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NEW SUBJECTIVITY AND PROSE FORMS OF ALIENATION:

PETER HANDKE AND BOTHO STRAUß

By

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ABSTRACT

NEW SUBJECTIVITY AND PROSE FORMS OF ALIENATION: PETER HANDKE AND BOTHO STRAUB

By

Linda DeMeritt Lindsay

German literature of the past decade has earned the label New Subjectivity ("Neue Subjektivität") due to a shift of emphasis from political persuasion to the personal feelings of the individual. New subjective literature focuses on the subject as both the object and method of portrayal. This dissertation examines in depth this most recent and controversial trend. The first chapter defines the term and places it within an historical literary framework. Chapters Two through Four discuss the themes and forms of a wide range of new subjective prose works. The final two chapters are devoted specifically to the prose of Peter Handke and Botho Strauß as important representatives of New Subjectivity.

Central both thematically and formally to New Subjectivity is the experience of alienation. The subject undergoes some type of personal catastrophe which invalidates his or her own natural seeming and given context. Alienation is a destructive process plunging the individual into isolation and often eliciting a process of dissolution which ends in death. But within this destruction lies a positive and socially relevant potential. Freed from the paralyzing systems of society the individual has the chance to rediscover the self and the world. This potential remains unrealized for many new subjective protagonists, but the author, by means of a questioning and fragmented form, burdens the reader with the responsibility of rediscovery and change.

The works of Handke and Strauß exemplify the themes and forms of New Subjectivity. Whereas the protagonist of Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter portrays extreme and absolute alienation, Keuschnig in Die Stunde der wahren Empfindungen overcomes his alienation in fleeting moments of true feeling, and the narrator protagonist of Die Lehre der Saint-Victoire learns how to lengthen these moments into refound union and harmony. Alienation in Strauß' three works Marlenes Schwester, Die Widmung, and Rumor, is motivated by separation from someone loved. The protagonists' attempt to re-establish contact reveals, especially in the latter two works, a harsh and disconnected society. The void surrounding the abandoned individual becomes a forum for self-confrontation and exploration.

To my parents
and to my husband Brian

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INTRODUCTION

New Subjectivity is the literary term used to describe the past ten years of German literature. It marks a shift in emphasis, which can be traced within the political and intellectual scene as well, from an engagement intending societal revolution to an interest in the subject and his or her own personal problems. The authors of the seventies suddenly begin to produce a literature which deals with topics considered banal and trivial just a short time before. Love, emotions, marriage and divorce, death or illness, and personal crisis are central themes of stories which take place within the apartments, offices, and daily routines of the individual. Accompanying the emergence of subjective themes is the sudden popularity of literary forms best suited for personal expression, such as poetry in general and the autobiography and diary within prose.

New Subjectivity is documented by a steady stream of secondary works which do not lack in volume but rather scope and depth. On the one hand, New Subjectivity is treated too often solely as a reaction to the sixties and a return to the broken literary tradition of the fifties. Although an understanding of the literature preceding New Subjectivity is necessary in order to place it within an historical background, such a comparison should be the starting point only of an investigation. On the other hand, too many articles exhaust themselves in noting and listing new subjective characteristics.¹ Although helpful and correct as far as they go, these articles become monotonous and remain on the surface. Such a

compilation of typical new subjective traits dead ends before asking the significance and intent of these characteristics and, in addition, seldom does justice to the work being analyzed.

Secondary literature has been involved in a long-winded battle over the validity of New Subjectivity. Representatives of the left automatically oppose a literature concentrating on the subject instead of society. The problems and suffering of an individual are legitimate only if they point to the conditions of a bourgeois and capitalist society as their cause. New Subjectivity is sometimes seen as a retreat from political involvement to an esoteric realm of inwardness having little to do with reality, and sometimes as a forum where private problems are laid bare in a type of exhibitionism.² Still others denounce New Subjectivity as a plot on the part of the book market in order to increase business.³ For much of the left New Subjectivity is trivial literature concerned only with the author's personal problems. In contrast, opponents of the left and of literature supportive of a political ideology in general laud the return of a subjectively oriented and a more traditional literary tendency. With an almost audible sigh of relief they welcome New Subjectivity, and more than one article is devoted to relating all the examples of authors who turned away from politically engaged literature to pursue more personal themes.⁴

The most important single consideration lacking in the discussions concerning New Subjectivity and its relevance is the communicative aspect of all art. A literary work is a process of interaction in which the author desires to communicate an aesthetic experience to his reader through the form of the piece of literature. Research completed to date on New Subjectivity is a one-way street, whereby the critic analyzes only what the

text says and does not consider how the work affects the reader. The critic's energies are directed away from himself as reader and exhausted by the message of the text. Secondary literature witnesses an overabundance of new subjective themes, and very few serious articles about its forms.

This dissertation attempts to provide a much needed in depth examination of new subjective literature. Besides noting characteristics common to New Subjectivity, this study investigates the significance and implications behind these themes. It strives to approach the subject matter free of prejudice, recognizing both the dangers of a subjective literature and its potential relevance for society. The forms of New Subjectivity are discussed extensively in addition to the effect of these forms upon the reader. It should be noted that the breadth of this analysis is limited to prose. This is a decision made in order to focus the present study and lend it unity, especially in the chapter concerning forms, and is not meant to imply that subjectivity characterizes German prose exclusively. Similarly, it should be recognized that the authors and works chosen for this discussion represent the most prominent, but certainly not the only, examples of New Subjectivity.

The definition of New Subjectivity formulated within the present work comprises both its themes and forms: the subject serves as both the object and means of portrayal. Subjectivity implies a prerequisite experience of alienation which jolts the individual out of a natural seeming and generally accepted--hence objective--context. Alienation is the common denominator of much of New Subjectivity and serves as the focal point and framework for the dissertation. This is an aspect which has

been neglected thus far by secondary literature, and yet one which offers many insights into and a context for the many themes and forms of New Subjectivity.

The method utilized for the analysis of primary works discussed in this dissertation attempts to reconstruct the intent of the author by means of an analysis of the form.⁵ Through registering the text's measurable elements (such as language and content), and then deducing that which is meant (as evidenced in the work's form and structure), one can aesthetically experience the literary work as intended by the author. The text is divided into three levels to be analyzed: first its language, then its outer form, and finally its inner form. The level of language includes such elements as phonetics, semantics, grammar, and style. The outer form, or poetical reality of the work, consists of time and place, metaphors, characters, and the story line. Finally, the inner form, reflecting the intent of the author, includes the causality or consequence of the action and of the ideas or themes presented. These elements are objectively measurable, but together, as a whole, they lead to a subjective experience of the work. The reader becomes a partner in a dialogue with the literary work and its author through the form. This analysis is guided by the questions: Why is the author writing?, and What does the reader experience during the act of reading?. It is based upon the belief that literature, as the manifestation of the author's state of consciousness, structures the consciousness of its reader.

