand, and French cuisine and cathedrals on the other (E2, 406-407). Mann believed that ignorance and the prevalence of received ideas about Germany among a majority of the French people contributed to the fact that they were largely unprepared for

the quick rise of Hitlerism and consequently underestimated its danger. Mann deplored that as late as the 1930s much of the French public still clung to outdated images of a romantically benign Germany and failed to see the threat of Nazism (Z 419). He accorded great importance to the role education as an institution as well as individual educators could play in correcting these misconceptions. As we have said, Mann's views in all of these matters are virtually identical to those expressed by Kurt Tucholsky at around the same time.

The point at which Mann differed from Tucholsky, as well as from Ernst Jünger, was in the way in which he perceived his own presence in France. Unlike either of the other two, Mann had essentially been *forced* by the German government to leave his native land⁶⁹. We might therefore expect there to be some degree of resentment on Mann's part toward his new place of residence (as would indeed be the case with his second exile during the 1940s in California). Yet quite the opposite was true: Mann's move to France in many ways

⁶⁹ While Tucholsky was eventually also barred from returning to Germany, his initial move to France in 1924 was a voluntary one. In Jünger's case the displacement was only temporary. Although it did contain some degree of coercion (since it came as part of a military operation), it was not prompted by any fundamental political differences with the Nazi regime.

represented a physical return to a place he had often considered his spiritual home. He had already taken up virtual "residence" in the country long before his exile began. Looking back on this period in 1943, Mann would not even qualify it as exile (he placed quotation marks around the term), but instead referred to it simply as "ein etwas ausgedehnter Aufenthalt" [a somewhat extended stay] in a country where he perceived himself as "ein Zugehöriger" [one who belongs] (cit. Banuls 1973, 200; Banuls 1966, 620). There are two main reasons why Mann had already considered France his "home" for such a long time prior to 1933: firstly, his extensive knowledge of and passion for the French language and its literature, and secondly, his specific vision of the country's history.

Mann once said that half his life consisted of French sentences (Banuls 1970, 39). He claimed that the first book he ever read, at the age of five, were Charles Perrault's fairy tales (Z 373), and that French books were his "Erzieher" [educators] (cit. Banuls 1966, 617). His French teacher in school suffered from chronic migraine headaches and therefore often let Mann conduct the class. Mann would read to his fellow students for hours from the works of Daudet, George Sand, Molière and his "classique préféré," Racine (Banuls 1970, 26). In 1910 he said that he felt "exiled" in

the German language, calling it "Tragik" [a tragedy] that he had to write his novels and other works in German. He was convinced that he would have been able to achieve better results writing in French (Banuls 1973, 205). In later years Mann did in fact write numerous texts, mostly articles and essays, in French, which he called "ma langue d'inclination" (cit. Banuls 1973, 205). Unlike his stay in Los Angeles, his move to France was thus not fraught with massive linguistic and cultural obstacles.

The way in which Mann used his particular vision of French history and politics represents the second, and vastly more important, reason why his first exile can be called a return home. In his literary endeavors, both before and after 1933, Mann frequently used examples taken from French history to make a point about the German present, usually by establishing a dialectic between the two nations. For Mann France, as the home of the eighteenth-century *philosophes* and the ideals of 1789, was the primary embodiment of liberty, reason, humanity, and justice in the world. Wilhelminian and, later, Nazi Germany were its complete and fundamental antitheses. Hitler, in particular, would eventually challenge the meaning of France as perceived by Mann:

(42)

"Die Vernichtung Frankreichs ... beschäftigt ihn, wie einzig seine eigene Person ihn beschäftigen kann: da

Frankreich unter den Völkern die unverbrüchliche Idee der Freiheit darstellt.... Er aber ist der Gegenspieler und muß fallen, wenn Frankreich steht. ... [Jeder kennt] das wahre Paar der Gegensätze ...: hier er und drüben die Freiheit" (VK 82).

The ideals of the French Revolution were Mann's most frequent point of departure and point of reference in establishing his dialectical models of history. In 1905, for example, he translated Choderlos de Laclos's Liaisons dangereuses into German. In the foreword to his translation he drew a parallel between the decadence of the late eighteenth-century French nobility and the German Empire of the early twentieth century. He argued that just as the Revolution of 1789 had removed the vestiges of France's feudal system and established a more representative system of government⁷⁰, a similar revolution in Wilhelminian Germany could achieve the same effect. In the only play Mann ever wrote, entitled Madame Legros, he also expressed his admiration for the radical democratic tradition of the Jacobins. Performed in Mann's hometown of Lübeck as well as in Munich in 1917 - in the midst of the war - the play was

⁷⁰ Ideally, at least. It was one of Mann's great oversights that he never quite acknowledged the gap between the Revolution's ideals and the way that these ideals were or were not realized. An admission that they were in fact *not* always realized to their full extent would of course have weakened Mann's argument considerably.

received surprisingly well by the German public (cf. Banuls 1970, 16).

The best-known texts in which Mann used a moment of French history as a potential paradigm for his own country are his two voluminous novels about Henri IV: Die Jugend des Königs Henri Quatre [The Youth of King Henri Quatre] and Die Vollendung des Königs Henri Quatre [The Completion of King Henri Quatre], published in exile in 1935 and 1938, respectively. On their most immediate level, these texts seem to be merely straightforward historical novels, but they can also be read as allegorical attacks on the Hitler state and in particular on Hitler's mistreatment of and contempt for most writers and thinkers. Mann's fictionalized Henri IV embodied his ideal of what a national leader should be; he was "der Fürst der Armen und Unterdrückten, wie er der Fürst der Denkenden war" [the prince of the poor and oppressed, as well as the prince of the thinkers] (VK 151), thus fostering a climate in which cultural innovation and new ways of thinking could thrive.

In 1939 Mann, who at that point was already living in France, was asked to write an essay on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the Revolution. As might be expected, he once again used the opportunity to exhort his countrymen to follow its ideals, admonishing them to prove their

"geistige Redlichkeit" [spiritual and intellectual decency] with "Taten" [deeds] and to rise up against the Nazi regime (VK 512). The two key terms Mann used in this essay should be explained in more detail. The antithesis between the concepts of *Geist* [a term that means both "intellect" and "spirit" in Mann's usage] and *Tat* [deed, action] is central to his understanding of France. In an early text entitled "Geist und Tat" (1910) he had outlined his view of the essential difference between French and German history. He believed that in Germany the *Geist* was historically positioned at a greater distance from the average person than in France (E2, 258). In other words, he thought that the French people were far more receptive to the revolutionary political and literary ideas advanced by many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century writers than the German people would have been. Mann believed - somewhat naively, to be sure - that literature could be a powerful means of political change if it operated within a framework conducive to such change, and that this framework existed in France, but not in Germany:

(43)

"Die Geistesführer Frankreichs, von Rousseau bis Zola, hatten es leicht, sie hatten [ein Volk. Ein Volk mit literarischen Instinkten, das die Macht bezweifelt, und von so warmem Blut, daß sie ihm unerträglich wird, sobald sie durch die Vernunft widerlegt ist]. In Deutschland hätten sie es schwerer. Sie hätten es mit einem Volk zu tun, das leben will, nichts weiter wie" (E1, 9-10).

Mann also believed that it was up to each individual author to not only write, but also to be actively involved in shaping and reforming society. Voltaire's efforts to abolish torture, Victor Hugo's work as a parliamentary deputy, and Emile Zola's pro-Dreyfusardian tract "J'accuse" were just a few examples of the kind of political *engagement* Mann had in mind. In the essays he devoted to these and other writers, he saw himself as continuing in their tradition.

Mann acknowledged that his predilection for France was rooted mainly in the abstract and in the past, and that it may not have had much to do with the country's contemporary reality of the 1930s. He once said that he loved France "als geschichtliche Erscheinung" [as a historical phenomenon] (cit. Banuls 1966, 620). In his mind he had created an imaginary and utopian place in French history to which his spirit had relocated long before his body did. Just as he was convinced that he would have achieved better results writing in French than in German, he believed that he would have been happier, more welcomed, and better appreciated in that imaginary place than he was in Wilhelminian and Nazi Germany. His writings about the idealized world of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century French writers and a sixteenth-century French king represented a "temporal and spatial exile" from the realities of twentieth-century

Germany (cf. Koopmann 82, 84). For Mann, French history had become a blueprint for an anticipated German utopia. Paradoxically, though, this utopia had also *already* existed in another time and place, and Mann often (re)lived it as reality in his texts. His forced exile of 1933 was thus merely a second step. It followed his first self-imposed exile in utopia.

Chapter 5

Michel Tournier:

Inverting the *Doppelgänger*

"Vous n'avez jamais cru au sens de ce monde et vous en avez tiré l'idée que tout était équivalent et que le bien et le mal se définissaient selon qu'on le voulait. Vous avez supposé qu'en l'absence de toute morale humaine ou divine les seules valeurs étaient celles qui régissaient le monde animal, c'est-à-dire la violence et la ruse"

Albert Camus, Lettres à un ami allemand, 71.

I

Since the publication of Le Roi des Aulnes in France in 1970 and in Germany in 1972, critical reactions to it have generally fallen into one of two categories: the first category consists of analyses which focus almost exclusively on the novel's outwardly observable plot, with much attention being paid to its depiction of Nazi Germany. Unfortunately, much of the criticism in this category has either remained at the superficial level of simply retelling the plot, or it has taken the form of vehement personal attacks against the

author for his alleged sympathy with the ideological phenomenon he describes. The second category has been prevalent since around the mid-1980s. It consists of a large number of scholarly articles and monographs⁷¹ that have moved farther and farther away from discussions of the book's fictionalization of concrete historical events and more toward purely theoretical questions of semiology, myth, and the function of the text as an independent entity dissociated from any reference to reality.

Curiously enough, a two-fold split similar to the one just described was already evident in the divergent kinds of reception given the novel by French and German reviewers when it was published: German reviewers⁷² generally concentrated more heavily on the novel's second half, the part that takes place in Nazi Germany from 1939 to 1945, and they built their reviews around Tournier's peculiar portrayal of the country and its history. French reviewers, on the other hand, focused mainly on the first half, Abel Tiffauges's *Écrits*

⁷¹ Two of the more original and fruitful entries in this long series are Michael Worton's "Myth-reference in Le Roi des Aulnes" (1982) and Mireille Rosello's L'indifférence chez Michel Tournier (1990). Other relevant titles are those by Bouloumié (1988 and 1991), Klettke (1991), and Petit (1991).

⁷² Meaning essentially West German, even though Tournier is one of the few contemporary French authors who was also published in the former East Germany.

sinistres, taking place in pre-war France. They made particular mention of Tournier's use of semiology and the concepts of "phoria" and "inversion" so central to the text. They tended to regard the second half as simply an illustration of the theoretical views expounded in the first (cf. Fischer 58-59, 82-83).

Neither of these two types of critical evaluations alone does justice to the text. Clearly, Le Roi des Aulnes is "not just a hermetically sealed artefact" (Davis 46). It has been said that Tournier's writings have inaugurated a "return to meaning" in the contemporary French novel⁷³, generally understood as a reaction to the seemingly manifest "non-meaning" of many *nouveaux romans*. It is true that much of what Tournier has written is intensely topical and contains the markers of traditional novel-writing: well-defined characters, places, and themes. And yet, even though Le Roi des Aulnes's main theme (Nazism) is "so obvious ... that ... a sense of ethics requires the subject to be understood as the *réfèrent obligé* of the narrative," most critics have managed to avoid a serious confrontation with it (Platten 1991, 281). Obviously then, it is possible to read Tournier as something other than a traditional realist. The "return

⁷³ Jean-Raoul Austin de Drouillard. Tournier, ou le retour au sens dans le roman moderne. Berne: Peter Lang, 1992.

to meaning" turns out to be not quite as simple as it may seem. Instead, we might call Tournier a postmodern realist. He combines conscientious historical and cultural documentation with the extensive use of semiology, theories of language, reference, and myth. These two divergent elements cannot and should not be separated. A critical response which takes into account both the political and theoretical questions raised by Le Roi des Aulnes would therefore be welcome. Yet even though "Tournier himself clearly solicited" this response, it "has not been forthcoming" (Platten 1993, 181). So far, only Colin Davis's Michel Tournier - Philosophy and Fiction (1988), and David Platten's "The *Geist* in the Machine" (1993) have come close to providing such a response.

Even more importantly, a thorough analysis of what we might call the novel's "Germanic" components (its numerous linguistical, historical, and literary references to Germany) still remains to be done. This oversight on the part of critics is puzzling, to say the least. Tournier's text cannot be fully grasped without some understanding of these components.

In this chapter, we will present a reading of Le Roi des Aulnes that is based largely on a discussion of precisely those "Germanic" elements. We will show how Tournier

assembles a coherent picture of Nazi Germany based on both traditional mimetic and postmodern semiological strategies. We will analyze Tournier's use of the German language, of Romantic conventions (including the *Doppelgänger* motif), of myth (in particular Goethe's poem, Erlkönig), and of signs (specifically colors).

II

Michel Tournier was born in Paris on December 19, 1924. His grandfather taught German in Dijon, and both of his parents studied German at the Sorbonne. His mother used to visit the country for at least a month every year since 1904, except in times of war (Fischer 7). Tournier himself also visited Germany numerous times during his childhood in the 1930s, in particular the town of Freiburg and the surrounding Black Forest. He has referred to that time as "my German childhood" (NDL 7). In his autobiography, Le Vent Paraclet (1977), he writes that he grew up "sous le signe de la *Germanistik*" and "avec un pied en Allemagne" (69). The first impressions he collected on those visits are of an era "où le nazisme déferlait sur l'Allemagne" (VP 72). Speaking specifically of his trips in 1933 and 1934, the first two years of Nazi rule in Germany, Tournier says: "J'ai tout vu,

tout compris, et tout retenu. Ces séjours en Allemagne m'ont donné une éducation politique extraordinairement précoce" (cit. Koster 154).

If we believe Tournier's own assessment, written with the benefit of 20/20 hindsight, his family was immune to Nazism: "Nous, nous savions. Nous étions vaccinés contre la séduction nazie. Nous l'avions vue naître" (VP 75). Some might argue that the seemingly approving picture he paints of Nazism in Le Roi des Aulnes is evidence enough that at least Tournier himself was, and is, not immune to its seduction. As we indicated before, that point was in fact made by some of the early reviewers of the book, most notably by Jean Améry, whose blanket condemnation of the novel we will examine in more detail in section III.

Tournier was fifteen years old at the beginning of World War II. During the war he lived with his family in the Paris suburbs of Saint-Germain-en-Laye and Neuilly, as well as in Normandy. He recalls how, after the Nazis had invaded France, his family - "une famille ... nourrie ... de Goethe et de Schiller" (VP 78) - was suddenly shunned by neighbors and friends because of their close pre-war relation to Germany. One man, an old French colonel, telling Tournier's father how useful the Nazi presence in France was going to be in his opinion, used the words "your Germans" - "Vos

Allemands! C'était ce possessif qui estomaquait le plus mon pauvre père" (VP 77). According to Tournier's account, his parents remained strictly opposed to the Nazis throughout the occupation. They considered the occupation almost as a personal disappointment by the people they had dedicated their lives to: when the Germans invaded France, "c'était tout un pan de leur vie qui s'écroulait" (VP 76).

More important for our discussion of Le Roi des Aulnes is Tournier's recollection of the potential appeal fascism had for people of his own generation:

"L'une de mes expériences fondamentales d'enfant en Allemagne nazie, c'est la propagande intense dont je sentais bien qu'elle était dirigée sur moi et les garçons de mon âge. Il y avait là une énorme entreprise de séduction des jeunes. C'est tout le sujet de la ballade de Goethe, *Le Roi des Aulnes*: 'Komm, gar schöne Spiele spiel ich mit dir' ('Viens, je jouerai avec toi des jeux magnifiques'). ... Et après la séduction vient la menace: 'Und bist du nicht willig, so brauch' ich Gewalt' ('Et si tu n'es pas consentant, j'emploierai la violence')" (cit. Koster 155).

"...j'avais nettement senti combien le nouveau régime allemand était axé sur moi et mes semblables. En effet c'est l'une des caractéristiques du fascisme de surévaluer la jeunesse, d'en faire une valeur, une fin en soi.... Il faut d'ailleurs convenir que la vie politique fasciste a quelque chose d'enfantin, je veux dire qu'elle se manifeste à un niveau qui le met à la portée des plus jeunes par ses perpétuels défilés, ses fêtes, ses feux de joie, ses randonnées, ses organisations de jeunes" (VP 105-106).

Later on we will see in more detail just how Tournier

has incorporated the theme of the seduction of youth, so central to Goethe's poem, into his own novel.

In 1943 Tournier began to study philosophy at the Sorbonne, concentrating at first on Greek and later on German philosophers. In July 1946, René Cheval, a well-respected French expert on German literature and philosophy, arranged for some French students to visit the University of Tübingen, which he had headed since the end of the war. Tournier was one of the few who got the opportunity to go. He set out on what was planned to be a three-week trip to the small university town in Germany's southwest. He ended up staying for four years. Tübingen, located in the French zone of occupation, was, and still is, somewhat of a francophone center among German universities. At the same time as Tournier, Claude Lanzmann, who would later direct the film *Shoah*, was in Tübingen preparing his *diplôme* on Leibniz. Friedrich Sieburg, whose *Gott in Frankreich?* earned him praise in both nations, was one of Tournier's professors in Tübingen, as was Carlo Schmid, a native of Perpignan and translator of Baudelaire and Malraux, and later a leading Social Democratic member of the German Parliament and co-writer of West Germany's constitution.

While Tournier's biography cannot in itself be a tool of literary analysis, we are certainly entitled to wonder about

the impact this bicultural upbringing had on him. Asked recently about his feelings for Germany after having spent so much of his youth there, Tournier answered:

"It is not a question of whether or not I love Germany. Germany is part of my childhood, my culture, and myself in general. ... You could just as well ask me about my feelings toward France. Do I love France? The question simply does not come up. France is within me; I am France, and *Deutschland, das ist wie ein Stück von mir*⁷⁴. ... I cannot imagine myself without Germany, without my childhood spent partially in Germany, without my German education" (NDL 6-7, my translation).

Yet Tournier has not always maintained such a cheerfully unproblematic attitude toward this issue. A few years earlier he wrote:

"A mon enfance correspondit la montée et l'épanouissement du nazisme. A mon adolescence l'occupation de la France.... A ma jeunesse répondit l'Allemagne année zéro.... On le voit, ce fut divers, mais jamais heureux, bien loin des rêves en tout cas. Le Roi des Aulnes est donc un acte de conjuration, et comme un effort pour liquider un complexe" (cit. Fischer 8).

In any case, whether we believe Tournier's first or second statement, it should be clear that his interest in German philosophy and history and his years spent in Germany were two of the factors in his decision to attempt a novelistic representation of the country.

After returning to France in 1949, Tournier worked as a

⁷⁴ "Germany is like a part of me."

producer and director at RTF, a French radio and television network. From 1954 to 1958 he was a newspaper reporter, and from 1958 to 1968 he served as the director of literary services at the Plon publishing house. During those years he also translated a number of German texts into French, most notably Erich Maria Remarque's Im Westen nichts neues.

Tournier published his first novel, Vendredi ou les limbes du Pacifique, in 1967. He had begun writing Le Roi des Aulnes as early as 1958, but abandoned the project for several years. When the book was finally published in 1970, it was the first novel ever to be awarded the *Prix Goncourt* unanimously. Tournier himself has been a member of the *Académie Goncourt* since 1972. Some of his most recent texts include Gaspard, Melchior et Balthazar (1980), Gilles et Jeanne (1983), La goutte d'or (1985), Le medianoche amoureux (1989), Le miroir des idées (1994), and Le pied de la lettre (1994). He has also published a large number of children's books, some of which were adaptations of his own earlier works meant for adults. Tournier turned 70 years old in December 1994.

III

It has been rightly said that Tournier has thought more

and written more about Germany and in doing so has been misunderstood more profoundly and more emotionally than almost any other contemporary French writer (Dean 118). Most often, Tournier has been accused of having produced "kitsch," of having depicted the Nazis too sympathetically, even of having written a dangerously apologetic pro-Nazi novel. Saul Friedländer levels the "kitsch" charge against a number of fictional representations of Nazism in literature and film (including Le Roi des Aulnes, Fassbinder's *Lili Marleen*, Syberberg's *Hitler*, and Visconti's *The Damned*).

Unfortunately, in most cases his criticism is superficial and unjustified. He admittedly reads and views these fictions not through the eyes of the film or literary critic, but through those of the historian, who of course will find them lacking if he looks at them as though they were purely historical documents. Yet another critic claims to detect (undefined) historical "blind spots" as well as a "pro-German thrust" in the novel (Nettelbeck 106)⁷⁵. Judgments like these deserve closer examination only because they touch on two of the principal questions that have to be answered in conjunction with Tournier's understanding of Germany: first,

⁷⁵ We are entitled to wonder about the accuracy of that statement, given the fact that the same critic quite inaccurately refers to the book as an "evocation ... of the Occupation" (ibid.). Le Roi des Aulnes is about many things - one thing it is not about is the Occupation.

the question of aesthetics, and second, the question of the alleged complicity between the author and his protagonist.

In 1973, after the novel had appeared in German translation, Jean Améry, a Belgian literary critic, published an article accusing Tournier of having "aestheticized barbarism" (73). His article still remains the most virulent piece of Tournier-bashing produced to this day. Its charges are built on shaky ground, to say the least. Améry never read the French original. He based his criticism of Tournier exclusively on the German translation done by Hellmut Waller, from which he quotes very selectively and mostly out of context⁷⁶. Améry writes that Tournier displays "the questionable courage of rendering the Nazi epoch fit for literature" (73) - as though that epoch ought better be excluded from literature. For him, the book is saturated with "Wagnerian opera Romanticism" (76), and drowns "in a morass of pure kitsch due to its lack of moral anchoring" (74). The novel's crucial final episode involving the young Jewish boy, Ephraim, is nothing but an "alibi" for Améry (79). In his opinion, Le Roi des Aulnes as a whole is "a politically as well as aesthetically dangerous book" (79).

In fact, things are not as clear-cut as Améry and the

⁷⁶ Waller's German sometimes distorts Tournier's French quite significantly. For example, he neutralizes many of Tournier's ironic or pejorative descriptions of Göring (cf. Fischer 103-106).

other critics make them out to be. Aesthetics was of course a large and integral part of Nazism's appeal. We know that hundreds of thousands of spectators at the annual Nuremberg Party Congress, for example, were mesmerized by the pomp and circumstance, and, indeed, kitsch offered there in the form of illumination, music, speeches, parades, flags, and the like. Tournier in turn has simply "used the story of one person to make more comprehensible the hysteria of an entire nation" and to "reveal Nazism's emotional power" (Petit 38, 44). Améry seems to believe that merely reproducing elements of Nazi aesthetics, kitschy as they may have been, already signals an endorsement of that aesthetics. Yet to believe this would mean the end of most, if not all, representations of fascism in fiction and even in non-fiction. Tournier's relation to Nazi aesthetics is undeniably one of fascination, to be sure, but at the same time it is just as undeniably one of "existential rejection" (Dean 118).

Asked how he would reply to Améry's charges, Tournier summed up the argument quite convincingly by drawing an analogy to Grass's The Tin Drum:

"[Le Roi des Aulnes] est ... l'un des rares romans français traduits en hébreu. [Le] jugement des Israéliens me paraît significatif. ... La vérité, c'est que j'ai voulu donner de l'Allemagne nazie une image complète, c'est-à-dire non seulement les arrières-boutiques (prisons, tortures et camps de concentration), mais aussi la vitrine (parades, cathédrales de lumière, tout le côté wagnérien du système). Apparemment, on n'a pas le droit de faire cela. Günther Grass dans son

Tambour ... évite soigneusement ce second aspect. A le lire, les nazis étaient purement et simplement grotesques. Je ne suis pas d'accord. Ils n'étaient pas grotesques. Ils étaient effrayants. Un défilé de S.S. dans leurs uniformes noirs avec le tam-tam funèbre de leurs tambours, cela faisait froid dans le dos, ce n'était pas drôle. ... [Cette] barbarie n'avait pas à être esthétisée, car elle était essentiellement esthétique" (cit. Koster 154-155).

As far as the question of complicity is concerned, the most severe mistake and (as Améry has demonstrated) apparently the easiest mistake one can make would be to regard Tiffauges as a spokesman for Tournier. No reading could be more simple-minded and more wrong-headed. Part of the problem may lie in the unusual way the novel is set up: in trying to explain the Nazi phenomenon partially by way of non-traditional and non-historical means, Tournier writes a mixture of the mimetic (historical facts and real persons, such as Göring and Hitler) and the fantastic (mythical stories and invented characters, such as Tiffauges), in which the lines between the two are not always easy to spot. The novel is built to a surprisingly large degree on solid historical documentation. For example, Tournier perused all 42 volumes of the Nuremberg trial proceedings (Morita-Clément 255). He also read numerous scholarly accounts on Nazism, on

the workings of the *napola*", and on East Prussia, as well as several unpublished sources:

"J'ai déniché le journal du dernier garde-forestier à Rominten, et j'ai repris de nombreuses notations dans mon roman, telle l'histoire du cerf tué par le petit professeur. [J'ai] été le premier à rencontrer, à leur sortie de prison en 65, deux hommes du IIIe Reich: Baldur von Schirach, qui était le chef de la jeunesse hitlérienne, et Albert Speer, qui était le ministre de l'armement de Hitler en 45. ... J'ai obtenu la transcription d'un témoignage radiophonique que m'a confié un rescapé d'Auschwitz qui était entré dans le camp à l'âge de dix ans. J'ai repris textuellement son témoignage" (cit. Bouloumié 1986, 24).

Possibly led astray by the presence of these factual details, Améry and others may have made the mistake of reading the whole novel as though it were a historical document. The supposedly missing ethical distance between author and protagonist, the alleged "lack of moral anchoring," which Améry thinks is responsible for their complicity, is simply not borne out by a close reading of the text. As we will discover later on, Tournier actually makes quite a strong moral statement condemning Tiffauges's actions. But since his *interpretation* of Nazism (as opposed to its *description*) is strictly an allegorical one, one that is based almost exclusively on the use of myth and signs, it takes some effort on the reader's part to discover that moral

" *Nationalpolitische Erziehungsanstalt*, a type of elite Nazi school designed primarily to prepare young boys for war.

statement. Apparently, Améry did not make that effort.

IV

One of the more obvious "Germanic" components of the novel is its liberal use of the German language. The number of German words and phrases (excluding place names and proper names) that can be found is quite considerable: Morgengabe (119), Waldtee (256), Latrinenwache (264), Arbeitseinsatz (270), Ausweis (273), Feldgendarmarie (274), Kommandantur (274), bretzels [sic], Pumpernickel (279), Feldwebel (281), Junker (282), Unhold (284), Oberforstmeister (287), Puffraeder (288), Chemische Werke, Wolfsschanze (298), Naturschutzgebiet Rominter Heide (301), Jagdhaus, Jägerhof, Reichsjägermeister (308), Hochkapitaler (320), Feldmarschall, Wehrmacht (323), Reichsjägermeisterhirsche (326), nationalpolitische Erziehungsanstalten (364), Kommandeur (365), blockhaus [sic] (374), Anstaltsleiter, Reichsmarschall (375), Jungmannen, Hundertschaftführer, Züge, Gruppen, Zugführer, Gruppenführer, Reichsparteitag, Jungmädelbund, Jungwolk [sic], Bund Deutscher Mädel, Hitler Jugend [sic], Arbeitsdienst, Wehrmacht (378-379), Luftwaffe, Draufgängertum (380), Flaggenparade (382), Heimmutter (383), Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer (394), Kinderlandverschickung (400),

Gauleiter (408), Julfest (411), Kieler Woche, U-Boot (417), Wandervogel (418), Reichsjugendtag, marschieren, Schützenwiese (420), fälisch, westisch (421), Urgrund, Urinstinkt (423), Weib, Mädel, Mädchen, Fräulein, Frauenzimmer, Wehrrertüchtigungslager (426), Blut und Boden (432), Diktat (434), Kreisleitungen (439), die Blutfahne, Reichsparteitag (477), Topfschnitt (483), Seitengewehr (486), Volkssturm (497), Frühstück (516), Panzerkorps (527), überall (531), Flakhelfer, Kreisorte (532), Panzerfaust (536), Tellerminen (541), Rollkommando (558), Arbeit macht frei (561), Panzerdivisionen (570), Flak (580).

As we can see, the majority of these words are either war-related or Nazi-related. Beyond their obvious function within their respective semantic fields, what is their function for the text as a whole? After all, Tournier could easily have expressed most of these concepts in French, but he chose not to.

First and most importantly these German words are no doubt designed to introduce a touch of authenticity. We have seen that Tournier was very much concerned with historical accuracy in his descriptions of Nazism. Using the actual German names for Nazi terminology simply adds one more element of factual detail.

All but one of the words occur in the second half of the

novel, which takes place in East Prussia. We would almost expect there to be some German words in these passages, therefore they do not necessarily strike us as particularly unusual or remarkable or worthy of special mention. Yet on another level, these words, taken in their totality, have a distancing effect. By virtue of their intrinsic foreignness and the fact that they are mostly italicized, they stand out from the rest of the words. The germanophone reader may skip over them with no problem, but all others are momentarily stopped in their train of reading, thrown off balance ever so slightly. There is no mistaking it: Tiffauges and the reader are no longer in France, and Tournier does not want the reader to forget that fact for a moment. What better and easier way of achieving this than on the very level of language itself?

As we have said, most of the words we have listed so far could just as easily have been rendered in French, and the text would have been just as understandable (or even more so for the non-germanophone). However, there are other instances where the German words do more than just sit there, where they interact closely with the French narrative surrounding them and are essential for an understanding of that narrative. Professor Blättchen, for example, makes a play of words on Tiffauges's name:

"Il s'est persuadé que Tiffauges n'est qu'une altération

de *Tiefauge*, et cache par conséquent une origine teutonne lointaine.... Il ne m'appelle donc plus que Herr Tiefauge, ou, dans ses moments d'euphorie, il m'anoblit, et je deviens Herr von Tiefauge" (406, Tournier's italics).

The careful reader will remember that Tiffauges himself already alluded to the word "Tiefauge" (literally meaning "deep eye") in the first half of the novel:

"Mais c'était toujours moi, plus jaune, plus ténébreux encore qu'à l'ordinaire, avec mes yeux profondément enfoncés dans les orbites..." (74).

Later, Blättchen carries the wordplay one step further when he calls Abel "Herr Triefauge" (meaning "bleary-eyed," or literally "dripping eye"):

"...je connais assez l'allemand pour savoir que *Triefauge*, ça veut dire oeil malade, larmoyant, chassieux exactement" (407, Tournier's italics).

The whole sequence only works because Tournier uses those two German words that look and sound alike. They are more than just a curiosity, more than an authentic detail; they become an integral part of the French narrative itself.

A similar example is the word *glockenspiel*. It is used to describe the voice of Tiffauges's landlady: "C'était Eugénie, et il y avait tout un orchestre de glockenspiel dans sa voix" (180). In the preceding passage Eugénie had just surprised Tiffauges as he tried to secretly slip back into

his apartment after one of his photographic hunts for children. The bell-like sound of her voice becomes a despised sign for Tiffauges: whenever he hears it, he expects bad news. However, in the two subsequent occurrences French equivalents are used for the word *glockenspiel*:

"Régulièrement, j'entendais tinter le jeu de clarines de Mme Eugénie, et chaque fois je pouvais déceler le dard empoisonné de ses propos" (186).

"C'est alors que la voix de clochette de Mme Eugénie s'élève dans le silence général, comme la sonnette de l'enfant de chœur lors de l'Élevation..." (190).

In the second passage Madame Eugénie's *glockenspiel* voice will announce Abel's resemblance to the murderer Weidmann, a moment of profound torment for Tiffauges (more on this shortly). The German word and its French equivalents thus not only appear at crucial stages in the first half of the novel; they also point to the geographical location (Germany) and nature of Tiffauges's future crimes (hunting children and eventually aiding in their murder).

Another function of the German language in the text is that of satire. The best example of this comes in the form of two lists of titles - one containing the ranks of *Förster*, or German forest rangers: "Förster, Revierforster [*sic*], Forstmeister, Landforstmeister, etc." (284), and another containing the ranks of SS officers: "Sturmmann, Rottenführer, Unterscharführer, Scharführer, Oberscharführer,

Hauptscharführer, Untersturmführer, Obersturmführer, Hauptsturmführer, Sturmbannführer, Obersturmbannführer, Standartenführer, Oberführer, Brigadeführer, Gruppenführer, Obergruppenführer, Reichsführer SS" (376-377). Apart from the fact that the inherent stupidity of these monotonous words becomes evident when they are bunched together like this, Tournier also parodies the German predilection for pompous-sounding titles by juxtaposing the SS ranks with the equally pompous-sounding *Förster* ranks, a strategy which results in comic incongruity. A similar effect is achieved when one of the Nazi characters is introduced as "Sturmbannführer Professor Doktor Otto Blättchen" (386), an appellation of no less than three titles, followed by a banal first name and a somewhat ridiculous last name⁷⁸.

Names, as one particular form of words, do have special meaning for Tournier. He rarely chooses them by accident; they almost always have a certain significance:

"Pour Michel Tournier..., nommer, c'est appeler à l'existence. Le nom est essence, principe d'existence, il engendre l'être ou l'objet qu'il désigne" (Bouloumié 1988, 41).

We have already seen how Abel Tiffauges's last name is the occasion for wordplay. His first name is of course equally portentous: the biblical Abel, a nomad, was killed by

⁷⁸ *Blättchen* means "little page" or "little leaf."

his sedentary brother Cain. Jews, "peuples errants, fils d'Abel, ces frères dont il se sentait solidaire" (560), were killed by the Nazis, "un Caïn botté, casqué et scientifiquement organisé" (560). Abel Tiffauges helps in the killing of Jews; he therefore helps in the killing of those he later considers his "nomadic brothers," but he does not realize it until Ephraim opens his eyes to this fact. Consequently, the novelistic Abel is not just an Abel but also a Cain.

Another example of the meaning names have for Tournier is Frau Unruh, who appears near the end of the novel. After initially feeling at home and at ease in East Prussia and in the *napola*, Abel is overcome more and more by unease, by restlessness, by non-quietness, by *Unruhe* at around the same time Frau Unruh makes her first appearance.