This method of analysis is particularly well-suited to an examination of New Subjectivity due to the emphasis of both on a subjective experience of reality. The function of new subjective literature is not to persuade the

reader or impart information. Instead, the author attempts to present an individual experience and to provoke a similar experience within the reader. This provocation is realized by means of the form. The effect of a piece of literature on its reader is relevant to the much debated question concerning the societal validity of New Subjectivity. The literature of the seventies burdens the reader with the uncertainty and questions of the protagonist and places the responsibility for change in his hands.

The first chapter of this dissertation discusses in detail the definition of New Subjectivity and includes the most frequently listed characteristics of this trend. In addition, it places new subjective literature within a broader literary framework and compares it to the literature of the sixties, as well as to other notably subjective literary periods, especially Expressionism, of the past. The first chapter attempts to answer two questions concerning New Subjectivity: first, What is New Subjectivity?, and secondly, What is new about it?

The following three chapters discuss the themes and forms of the new subjective experience of alienation with examples extracted from a large body of primary literature. Chapter Two investigates the destructiveness of this experience. In addition, it recognizes the dangers implicit in a literature devoted to the person and documents the vehemently negative reaction to New Subjectivity in general. Chapter Three delves into the significance and implications of destruction and posits for much of New Subjectivity a positive potential within the experience of alienation. The fourth chapter examines specific anti-realistic forms of alienation.

The final two chapters of this dissertation are devoted to two

important new subjective representatives, Peter Handke and Botho Strauß. Peter Handke was chosen on the basis of his consistent and extreme subjectivity. His literary production must be considered both as a predecessor to and a radicalization of New Subjectivity. Botho Strauß is far less known and acclaimed more for his dramatic contributions than prose, but these prose works witness a sensitivity and humanity which deserves recognition.

Notes--Introduction

¹See for example the articles by Heinrich Vormweg (1973-1977) and Hans J. Fröhlich (1977-1980) in Jahresring.

²See for example Adolf Muschg, "Bericht von einer falschen Front oder: Der Schein trügt nicht." In Literaturmagazin 5: Das Vergehen von Hören und Sehen: Aspekte der Kulturvernichtung, ed. Peter Piwitt and Peter Rühmkorf (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1976), p. 30.

³See for example Delf Schmidt, "Gegen die Placebo-Literatur: Eine Vorbemerkung," in Literaturmagazin 11: Schreiben oder Literatur, ed. Nicolas Born et al. (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1979), p. 12.

⁴See for example Michael Radtke, "Jetzt dichten sie wieder," in Stern, Oct. 1974.

⁵This method of analysis was developed by Dr. Kurt W. Schild at Michigan State University.

Chapter One--What is New Subjectivity?

Introduction

Before proceeding into an in depth discussion of new subjective themes and forms, it is helpful and indeed necessary to define the literary term: "Neue Subjektivität." This chapter presents such a definition and approaches the question: What is New Subjectivity? from several different viewpoints. The first section offers the definition of the term which will be used throughout this dissertation: New Subjectivity is a literature in which the subject functions as both content and form. In the second section the question is seen within a limited historical perspective. New Subjectivity is discussed as a reaction to the political literature of the sixties. The juxtaposition of the seventies to the sixties should not, however, be considered absolute, for even the sixties offer more than one example of a literature committed to an investigation of the subject. Finally, the perspective is broadened even further, and the new subjective literature of the seventies is placed within the continuum of subjective literature in general. This section, while briefly mentioning similarities between the seventies and other literary periods noted for their subjectivity, then focuses in on parallels between New Subjectivity and Expressionism.

A. A Definition of the Term

New Subjectivity is the term used to characterize a decade of German literature devoted to the subject. Marcel Reich-Ranicki was one of the first to proclaim the discovery of the individual as the dominant trait of the seventies: "Das, in der Tat, ist die große Dominante der deutschen

Literatur dieser Jahre: das Individuum."¹ The subject is of primary importance, for it is both the means and object of portrayal:

Kein Zweifel: An einer Reihe von neueren literarischen Arbeiten fällt auf, daß in einer intensiveren Weise die Wirklichkeit subjektiv erfahren, erlebt, rezipiert und dargestellt wird, ja, daß sich das Subjekt als Medium und zentraler Inhalt literarischer Gestaltung ganz in den Vordergrund drängt.²

The subject's own unique and sometimes very personal world is depicted as seen and experienced through the subject's eyes. Such is the essence of this most recent literary period: subjectivity as content and form.

The author of the seventies depicts ordinary individuals, such as housewives or businessmen, within typical settings, such as the home or at the office. However, the new subjective protagonist is an alienated individual. He is someone for whom the patterns, routines, and conventions of society are no longer valid. Accordingly, he stands alone and isolated, no longer part of the smoothly functioning whole which continues without interruption around him. Alienation is often precipitated by the experience of a personal catastrophe. The frequency of some type of personal trauma within new subjective works has led Michael Rutschky to postulate a literature of catastrophes as the newest trend of the seventies: "Katastrophen-Literatur - die neueste Tendenz?"³ New subjective traumas include death, sickness, abandonment, betrayal, and separation. Such traumas destroy the seeming security of the individual's everyday world. The subject is confronted with something inexplicable and meaningless which invalidates his previous manner of life. Everything which previously was taken for granted becomes questionable and uncertain. The alienated individual no longer believes in a meaningful and comprehensive totality which orders and explains the world and his own

existence.

The alienated state of the new subjective protagonist is manifest in a general distrust of any all-encompassing concept or order. The New Subjectivists express within their works a wariness of societal institutions, a negation of political and scientific opinion, and an uneasiness concerning systems of thought claiming truth. Klaus R. Scherpe and Hans-Ulrich Treichel note "unbestimmte Negation aller veröffentlichten wissenschaftlichen und politischen Meinungen über dieses Leben, insbesondere auch das Unbehagen über die Erklärungssysteme zu seiner Veränderung...."⁴ The seventies are a time of skepticism. The works produced during this decade portray uncertainty and fear. The reader is not offered a solution or theory, but rather confronted with the confusion and doubt of a protagonist, for whom the validity of all objective precepts and assumptions has been undermined.