Names also play a crucial role in defining one of Abel's most important *Doppelgänger*, Eugène Weidmann. Both the name and identity of this German mass murderer on trial in France are in fact historically accurate. This is all the more astonishing since Tournier could probably not have invented a more overdetermined name and persona if he had tried. The chain of connections and prefigurations set in motion by this name is an amazing, and amazingly circular, one. To begin with, Weidmann's first name, "Eugène," as Tiffauges has it,

or "Eugen," as its German version would be, is not only profoundly ironic in terms of its etymology (eu = good, when in fact he is anything but good), but also in light of the fact that Tiffauges's landlady, Eugénie Ambroise, carries the corresponding female version of the name. It is Madame Eugénie, who, when she sees Weidmann on the day of his public execution, exclaims for all to hear:

"Mais, monsieur Tiffauges, c'est qu'il vous ressemble! Ma parole, on dirait votre frère! Mais c'est vous, monsieur Tiffauges, c'est tout à fait vous!" (190).

Before he got to this point, Tiffauges had already gradually been portrayed as Weidmann's *Doppelgänger*, starting with their identical height and weight (155), their identical birthdays and their status as an only child (164)⁷⁹. Here now he totally assumes Weidmann's identity, thanks to Madame Eugénie's three short sentences, escalating from a mere physical resemblance to the complete disappearance of Abel's own identity. As we have seen before, Madame Eugénie is also

⁷⁹ Later this mirror-like image will be reinforced when it turns out that Tiffauges travels to the West, while Weidmann traveled to the East, and that Tiffauges is captured by the Germans on June 17, 1940, while Weidmann was executed on June 17, 1939.

(It is quite likely that Tournier selected this particular date because it has special significance in the history of cold-war Germany's East-West relations. On June 17, 1953 East German workers rose up against the communist regime. The revolt was crushed by Soviet tanks. West Germany subsequently observed the date as its national holiday until 1990.)

the one who figures out Abel's daily photographic hunts for children: "Voilà M. Tiffauges qui revient du marché avec sa provision de chair fraîche" (180). Therefore, both "Eugène" and "Eugénie" prefigure the course of Abel's future development in Germany. As if that were not enough, Tournier briefly mentions a third character with the same name, Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli, who is elected Pope (162).

Weidmann's last name is an even richer case of etymological and semiological overdetermination. In German, the word *Weidmann*⁸⁰ means hunter. Thus a *Weidmann* is someone who kills animals; Eugène Weidmann killed humans. Göring assumes both of these guises: as a hunter he is a killer of deer⁸¹; as one of the highest ranking Nazi officials he is a killer of humans. Abel, who has already been thoroughly identified as Weidmann's *Doppelgänger*, and who in France had hunted children with his camera, now turns into a real hunter and killer of children. In the description of one of the hunting excursions, Tournier uses the word *Weidmannsheil* (343), which is a traditional salute wishing good luck during the hunt. Not only does the word contain immediate

⁸⁰ Often the word is spelled with -ai- instead of -ei-, but the second version is the only one authorized by etymology: from Old High German *weida* = hunt.

⁸¹ One of his official titles was actually *Reichsjägermeister* (Hunting Master of the Reich).

references to both "Weidmann" (the first part of the word) and the Nazis (the second part, "Heil"); its placement within the passage also suggests a close connection to the celebration that accompanied Eugène Weidmann's execution (we read, for example, of "flots de champagne" being consumed, an allusion to the giant picnic that took place at Weidmann's hanging); and the word is also brought into close textual proximity with the word *crime*, which recalls Weidmann's earlier crimes (in this scene, the "crime" in question is Essig's inadvertent killing of a deer that had been reserved for Göring). *Weidmannsheil* thus reminds the reader of Weidmann and Göring, and consequently Abel, in not one, but four ways simultaneously. Based on all this evidence, we can establish a chain of linked identities whose beginning and end are almost impossible to disentangle: Eugène Weidmann = murderer = *Weidmann* = hunter = Göring = Abel. Through the fortuitous use of just one person's name, Tournier manages to sum up a good part of the entire novel.

V

Before looking at the considerable role Romanticism plays in Le Roi des Aulnes itself, let us consider briefly its place in Tournier's autobiography, Le vent Paraclet,

because in it we can see *en miniature* the basic strategy Tournier deploys. Writing in 1977, Tournier makes a point of describing in some detail the train rides he used to take through the Black Forest roughly forty years earlier. He mentions, for example, the oddly picturesque names of the little villages he used to pass through: Bärenthal [Bear Valley], Hirschsprung [Deer Jump], Höllental [Hell Valley], Himmelreich [Kingdom of Heaven], Notschrei [Cry of Distress], Titisee [Lake Titi], Herzogenhorn [Duke's Horn]. He calls these "une série de stations dont les noms poétiques et baroques faisaient notre joie" (VP 73). He also evokes images of "lacs métalliques," "sommets arrondis," "hautes herbes," and "cathédrales forestières" (VP 74). Even at this late stage of the twentieth century Madame de Staël's book seems to exert its grip on those who follow in her steps⁸². In writing this passage, Tournier employs a certain ironic distancing, to be sure (that litany of names is simply too precious not to be taken ironically). However, the self-conscious referral to Romantic *topoi* still depends for its effectiveness on the reader's *familiarity* with precisely those *topoi*. Tournier apparently has reason to assume that his readers are in fact familiar with them, that the 150-year-old clichés still have currency today. By the same

⁸² Tournier claims not to have read De l'Allemagne (Scheiner 85).

token we can submit that it is no coincidence that Tournier both opens and closes this chapter of Le vent Paraclet with that most trite of Romantic clichés, circulated by, among others, Gérard de Nerval:

"...là-bas à l'horizon, ...savez-vous ce qu'il y a? ... Il y a l'Allemagne! La terre de Goethe et de Schiller, le pays d'Hoffmann; la vieille Allemagne, notre mère a tous!" (VP 67, 147).

Tournier uses the same procedure in several key passages of the novel. Here, too, he counts on the reader's ability to recognize certain literary conventions established by the Romantics. For example, when describing Abel's first impressions upon his arrival in Germany, Tournier writes:

"...sa vue s'étendait à l'infini de tous côtés, galopant parmi les brumes, planant au-dessus des bruyères et des miroirs d'eau..." (253).

And shortly afterward:

"C'était une succession de champs de seigle mûr, presque blancs, coupés par la ligne sombre d'une forêt de sapins, d'étangs brillants comme des plaques d'acier qu'entouraient des plages de sable clair, de tourbières charbonneuses où éclataient les troncs argentés des bouleaux, de marécages où se reflétaient les nuages laiteux, entourés par la sombre toison d'une aulnaie, de champs de blé noir alternant avec des pièces de lin blanc. 'Un pays noir et blanc, pensa Tiffauges. Peu de gris, peu de couleurs...'" (262).

These passages show a remarkable degree of similarity to some of Madame de Staël's descriptions of German landscapes.

The key words she uses in one particular section are:
 "forêts," "une nature non habitée," "chênes," "sapins,"
 "fleuves," "bruyères," "sables," "un climat sévère,
 remplissant d'abord l'âme de tristesse," "une impression
 pénible," "silencieux," "le temps marche là plus lentement
 qu'ailleurs" (I, 51). From both of their accounts we get a
 general impression of fantasy, dreaminess, slowness,
 heaviness, and darkness. In fact, based on just these two
 moments in Tournier's text, we might be tempted to say that
 Tournier simply copies Madame de Staël and other Romantics:

"Ce n'est pas pour rien que le merveilleux trop souvent
 décrit en France comme inhérent à l'atmosphère
 allemande, ...que l'Allemagne comme terre magique,
 fantastique, irréelle, nous soient projetés
 spectaculairement par Abel Tiffauges. En lui, amplifié,
 ce cliché français qui a cours depuis l'époque
 romantique d'une Allemagne révélation d'un besoin
 spirituel, d'une Allemagne seconde patrie" (Richard 17).

However, this assessment is only partially true.
 Tournier soon moves away from Staëlian clichés. The second
 of the two quotes we read a moment ago was in fact not
 complete; the crucial final half-sentence was missing:

"Un pays noir et blanc, pensa Tiffauges. Peu de gris,
 peu de couleurs, *une page blanche couverte de signes
 noirs*" (262, my italics).

Tiffauges, citizen of the twentieth century that he is,
 reads the landscape as a semiologist, not as a romantic. And

even more of this is to follow:

"...les traces d'oiseaux, de rongeurs et de petits carnassiers qui entrecroisaient leur délicate sténographie sur la grande page blanche ouverte à ses pieds" (278).

"A l'opposé de la France, terre océanique, noyée de brumes, et aux lignes gommées par d'infinis dégradés, l'Allemagne continentale, plus dure et plus rudimentaire, était le pays du dessin appuyé, simplifié, stylisé, facilement lu et retenu" (280).

"...pour Tiffauges dont le ciel clouté d'allégories et d'hiéroglyphes retentissait sans cesse de voix indistinctes et de cris énigmatiques, l'Allemagne se dévoilait comme une terre promise, comme le *pays des essences pures*" (281, Tournier's italics).

"...mis en page dans un paysage noir et blanc..." (281-282).

"...la Prusse-Orientale tout entière était une constellation d'allégories..." (282).

"Il allait livrer cette terre à une interprétation tiffaugéenne" (283).

We quickly realize that we have left Madame de Staël far behind, and most of Romanticism with her, and that we are now standing firmly on postmodern ground. The poles of the Staëlian polarity have been inverted (cf. Fischer 130). The cliché about French clarity and simple lines, for example, has been transferred to the East Prussian landscape. Germany as a whole has been turned from a landscape to be passively admired into a text to be actively deciphered, just as Le Roi des Aulnes is a text that cannot be passively consumed but

must be actively read in order to be meaningful.

It is interesting that nature as a text to be read does not enter into Abel's universe until his arrival in East Prussia. Germany is a text for Tiffauges; France is not. In fact, there are virtually no descriptions of nature at all in the entire first part of the novel, which takes place in France.

What then, we may wonder, is it about this province that so captivates Tiffauges? A quick glance at some facts will be helpful: in 1939, around the time Tiffauges arrived there, East Prussia's population was only about 2.5 million, and it was spread over a vast terrain that consisted almost exclusively of forests and fields. Peat production and horse breeding were two of the main sources of income for the province. East Prussia was also the last refuge of the elk in Germany; about 1,300 elks still lived there in 1940. Tournier, the ever thorough researcher, managed to incorporate all three of those odd facts into the novel: the pre-historic cadaver is pulled out of a peat bog, Göring is an expert horse breeder, and Tiffauges comes across a giant elk named *Unhold* (meaning "monster" or "evil spirit"). Tournier had never actually been to East Prussia when he set out to write the book. He first visited the area in August 1975, five years after finishing the novel. He built his

portrayal of the province strictly on the basis of old maps, guidebooks, photographs, and private testimonials. Assessing his 1975 trip, he admits that the image of East Prussia as a barren moonscape of black and white was wrong⁸³:

"...ce fut plutôt une campagne riche et avenante, doucement vallonnée, plantée d'arbres majestueux, semée de plans d'eau pittoresques..., une sorte de Limousin⁸⁴ en somme où il y aurait eu des lacs" (VP 140).

Tournier has said that the fictional East Prussia for him had "the enormous appeal of ... being a fantasy land" (NDL 7), an area of low population, wide open spaces and with somewhat of a frontier mentality not unlike the mythical American Old West. We may assume that its appeal for Tiffauges lies in the same qualities: he feels a paradoxical sense of freedom as soon as he enters East Prussia ("paradoxical" because he is, after all, a prisoner of war). The allegedly unadulterated, jungle-like, non-ordered nature of forests and landscape in general was of course one of the main features of the French Romantics' image of Germany and other "uncivilized" parts of the world.

⁸³ It is no coincidence that East Prussia is painted predominantly in black and white. We will see why when we discuss the text's many uses of color (section VII).

⁸⁴ We have to wonder whether Tournier's choice of precisely this region (the description he gives is vague enough so that he could have chosen almost any other) is not an allusion to Giraudoux's novel.

But nature is not the only aspect of Romanticism that Tournier uses for his purposes. Another important concept is that of the *Doppelgänger*. It is an ancient myth rooted in the folklore of many cultures. Folk belief holds that to meet one's *Doppelgänger* is a sign that one's death is imminent. If this is true, Abel seems to have nine lives, because he comes across a good number of *Doppelgänger* in the course of the novel before he finally dies. We have already discussed the central role Weidmann plays in this regard. Göring and Hitler are two other *Doppelgänger* of Abel: at the very outset of the text, Rachel calls Tiffauges an "Ogre" (13). Later, Göring, the killer of deer, is called the Ogre of Rominten (303), and Hitler, the killer of humans, the Ogre of Rastenburg (369). Tiffauges himself, the hunter of children, becomes the Ogre of Kaltenborn (460).

Yet another *Doppelgänger* of Tiffauges, the fifteenth-century nobleman Gilles de Rais, does not actually appear in the text, but is evoked through a number of details. To begin with, the name of Gilles's castle was *Tiffauges*. Gilles, who fought alongside Jeanne d'Arc against the English, was also a notorious mass murderer (he killed about 300 children). This makes him a double of the mass murderer Weidmann and therefore of Tiffauges. Gilles killed the children mostly by impaling them. Tiffauges witnesses the

impalation of three pigeons and three children. It is believed that Charles Perrault took Gilles as the model for his fairy tale, Bluebeard, in which the character murders his wives - Tiffauges's horse is called *Barbe-Bleue* (Bluebeard)⁸⁵. Finally, Gilles was executed for his crimes, as was Weidmann, and Abel commits a sort of suicide, a self-execution, when he voluntarily drowns in the swamp.

Apart from these four *Doppelgänger* of Tiffauges (Göring, Hitler, Weidmann, Gilles), others abound. For example, Rachel is Ephraim's *Doppelgänger*. She opens the novel; he closes it. Both instill guilt in Tiffauges: the biblical Rachel was Joseph's and Benjamin's mother, and Ephraim's adoptive mother. She cries for her children when they are carried away by the Assyrians. The novelistic Rachel is a metaphor of the biblical Jewish *Ur-Mother*, accusing Abel of being an Ogre who, as it turns out, indirectly helps carry away Jews to their death. Ephraim is also a metaphor for Jews, and Tiffauges will literally drown under the weight of Ephraim's body, and under the weight of his own guilt,

⁸⁵ Tournier chooses a particularly fitting quote by Perrault as the epigraph for the chapter dealing with Göring: "Il flairait à droite et à gauche, disant qu'il sentait la chair fraîche" (304). Tournier is also familiar with the corresponding German version of the Bluebeard tale, which had been collected by the Brothers Grimm in the wake of the Romantics' infatuation with folklore.

revealed to him by Ephraim. Professor Blättchen, the classifier of races and anatomical features is the double of Professor Essig, the classifier of deer antlers; beyond their common interest in systems of classification, they also share the first name "Otto" - with all the doubling and mirroring this palindrome implies. And Haio and Haro, the identical twins, are also *Doppelgänger* of each other.

Besides being simply a double of a particular character, the *Doppelgänger* in Le Roi des Aulnes is also closely associated with the concept of inversion. The most important examples of this type of positive/negative, benign/malign double are Saint Christopher/*Erlkönig*, white/black, old Germany/new Germany, and the verbs *porter/emporter*. In the next two sections we will talk about them in more detail.

VI

Tournier uses a number of ancient myths and biblical stories in order to allegorize his version of Nazi Germany. He portrays Abel's spatial journey to East Prussia as an inverted chronological journey into earlier times, into the Dark Ages, even into prehistory. For example, Abel comes across both an *aurochs* and an elk, two prehistoric animals that are no longer supposed to be alive in 1940's Germany.

The discovery of the 2000-year-old peat bog cadaver falls into the same category.

There are numerous other examples of this temporal regression. For example, the technical sophistication of the various modes of transportation used by Tiffauges diminishes as the plot progresses. He starts out with a car (Tiffauges is a garage mechanic), followed by a bicycle, followed by a carriage, followed by his horse, *Barbe-Bleue*, followed by a journey on foot carrying Ephraim, and ending up with the total negation of all movement.

We also find a whole cluster of allusions to ancient Egypt. The biblical Ephraim was born in Egypt; Tournier's Ephraim therefore carries that connotation with him, but more than that, Ephraim also draws an elaborate comparison between ancient Egypt, which expelled the Jews, and Hitler's Germany, which expelled and killed them (565ff). In addition, there are brief references to "la momie de Ramsès" (162), a prefiguration (as we will see shortly) of the mummy-like cadaver called *Erlkönig*, and to the hieroglyph as a metaphor for all the signs Tiffauges is confronted with: "je n'ai cessé d'observer des hiéroglyphes" (16), "ce monde semé d'hiéroglyphes dont je n'ai pas le clé" (152), "le ciel clouté d'allégories et d'hiéroglyphes" (281). Moreover, Tournier chooses a quote from Exodus as the epigraph of the

final chapter: "Au milieu de la nuit, l'Éternel frappa tous les premiers-nés dans le pays d'Égypte" (526), just as Abel (who is the namesake of one of the two first-born biblical sons) is struck by the Russian troops advancing into Germany in the middle of the night.

The novel's third chapter, which describes Tiffauges's arrival in Germany, bears the title "Hyperborée" (247). Again, Tournier has managed to come up with a relevant symbolic connection between ancient myth and modern politics: in Greek legend, the Hyperboreans were a mythical people living in a paradisaical region beyond the Boreas (the north wind). They lived for exactly one thousand years before they died. Nazi Germany is initially a sort of paradise for Tiffauges, and we know that Hitler liked to refer to his reign as the "Thousand Year Reich".

While all of these references to myth are no doubt important, the central myth referred to in Le Roi des Aulnes is that of the *Erlkönig*. The novel, of course, takes its title from Goethe's poem, Erlkönig. A line from the poem also serves as the epigraph to the chapter in which Tiffauges's career as a seducer of children is completed: "Veux, fin jeune garçon, -tu venir avec moi?" (372). The myth is based on a Danish folk tale which the writer Johann Gottfried Herder imported into Germany in the eighteenth

century. Herder's translation, however, contained one decisive error: he translated the Danish word *eller* [elves] as *Erlen* [alders] (VP 119). Goethe took Herder's faulty translation of the tale as the starting point for his ballad, which is still one of the best known poems in the German language. According to Tournier,

"[ce] poème de Goethe, dont un lied de Schubert devait redoubler la célébrité, a toujours été pour l'écolier français abordant la langue et la littérature allemandes le poème allemand par excellence, le symbole même de l'Allemagne" (VP 118).

The poem's strong theme of physical seduction has suffered somewhat in the traditional French translation. In order to make this theme more apparent, Tournier proposes to translate the crucial line "Mich reizt deine schöne Gestalt" not as it is traditionally done: "Ton doux visage me charme," but instead more correctly: "Ton beau corps me tente" (VP 120). This version "permet toutes les interprétations sans en imposer aucune" (VP 120).

Whereas Göring's persona is inscribed mainly in the sign of the *Weidmann*, Hitler, the other main historical character in the novel, is presented as an *Erlkönig*, as a great seducer, especially of young children. As we have seen at the beginning, for Tournier seduction was one of the defining features of Nazism. Throughout the novel the *Erlkönig* serves as the negative pole, as the malign inversion of Saint

Christopher, the biblical figure who carried the child Jesus Christ across a river. Whereas Saint Christopher simply carries, the *Erlkönig* carries off or away - a wordplay that really only works in French: Saint Christophe *porte*/le Roi des Aulnes *emporte* les enfants. The *Erlkönige* Hitler and Tiffauges *emportent* children into the *napolas*, and Jews into the gas chambers. There is, however, one crucial difference between the two: Tiffauges, unlike Hitler, is *not just* an *Erlkönig*. The seducer is only one half of his identity. The other half, the benign inversion which must not be neglected, is that of the rescuer, Saint Christopher⁸⁶. In fact, this is the aspect that prevails in the end: Abel carries (*porte*) Ephraim to safety while sacrificing himself.

The great irony in this final scene is that Ephraim, riding on Abel's shoulders, says to him: "Cheval d'Israël, *emporte-moi*" (565) - Abel himself has essentially turned into a horse at this point, or more accurately: into his own horse's inverted *Doppelgänger*; he has become a second *Barbe-Bleue* under reversed signs. Ephraim's choice of terminology notwithstanding, Abel is no longer someone who *emporte* children, but rather a benign Saint Christopher. Again, it should not be surprising to the inveterate reader of signs that Abel ends up as a horse; he himself prefigures this

⁸⁶ We should remember that the name of young Abel's *collège* was *Saint Christophe*.

development at the outset of the novel when he mentions the "cheval ailé de Mobilgas" in the neon sign of the gas station where he works (15).

The *aulne* itself, the alder tree that lent its name to Goethe's poem and Tournier's novel, appears at four strategically placed locations in the text: the first time immediately after Abel's arrival in Germany (262), the second time when the peat bog cadaver is discovered (294), the third time shortly before Abel becomes the "Ogre of Kaltenborn" (358), and finally a few sentences before the end (580). In all four instances the word is designed to remind the reader of the negative, or malign, part of Abel's identity that will not be overcome until after the final occurrence of the word.

Aside from the living *Erlkönige*, there is a dead one as well: the 2000-year-old body that is being pulled from the peat bog is named *Erlkönig* by Keil, an expert on these cadavers. If Tournier says that *Erlkönig* is a decomposed body, then, by extension, the *Erlkönig* Hitler and his ideology are also decomposed bodies. And, inversely, if Saint Christopher, the rescuer of the Jew Jesus is triumphant in the end, then, again by extension, so are all those who saved Jews, those who fought malign inversions, including the benign Tiffauges who finally prevails. Far from endorsing the evil *Erlkönig*, as we have seen some critics charge,

Tournier clearly comes down on the side of Saint Christopher.

VII

Over the course of its nearly 600 pages, Le Roi des Aulnes unfurls dozens of tentacle-like subjects that are all somehow connected to its allegorical skeleton (cf. Dean 119). It is not always easy to follow all of these various developments simultaneously⁸⁷. While "on peut avoir l'impression à la lecture du Roi des Aulnes de comprendre chaque phrase, chaque page, chaque chapitre," it is no wonder that one may still be left with the feeling that "l'essentiel se dérobe" (Merlllié 11). One reason for the fact that the novel is not easily grasped in its totality is the vertiginous proliferation of signs. Signs and prefigurations are everywhere in this book. Tiffauges states repeatedly that *tout est signe*: "la lecture des signes - la grande affaire de ma vie" (48), "ma vie est bien assez encombrée ... de prémonitions" (56), "environné de signes et d'éclairs comme je suis" (105), "tout est signe ici, comme ailleurs" (152), "tout est symbole et parabole" (166), "l'avalanche de

⁸⁷ The structure of Le Roi des Aulnes has been compared to that of a fugue. In Le vent Paraclet, Tournier expresses his admiration for the art of the fugue as perfected by Bach (VP 128).

signaux" (212), "l'univers surchargé de signes et de figures symboliques de Tiffauges" (470). He sees "reality as a profusion of signs which urgently require analysis" (Davis 35), and the reader has little choice but to follow him in his quest for the meaning of those signs if he hopes to make sense out of the text. (After a while, the reader and Tiffauges both run the risk of semiotic paranoia, of seeing signs everywhere, even where there may not be any.) In fact,

"[a] game is being played with the reader: he is challenged to see the relevance of the new detail, left uncertain and unsettled [until] the texts asserts it. The text ... lives on coherence; it can't permit non-thematic material, but teasingly pretends to, and engages the reader's speculative competence as it does so. Little is lost in the novel, which deploys much skill in attaining consistent relevance, a skill striking the reader as a virtuosity; but this skill has an implication: that the world of the novel is a nearly magical one in which the most incidental detail may be a harbinger, ...a world of inexplicable and inescapable repetition" (York 82, 85-86).

The Nazis have appropriated a large part of the semiological universe by inverting traditional signs⁸⁸. As the anti-Hitlerian German officer, Raufeisen, tells Tiffauges:

"La vérité, c'est que dès son origine, le IIIe Reich est le produit des symboles eux-mêmes qui mènent souverainement le jeu" (476).

⁸⁸ It seems that Tournier was slightly ahead of the experts on this point: in his 1989 book, Rites of Spring, historian Modris Eksteins comes to a similar conclusion.

For example, the Nazi swastika is the malign inversion of the Maltese Cross, a traditional symbol of peace (474). In a similar vein, the eagle used by the Nazis on some of their flags looks to the left; it is an inversion of the old Prussian eagle, whose head was always turned to the right (475)⁸⁹.

But even though Tiffauges recognizes some of these malign inversions early on (105-106), he does not do anything about them until it is almost too late. Benign inversion, which "consiste à rétablir le sens des valeurs que l'inversion maligne a précédemment retourné" (123), does not occur until Abel's highly symbolic conversion into the "cheval d'Israël" who rescues Ephraim. In fact, Abel does not really care about questions of good or evil when he arrives in Nazi Germany; what appeals to him there is "not the content of the ideology, but the effort to create a perfectly ordered symbolic universe that excludes all that is unsettling in life" (Cloonan 51). Raufeisen is a passionate reader of signs, just like Tiffauges. But unlike Tiffauges, he recognizes that there are moral differences between good and evil signs. Abel, however, is far too preoccupied with

⁸⁹ To further complicate matters, Tournier informs us that in heraldry *left* means *right*, and *right* means *left* (475).

deciphering signs to worry about their ethical content⁹⁰. He admires the Nazis' mastery of semiology, but just as he and they lived by the sign, so they will die by it, or, as Rauf Eisen reveals to an incredulous Abel: "Qui pêche par les symboles sera puni par eux" (472).

One large class of signs we will now look at in more detail are colors. An elaborate and quite pervasive color symbolism is being deployed in the novel. The three main colors that recur throughout the text are red, white, and black. Often these colors appear as a threesome within a short textual distance of one another. Even more frequently, two of the colors, most often black and white, combine to form a twosome. The instances in which any one of the three colors appears on its own are far too numerous to mention. There is an occurrence of either "red," "white," or "black" at least once every few pages. Suffice it to say that by insisting on those three colors almost to the point of annoyance, Tournier makes sure the reader never loses them and their rich political and semiological connotations from sight.

As we have said, the first and most crucial connotation Tournier suggests with the black and white combination is

⁹⁰ This is an important point for Tournier: values matter; good and evil may be easily invertible but they are not interchangeable. We will come back to this issue at the end of the chapter.

that of inversion. Abel himself notes "l'inversion noir-blanc" early in the text (181). In fact, his musings about malign and benign inversion are in large part triggered by his discovery of the phenomenon of photographic inversion (what is white on the negative is black on the photo, and vice versa). When he develops the pictures he took of the children, he sees

"l'étrangeté qui naît de l'inversion des valeurs. Le visage aux cheveux blancs et aux dents noires, au front noir et aux sourcils blancs, l'oeil dont le blanc est noir, et la pupille un petit trou clair.... C'est dans la nuit rouge du laboratoire que le négatif s'impose souverainement" (175).

Secondly, black on white is also the way written signs (words on a page) are usually communicated, a quality that is of particular importance for Tiffauges, the sign-reader. Tournier makes extensive use of this image. For example, of Abel's arrival at Moorhof he writes: "...on lisait en lettres gothiques noires sur fond blanc: MOORHO" (253). Of East Prussia he says: "Un pays noir et blanc, ...une page blanche couverte de signes noirs" (262). Of a field covered with new snow: "la grande page blanche ouverte à ses pieds" (278), followed closely by references to "pain ... noir" and "cygnes noirs" (279). Of a secretary writing a letter: "...et en consigna l'essentiel noir sur blanc" (463). With these images Tournier also self-consciously refers back to his own

writing because what is Le Roi des Aulnes after all, if not a collection of black signs on a white surface?

There are many other instances where Tournier combines two of the three colors: "du noir pur au blanc incolore" (78), "pierre noire/pierre blanche" (163-164), "les composantes noire et blanche" (181), "[par] la fenêtre blanchie/[les] ténèbres noires" (277), "le chou rouge et le pain noir" (305), "épars et noirâtres/disques blancs ivoirés" (333), "la ramure dressée en magnifique buisson d'ivoire sombre/[le] corps puissant et ramassé semblait sculpté dans l'ébène" (342-343), "une immense tapis de fourrure fauve et blanc/encadrée de noir" (357), "drap rouge/habit blanc" (362), "le grand laboratoire laqué blanc/une centaine de poissons rouges" (388), "un pays noir et blanc" (402), "[la] terre prussienne est noire et blanche" (402), "leur manteau blanc écartelé de noir" (402), "un gros nuage d'une noirceur insolite/l'air s'est animé de mille et mille flocons blancs" (409-410), "flammée noir et blanc" (433), "les esquifs blancs/le ciel noircit" (458), "[ce] fond blanc, ces silhouettes rouges" (492), "au gibier rouge et noir" (536), "une lueur blanche/globules rouges/ensanglantés/grand soleil rouge/ouragan vermeil/cyclone écarlate/manteau de pourpre" (544-545), "rejetant des selles blanchâtres/ses grands yeux noirs" (553).

In none of those occurrences do the colors have anything directly to do with the theme of the inverted *Doppelgänger*. But by virtue of the sheer frequency of these juxtapositions, the themes of polarity, doubling, and inversion are kept constantly in the reader's mind, even when the text does not refer to them explicitly.

Colors also act as personal signs for Tiffauges's course. For example, something as seemingly innocuous as the color of a bird later turns out to have been a prefiguration: Tiffauges is allowed to save one of his four pigeons from being killed for food. He saves the black one (237). Black is also the color that "survives" in the end, since the last word of the novel is "noir" (581). The three pigeons that are being skewered by the colonel are the two red ones and the white one (237, 241); a prefiguration of the end of the novel, when Tiffauges witnesses the impalement of the three children, Haio, Haro, and Lothar: two of them have red hair, the third one has "white" hair (577). In addition, this discovery is introduced by an accumulation of various other reds and whites: "un tapis de neige immaculée," "la balustrade ... blanche," "tachée de rouge," "un manteau de pourpre" (577), all within the space of just five lines.

Beyond serving as signs of personal prefiguration for Tiffauges, red, white, and black have another, more political

significance as the colors of various German flags. The traditional Prussian flag consisted of two horizontal black and white bars. The colors of the Weimar Republic's flag were three horizontal black, white, and red bars. The text makes two allusions to these facts but at first Tiffauges gives little thought to them:

"Les trois épées rouges sur fond blanc rappelaient les deux épées des Porte-Glaive auxquelles se joignait celle des Teutoniques. La bande noire qui barrait le haut du blason ajoutait au blanc et au rouge la troisième couleur du drapeau prussien" (363).

"Aussi les couleurs de la Prusse-Orientale sont-elles le noir et le blanc, [mais] au noir et au blanc des Teutoniques, il ne faut pas manquer d'ajouter le rouge des Porte-Glaive" (402-403).

Once again, it is not until Abel's semiologically gifted *Doppelgänger* Raufeisen opens Abel's eyes to the Nazis' inversion of the traditional colors, that he realizes its malignancy:

"...quand j'ai vu ce qu'il [Hitler] en faisait - ce drapeau rouge centré d'un grand disque blanc où s'inscrit en noir la croix gammée, j'ai soupçonné le pire. Car cette araignée en perte d'équilibre, tournoyant sur elle-même et menaçant de ses pattes crochues tout ce qui fait obstacle à son mouvement, c'était bien l'antithèse flagrante de la croix de Malte rayonnante de sérénité et d'apaisement!" (474).

The Nazi flag inverted and perverted traditional color combinations by using the three colors in a different arrangement (a black swastika in a white disk on red ground).

In Rites of Spring (1989), Modris Eksteins, giving an account of Nazi use of imagery, points out the same phenomenon: "In the end the process of reversal, which characterized Nazism, meant that light would be turned into darkness. In the Nazi flag, the swastika, a sun symbol, was in black" (320). The new, Nazi colors are thus the evil *Doppelgänger* of the old, Weimar colors. But in spite of their difference, the three colors are also essentially *still the same* as the old ones. Tournier seems to indicate that Hitler's new state is not a radical departure from Weimar's old state⁹¹: it is based on the same symbols, which, in a symbol-driven universe such as Abel's, means everything. It is only at this point, when it is elucidated for him via the metaphor of color signs, that Abel slowly begins to see the true nature of the regime he has been living under and working for. However, he leaves it to Raufeisen to sum up what he has learned:

"Vous aimez la Prusse, monsieur Tiffauges, parce que sous la lumière hyperboréenne, dites-vous, les signes brillent d'un éclat incomparable. Mais vous ne voyez pas encore où mène cette prolifération redoutable de symboles. Dans le ciel saturé de figures se prépare un orage qui aura la violence d'une apocalypse, et qui nous engloutira tous" (478).

As we have seen, Tournier's flag symbolism is built on

⁹¹ This is another point that is crucial for understanding Tournier's view of Nazism. More on it at the end of the chapter.

the combination of all three colors. While these triple occurrences are less frequent overall than the double combinations we saw earlier, they are no less significant for Abel's reading of the world. Again, there are a number of early instances of red/white/black combinations that can be regarded as prefigurations of the direction the text and its protagonist are going to take, namely towards Germany, and more specifically, Hitler's perverted Germany. (Ironically, it is Tiffauges himself, the great reader of signs, who gives those clues in his own *Écrits sinistres*, without being able to interpret them.) In fact, the very first instance of any type of color imagery in the novel is also the first instance of a triple combination. It comes as early as three pages into the text: "le ciel humide et noir/[cette] palpitation rougeâtre/cette page blanche" (15), and it already points to Abel's discovery, some 450 pages later, of the inverted Nazi flag. Some of the other examples with which Tournier keeps reminding the reader of the political significance he attaches to the three colors are: "chapeaux rouges à pois blancs/l'ellébore noir" (307), "velours noir/leur rousseur et leur blancheur" (447), "une meute noire/les cheveux blancs/Wüstenroth"⁹² (461), "Wüstenroth/le masque noir/une

⁹² Lothar Wüstenroth is the name of one of the boys in the *napola*. The suffix -roth is an obsolete spelling of *rot*, meaning red.

blancheur platinée" (463), "Wüstenroth/noir sur blanc" (463), "le rectangle noir/un rectangle de tissu blanc/l'eau rougie de vin" (572-573).