The new subjective experience or state of alienation leaves the individual in a void. The alienated individual has been stripped of his societal garb, i.e., of his role, of his self-definition, of the meaning of his life, and of the accepted models or patterns of thought and behavior. Robbed of the guidelines and structure of an outwardly imposed system, the subject comes face to face with himself, for if outer and objective reality can no longer order life and provide answers, the individual is forced to turn to himself for these answers. The individual subject occupies the center of attention and becomes the object of investigation. The direction of New Subjectivity is inward, and it presents a questioning of and a search for one's self: "Selbstbeobachtung, Selbsterfahrung, Selbstdarstellung – das ist es, was als dominierendes Kennzeichen Lyrik

und Prosa der siebziger Jahre miteinander verbindet."⁵ It is the confrontation of the subject with himself as subject which constitutes the central experience of New Subjectivity. In the void of alienation the individual engages in an existential search for his self and a personally meaningful reality.

This dissertation defines New Subjectivity as a literature in which the subject determines both content and form. The New Subjectivists portray within their works reality as experienced and as perceived by the protagonist. The subjective experience of reality constitutes the content of new subjective works: "Damit ist nicht zuletzt wieder das Erlebnis in den Vordergrund gerückt, das Individuelle, ja private Erlebnis, das eigene und das anderer."⁶ In addition, the subjective perception of reality determines the form of the text. The reader is not offered a reliable account of events, but rather a distorted and subjective view of the protagonist's world. He is burdened with the same lack of insight, doubt, and question which plagues the protagonist. The premise for such a definition is the loss of belief in an independently existing reality which functions according to predetermined laws and remains stable, predictable, and trustworthy. Only upon the invalidation of objective reality--only through the experience of alienation--is the individual plunged into the process of subjective questioning which becomes a search for and a confrontation with one's self.

B. New Subjectivity as a Reaction

Secondary literature commonly describes New Subjectivity in terms of a reaction against the sixties. Within the titles themselves of articles concerning this trend one hears of such a reaction: "Jetzt dichten sie wieder."⁷ "Rückkehr zur schönen Literatur."⁸ "Abschied von den Protokollen."⁹ To arrive then at an understanding of New Subjectivity one must first briefly discuss the literary scene of the sixties. The following discussion should not be viewed as comprehensive, for it will dwell on those aspects most important for New Subjectivity.

Politics pervaded every aspect of life in the sixties. Hans Dieter Schäfer describes this decade as one of rationalistic and socialist thought emphasizing the group, as compared to the postwar emphasis of the melancholy individual and his existential feeling for life:

Soziologisches Denken, Rationalismus, und vor allem eine Abkehr von existentialistischem Lebensgefühl der Nachkriegszeit führten zu einer Umorientierung. An die Stelle der Restauration, des Einsamkeitskultes und der Melancholie rückten nun [mitte der sechziger Jahre] neue Projektionen wie Demokratisierung, Gruppendenken, Optimismus und Sachtreue.¹⁰

Literature was burdened with a political function during the sixties. The writer was to directly effect a change in society through his work. No longer did he feel justified in talking about himself, for he was supposed to portray the problems and realities of the surrounding community.

Due to an inability to bring about real societal change literature was eventually denounced as having nothing to do with reality. The antinomy felt between life and literature culminated in the literary crisis of 1968. Hans Magnus Enzensberger, in his illustrious essay of 1968 entitled "Gemeinplätze, die Neueste Literatur betreffend," states that there exists no revolutionary literature in West Germany. Literature, he says, has no

societal relevance, which means that an author who continues to write does so at his own risk. Literary production, and the artist himself, can no longer be justified:

Ich fasse zusammen: Eine revolutionäre Literatur existiert nicht, es wäre denn in einem völlig phrasenhaften Sinn des Wortes. Das hat objektive Gründe, die aus der Welt zu schaffen nicht in der Macht von Schriftstellern liegt. Für literarische Kunstwerke läßt sich eine wesentliche gesellschaftliche Funktion in unserer Lage nicht angeben.... Wer Literatur als Kunst macht, ist damit nicht widerlegt, er kann aber auch nicht mehr gerechtfertigt werden.¹¹

The death of literature, based upon its societal irrelevance, was proclaimed.¹²

Enzensberger posited as the new societal function for literature the political education of Germany ("die politische Alphabetisierung Deutschlands"), and cited as models to be followed Börne, Rosa Luxemburg, Günter Wallraff's documentaries, Ulrike Meinhoff, and Georg Alshemer's report concerning Viet Nam.¹³ The demand for politically engaged literature was a demand for literary forms which related and prompted revolutionary actions in the streets and factories. The debate centered around the death of literature went beyond the acceptance of literature's irrelevance and posed the question of how, through what means, could the emancipatory ideals of literature best be realized.

For many authors documentary literature appeared to be the answer to this question. It was viewed as a means to overcome the discrepancy between literary ideals and societal reality. Writers used a documentary piece as a forum for an analysis of society. The author wanted to communicate his analysis to as broad a public as possible, persuade his audience, and ideally provoke them to take a stand on the issue and act. Erika Runge explains the intent of her Böttroper Protokolle (1968), a

classic example of documentary literature, as "directed enlightenment":

Die Abfolge der Protokolle zeigt also eine kompositorische Absicht: es ging nicht allein um Dokumentation, sondern um gezielte Aufklärung durch sie. Ich habe ein Mosaik zusammengestellt, das die persönlichen Aspekte in einem neuen aufheben und den Leser anregen sollte, die historische und politische Situation noch einmal zu durchdenken und Entscheidungen zu erwägen, die über die Möglichkeiten der Einwohner von Bottrop hinausgehen. In der Kritik wurde daraufhingewiesen: "Dies ist ein politisches Lehrstück neuer Art."¹⁴

The success of documentary literature to persuade depends upon its authenticity, which derives from its documents. Fact is the basis of the work, not a fictional story, and the hero is historically founded, not invented. Authenticity supercedes the imagination in an attempt to approach reality. The smallest structural unit is that of the quote. These quotes are placed side by side in a montage resembling, to use Erika Runge's terminology of above, a "mosaic." Segments of reality have been lifted out of their context and transposed and rearranged. The segments are often connected with the author's commentary and interpretation of the events presented. The language, again in order to persuade, is clear, straight-forward, and in general avoids poetic metaphors or ambiguity:

Immerhin führt der Zweifel an der Wirkung von noch so kritischer oder satirischer Dichtung auch nach ernsthafter Selbstprüfung Autoren immer wieder dahin, der poetisch-vieldeutigen Schreibweise zu entsagen zugunsten einer möglichst unmittelbaren Dokumentation sozialer Realitäten und damit zur Betätigung eines direkten, politischen, sozialen, humanen Engagements.¹⁵