The two German words used to describe red and white of particular intensity or purity are *blutrot* [blood-red] and *schneeweiß* [snow-white]. It is surely no coincidence, then, that Tournier occasionally replaces the word "red" with the word "blood," and "white" with "snow." Most of these replacements come at crucial moments in the text: for example, the short entry in Tiffauges's diary of December 9, 1938, in which we first learn about Weidmann, is immediately preceded by an entry containing the words "un grouillement de tabliers noirs soutachés de rouge," and immediately followed by one speaking of "une mince couche de neige" (151). The second instance occurs on the day of Weidmann's execution: "petits hommes noirs/la chemise blanche/petits hommes noirs [again]/son visage blanc/[le] sang jaillit à flots" (190-191). We have already talked about the place Weidmann holds in Tiffauges's world; the fact that his name is also linked to the colors of the Nazi flag which are so eye-opening for Tiffauges is just one more element reinforcing this central place. The third replacement of colors comes as Abel arrives at Kaltenborn: "un vieil homme en casquette à pont balayait la neige/[c'était] une citadelle

rude, ...aux teintes rougeâtres et noires" (359). The fourth instance refers to the boys in the *napola*: "ces poitrines blanches/il n'y a plus que noirceur/cette saignée" (428). A final crucial moment at which "snow" and "blood" replace "white" and "red" is the next-to-last scene of the novel in which Abel discovers the three children who have been impaled (577-578). The evil and horror of the Nazis, which Abel first clearly recognizes in his conversation with Raufeisen, is being recalled one last time, both for Tiffauges and the reader, in the same terms as before: as an accumulation of signs (colors in this case) that have been malignantly inverted.

VIII

We have seen that Tournier portrays the Nazi symbols as being essentially still the same as earlier German symbols (the colors, the eagle, etc.). He sees Nazism not as a radical departure from earlier German traditions, but as their perverted, yet logical continuation. For Tournier, Nazism, and fascism in general, is built on "a common cultural consensus" (Platten 1993, 188); it comes from within:

"...Le Roi des Aulnes forces us to face the intensely pessimistic reality that Fascism, or Nazism as it was, is not the product of external, historical circumstances

- with all the reassuring distancing and unburdening of individual responsibility that this diagnosis implies - but the mobilization, in thought, of something integral to the human condition" (Platten 1991, 292).

While this assessment is true, it would be a slightly depressing one if Tournier had left it at that. But it is precisely the faintly Sartrean concept of individual responsibility mentioned by Platten and implied by Tournier that offers the only way out.

We should be careful not to reduce a novel as polyphonic as Le Roi des Aulnes to one final conclusion, and not to etch in stone our interpretations of a text that is centrally about the pitfalls of interpretation. However, if there is a point that Tournier seems to be making above anything else, it is that values matter. By showing how almost all things are invertible, Tournier does not posit their moral indifference, as Améry and others seemed to believe, quite the contrary. Good and Evil may resemble each other, and an Evil may come along disguised as a Good, but it is individual moral judgment, and, yes, accurate interpretation of signs, that prevent us from learning the hard way about "the shattering consequences of misinterpretation" (Davis 38). Preoccupied with himself, Tiffauges sees the Evil too late and misinterprets it when he finally does see it, because "he has abandoned any normative standard of truth and morality"

(Davis 52). He is indifferent to ideology, but cannot escape from ideology's consequences. He "goes along with his captors because, like most people, he does not want to consider fully the implications of his actions" (Petit 39). In Nazi Germany Tiffauges finds "the fulfilment of his own most fundamental urge for enslavement and hence absolution from individual responsibility" (Davis 44-45). And yet, individual responsibility is essential if one wishes to fight the spread of Evil. Tiffauges does not accept that responsibility, he does not make value judgments, and he is swept away by the *Erlkönige* waiting to take advantage of him. Tournier tells us that we all can and must choose between the two inverted *Doppelgänger*, between the two possibilities before us, the *Erlkönig* or Saint Christopher.

Chapter 6

Patrick Süskind:

Postmodern Enlightenment -

The Madness of Systems

I

Patrick Süskind has been described as the "wunderkind" of the contemporary German literary scene (Gray 489). His first novel, Das Parfum. Die Geschichte eines Mörders [Perfume. The Story of a Murderer], originally published in 1984, was the most widely read German work of fiction during the 1980s. By the end of the decade, it had been translated into twenty-five languages and had sold more than two million copies worldwide (Gray 489, Hage 101). Its success was and remains especially great in France. Das Parfum is also one of the few contemporary non-anglophone novels that have managed to find a relatively large audience in the United States. In an attempt to capitalize on the book's continuing popularity in France and elsewhere, the Grasse-based perfume maker Fragonard began to market a new perfume named simply "Le Parfum" in the fall of 1994. Süskind was present at its

launch and served as its "godfather." The label on the bottle bore a picture of the Watteau painting, *Nymphe et Satyre ou Jupiter et Antiope*, that had been used as the cover image for the novel's dust jacket. The apparent economic viability of such a marketing scheme should suffice to prove that while Süskind's book did not quite make it onto the racks of paperbacks found in airport terminals and drug stores, its commercial appeal certainly was not all that far removed from the appeal held by the kinds of books which usually populate these racks.

Why, then, did Das Parfum garner such an enormous response as it did? It is not particularly difficult to come up with an answer to that question: the book is reasonably short (just over 300 pages in the original), it is rather easy and enjoyable to read, and the craftily plotted murder mystery around which it is built does much to keep the reader engaged for the length of the text. The narrative, which "harks back to the realistic fiction of the nineteenth century" (Gray 490), is straightforward, it moves along briskly and smoothly, and Süskind's language is always very precise, clear, and lucid.

Because of its immense popular success, and because it seems to present few or no analytical problems, a good number of critics have questioned Das Parfum's credentials as a

"serious" work of literature. Their initial reactions to it were in general far less enthusiastic than the public response. Even as late as 1990, for example, one critic persisted in calling it "not a book ... one would read a second time in the hope of being able to extract any deeper secrets from it" (Hage 103, my translation).

However, whether Das Parfum should be regarded as a "serious" piece of art or as a perishable product of mass culture may no longer be a very pertinent question to ask at this point in time. As Andreas Huyssen has shown in After the Great Divide (Indiana University Press, 1986), postmodernism has largely torn down and thus rendered meaningless the walls that have separated "high" and "low" culture since at least the mid-nineteenth century. Huyssen argues that modernism was responsible for building these walls. As an artistic movement, modernism "constituted itself through a conscious strategy of exclusion, an anxiety of contamination by its other: an increasingly consuming and engulfing mass culture" (vii). Huyssen uses the term "Great Divide" to sum up this kind of exclusionary discourse. Süskind, who is firmly planted in a postmodern environment, is one of those who have participated in the demolition of the rather narrow and elitist concept of literature established by modernism.

While the postmodern paradigm, the relentless mingling of high and low, of elite and mass, has been widely accepted by those who produce and by those who consume culture, it has not yet been accepted to the same extent by those who analyze it. Huyssen deplores the fact that

"[the] belief in the Great Divide ... is still dominant in the academy today (witness the almost total institutional separation of literary studies ... from mass culture research, or the widespread insistence on excluding ethical or political questions from the discourse on literature and art.) ... [The] high modernist dogma has become sterile and prevents us from grasping current cultural phenomena. ... For quite some time, artists and writers have lived and worked after the Great Divide. It is time for the critics to catch on" (viii-ix).

But of course many of them have been slow to do so. Because postmodern texts often appeal to a mass audience they are not seldom viewed with a considerable amount of suspicion by traditional literary pundits, who, out of unwillingness or inability to refocus their critical faculties, choose to either ignore or attack these texts. The reaction to Das Parfum is one such example⁹³.

⁹³ Another is the hostile greeting accorded Tournier's Le Roi des Aulnes. As we have demonstrated in Chapter 5, that hostility was based partly on ignorance, partly on a willfully careless reading of the text. For more on the inadequacies of traditional criticism in dealing with postmodern writing see Judith Ryan's article "The Problem of Pastiche: Patrick Süskind's Das Parfum" in The German Quarterly (Summer/Fall 1990), in particular page 396.

Making value judgments about works of art and literature, separating the good from the bad, the outstanding from the mediocre, is of course important, and it used to be one of the tasks of a critic. It ought to be understood - and Huyssen rightly makes a point of insisting on this (ix) - that the blending of high and low does not do away with this task; it does not automatically entail an acceptance of inferior quality; it does not and should not sanction kitsch or banality. However, such value judgments should always and only be based on hard textual evidence and not on a work's outwardly perceived level of "seriousness" or lack thereof as deduced from its sales numbers.

Those outside the circles of professional literary criticism - historians, for example - may be the more astute and certainly the more useful observers in a case such as Das Parfum. Along with Umberto Eco's The Name of the Rose, Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children, and Graham Swift's Waterland, Süskind's text has been cited as a prime example of what could be considered a new and still evolving literary genre: the postmodern historical novel (Schama 31). Even though it remains first and foremost a fictional text, crucial parts of Das Parfum, such as the olfactory descriptions of Paris presented early in the book, are rooted in serious historical research. The novel owes much, for

example, to Alain Corbin's Le miasme et la jonquille (1982)⁹⁴, a groundbreaking study about the role of smell and stench in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century France - a subject, as it turns out, that had wide-ranging implications for social policies and politics of the period, and that had been all but neglected by traditional historical scholarship. And Simon Schama, best known for his monumental 1989 tome entitled Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution, attested that Süskind

"has provided one of the very best accounts of the topography, the social flavor, and the material life of 18th century Paris to be found anywhere, inside or outside historical scholarship. ... He gets straight A's for his social history. More important, he does so without the footnotes swarming over the narrative like a plague of flies" (Schama 30).

We might therefore say that Das Parfum is simultaneously *histoire* and *une histoire* - in both senses of the term. The moment and place in history that are fictionalized in the novel (the pre-revolutionary years in Paris and in provincial France), set Das Parfum apart from most of the other texts we have examined so far, even from its closest chronological neighbor, Le Roi des Aulnes. Many of the writers we have

⁹⁴ Published in English as The Foul and the Fragrant (Harvard University Press, 1986). Süskind's conspicuous use of the words "Miasmen" and "Joncquillen" in the text (47, 239, 267) can be read as an expression of his debt to Corbin's book.

discussed up to this point, from Giraudoux to Tournier, from Tucholsky to Mann, used some aspect of Franco-German politics as the organizing principle for their texts. Most often they dealt with contemporary events, such as the two World Wars and the Occupation. Usually they tried to advance a certain political point of view, so that these works were, among other things, instances of polemical writing.

Das Parfum, the most recent of our texts, is the only one that does not seem to fit this description. Presenting itself primarily as a murder mystery, as an olfactory *roman policier*, it appears to be manifestly apolitical. The very fact that Franco-German affairs as such are not an issue here could of course in itself be considered an issue: there simply was no urgent political need in the 1980s for the kind of argumentative writing about the matter as there was, say, in the 1920s during Giraudoux's and Tucholsky's time.

The larger issue, however, lies elsewhere. One of the hallmarks of postmodern writing is its self-conscious referral to its very status as writing, to the text's function as a sign awaiting deciphering by the reader, to the question of interpretation and the dangers of

overinterpretation⁹⁵. Unlike in Le Roi des Aulnes, where the proliferation of signs, their multiple operations, and the peril of seeing signs where there are none were all concerns for the central character, the problem in Süskind's case is mainly one for the reader: should we search for any deeper significance in the novel? Does Das Parfum mean anything? Does it even want to mean anything?

A look beyond its surface appearance (which, as we said, suggests that there is no larger meaning to it) will convince us that there may in fact be a significant and signifying interest to the story after all. Grenouille is a killer; he is a monster; he is a dictator; in an era of few absolutes he represents absolute evil. The presence of such a character in any post-war German work of fiction is enough to at least raise speculations about a possible parallel with the real-life version of absolute evil: Hitler. Just as Tournier did in Le Roi des Aulnes, Süskind uses a fictional French character to illuminate a crucial moment of German political history. We might say that he employs one national myth (Enlightenment) in order to allegorize and explicate another

⁹⁵ Earlier we mentioned Umberto Eco as one example of a postmodern historical novelist. He has also written extensively on these kinds of semiological questions. Two of his relevant titles on the subject are: Interpretation and Overinterpretation (Cambridge University Press, 1992) and The Limits of Interpretation (Indiana University Press, 1990).

national myth (Nazism). Whether or not this speculation holds true will be one of our concerns in the following. Other issues to be considered in this chapter are Süskind's attempt at writing a social history of Paris in olfactory terms and his various uses of the history of French Enlightenment. In this regard, we will pay particular attention to the connection between knowledge and ethics as it is delineated in the text.

Patrick Süskind was born on March 26, 1949 in Ambach, a small town about twenty-five miles south of Munich. In the late 1960s and early 1970s he attended the Universities of Munich and Aix-en-Provence, where he studied medieval and modern history. Since the mid-1970s he has been writing screenplays for German television productions. In 1976 he published a short piece of prose entitled "Das Vermächtnis des Maître Mussard" [The Legacy of Maître Mussard]. We will discuss this text, which is based on a passage from Rousseau's Confessions, in more detail later in the chapter. Süskind's first play, the one-man drama Der Kontrabaß [The Double Bass], premiered in Munich in 1981 and was published in 1983. It has since been performed on numerous stages all over Germany, as well as in many other European countries and the United States. Beginning in the fall of 1984, Das

Parfum, his first novel, was serialized in one of Germany's largest nationwide newspapers, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. It was published in book form in the spring of 1985. Since then Süskind has written another television screenplay, entitled Kir Royal (1986), about a Munich gossip columnist, as well as two novellas: Die Taube [The Pigeon] in 1987, and Die Geschichte von Herrn Sommer [Mr. Summer's Story], with illustrations by Sempé, in 1991.

II

On the preceding pages we mentioned that one of the most favorable responses to Das Parfum had come from Simon Schama, a historian. We have also said that Patrick Süskind himself studied history. It should probably not surprise us, then, to discover that Süskind wants his novel understood, among other things, as a contribution to history. Beginning with the very first page of the text, he makes it clear that he wants it understood specifically as a contribution to that portion of history which is most intangible and most unusual because it leaves no traces: "das flüchtige Reich der Gerüche" [the fleeting realm of scent] (5)⁹⁶. At the same

⁹⁶ Translations are taken from John F. Woods' Perfume. The Story of a Murderer (Knopf, 1986). On a few occasions I have modified Woods' version slightly.

time, Süskind also establishes a more traditional historico-geographical frame for his narrative. In the opening sentence he advises the reader that the story he is about to tell takes place in eighteenth-century France, and he compares its main character, Jean-Baptiste Grenouille, to a number of actual historical figures such as de Sade, Saint-Just, Fouché, and Bonaparte, all of whom he calls "[geniale] Scheusale" [gifted abominations] (5). He claims that, compared to the latter four, the former has fallen into oblivion and needs to be resurrected in contemporary minds.

The reader, of course, is supposed to infer from this approximation of fictional and non-fictional names that Grenouille was an authentic and historically documented figure, and not just a novelistic character. The fact that nobody is likely to draw that inference matters little. The narrative strategy Süskind sets up in this opening paragraph is appropriately reminiscent of the strategy used by many eighteenth-century French writers who attempted to authenticate their fictions by trying to disguise both their own identity as authors and their texts' status as fiction. They did this, among other things, by using devices such as the epistolary novel or the anonymous "lost and found" diary, or by insisting on the factual veracity of the events they are reporting. Laclos, Prévost, and Rousseau are just three

of those who have used these and similar strategies to varying degrees. In Süskind's case the technique serves a somewhat different purpose than it did in the eighteenth century. It is not meant to hide the author's true identity. Instead it is intended as both a playful allusion to those literary predecessors, and - more important for the course of the novel - as a means of introducing the pivotal subject of history into the text. By attempting to authenticate Grenouille from the outset, however transparent and derivative the attempt may be, Süskind lays the foundation for a reading of Grenouille that has quasi-historical legitimation. In other words, the novel's central character is set up to serve as an exemplar of several specific aspects of pre-revolutionary French history.

We can distinguish between two types of eighteenth-century French history Süskind wishes to stage in Das Parfum. For purposes of identification, we will designate them here as "official" and "unofficial" history. Grenouille straddles the border between these two domains and also serves as the connector between them. The "official" history is in essence the collection of dates, names, and facts described, discussed, dissected and sanctioned by traditional historiography. What we have chosen to call "unofficial" history is roughly congruent with the information Corbin

unveils in Le miasme et la jonquille; it is, to position it within the specific framework of Das Parfum, the olfactory and social history of the capital (as well as, in later chapters, that of the provinces) and of its inhabitants. There are at least three reasons why this history can be considered "unofficial": firstly, because it does not readily conform to traditional notions of what history as an academic field should concern itself with; secondly, because it does not always (seldom, in fact) affix itself to great names and dates; and thirdly because it leaves no tangible traces of its existence and has therefore remained largely unknown and unknowable to the present day. The official history is always a public and visible, the unofficial mainly a private and invisible one. It is Süskind's claim in Das Parfum to resurrect part of that private history.

He realizes his claim by writing the story of a private life. Das Parfum, and with it Grenouille's life, spans the years 1738 to 1765. Since there is no story without Grenouille, since it begins when he is born and ends when he dies, the novel is a virtual biography of its central character. As such it is private history at its most immediate. Süskind underscores this fact in the opening paragraph of the text, when he mentions that he intends to tell Grenouille's "Geschichte" (5), a word that - like the

word "histoire" - means both *story* and *history*.