Documentary literature reached its zenith during the late sixties and early seventies only to crash into disrepute. The reasons behind the sudden turn to a subjective literature are many. Some are due to the shifting political climate in much of Western Europe. The optimism of the sixties was replaced by disappointment and resignation due to the lack of

real societal change which had been envisioned. In West Germany the government reacted to the demands for change with the "Radikalenerlaß" of 1972 and stricter censorship guidelines. With the advent of Helmut Schmidt the mood of the government and entire country was one of pragmatism, due in part to the economic recession felt throughout the Western world. The student movement lost momentum and eventually dispersed, as did the APO ("Außerparlamentarische Opposition"). One of their primary rallying points, the Viet Nam war, had been defused in the meantime:

Mit dem Ende des Vietnamkriegs entfiel ein mächtiges moralisches Motiv für übernationales Engagement. Innerstaatliche Reformimpulse kollidierten mit überlegenen Reaktionen auf die ökonomische Rezession. Der Pragmatismus der 'Macher' erhielt erhöhtes Ansehen in der öffentlichen Meinung, 'Theorie' begann suspekt zu werden; eine neue Entfremdung zwischen der Macht und den Intellektuellen bahnte sich an. Der Bildungsexpansion wurden Grenzen gesetzt. Die staatlichen Administrationen erhielten mehr Macht an den Universitäten. Der Numerus clausus und der Stellenmangel im öffentlichen Dienst wie in der privaten Wirtschaft veränderten sukzessive das Lehr- und Lernklima an Schulen und Hochschulen. Linke Literatur verlor einen Teil ihres Marktes.¹⁶

There were also important literary reasons. The question arises as to the aesthetic value of documentary literature. Proponents argue that the arrangement of the segments provides room for both imagination and artistic form, and this is true to varying degrees. But Marcel Reich-Ranicki points out that documentary authors themselves described their primary goal to be political impact, not art: "Im Mittelpunkt des Interesses, zumal der jüngeren Leser, stand in jenen Jahren eine als neuartig empfundene Literatur, deren Autoren programmatisch erklärten, daß sie es nicht auf Kunst, sondern auf politisch-erzieherische Wirkung abgesehen hätten."¹⁷ The basis of literary evaluation was usefulness ("Gebrauchswert")

according to Enzensberger), not aesthetic value, thereby realizing the criteria of Walter Boehlich:

"Können wir keine Kritik haben, die den fadenscheinig gewordenen Kunstwerk-Begriff über Bord wirft und endlich die gesellschaftliche Funktion jeglicher Literatur als das Entscheidende versteht und damit die künstlerische Funktion als eine belläufige erkennt? ... Können wir keine Kritik haben, die nicht vom überzeitlichen Charakter des Kunstwerks ausgeht, sondern vom jeweils zeitlichen Charakter, die Literatur nicht länger als das begreift, was sie angeblich ist, sondern als das, wozu sie dient und was mit ihr geschieht? Diese Kritik wäre lebendig...."¹⁸

New Subjectivity is above all a reaction to the fact that much of the literature of the late sixties portrayed factual and political objectivities at the expense of the development of the individual: "...diese Vernachlässigung [der persönlichen Entwicklung] fängt an, sich zu rächen."¹⁹ In the left's attempt to abolish the distinction traditionally made between a political and private existence--"hie Politik, hie Individuum"²⁰--it totally ignored the private and very real needs of the person. In its attempt to educate the individual as to his societal responsibility and group identity, the individual disappeared, for he was to serve the interests of the group:

Und zu dieser traurigen Erfahrung, daß die Kollektive wie die Individuelle Entfaltung der Subjekte, die einen Moment einswerden zu können schien, wieder reduziert war, gehörte auch - und zeitlich vielleicht noch vorher - die Entdeckung, daß viele der gesellschaftskritischen Einsichten und Parolen etwas schlecht Objektives, etwas Abstraktes hatten, daß sie nicht nur nicht eingelöst wurden, sondern daß sie eine über den Kopf und das Leben des einzelnen hinweggehende Allgemeinheit hatten, unter die das konkrete Subjekt nur in einem schlechten Sinn subsumiert wurde. Die Wendung zum eigenen Subjekt, zu seiner vereinzelter Konkretheit und seinem Alltag erfolgte nicht aus freien Stücken, sondern mangels eines Besseren....²¹

New Subjectivity is a rebellion against the ideological yoke placed upon literature. The function of literature is again seen in its freedom

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and a refusal to serve any system, as evidenced in the New Subjectivists' distrust of political truisms. The evaluative criteria proclaimed by Enzensberger and Boehlich--literature's usefulness--have been replaced by a new concern for form. The primacy of rational and ordered thought gives way to an irrational tendency and to the emphasis on individual experience. The sudden appearance of New Subjectivity around 1973 represents a pendulum swing away from political activism of the sixties to more private, personal concerns. Gabriele Wohmann's poem "So ist die Lage" testifies to the necessity of this swing:

Bei meinem Versuch nach etwas Belangvollem Ausschau zu halten
 Mich den wahren Sorgen der Menschheit zuzuwenden
 und von mir abzusehen
 Bin ich sofort auf die Brandopfer, auf die Bombardierten,
 auf die Verhungernden und auf euch gestoßen
 Ich wollte das neue Jahr einmal nicht mit Innenaufnahmen
 von mir beginnen
 Jetzt kann ich loslegen inmitten der Ereignisse
 Allein meine denkbaren Überschriften füllen einen Notizblock
 Bin ich aber stark genug in Anspruch genommen von den
 Fangzügen
 aus den Untiefen des Weltgeschehens
 Bin ich betroffen vom Mitschnitt der Katastrophen
 Habe ich toderntst gefrühstückt ansässig unterwegs in
 Mitleidenschaft gezogen
 Halt den Mund, muß ich dem Sprecher in meinem Kopf zurufen
 Denn diese überaus wichtige Kleinigkeit zwischen dir und drei
 oder vier anderen Personen
 Läßt außer euch keinen aufhören und alles beim alten
 Mehr Ausgeglichenheit und Wohlbefinden
 damit die großen Themen eine Chance bei dir haben
 Schluß mit den privaten Obsessionen und inneren Anlässen
 Im neuen Jahr werden die Fliegengewichte
 individualistischer Schwierigkeiten
 Beim Namen genommen und niedergeboxt
 Das Elend gibt es nämlich wirklich, Leiden ist anders, es wird
 gestorben
 Aber wie kommt es daß mich die Fernsehbilder jetzt
 Weniger angreifen als dein Tonfall vorhin
 Daß es mich beschäftigt wie wir uns GUTE NACHT sagen
 Während die Erdbebengeschädigten keine Schlafstätte haben
 Wie kommt es daß ich über die Freundlichkeit nachdenke
 Über das Abendessen, über unsere kommenden Sätze,

über das Unbeendbare zwischen uns
 Während ich dem Massentod zuschaue
 Trotz ausreichender Bildqualität ein Gähnen unterdrückend
 Jederzeit doch für den Einzeltod zuständig gegen deinen Tod
 zum Beispiel Immer auf den Barrikaden
 Beim Versuch nach etwas Belangvollem Ausschau zu halten
 und von mir abzusehen
 Mitten im Material für den Rohschnitt
 Verliert und verhakt in den Trümmern und den Grimassen
 und in den letzten Infusionen
 Zwischen den Toten und denen die tot sein werden
 Im Gedränge der Wörter über die Lage die so ernst ist wie
 immer
 Dermaßen also eingeschlossen in überregionalem Entsetzen
 Und von allem was mich auch betrifft, auch mich, wirklich
 durchaus
 Beim Versuch von mir abzusehen
 Bin ich auf mich gestoßen.²²

C. Continuity between the Sixties and Seventies

New Subjectivity is a literary term and a crutch used by literary critics to neatly and efficiently categorize a movement. The juxtaposition of New Subjectivity of the seventies with the political literature of the sixties is not absolute and only serves to outline in general the most striking trends. The late sixties, in particular documentary literature, are used as a literary foil to better perceive the contours of New Subjectivity. There are certainly examples of subjectivity in the sixties, and some authors of the seventies continue to write in the name of a political ideology. If one looks for continuity within literary development instead of evidence of the abrupt pendulum swing, there are two obvious examples: literary feminism and poetics:

Der literarische Feminismus, der auf die politische Dimension des Subjektiven besonderen Wert legen mußte, um die Frau aus den Schranken des nur Privaten zu befreien, und die Autorenpoetik, die den Wandel in der Funktionsbestimmung der Literatur kommentiert und rechtfertigt, sind die sichtbarsten Bekenntnisse zu solch fraglich gewordener Kontinuität.²³

Literary feminism even in the sixties attempted to combine the private and political. It wanted to communicate to individual women, who had always been perceived within their traditionally private role as mother and homekeeper, a sense of their political and public self. Ideally this was not to become merely a role change, but should offer women a wider range of possibilities and a broader area of exploration in which to realize themselves. Christa Wolf's novel Nachdenken über Christa T., published in 1968, provides a good example of a search for oneself: "Was ist das: Dieses Zu-sich-selber-Kommen des Menschen?,"²⁴ and can be considered a forerunner of New Subjectivity.

Continuity can also be found in the poetics of several prominent authors. Their theoretical writings of the sixties concerning the societal function of literature concentrate on the subjective nature of all literature. Günter Herburger states in 1967 that he himself is the main character of all his writings: "Wenn ich schreibe, schreibe ich im Grunde nur von mir. Alles was vorgestellt wird, sind meine Projektionen. Ich bin die Hauptperson."²⁵ Peter Handke offers perhaps the most dramatic example in his essay "Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms," written in 1967 at the height of political activism: "Ich habe keine Themen, über die ich schreiben möchte, ich habe nur ein Thema: Über mich selbst klar, klarer zu werden...."²⁶ In his essay of 1966 entitled "Die Literatur ist romantisch," Handke finds that "engaged" and "literature" are mutually exclusive: "Eine engagierte Literatur gibt es nicht. Der Begriff ist ein Widerspruch in sich."²⁷

Dieter Wellershoff is another important author who already in the sixties warned against the total lack of the personal sphere in literature.

The portrayal of the subject crippled by reality burdens contemporary society with responsibility toward this individual and indicates the necessity for change. Hinrich Seeba states that Wellershoff dialectically unites the political and private spheres through attributing a societal function to the writer's task of portraying the individual: "Erst die persönliche Konkretisierung verschafft dem kritischen Potential der Literatur die glaubwürdige Wirkung, die dem abstrakten Engagement abging."²⁸ This presages the solution which many writers of the seventies will find to overcome the discrepancy between the autonomy and engagement of art and to justify their writing. In addition, Wellershoff's New Realism, a statement of method and intent, portends in many ways the trends of the seventies.²⁹ As early as 1967 Wellershoff discusses a subjective narrative perspective, whereby objective reality is seen slightly askew. By means of this skewed perspective the everyday world will appear not so everyday and the reader will be able to experience it anew. The connection between Wellershoff and much of New Subjectivity lies in the author's attempt to free himself and his reader from preconceptions and established meanings in order to experience more fully a wider range of reality.

This connection is also to be found between "sprachreflektierende Literatur" (literature reflecting upon itself) and New Subjectivity. Based in part on Ludwig Wittgenstein's theory of language and related to the skepticism toward language displayed especially during the postwar years, the representatives of this movement--Heißenbüttel, Mon, and Bense being the most important--understand the manipulative power of language and its structures. Language is a carrier of implied meanings which distort our perception of reality. "Sprachreflektierende Literatur" attempts to destroy

the clichés which determine the way we see, think, and speak, and to escape the meanings traditionally burdening all language. The reader is confronted with antistructures, which do not correspond to traditional patterns of syntax and do not lend themselves to traditional interpretation, thereby springing paralyzed language models and draining metaphors of meaning. This destructive process should broaden the individual's capacity to think and speak: "Ich nenne Helmut Heißenbüttel stellvertretend für eine größere Anzahl von Schriftstellern, die eine Veränderung der Sprachfähigkeit und also die Erweiterung des Denk- und Sprechvermögens sich zur Aufgabe gesetzt haben."³⁰ Although considerably more abstract and experimental, justification for the inclusion of this type of literature here lies in the personal freedom it strives to attain through destroying societal preformulations and preconceptions.