This (hi)story is defined from the outset in terms of odor. Breaking with the received ideas advanced by much of official historiography (which saw Paris as the pleasant and civilized capital of arts, culture, and politics), Süskind follows Corbin's lead and depicts the city as the rather uncivilized capital of smells, and in particular of unpleasant smells:

(44)

"Zu der Zeit, von der wir reden, herrschte in den Städten ein für uns moderne Menschen kaum vorstellbarer Gestank. Es stanken die Straßen nach Mist, es stanken die Hinterhöfe nach Urin, es stanken die Treppenhäuser nach fauligem Holz und nach Rattendreck, die Küchen nach verdorbenem Kohl und Hammelfett; die ungelüfteten Stuben stanken nach muffigem Staub, die Schlafzimmer nach fettigen Laken, nach feuchten Federbetten und nach dem stechend süßen Duft der Nachttöpfe. ... Die Menschen stanken nach Schweiß und nach ungewaschenen Kleidern; aus dem Mund stanken sie nach verrotteten Zähnen, aus ihren Mägen nach Zwiebelsaft und an den Körpern ... nach altem Käse und nach saurer Milch und nach Geschwulstkrankheiten. ... Der Bauer stank wie der Priester, der Handwerksgeselle wie die Meisterfrau, es stank der gesamte Adel, ja sogar der König stank, wie ein Raubtier stank er, und die Königin wie eine alte Ziege, sommers wie winters. Denn der zersetzenden Aktivität der Bakterien war im achtzehnten Jahrhundert noch keine Grenze gesetzt, und so gab es keine menschliche Tätigkeit, keine aufbauende und keine zerstörende, keine Äußerung des aufkeimenden oder verfallenden Lebens, die nicht von Gestank begleitet gewesen wäre. Und natürlich war in Paris der Gestank am größten, denn Paris war die größte Stadt Frankreichs" (5-6).

Grenouille, in turn, is born "am allerstinkendsten Ort

des gesamten Königreichs" [on the most putrid spot in the whole kingdom] (7); he is born in and into the very center of this unofficial version of Paris, namely into the heat, stench, and blood of a fishmarket that had been built on top of the site formerly occupied by the *Cimetière des Innocents*. After 800 years at that location the cemetery had to be closed when the surrounding residents began to revolt against the pestilent smells emanating from it (7). Much like the text and the city, Grenouille's life is thus defined from the very beginning as a series of myriad unpleasant olfactory impressions.

Whereas the lower classes among the Parisian population had no other choice but to languish in this stench, Süskind shows how wealthy Paris had the economic means to cope with the problem. He uses the occasion of Grenouille's exploratory walks through the rich part of town to contrast the city's two divergent social universes. For example, at one point in the text Grenouille, who is constantly in search of new smells for his collection, ventures

(45)

"auf die andere Seite des Flusses hinüber in das Sorbonneviertel und in den Faubourg Saint-Germain, wo die reichen Leute wohnten. Durch die Eisengitter der Toreinfahrten roch es nach Kutschenleder und nach dem Puder in den Perücken der Pagen, und über die hohen Mauern hinweg strich aus den Gärten der Duft des Ginsters und der Rosen und der frisch geschnittenen Liguster. Hier war es auch, daß Grenouille zum ersten Mal Parfums im eigentlichen Sinn des Wortes roch" (47).

Süskind also uses Grenouille in order to depict other aspects of everyday life in pre-revolutionary France that are not directly connected to the problem of smell, but which, too, have sometimes been neglected by official historiography. He sends him through a rapid succession of bleakly realistic episodes which on occasion take on an almost Zola-esque quality of grim *naturalisme*. For example, we come across a rather extensive portrait of the virtual "industry" of raising orphans and indigent children that flourished at the time. Since Grenouille's mother was executed shortly after his birth because she had tried to kill her son, the boy is handed over by the police to Jeanne Bussie, a wet nurse, who in turn hands him over to a priest, Father Terrier, who hands him over to yet another *nourrice*, Madame Gaillard. Süskind describes in some detail the wretched conditions under which Grenouille and two dozen other babies live while they are in her custody (25-30). He portrays the *nourrice* as a greedy and callous woman who does not actually care about or for the children, but only about the money the state pays her for her services. Madame Gaillard does not invest any emotional stock in them, and in order to keep her profit margin high, she gives the babies just enough food to keep them from starving. Her charges are

nothing more than an expandable commodity for her - to be bought and sold, used and discarded at will⁹⁷. A similar environment awaits Grenouille when, at the age of eight, he is sold to the tanner Grimal as a child laborer. Grimal uses the boy to carry out the most dangerous tasks in the tannery, such as "das Entfleischen verwesender Tierhäute, das Mischen von giftigen Gerb- und Färbebrühen, das Ausbringen ätzender Lohen" [scraping the meat off rotting hides, mixing the poisonous tanning fluids and dyes, producing the caustic lyes] (37). Tasks such as these were routinely given to orphans and vagrants whom no one would be likely to miss should they happen to die while carrying them out.

Another way in which Süskind uses Grenouille to establish a counter-myth to the official myths of history is by contrasting significant public and political events with Grenouille's private actions during those occasions. For example, on September 1, 1753, while most of the rest of Paris is celebrating the anniversary of Louis XV's ascension to the throne, Grenouille quietly walks the streets of the city and comes upon his first murder victim. As we will see later in the chapter, the day is a crucial one in

⁹⁷ Süskind underscores this commercial nature through his choice of words: he refers to Madame Gaillard's activities as a "business," writes that ten thousand new orphans are "produced" each year in Paris, and calls their death rate of 90% a "Verlustquote" [loss quota] (27).

Grenouille's private history because the murder prompts him to start organizing his collection of smells into a well-ordered system.

A similar example is the period of the Seven-Years-War, which Grenouille spends inside his mountain in the Auvergne, refining his system of knowledge. In this case, too, a major event of official history becomes a defining moment of private history for him. The time he spends inside the mountain is an introspective one. He retreats to this place in order to learn more about himself and to formulate his own identity. The mountain, located at the center of France and at the center of the book, is an intermediate stop during Grenouille's travels from his birthplace, Paris, via the *Massif Central* to Montpellier and finally to Grasse. This journey from north to south takes twenty-seven years and occupies the first fifty chapters of the book. In the fifty-first and final chapter Grenouille travels back to Paris, where he dies. Save for this final chapter, Das Parfum might therefore, at first sight, be termed a *Bildungsroman*. However, a closer look reveals that Süskind's text does not really conform to the traditional notion of a *Bildungsroman*. In spite of its outward appearance, it is not a book about an ingénu venturing afield and learning about the world and himself. On the contrary, Grenouille does not learn anything

about himself in the mountain, nor elsewhere for that matter. In fact, it is his very inability to know himself (manifested by his physical inability to smell himself) that opens the door to the catastrophic finale. It is precisely because Grenouille does not know who he is, because he has no defined identity, that he is unable to make sense of what knowledge he has gained and hence applies it in pernicious ways. Das Parfum, then, is not a *Bildungsroman* - it is, however, a "Roman" about "Bildung," a novel about education and knowledge, and crucially about the *uses* of knowledge. This interpretation of the term helps bring us to the true heart of the text: its representation of the mechanisms and potential ramifications of French Enlightenment.

III

Das Parfum has rightly been called "a fable about the Enlightenment" (Schama 30). Süskind's portrayal of this moment in French intellectual and political history and the uses to which Grenouille puts it are two central points of interest in the novel. Many of the text's main characters take a well-defined and definite position on the issue. Some, such as Father Terrier and the Marquis de la Taillade-

Espinasse, claim to be "enlightened" themselves⁹⁸. Others are vehemently opposed to the revolution of knowledge brought on by Enlightenment. The conflict between these two fictional camps mirrors the actual historical controversy raised by the *philosophes*'s new ideas. The seventy-year old perfume-maker Giuseppe Baldini, for example, is the epitome of pre- and anti-Enlightenment thinking in Das Parfum. He had once been the most sought-after perfume creator in Paris, but was unable to keep pace with the changing times and with his customers' changing tastes. This inability is merely a symptom of a larger mental immobility, which finds its parallel in his physical comportment: Baldini stands "alt und starr wie eine Säule" [old and stiff as a pillar] (60). Close to financial ruin and dependent on a handful of "[greise] Herzoginnen" [doddering countesses] (83) who still buy his perfumes, Baldini laments about the unusual and even revolutionary methods his young competitor Pélissier is using, such as introducing a new scent each season.

Pélissier, however, serves merely as a catalyst for Baldini's much more expansive condemnation of the whole "enlightened" society he sees himself surrounded by. The cornerstones of his thinking are the rules and formulas

⁹⁸ However, as we will see shortly, the words and deeds of these characters demonstrate that their claims really do not hold up to close scrutiny.

established by traditional artisanship and the guild system. Baldini believes that in his *métier* there is only one right way of doing things. He inveighs against all those who would question old methods, no matter in which domain of knowledge, and he condemns the "hektische Neuerungssucht" [hectic mania for novelty] and the "Experimentierwut" [craze of experimentation] that have gripped French society (72). He is convinced that the *philosophes* are to blame for this state of affairs:

(46)

"Es genügt nicht mehr, daß man sagt, was ist und wie es ist - es muß jetzt alles noch bewiesen werden, am besten mit Zeugen und Zahlen und irgendwelchen lächerlichen Versuchen. Diese Diderots und d'Alemberts und Voltaires und Rousseaus und wie die Schreiberlinge alle hießen ..., sie haben es wahrhaft geschafft, ihre eigne perfide Ruhelosigkeit, die schiere Lust am Nichtzufriedensein ... auf die gesamte Gesellschaft auszudehnen! ... In den Salons palaverte man nur noch über Kometenbahnen und Expeditionen, über Hebelkraft und Newton, über Kanalbau, Blutkreislauf und den Durchmesser des Erdballs" (74-75).

Baldini has no use for the impending revolution in all areas of human knowledge. He is dismayed, for example, to find that wherever he looks people are reading books, "sogar Frauen" [even women] (74). He also wonders why anyone would want to know anything about other continents and other countries (73), a reference to the explorers' voyages and the proliferation of knowledge about non-European cultures that, while it began as early as the end of the fifteenth century,

accelerated tremendously during the second half of the eighteenth century. Baldini subscribes to Pascal's maxim that man's unhappiness results from his not being able to stay in his room, yet he has to admit that

(47)

"Pascal war ein großer Mann gewesen, ein Frangipani des Geistes, ein Handwerker recht eigentlich, und ein solcher ist heute nicht mehr gefragt. Jetzt lesen sie aufwieglerische Bücher von Hugenotten oder Engländern. Oder sie schreiben Traktate oder sogenannte wissenschaftliche Großwerke, in denen sie alles und jedes in Frage stellen. Nichts mehr soll stimmen, alles soll jetzt plötzlich anders sein. In einem Glas Wassers sollen neuerdings ganz kleine Tierchen schwimmen, die man früher nicht gesehen hat; ... die Wilden sind Menschen wie wir; unsere Kinder erziehen wir falsch; und die Erde ist nicht mehr rund wie bisher, sondern oben und unten platt wie eine Melone.... In jedem Bereich wird gefragt und gebohrt und geforscht und geschnüffelt und herumexperimentiert" (73-74).

In short, Baldini's entire view of the world as he has known it, from the most minute to the most enveloping, is literally turned upside down by Enlightenment, and he cannot cope with it.⁹⁹

On the other side of the philosophical dividing line traversing the novel are figures such as Father Terrier and

⁹⁹ Having said all this, we should not neglect to mention that Baldini is the only character in the text who recognizes that Grenouille has the makings of a despot (106). Baldini's warning that enlightened thinking might lead to unwelcome consequences ("böse würde alles enden" [it would all come to a bad end], 75), while seemingly ridiculous at first, turns out to be true in the end.

the Marquis de la Taillade-Espinasse. Whereas Baldini admits that he adheres to the traditional notions advanced by a Pascal and detests the ideas of a Voltaire and a Diderot, both the priest and the Marquis profess to follow the tenets of enlightened reason. Father Terrier is described as a "gebildeter Mann" [educated man] and as someone who "hielt einiges auf die Kraft seines kritischen Geistes" [had a rather high opinion of his own critical faculties] (18). Yet the priest is not willing to question "die Wunder, die Orakel oder die Wahrheit der Texte der Heiligen Schrift ..., auch wenn sie strenggenommen mit Vernunft allein nicht zu erklären waren, ja dieser sogar oft direkt widersprachen" [the miracles, the oracles, the truth of the texts of Holy Scripture, even though they could not, strictly speaking, be explained by reason alone, indeed often directly contradicted it] (18-19). In other words, he is unwilling to jettison dogma and irrationality in an area which was of course one of the *philosophes*'s main targets for criticism. This fundamental unwillingness to apply reason renders Terrier's claim to be an enlightened thinker all but meaningless.

Before turning our attention to Taillade-Espinasse, the more significant of the two characters, it will be instructive to take a detailed look at Süskind's short 1976 prose piece, entitled "Das Vermächtnis des Maître Mussard"

[The Legacy of Maître Mussard], where we find already an example of the sort of pseudo-enlightened thinking we encounter again nine years later in Das Parfum.

"Das Vermächtnis des Maître Mussard" is based on a brief passage from the eighth book of the Confessions, in which Rousseau recounts the story of François Mussard (1691-1755), a Geneva jeweler who was a distant cousin of his:

"Le bon homme Mussard, vrai philosophe de pratique vivoit sans souci dans une maison très agréable qu'il s'étoit bâtie et dans un très joli jardin qu'il avoit planté de ses mains. En fouillant à fond de cuve les terrasses de ce jardin, il trouva des coquillages fossiles, et il en trouva en si grande quantité que son imagination exaltée ne vit plus que coquilles dans la nature, et qu'il crut enfin tout de bon que l'univers n'étoit que coquilles, débris de coquilles, et que la terre entière [*sic*] n'étoit que du Cron¹⁰⁰. Toujours occupé de cet objet et de ses singulières [*sic*] découvertes, il s'échauffa si bien sur ces idées qu'elles se seroient enfin tournées dans sa tête en système, *c'est-à-dire, en folie*, si très heureusement pour sa raison mais bien malheureusement pour ses amis ... la mort ne fut venue le leur enlever" (Rousseau 373, *my italics*).

Süskind elaborates considerably on this anecdote. Most of his additions are designed to bring into sharper focus two central and interrelated points, both of which are also of prime importance in Das Parfum: firstly, the way the explosion of knowledge engendered during the eighteenth

¹⁰⁰ This word was used in the eighteenth century to designate "un sable ou amas de petites coquilles qui se trouvent dans le sein de la terre" (Gagnebin 1441).

century manifested itself, and, secondly, the potential foolishness and madness inherent in attempting to interpret and order that knowledge. Süskind's additions to Rousseau's text also serve to position Mussard as a forerunner to some of the characters in the novel. For example, like Genouille, Mussard initially works as an apprentice (the former as a perfume maker, the latter as a goldsmith); like Grenouille, he spends several years wandering across France; like Grenouille, he finds employment with a well-known Parisian artisan; and like Baldini, Mussard builds his shop into the largest and most prestigious store of its kind in Paris and delivers his merchandise (jewels in one case, perfume in the other) to the royal court and many foreign countries.

However, more important than these outward similarities between the two texts (interesting though they are) is the fact that Süskind, in providing detailed information about the way in which Mussard came to dabble in intellectual pursuits in the first place, draws an extended parallel between him and Taillade-Espinasse. Süskind portrays education and the acquisition of knowledge as a pastime for both of these characters. As Mussard amasses ever greater material wealth, he becomes increasingly bored with himself, and, in order to combat his boredom, starts to read books. He reads virtually anything he can find and soon believes to

have gained a "gründliche Kenntniss" [thorough knowledge] (VMM 63)¹⁰¹ of science, literature, the arts, and Latin. He also frequents all of the important salons and receives at his house guests such as Diderot, Condillac, and d'Alembert. In addition he regularly exchanges correspondence with Voltaire and counts Rousseau among his close friends. While we learn in the Confessions that the real Mussard did in fact spend much time in Parisian salons after he had made his fortune, the company he kept was not quite as illustrious as it is in Süskind's version of events. His most prominent acquaintance was the Abbé Prévost. The rest were decidedly minor members of the salon society: Procope Couteau (a doctor and author of some light comedies), Nicolas-Antoine Boulanger (an engineer who penned the article "Déluge" in the Encyclopédie), Marie-Louise Denis (a niece of Voltaire's who had written a few comedies but, on her uncle's advice, elected not to publish them), and opera singer Anne-Antoinette-Christine Van Loo (Rousseau 374, Gagnebin 1442). Süskind's choice of more well-known names, and in particular of the *encyclopédistes*'s names, is no doubt designed to help explain how and why Mussard got the idea for constructing an organized system around his supposed "discovery" of the shells.

The extent to which this system degenerates into

¹⁰¹ All translations of quotes from "Das Vermächtnis des Maître Mussard" are my own.

madness, while already hinted at in Rousseau's original anecdote, is described more fully in Süskind's version, in which Mussard comes to believe that the whole planet as well as all human beings are in a continual and unstoppable process of calcification. He refers to this process as the "Vermuschelung des Kosmos" [shellification of the cosmos] (VMM 73). He also starts to think that the whole world is enclosed inside a giant shell which nobody has ever seen, and in which lies the ultimate secret and principle of the universe. He believes that this giant shell has revealed itself to him at one brief moment and that therefore he is the only person on the planet who possesses the key to that secret. The shells thus assume the organizing role in a quasi-religious belief system of Mussard's own invention. Although both Rousseau's and Süskind's Mussard obviously suffers from delusions and hallucinations (Rousseau calls these delusions "conchyliomanie," 374), Süskind's Mussard for one vehemently insists that he is sane.

Süskind describes in far more detail than Rousseau does how Mussard, after discovering the shells in his garden in Passy, makes use of the apparatus of methodical and empirical science about which he had learned through his readings of Enlightenment writers. In order to ascertain the degree of the earth's supposed contamination with shells he carries out

numerous "Examinationen und Exkursionen" [examinations and excursions] and undertakes extensive "Forschungen" [research] (VMM 68, 69). He then proceeds to read everything he can find on the subject of shells, consulting "jedes Buch" [every book], "alle Werke" [all works], and "alle Autoren" [all authors] (VMM 69) who have had something to say about it. Since he - quite predictably of course - finds little, he is forced to conduct "[umfangreiche] Studien" [comprehensive studies] (VMM 70) of his own¹⁰². He is shocked to discover that "unsere angesehensten Philosophen" [our most respected philosophers] have failed to recognize the alleged threat of the shells (VMM 72). He repeatedly stresses his own "scientific" and "systematical" way of gathering information (VMM 68), insists on calling himself a "gebildeter Mensch" [educated person] and a "Philosoph" [philosopher], and refers to others who have not reached the same conclusions as he did as "unwissenschaftlich" [unscientific] and as possessing a "unbedarften Geist" [simple mind] (VMM 71, 72).

Mussard's conviction that he alone has come upon the truth and that everybody else is wrong is of course a perversion of the *philosophe* mindset, which championed the free and reasoned exchange of ideas, as well as an openness

¹⁰² The real Mussard did the same. In fact, he published three letters about the fossilized sea shells in the June 1753 and January 1754 issues of the Mercur de France (Gagnebin 1441).

to multiple and new ways of looking at things. While Mussard's point of view is certainly a new one, it is also a demented one. Failing to recognize that fact, he stubbornly applies the methods of empirical science without pausing to consider what it is he is studying or whether it is reasonable to do so. Mussard tries to mold a rational system out of something that does not lend itself to such treatment. Moreover, and not unlike Tournier's Tiffauges, he tries to find significance where there is none. In attempting to order the unorderable and to explain the meaningless, Mussard falls victim to the dual pitfalls of the Encyclopedia and of overinterpretation.

Reading Mussard's story is helpful because in large parts it parallels that of the Marquis de la Taillade-Espinasse in Das Parfum. Both of them are "a caricature of the experimental scientist bred by Enlightenment culture" (Gray 500). Like Mussard, the Marquis is one of the richest citizens in his town and starts to turn his attention to intellectual and scientific matters for two reasons: because

he is bored and because it is fashionable to do so¹⁰³.
 Taillade-Espinasse purports to be an expert in a variety of
 disparate subject fields. Süskind's summary of the Marquis's
 "scientific" career can be read as both a parody and a
 critique of the *encyclopédistes*'s project of universal
 knowledge. First, the Marquis writes a book about economics,
 in which he advocates a reversely progressive income tax that
 would impose the highest tax rates on the poor in order to
 prompt them to work harder (178). Encouraged by the success
 of this book he writes several more, including one about the
 education of young children and another one about
 experimental agriculture, in which he proposes cross-breeding
 bulls with grass in order to produce "ein animalo-vegetables
 Kreuzungsgewächs zur Milchgewinnung . . . , eine Art Euterblume"
 [a milk-yielding animal-vegetable hybrid, a sort of udder
 flower] (178). The fact that he has no actual training or

¹⁰³ The connection between wealth, boredom, and the desire
 to appear "enlightened" is an important one in Süskind's
 mind. He takes it up once more toward the end of *Das
 Parfum*, when, after the string of murders, the wealthy
 citizens among Grasse's population are said to apply
 "modernste wissenschaftliche Methoden" [the most modern
 scientific methods] in order to catch the killer. Those
 methods include magnetizing their houses, hypnotizing
 their daughters, forming "fluidale Schweigekreise"
 [fluidal circles of silence] and using telepathy (283-
 284). The fact that these schemes have nothing at all
 to do with science does not daunt them. Much like
 Taillade-Espinasse and Mussard, they affix the term
 "science" to them because they think its use has become
de rigueur.

expertise in any of these fields does not faze the Marquis. Nor is he bothered by the obvious silliness and outrageousness of his pseudo-scientific proposals.

Taillade-Espinasse believes that the crowning achievement of his career as a "scientist" is his essay on the *fluidum letale*, a noxious gas supposedly emitted by the earth which, so he thinks, paralyses and ultimately destroys all life at ground-level. He believes that the reason why people and other living organisms grow upward is to escape the effects of the gas. Upon meeting the emaciated and dirty Grenouille and learning that he has just emerged from a seven-year stay inside a mountain, the Marquis is convinced to have found the best piece of evidence yet to prove the existence of the *fluidum letale*. He promptly exhibits Grenouille at the university in Montpellier and holds a lecture about him explaining his theory. He then tries to restore Grenouille to health by placing him inside a "Vitalluftventilationsapparat" [vital air ventilation machine] (182). This apparatus of his own invention is designed to collect "uncontaminated" air from up high, pass it through a chamber, surround the person placed inside the chamber with it, and emit the used air at the bottom. In hopes of further minimizing the noxious effects of the putrid gases at ground-level, Taillade-Espinasse advocates the

consumption of foods that are of "erdferner Provenienz"
[earth-removed provenance], such as

(48)

"Taubenbrühe, Lerchenpastete, Ragout von Flugenten, eingemachtes Baumobst, Brot von hochwachsenden Weizensorten, Pyrenäenwein, Genssenmilch und Eischäumcreme von Hühnern, die im Dachboden des Palais gehalten wurden" (183).¹⁰⁴

The Marquis also has Grenouille bathed and shaved, has his hair and nails cut and his teeth brushed. He puts him into clean and expensive clothes, applies make-up to his face, sprays him with perfume, and teaches him a few basic social graces. He then presents the "new" Grenouille during a second lecture at the university. The audience, convinced that Grenouille's transformation is due to the Marquis's fresh-air therapy, believes and applauds Taillade-Espinasse's theory. In the ensuing years articles are written about him in scientific journals and clubs which aim to propagate his theory are formed all over southern France (206-207).

As was the case with Mussard, neither the Marquis nor his followers realize the madness of building such an elaborate system of explanations and rationalizations around a phenomenon that does not even exist in the first place.

¹⁰⁴ Mussard had concocted a similarly silly remedy to avoid contamination with shell substance: he subsisted almost exclusively on rain water because it alone had not come into contact with the ground and thus with shells.

Grenouille is the only one who recognizes that it was not the fresh-air machine nor the peculiar diet that caused his physical transformation, "sondern einzig und allein die paar Kleider, der Haarschnitt und das bißchen kosmetischer Maskerade" [but solely the few clothes, the haircut, and the bit of cosmetic masquerade] (186), and that those were also the factors that changed the way in which the audience at the university reacted to him. He realizes that this change (from initial disgust at the filthy, rag-wearing cave-dweller to eventual admiration for the cleaned, clothed, and coiffed *habitué* of the salon society) was caused by an aesthetic illusion. Grenouille learns that such illusions can be used to control people and that they are "the most powerful weapon in the arsenal of the demagogue" (Gray 500). He applies this new-found insight to further his own project of universal domination over other human beings.

IV

We have seen how Taillade-Espinasse and Mussard became victims - largely through their own fault - of the explosion of knowledge that occurred around the time of the Enlightenment and, to be more specific, victims of the attendant obsession with comprehensively ordering knowledge.

Yet whereas their inability to cope with knowledge has primarily humorous consequences, and whereas these two figures are designed essentially as parodies, Grenouille's case sets an example that is far more dangerous. He consciously and methodically employs a system of knowledge to build a system of terror. This system of terror is made possible because Grenouille unites two divergent phenomena: an abundant factual knowledge and an utter lack of ethical acumen. Throughout the text Süskind consecrates much space to a detailed description of Grenouille's knowledge. He expends great care and precision as well as many pages on a meticulous account of the various processes of perfume making, such as selecting the ingredients, measuring the correct quantities, mixing them, distillation, cold *enfleurage*, and more (cf. 91-107, 122-130, 221-240)¹⁰⁵. In addition, Süskind also gives extensive descriptions of the myriad smells Grenouille is able to distinguish (cf. for example 36, 43-44, 47, 96, 98, 193).

Those two domains, however, are the only ones in which Grenouille is versed. He is ignorant about virtually all other areas of human endeavor and existence. Most importantly, he has immense trouble making sense of abstract

¹⁰⁵ Süskind is familiar with the technical intricacies of perfume-making because he did extensive research for his book at Fragonard in Grasse.

concepts, and especially great difficulty distinguishing between terms designating moral concepts, such as "Recht, Gewissen, Gott, Freude, Verantwortung, Demut, Dankbarkeit" [justice, conscience, God, joy, responsibility, humility, gratitude] (33). He does not know what these terms mean and he confuses them constantly¹⁰⁶. We might therefore say that while Grenouille is an olfactory genius, he is a moral idiot. He does not possess the basic moral apparatus that is needed to cope with the pure factual knowledge he has acquired. What he does possess, however, much like Mussard and the Marquis, is the scientific apparatus - provided by the culture of the Encyclopedia - that is necessary to order those facts.

Grenouille's wealth of olfactory knowledge is initially unordered and incoherent in his mind. At first, he does not distinguish, for example, between pleasant and unpleasant smells. Prompted by the scent of his first murder victim in

¹⁰⁶ A confusion of moral absolutes similar to the one evident in Grenouille's mind operates toward the end of the novel. The townspeople in Grasse consider Grenouille to be the "Teufel" [devil] (283, 285, 289) and a "Dämon" [demon] (261). Their assessment stands in contrast to Grenouille's self-proclaimed status as "sein eigener Gott, und ein herrlicherer Gott als jener weihrauchstinkende Gott, der in den Kirchen hauste" [his own God, and a more splendid God than the God that stank of incense and was quartered in churches] (304). This confusion of good and evil, God and Devil, is reminiscent of the inversion of values we have seen played out so extensively in Le Roi des Aulnes.

Paris, however, Grenouille slowly starts to realize that there are in fact qualitative differences in the smells he knows. The murder thus becomes a momentous event for him. He regards the girl's scent as "der Schlüssel zur Ordnung aller anderen Düfte" [the key for ordering all other scents] (50) and gains sudden consciousness of what he has been doing, namely collecting smells. He also discovers what he intends to do with this collection, namely revolutionize the world of scent by creating the supreme perfume. This plan becomes his life's "Sinn und Zweck und Ziel und höhere Bestimmung" [sense and purpose and goal and higher destiny] (57). In order to achieve this goal, he starts to apply reason to mold the disjointed collection of facts he has acquired into a coherent system, precisely the way an *encyclopédiste* might have done:

(49)

"Er prüfte die Millionen und Abermillionen von Duftbauklötzen und brachte sie in eine systematische Ordnung: Gutes zu Gutem, Schlechtes zu Schlechtem, Feines zu Feinem, Grobes zu Grobem, Gestank zu Gestank, Ambrosisches zu Ambrosischem. Im Verlauf der nächsten Woche wurde diese Ordnung immer feiner, der Katalog der Düfte immer reichhaltiger und differenzierter, die Hierarchie immer deutlicher" (58).

However, Grenouille soon modifies his initial project. No longer is he interested in merely creating the supreme perfume for its own sake, but he affixes a specific purpose to that creation: he resolves to control and rule over

people. He decides to be "der omnipotente Gott des Duftes" [the omnipotent god of scent], not just in his own private world, as he had been for the longest time, but in the world at large (198-199). The masquerade to which Taillade-Espinasse subjected him taught Grenouille that the "power to manipulate other human beings is intimately bound up with the ability to control simulations and their effects" (Gray 501). From the moment he started to organize his vast arsenal of facts in a methodical fashion, Grenouille possessed that ability. He appropriated and applied reason in order to establish "an egocentric reign of terror" (Gray 493).

It is the manner in which this reign of terror plays out that authorizes the reader to speculate about a possible link between Grenouille and the Nazi state. For example, Grenouille's megalomaniac ambition to be "der größte Parfumeur aller Zeiten" [the greatest perfumer of all time] (58), recalls Hitler's claim to be the greatest military leader of all time. Moreover, Grenouille is a master of the manipulation of the senses, much like the Nazis were. He is

"the perfect acolyte of the Enlightenment's belief in the world as a machine, of humanity as a bundle of sensory and chemical matter (*l'homme machine*) that could be made to react in predictable ways through the administration of organized knowledge" (Schama 31).

Grenouille creates the reactions he wishes to create and controls the emotions of the people of Grasse in a manner

that is reminiscent of the methods used by the fascists to control their audiences¹⁰⁷. He understands that, even more intensely than light and music shows, it is the all-pervading sense of smell which is best able to overpower reason, for it can never be turned off, and it alone cannot be controlled with willpower. In short, Grenouille uses reason to engender irrationality. He uses order to cause disorder. The mass orgy in the town square of Grasse, which comes to symbolize the apex of his reign, is the most potent expression of that irrationality and disorder (301-304). If knowledge is power, then Grenouille's encyclopedically organized aesthetic knowledge is power over other people.

Hannah Arendt coined the term "banality of evil" to summarize her account of Eichmann's trial in Jerusalem. The expression can also be applied to Grenouille. Although he represents absolute evil, he is an utterly banal and mundane person. He is so banal, in fact, that when he is sought for the murders in Grasse, the townspeople are unable to describe him or notice any peculiarities about him: Grenouille is one human being among many; he is "unscheinbar" [insignificant] (271), and wholly "unbemerkenenswert" [unremarkable] (286).

And, in a final parallel between the events described in the novel and the events of history, the people of Grasse

¹⁰⁷ As we have seen in Chapter 3, Robert Brasillach was one of those who was taken in by this manipulation.

collectively try to forget their individual implication in Grenouille's crimes by devoting all of their energy to their work. As their town prospers and grows wealthier, no one talks about the reign of terror they helped to turn into reality:

(50)

"Die Stadt hatte ihn ... vergessen. ... Die Leute arbeiteten fleißig und schliefen gut und gingen ihren Geschäften nach und hielten sich rechtschaffen. Das Wasser sprudelte wie eh und jeh aus den vielen Quellen und Brunnen und schwemmte den Schlamm durch die Gassen. Die Stadt stand wieder schäbig und stolz an den Hängen über dem fruchtbaren Becken. Die Sonne schien warm. Bald war es Mai¹⁰⁸. Man erntete Rosen" (314).

Süskind's allusion to Germany's post-war "economic miracle" and to the attendant widespread silence about the Nazi past is of course a supremely allegorical one, yet it is a rather obvious one as well.

In the final analysis, Das Parfum is certainly not, as critics such as Richard Gray have claimed, a wholesale attack in the tradition of Horkheimer and Adorno on the legacy of the French Enlightenment. Such a sweeping interpretation is simply not authorized by the text. The novel can and should, however, be read as a warning about the dangers of pure knowledge, of knowledge that is not amplified by a sense of

¹⁰⁸ A month chosen probably not at random: the Hitler state collapsed in the month of May as well.

ethics. Süskind, much like Tournier does in Le Roi des Aulnes, demonstrates that a basic notion of right and wrong is essential for human survival, and that fascism and similar "isms" thrive in its absence. Grenouille, Mussard, and Taillade-Espinasse, each in his own way, are proof that it is not enough to simply collect and order facts, that it is not enough to be a walking *Encyclopédie*, but that having an idea of how to properly use these facts is essential as well. Read in this manner, Das Parfum becomes a warning about the potential private madness and public danger of systems of knowledge.

Conclusion

The term "conclusion" is, in one sense at least, somewhat of a misnomer because it is of course impossible to "conclude" an issue that is essentially political and historical in nature and thus in constant flux. It is impossible to completely resolve and end all of the questions raised by the many centuries of Franco-German nationalism, antagonism, and, more recently, reconciliation. While these questions appear for the moment closer than ever to being settled, they may always remain ongoing points of debate, and there can be no absolute certainty that a final conclusion will in fact be reached. In spite of the enormous progress achieved in the political arena in recent years, much work still remains to be done, as is evidenced, for example, by the many (though mostly rather minor) obstacles still standing in the way of genuine European unity. The details, then, remain to be resolved. It appears, however, safe to say that the larger problem *has* in fact found its conclusion. The rift between the two countries that lay at the origin and center of Europe's division has been overcome and has been transformed into the foundation for a new and radically different continent.

While it would be presumptuous and foolish to believe that the authors and works we have discussed in the preceding pages were alone or even largely responsible for this transformation, it is quite possible to argue that they were at least to some degree involved in it, and that they participated, however briefly, in the long history of nationalism dividing the two nations. Their writings often were not only expressions, but also reinforcements of opinions held by certain segments of the larger society surrounding them. A Vercors and a Brasillach, for example, gave public outlets to political voices that had already been audible in private, and in the process they may have added resolve to those voices - for better or for worse. By the same token, the writings of a Giraudoux and a Tucholsky may well have strengthened anti-nationalist sentiments among their respective audiences.

The extent to which they and the other authors were successful in shaping public opinion, in helping to direct the political discourse of their era varies of course greatly, and it is surely impossible to determine that extent precisely. It seems to me, however, that those writers who staked an intense personal interest in what they chose to publish, and hence publicize, may have been more successful than those who did not, than those whose texts remained more

aloof, more abstract, less impassioned. Among the eight authors included here, Vercors, Giraudoux, and Tucholsky are three whose texts can be regarded as more personal and private than some of the others. It is hardly surprising if their convictions and arguments (which were essentially identical in nature) have, at this point in time, carried the day, because by injecting themselves, their very beings, into the political debates of their times they personalized what would otherwise be a highly abstract and impersonal, and certainly uninteresting, issue. Le silence de la mer, Siegfried, and Tucholsky's missives from Paris likely have done more to help overcome national antagonism between the two peoples than many a political speech, declaration, or treaty. Hence these texts, as well as all the others we have looked at in this study, were small but essential parts in the bigger picture of French and German history during the course of the twentieth century.