Finally, as evidence of literary continuity Marcel Reich-Ranicki makes note of several authors who continued to write seemingly uninfluenced by the political upheaval around them: "In der Tat: Viele Autoren – von Marie Luise Kaschnitz bis Gabriele Wohmann, von Hans Erich Nossack bis Peter Handke – veruchten das Ihrige weiterzumachen und ließen sich von den Demonstrationen im Lande kaum beirren."³¹

D. New Subjectivity as a Return

The phenomenon of literary subjectivity is certainly not unique to the seventies, but rather part of a long tradition which first emerged with the appearance of the bourgeois novel itself.³² The older epic or epos, according to Hegel, still portrayed a complete picture of the world and man's place within the whole; it presented "die Totalität einer Welt- und

Lebensanschauung."³³ The "moderne bürgerliche Epopoe" originates from a tradition of totality, but eventually emancipates itself more and more from this predetermined, fixed, and objective reality in a process of subjective questioning and doubt, which ultimately arrives at the subject as the central axis of the novel: "Im Unterschied zum Epos problematisierte und entthronisierte er [der Roman] die öffentlichen Rangordnungen und Werte und entdeckte als seinen eigenen Gegenstand den Menschen schlechthin, das menschliche Individuum und dessen Subjektivität...."³⁴

The historical development of the novel traces the dialectic relation between objectivity and subjectivity. The pendulum swings back and forth between the two extremes, never totally disregarding either pole, but emphasizing one or the other in what Zsuzsa Széll calls "Akzentverschiebungen."³⁵ Storm and Stress is one period characterized by subjectivity and the autonomy of the artist--the "Genie"--to create and phantasy new literary contents and forms beyond those already formulated and existant in reality. The motifs of madness, wonder, and ecstasy in works during the Storm and Stress and the Romantic periods parallel the tendency toward the irrational and inexplicable, the dark and fearful, and toward the mystical apparent in many new subjective works.³⁶ Another correlation between these literary periods is the supremacy of feelings, and the role attributed to these feelings of freeing the individual from the particularization and functionality of society: "Schon in Werthers Leidensgeschichte ist die Unbedingtheit des Gefühls Ausdruck eines Emanzipationsanspruches des ganzen Menschen...."³⁷ Supportive of the analogy drawn between Romanticism and New Subjectivity is the frequency with which Romantic writers are quoted or mentioned within the works of

the seventies.

The swing back around 1830 to objectivity as evidenced in literary Realism, and then its intensification in Naturalism at the turn of the century, serve to spotlight the crisis of the individual at the beginning of the twentieth century. Underlining the seesawing movement of previous centuries was the gradual movement toward the negation of any type of totality or all-encompassing meaningful reality. The process of questioning ultimately leads to the experience of Nietzsche's "Bruch": a break with tradition, with societal institutions, with systems based on truth. Expressionism is a reaction to the experience of the loss of meaning in the world, whereby the individual is thrown back upon himself and his own subjective experience of reality. There are many similarities between New Subjectivity and Expressionism, which will be highlighted in the following discussion. An in depth analysis and comparison of these two literary movements and their individual representatives would be extremely enlightening and interesting, but goes beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Both New Subjectivity and Expressionism are reactions to the overwhelmingly objective perception of the world characterizing the literary periods immediately preceding them, those of the political sixties and of Naturalism. The decade of the sixties can be viewed as a movement toward contemporary society. The authors no longer wanted their works to merely simulate life, but to be life: "Man wollte nicht nur Lebensnähe, sondern das Leben selbst...."³⁸ Naturalism strove to "photograph" the world; the Naturalists wanted to present a segment of life as true to reality as possible. Hans Dieter Schäfer establishes the connection between Naturalism and the decade of the sixties, which borrowed and

expanded upon the experimental forms of its predecessors.³⁹ For both literary periods reality was something firm and solid under the feet and represented a supraindividual societal system which determined the individual.

In contrast, the totality of reality furnishing a meaningful connection between isolated parts has dissolved for the Expressionists. Hugo von Hofmannsthal's "Ein Brief" (1901), the single most important document signaling the advent of the expressionist experience, testifies to the unsuccessful search for meaning and reference points in traditional systems proclaiming truth: "An dieser Harmonie begrenzter und geordneter Begriffe hoffte ich zu gesunden. Aber ich konnte nicht zu ihnen hinüber."⁴⁰ The narrator's reality disintegrates into smaller and smaller segments, which cannot be reunited under the generality of some concept: "Es zerfiel mir alles in Teile, die Teile wieder in Teile, und nichts mehr ließ sich mit einem Begriff umspannen" (13). The experience of a reality which is no longer perceived as solid ground is thematic in Franz Kafka's early short story "Gespräch mit dem Beter," in which the narrator describes this condition as one of sea sickness on land: "Ich habe Erfahrung und es ist nicht scherzend gemeint, wenn ich sage, daß es eine Seekrankheit auf festem Lande gibt."⁴¹

A similar experience can be found in many new subjective works.⁴² There is a scorn shown toward any answers which pretend to be certain and true. The narrator of Nicolas Born's novel Die erdabgewandte Seite der Geschichte states: "Ich hatte keine Antworten auf bestimmte Fragen der Geschichte, konnte alle Antworten, je selbstgewisser und gerechter sie klangen, nur noch verachten."⁴³ This is connected to the negation of any

political ideology or societal institution and is a reaffirmation of Nietzsche's "Bruch" after the positivism of the sixties. Typical for the new subjective hero is a sudden feeling of displacement and lack of context. The hero of Peter Handke's novel Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung, Gregor Keuschnig, suddenly feels as if he no longer belongs: "Auf einmal gehörte er nicht mehr dazu."⁴⁴

The experience of the collapse of a meaningful reality exterior to the subject results in the thematization of the narrative perspective. The objects of reality are no longer of primary importance, but rather the subject who perceives and experiences them. The reader is not presented an objective and trustworthy picture of the world, but rather a protocol of the narrating subject's consciousness. The narrator of Robert Musil's short story "Tonka" (1924) says that it is necessary to believe in the objects of the world before they exist: "Es waren die Dinge. Von ihnen galt, daß der Glaube an sie früher da sein mußte als sie selbst...."⁴⁵ What Fritz Martini states concerning Expressionism is equally true of New Subjectivity:

Die Perspektive verdichtet sich auf ein Ich als Mittelpunktfigur – "Ich: Abenteuer der seelischen Einsamkeit" (Max Krell) –, sie faßt einen Lebensaugenblick, einen Lebensabschnitt zusammen. Dieses Ich erzählt sich gleichsam monologisch selbst, oder aber der Erzähler erzählt, mit einem Gestus der Objektivierung, aus ihm heraus. Das Subjektive und das Objektive rinnen ineinander; die Außenwelt verliert ihre eigene, abständige Wirklichkeit, sie wird zur Projektion des Innern, nur aus den Prozessen, die in ihm ablaufen, gesichtet und gedeutet.⁴⁶

The same existential isolation of the subject due to the dissolution of an exterior objective reality will be noted for the new subjective protagonist. Reality serves as an impetus for subjective reflection, memory, or imagination; in short, for subjective experience.