Appendix:

Translations of Quotes

Note:

This appendix contains translations of numbered German quotes in the order in which they appear in the text. Words that were in French in the original have not been translated. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

Chapter 2 - Kurt Tucholsky:

(1)

"It would be better if Heine's travel letters were more well-known than they are, those from the Pyrenees too, and all his reports from Paris, in which he proves to be a centurial man of rare caliber, a prophet, and someone who surveys everything. ('One of these evenings one really ought to get out those volumes of Heine again...!' Yes, one really ought to.)"

(2)

"what moves one to tears is not that there are butter, happy people, and silk in the world, but that nobody makes a to-do about it, and that everybody takes it for granted"

(3)

"because all of a sudden being alive has meaning again - because once again a cloud is a cloud, a rock a rock, the sun the sun. I walked around in enchantment"

(4)

"Here nobody steps on my shoes. Here people are polite and nice."

And if someone does step on me, he says: 'Ah pardon, monsieur!' everywhere, in Malakoff and in the rue Lafayette.

...
Here one can still rejoice because an awning gleams so pretty and yellow. Here everyone has work, yet still time to be human, to take a breath, alone and in pairs.

...
Here being alive still has meaning.

...
A whole country holds out its arms in peace.

...
How pleasant it is to live here...
Ten years too late! And yet I must not complain.
It feels so good to say Yes for a change"

(5)

"Here it is pretty. Here I can dream in peace.
Here I am human - and not just a civilian.
Here I am allowed to walk on the left. Under green trees
no sign tells me what's forbidden.

A big round ball is lying on the lawn.
A bird is plucking a bright leaf.
A little boy is digging in his nose
and is happy when he has found something.

Four American women are checking
if Cook was indeed right and there are trees here.
Paris from the outside and Paris from the inside:
they see nothing and must see everything.

Children are making noise on colored stones.
The sun is shining and glistening on a house.
I sit still and let myself be shone upon
and take a rest from my fatherland"

(6)

"When one has lived in a foreign country for two months, one usually understands it splendidly - why, it is so clear...
Then it gets darker, and right now I am in that period familiar to anyone who travels: I hardly understand anything at all anymore. Everything I have learned appears to be wrong - everything I know about the French, thought I knew,

seems to be skewed... I am groping about. What kind of people is this?"

(7)

"I have been in France for ... four years now. In the first week I walked around in a daze; the iron chains of inflation had just fallen off, and I had lost my heaviness. After two months I understood everything.... After half a year the picture began to darken slowly; the threads became entangled; there were contradictions I was not able to solve.... After three years I no longer understood anything at all. ... It is not over. After four years I am standing - on a small hillock; several valleys I conquered are lying behind me, and I want to go on, on a long ramble"

(8)

"The Frenchman ... lives his life with a simple joy, with a tenderness, with a heartfelt love for nature and other people which we have almost forgotten. ... [One notices] that everything happens smoothly and pleasantly, that existence glides and does not snarl - one senses how easy life really is"

(9)

"The French are not better people - because there are no angel nations and devil nations. But it seems to me that they have figured out one thing which we are lacking completely: they are more *practical* in dealing with their fellow humans; they do not waste this enormous energy we squander in order to be right, to remain right, to triumph. ... When two Germans meet, a silent quarrel almost always ensues about who is more. The French are ... true democrats...: they live together and side by side. They live coordinately, not subordinately"

(10)

"They also make an endless fuss about everything, make life difficult for themselves and others, and turn traveling into a duty which they attend to with pursed lips and strained facial expressions. I have never seen so much ado about nothing on a French train. Where a person sits, whether to

open or close the window, how to place the valise, and a whole host of other things... These are typically German 'problems': they do not exist at all elsewhere, or they are not problems. How much strength existence must cost here! And it does. The air is loaded with tension - one feels it never more than when one comes from outside, where life is by no means more paradisaical, but where it runs without a hitch, even when it stalls. A French traffic tie-up requires fewer nerves of those involved than smoothly running German traffic"

(11)

"may ... then say those words, which, with a slight gesture of the hand, almost every Frenchman nonchalantly throws before his friends, who, depending on whether they have it or not, congratulate him condescendingly or reverently, words, which refer to the always presumed bitter fights about the ribbon, and which a Courteline could have conceived, because they are so humoristically ambiguous: 'Et vous savez - je n'ai rien fait pour cela!'"

(12)

"when they serve a watery soup, a tiny pâté, antique fish and a pitiful chicken with potatoes, the menu looks like this:

Potage à la Potage
Vol-au-Vent à la Valéry
Sole à la Reine de Portugal
Volaille à la Poule
Pommes à la Pomme
Fruits

The last plural is an exaggeration"

(13)

"Often, when we came to the question: 'And you are... English?', and I said the word, a tiny little pause would ensue, and a world was in that silence. A world of four years. But never, never, never more than that - never an ugly word, never a fierce allusion, an attempt to now win the war one more time, eye to eye"

(14)

"Through a cloud of hatred, unreason, loathing, and cabals we see but a blurry image of France. France and we: it is time to clean the air through objective and calm work"

(15)

"when I read the German papers today - what do I have to find out about the country I am living in! The women never have children; the girls can be found vertically for only a few hours a day; the men shoot holes in each other's stomachs or steal jewels"

(16)

"Paris is a city whose female inhabitants are encountered mostly in a horizontal position, and whose male inhabitants, drunk on champagne, are hysterically demanding Hindenburg's head. The degenerate French people are rolling down the boulevards in naked pairs, alternately shouting 'Gloire!' and 'à Berlin!', and they have no national pride at all, which is why they will soon perish, or far too much national pride, which is why Germany will soon perish"

(17)

"they falsify the truly peaceful will of the French people, who want their quiet, and make it out to be the mentality of a raging lunatic. And so it goes, year in, year out, and the retired colonel in Prenzlau, highly paid by the republic, feels his hemorrhoids less when he reads with bliss how rotten, how degenerate, how depraved France is. ... They have already hounded us into war once; they will do it again. It is up to us to fight the pernicious influence of this press with the most extreme means"

(18)

"it is an eminently German peculiarity to want to efface an event of world history by putting it in quotation marks. France has not emerged as the 'victor' of this war, but as the victor, and Germany has lost this war"

(19)

"Year in, year out lessons are drummed into receptive children's brains which they will probably never forget and which only few will have the opportunity and the strength to erase. ... This book is in its sixth edition. Consequently, our math problem for the day appears to be: when will we have the next war?"

(20)

"No more romanticism, no more torn evening clouds through which the pale moon shines down on the surreptitious contrebandiers; smuggler love and smuggler death..., no more. Mainly because today borders no longer inspire such reverence in any reasonable human being to cause his heart to pound. After all, we know. We know who stands guard for whom. Grain is not supposed to come from where it is cheaper, nor pianos from where they are better made - industry, capital, and jobs are being artificially propped up. An economic process. Don't paint your ridiculous border posts so ceremoniously! Write on them: Müller's Vaseline is the best! That would come much closer to the truth"

(21)

"once ... the hundreds of thousands have learned for which schemes (or whose wallet) they are dying, it's over. Then not even the slogans: glory, fatherland, honor, will do the trick; then the French worker will no longer fire on his German colleague"

(22)

"here is the beginning of a true work of peace. ... If I am not totally mistaken, these children will be bad soldiers. For they have now seen with their own eyes what books and lectures can only suggest: that over there, behind the trenches, live, not 'enemies,' but parents, but fathers, mothers, friends; that these parents have been cheated and lied to on both sides when they were told that the enemy stands on the other side. He stands altogether elsewhere"

(23)

"speeches by German writers in Paris; exhibitions of French

pictures in Berlin....: none of this effects anything. ... As long as the power of the state to rule over the lives of the people remains untouched, this sort of pacifist advance is a harmless parlor game. ... And that is not a pessimistic theory - there is irrefutable proof of it. German intellectuals in Paris, French ones in Berlin... We had come just as far in 1912"

(24)

"tomorrow everybody - bus driver, *Métro* conductor, university teacher, and milkman - will metamorphose into a raging, howling mass, harboring just this one wish: to mash their colleagues from the other side into a stinking pulp rotting in the sand craters... Tomorrow again? Tomorrow again?"

(25)

"they do not know the new-German, unfeeling, unscrupulous type at all. He is cold - they don't understand that. He ... has checked his conscience in the cloakroom.... Nothing can be read in the *Action Française* about Germany's true imminent danger for France"

(26)

"Thank you for letting me live in you, France. You are not my homeland.... I have not memorized your nursery rhymes; there is much I have to transpose first. It is not here that I painted stick figures on fences and a long indecent drawing on the little house at the corner. It is not here that I ran through the streets in love, a small letter in my breast pocket and a giant shudder across my back. ... And yet I am at home here. You were hospitable from the first day. You never mocked the stranger when he confused words, customs, neighborhoods. ... You gave and gave, lent and granted.... I was so poor. I am so rich. And now there are no more reservations, no criticism, and no deliberations: there I stand on the bridge and am right in the middle of Paris again.... There flows the water, there you lie, and I throw my heart in the river and dive into you and love you"

Chapter 4 - Ernst Jünger and Heinrich Mann:

(27)

"People were passing by with bottles of wine; I dispatched Rehm on his bicycle to trace the source; he returned with several bottles¹⁰⁹ of Burgundy. He told me that he had been inside an army depot where an extremely merry lot had gathered in the basement. In fact, the route of advance is lined with bottles of champagne, Bordeaux, and Burgundy. I counted at least one per step, not to mention the camp sites, which looked as though it had rained bottles"

(28)

"fine cuisine, such as onion soup - how to eat it on a weekday and how to eat it on a Sunday. Then about wild rabbit *pâté*: before brushing it with dough and topping it with cheese, one presses holes in it with a thumb and fills them with old Cognac"

(29)

"It is surely part of the tradition of a French campaign that each invasion of Germanic armies is accompanied by the kind of heavy drinking the Gods in the Edda used to do, and to which no supply can stand up"

(30)

"We truly are the *sansculottes*, the victors, if not without pants, then certainly with pants made of wood fibers. Half in amazement we see what sort of treasures there still are in the world - such as my unknown host's cellar with its collection of Burgundy wines"

(31)

"We finished the day with a bottle of Aloxe-Corton ..., speculating on whether it was part of the destiny of this place to have armies march past it and to have to accommodate Prussian officers every now and then, as for example in 1814, 1870, 1914, and now once again"

¹⁰⁹ In the original, Jünger invents a word by appending a German plural suffix (-en) to the French word *bouteille*.

(32)

"Heavy destruction in town; where houses used to be there were often only vast craters filled with yellow water. ... Onward through these amazing landscapes. In the villages and towns no hearth was smoking, no child, no living being crossed our path. Often I would press my face against the window panes and see tables set with plates and glasses in the rooms, but no guests - the sight of meals abruptly interrupted. In the churches the golden and silver implements were still sitting on the altars, and in the palaces life appeared to have fallen asleep as in Sleeping Beauty's castle - dead, dead, dead"

(33)

"Dead animals: mainly horses, heavily swollen.... Blue, green, and golden flies were playing on their tightly stretched coat, and wasps were gnawing on their skin. ... Furthermore dead dogs, run over or starved to death on chains; cows, chickens, sheep"

(34)

"Masses of dead horses alongside the road.... Lips thrown half open with an expression of suffering, so that the big white teeth are visible"

(35)

"After having seen cities like Rostov, Paris appears to me in a new, outrageous luster, even though it has become more impoverished. The books alone, with whom I celebrated a reunion by purchasing a beautiful monograph about Turner"

(36)

"The small *palais* in which he received us is said to belong to his Jewish wife, which did not keep him from making fun of the 'Youpins' during the meal. I met Sacha Guitry there"

(37)

"Yesterday Jews were arrested here to be deported - first the

parents were separated from their children, so that the wailing could be heard in the streets. At no moment must I forget that I am surrounded by unhappy and deeply suffering people"

(38)

"Warnings, fly-overs. From the roof of the 'Raphael' I twice saw huge blast clouds rise up from the direction of Saint Germain, while squadrons were flying away at great height. The river bridges were their target. The manner and succession of the actions taken against the supply lines suggested a sharp mind. The second time, at sunset, I was holding a glass of Burgundy with strawberries swimming in it. The city with its red towers and domes lay there in stupendous beauty, like a chalice being overflowed for deadly pollination. Everything was spectacle, was pure power, affirmed and elevated by pain"

(39)

"Although I am for the most part surrounded by a setting¹¹⁰ of comfort in this second world war, I am nonetheless living in greater danger than during the battles of the Somme or Flanders"

(40)

"No doubt that there are individuals who are responsible for the blood of millions. And they are intent on bloodshed like tigers. Apart from the mob instincts, a satanic will, a callous delight in the downfall of humans, perhaps even of humanity, is pronounced in them. ... What Jodl ... said about Kniébolo's intentions was terrible. One must also know that many Frenchmen approve of such plans and are eager to provide hangman's services. The only forces who are able to foil the union of the partners, or at least to delay it, are here in this house"

¹¹⁰ The word "Kulissen" in the original means literally the wings of a stage (*les coulisses*). Here it is of course used metaphorically.

(41)

"The great plans for extermination can only succeed if they are paralleled by changes in the moral world. Man must sink further in value, must become metaphysically indifferent before the transition from mass extermination, as we experience it today, to total extermination becomes possible. Just like our entire situation, this circumstance, too, is foreseen in the Scriptures; not just in the depiction of the flood but also the fall of Sodom: God expressed it by wanting to spare the city as long as it still contained ten righteous people. This is also a symbol for the immense responsibility of the individual in this time. For countless millions one individual can be a guarantor"

(42)

"The destruction of France ... occupies him as only his own being can occupy him, since France represents ... the unalterable idea of liberty among nations. Yet he is the opponent and must fall if France is to stand. ... [Everybody knows] the true pair of opposites ...: him here and liberty over there"

(43)

"France's intellectual and spiritual leaders, from Rousseau to Zola, had it easy; they had [a people. A people with literary instincts who doubt power, and who are so warm-blooded that power becomes unbearable to them if it is contradicted by reason]. In Germany they would have it more difficult. They would have to contend with a people who wants to live, nothing but"

Chapter 6 - Patrick Süskind:

The following translations are taken from John F. Woods' Perfume. The Story of a Murderer (Knopf, 1986). Occasionally I have modified Woods' version slightly.

(44)

"In the period of which we speak, there reigned in the cities a stench barely conceivable to us modern men and women. The streets stank of manure, the courtyards of urine, the

stairwells stank of moldering wood and rat droppings, the kitchens of spoiled cabbage and mutton fat; the unaired parlors stank of stale dust, the bedrooms of greasy sheets, damp featherbeds, and the pungently sweet aroma of chamber pots. ... People stank of sweat and unwashed clothes; from their mouths came the stench of rotting teeth, from their bellies that of onions, and from their bodies ... came the stench of rancid cheese and sour milk and tumorous disease. ... The peasant stank as did the priest, the apprentice as did his master's wife, the whole of the aristocracy stank, even the king himself stank, stank like a rank lion, and the queen like an old goat, summer and winter. For in the eighteenth century there was nothing to hinder bacteria busy at decomposition, and so there was no human activity, either constructive or destructive, no manifestation of germinating or decaying life that was not accompanied by stench. And of course the stench was greatest in Paris, for Paris was the greatest city of France"

(45)

"across to the other bank of the river into the quarters of the Sorbonne and the Faubourg Saint-Germain where the rich people lived. Through the wrought-iron gates at their portals came the smells of coach leather and of the powder in the pages' wigs, and over the high walls passed the garden odors of broom and roses and freshly trimmed privets. It was here as well that Grenouille first smelled perfume in the literal sense of the word"

(46)

"It's no longer enough ... to say that something is so and how it is so - everything now has to be proven besides, preferably with witnesses and numbers and one or another of these ridiculous experiments. These Diderots and d'Alemberts and Voltaires and Rousseaus or whatever names these scribblers have ..., they've finally managed to infect the whole society with their perfidious fidgets, with their sheer delight in discontent...! In the salons people chattered about nothing but the orbits of comets and expeditions, about leverage and Newton, about building canals, the circulation of the blood, and the diameter of the earth"

(47)

"Pascal was a great man, a Frangipani of the intellect, a real craftsman, ... and such a person is no longer in demand today. People read incendiary books now by Huguenots or Englishmen. Or they write tracts or so-called scientific masterpieces that put anything and everything in question. Nothing is supposed to be right anymore, suddenly everything is supposed to be different. Little animals never before seen are supposed to be swimming about in a glass of water lately. ... Savages are human beings like us; we raise our children wrong; and the earth is no longer round the way it was, but flat on the top and bottom like a melon.... In every field, people question and bore and summarize and pry and dabble with experiments"

(48)

"dove bouillon, lark pie, ragout of wild duck, preserves of fruit picked from trees, bread made from high-growing wheat, wine from the Pyrenees, chamois milk, and frozen frothy meringue from hens kept in the attic of the mansion"

(49)

"He examined the millions and millions of building blocks of scent and arranged them in a systematic order: good with good, bad with bad, fine with fine, coarse with coarse, fetid with fetid, ambrosial with ambrosial. In the course of the next week, this order grew ever more refined, the catalog of scents ever more comprehensive and differentiated, the hierarchy ever clearer"

(50)

"The town had forgotten him.... People worked hard and slept well and went about their business and behaved decently. Water gushed as it always had from the many fountains and wells, sending muck floating down the streets. Once again the town stood shabbily and proudly on the slopes above the fertile basin. The sun shone warmly. Soon it was May. They harvested roses"

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