Because the perception of reality will change from person to person

and will even differ for the same subject, the world of objects is in a state of constant flux: "Die Dinge rückten sehr heran, wurden problematisch und enthüllten sich aus der Nähe als endlose Bewegungen in sich. Sie noch in statischem Übereinander zu reproduzieren, war fürderhin unmöglich. Das Problem, sie in ihrem Schwingen darzustellen, wurde brennend."⁴⁷

The boundary between subject and object often becomes fuzzy or disappears entirely. In the works of Rainer Maria Rilke and Peter Handke outer and inner world flow into each other without warning. In Rilke's Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge (1910) the narrator feels the outside penetrate his own room: "Elektrische Bahnen rasen läutend durch meine Stube. Automobile gehen über mich hin."⁴⁸ Handke's Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung is structured upon a seesaw back and forth between objective and subjective reality, with the reader never fully able to determine the contours of either. The protagonist of Dieter Wellershoffs novel Die Schönheit des Schimpansen undergoes a similar experience. Klaus Jung can no longer distinguish between outer and inner world, "so daß innen und außen langsam ineinander übergangen...."⁴⁹

Moments of an almost mystical unity between subject and object can be found in both new subjective and expressionist works. Lord Chandos, the narrator of Hofmannsthal's "Ein Brief," experiences the eternal essence of being through a watering can, whereby the narrator feels himself flowing into external objects and is overcome by a sympathy or participation in the fluid of life and death. He tries to describe his experience: "Es war viel mehr und viel weniger als Mitleid: ein ungeheures Anteilnehmen, ein Hinüberfließen in jene Geschöpfe oder ein Fühlen, daß ein Fluidum des Lebens und Todes, des Traumes und Wachens für einen Augenblick in sie

hinübergeflossen ist..." (15). Lord Chandos' experience of eternity ("Gegenwart des Unendlichen"), caused by the accidental composition of insignificant objects ("diese Zusammensetzung von Nichtigkeiten"), is echoed in Peter Handke's works. The narrator of Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied experiences this unity as the swaying of a cypress tree he is watching gradually penetrates and takes over his breathing: "...mit einem willenlosen Wohlgefühl spürte ich, wie die Bewegung der Zypresse die Funktion des Atemzentrums übernahm, mich in sich mitschwanken ließ...."⁵⁰ Another Handke hero, Gregor Keuschnig, feels a helpless attachment and oneness with the world upon viewing three wonderful objects lying in the sand: a chestnut leaf, a mirror splinter, and a barrette:

Bei dem bestärkenden Anblick der drei wunderbaren Dinge im Sand erlebte er eine hilflose Zuneigung zu allen.... Das Kastanienblatt, die Speigelscherbe und die Zopfspange schienen noch enger zusammenzurücken – und mit ihnen rückte auch das andere zusammen . . . bis es nichts anderes mehr gab. Herbei gezauberte Nähe! (SE,82–83).

Common to many new subjective and expressionist authors is a tendency toward the irrational and the anti-intellectual. Civilization's highly developed reason is seen as an obstacle to the attainment of unity and totality. Martini states of the Expressionists: "Im Elementaren glaubte man einer Totalität des Seins habhaft zu werden."⁵¹ In Gottfried Benn's "Ithaka" (1914) the students rebel against the intellectual acrobatics ("Intellektakrobatik") and unquestionable, absolute power of the logical, systematic brain. They seek an original state of being in the warmth of the sea and the blood of motherhood: "Wir sind das Blut; aus den warmen Meeren, den Müttern, die das Leben gaben. Sie sind ein kleiner Gang vom Meer. Kommen Sie heim. Ich rufe Sie."⁵² Reason as apparent at the beginning of the piece is overcome at the end and replaced with ecstasy: "Wir

wollen den Traum. Wir wollen den Rausch. Wir rufen Dionysos und Ithaka! –" (100). Stephan Reinhardt discusses within contemporary feminist works the cult of motherhood and blood as the sign of life and fertility. He quotes Karin Struck's Die Mutter: "Es ist wahr, das Blut ist Zeichen des Lebens, der Fruchtbarkeit, und die Angst vor dem Blut ist falsch. Das Blut ist dick und leuchtend."⁵³ The rejection of the rule of reason is not limited to feminists. The narrator of Nicolas Born's Die erdabgewandte Seite der Geschichte laments that the world is a victim of rationality: "Die Erde wird letzten Endes der Vernunft geopfert" (SG.151).

As expression and reflection of subjective consciousness the forms of new subjective and expressionist works resemble each other in certain ways. Both literary styles break with Realism and instead display a style of fragmentation. There often exists no logical development, no sequential order, no causality imposed from the outside. Time and space are difficult to determine. The story line follows the reflections, the associations, the imagination, and the memories of the subject. Typical for New Subjectivity and Expressionism is the destruction rather than construction of symbols. A symbol requires a system of prearranged meaning within a given and natural context. As has been shown, however, these two literary movements lack such a context. Again, what Martini asserts concerning Expressionism can be applied to much of New Subjectivity:

Unverkennbar ist...die Entfernung von einem symbolischen Erzählen. Es konnte künstlerisch nur möglich sein, wo an dem Bewußtsein eines sinngebenden Weltzusammenhangs, an einer Koinzidenz des Konkret-Einzigen mit dem Allgemein-Bedeutenden unter dem Aspekt reziproker Sinnerhellung festgehalten wurde. Wenn es hingegen gerade um die Verstörung des Zusammenhangs ging, dieser als eine Lüge der Harmonie galt, wenn Erzählthema und Erzählformen gerade das Fragmentarische, Isolierte, Offene zu akzentuieren hatten, so mußten dem Vereinzelten seine eigene Absolutheit mitgeteilt

werden – eine Absolutheit zur Nihilität oder zum Unendlichen.⁵⁴

Due to its antisymbolic nature, Kurt W. Schild has characterized Expressionism as "Parabolkunst," or parabolic art, a term which aptly describes much of New Subjectivity as well.⁵⁵ The literary work presents pictures and images which defy recognition and meaningful interpretation. In Wassily Kandinsky's "Der gelbe Klang" (1912) the observer is confronted with a moving stage composition ("Bühnenkomposition"). There are no characters but rather "Mitwirkende" (contributors) who, as carriers of form and color, arrange themselves in six different pictures. Neither the words nor the action impart a meaning but rather an impression.⁵⁶ Peter Handke also strips objects of everything but their form and color in his novel Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire.⁵⁷ The questions directed by the reader at the work of literature remain unanswered and are accordingly reflected back upon the questioning reader. This process of reflection constitutes the parabolic nature of Expressionism and of many new subjective works. Important is the work's effect on the reader. The author wants not only to impart the loss of totality and meaning in the world to the reader, but ideally to draw him into a similar experience. The energy of the piece of literature is not exhausted by what it means, but rather, through parabolic reflection, burdens and provokes the reader with his own questions, feelings, and experience.

As a consequence of the dissolution of a meaningful reference system, language itself as a labeling and categorizing system becomes problematic. In some cases this leads to a rebellion of the objects against their predetermined and limiting categorization, as evidenced in "Lydia und Mäxchen" (1906) by Alfred Döblin.⁵⁸ But more often it results

in a speechlessness which is common to both Expressionism and New Subjectivity. Words simply disintegrate in the mouth of Lord Chandos "wie modrige Pilze." He can no longer speak of anything within a general context, and it has become impossible for him to use concepts: "...nichts mehr ließ sich mit einem Begriff umspannen. Die einzelnen Worte schwammen um mich..." (13). The main character of Botho Strauß' novel Rumor, Bekker, gradually loses his ability to speak due to an inability to answer any question definitively:

Der Vater wiegt immerzu den Kopf leicht hin und her, als sei er unschlüssig der einzig richtigen Antwort. Aber es kommt überhaupt keine. So verebben Grits Fragen allmählich vor dem gründlichen Schweiger, der mit dem Kopf wackelt und kurz vor dem ersten Ton einer Erwiderung es sich immer noch einmal anders überlegt.⁵⁹

These examples manifest the connection between the loss of a meaningful context and speechlessness. Concepts and names for objects are rejected or destroyed because they help structure and categorize the objects of reality. Without these artificial categories the experience mentioned before of objective instability is intensified, as is the case with Wellershoffs protagonist, Klaus Jung: "...er hatte aufgehört, seinem Leben oder der Welt, die ungetrennt durch ihn hindurchflossen, Namen zu geben, mit denen er sie festhalten konnte" (SS,26).

Finally, it is interesting to note that both New Subjectivity and Expressionism have unleashed a controversy concerning their validity and function for society. In 1937 and 1938 the so-called Expressionism debate argued for and against its aesthetic value, and pondered whether or not Expressionism should be used as a basis for antifascist literature. Opponents stated that because Expressionism portrays the isolation, alienation, and meaninglessness of human life as an existential reality,

instead of pointing to society as the cause of this alienation and showing the masses the path of revolutionary change. It has no societal merit or relevance. Such arguments are the forerunners of reproaches leveled at New Subjectivity today, as will be discussed in detail in later chapters.

There are also several important and striking differences to be noted between Expressionism and New Subjectivity. The most important of these is that New Subjectivity is a much more accessible literature than was Expressionism. Heinrich Vormweg characterizes the literature at the beginning of what can be considered the new subjective movement as an invitation to all--borrowed from Dieter Wellershoffs novel entitled thusly--to read.⁶⁰ Above all, the accessibility is due to the concreteness of many new subjective works. The themes are recognizable and extracted from everyday life with typical characters. The setting and departure point for the action to come are familiar. In general, the forms of New Subjectivity are less radical than those of Expressionism. In contrast to its predecessor, New Subjectivity often unfolds a story and develops characters. It frequently presents a return to a more traditional narrative form. The biography and autobiography can, for example, offer the framework for a sequential time and place and for a logical progression from beginning to end.

Conclusion

In this first chapter the term New Subjectivity, as it will be used throughout this dissertation, has been defined. The term has also been placed within its historical framework, not in an attempt to present a literary history, but to provide a more thorough understanding of the term.

Juxtaposed to the documentary literature of the late sixties, New Subjectivity appears to be a radical, abrupt, and totally new literary direction. But within a broader frame, within a tradition of subjective literature especially apparent during the early twentieth century, New Subjectivity no longer seems as new as the furor upon its advent led the reader to believe. What is new then about New Subjectivity? New Subjectivity is new first of all because it is a very definite reaction to and rejection of the objectivities of the sixties. More importantly, even though it evolved from a subjective tradition, the themes and forms used to express the experience of the loss of a firm, objective reality will be unique to and reflections of the past decade of German life; both personal and societal. The following chapters will document these themes and forms in greater detail.

Notes--Chapter One

¹Marcel Reich-Ranicki, "Rückkehr zur schönen Literatur: Eine Bilanz aus Anlaß der Frankfurter Buchmesse," Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 8 Oct. 1975, p. 21.

²Roman Ritter, "Die 'Neue Innerlichkeit' - von Innen und aussen betrachtet: (Karin Struck, Peter Handke, Rolf Dieter Brinkmann)," in Kontext I: Literatur und Wirklichkeit, ed. Uwe Timm and Gerd Fuchs (München: Bertelsmann, 1976), p. 238.

³Michael Rutschky, "Katastrophen-Literatur - die neueste Tendenz?," Neue Rundschau, 88 (1977), 619.

⁴Klaus R. Scherpe and Hans-Ulrich Treichel, "Vom Überdruß leben: Sensibilität und Intellektualität als Ereignis bei Handke, Born und Strauß," Monatshefte, 73 (1981), 187.

⁵Marcel Reich-Ranicki, "Anmerkungen zur deutschen Literatur der siebziger Jahre," Merkur, 33 (1979), 176.

⁶Heinrich Vormweg, "Einladung an alle: Prosaneuerscheinungen Herbst 1972 und Frühjahr 1973," Jahresring, 1973/74, p. 247.

⁷Michael Radtke, "Jetzt dichten sie wieder," Stern, Oct. 1974.

⁸Reich-Ranicki, "Rückkehr," p. 21.

⁹Erika Runge, "Abschied von den Protokollen: Überlegungen zur Dokumentarliteratur," Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 17 Aug. 1976, p. 19.

¹⁰Hans Dieter Schäfer, "Stimmungen wie im Sammetherzen," Die Welt, 12 Aug. 1976, p. 21.

¹¹Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "Gemeinplätze, die Neueste Literatur betreffend," Kursbuch, 15 (1968), 195.

¹²It has been noted that Enzensberger himself did not, as is commonly thought, proclaim the death of literature. In an interview with Alfred Andersch Enzensberger states: "Sie [die Kritiker] behaupten hartnäckig, ich hätte darin den Tod der Literatur verkündet oder gar verlangt. In Wirklichkeit habe ich festgestellt, was eigentlich jeder Literaturstudent wissen müßte - nur bis zu den deutschen Kritikern hat es sich offenbar immer noch nicht herumgesprochen -, nämlich daß der Tod der Literatur selber eine literarische Metapher von ehrwürdigem Alter ist, und ich habe mich über diese Rhetorik des Absterbens lustig gemacht." In Nach dem Protest: Literatur im Umbruch, ed. Martin W. Lüdke (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979), p. 92.

¹³Enzensberger, 196-97.

¹⁴Runge, p. 19.

¹⁵Eberhard Lämmert, "Über die öffentliche Verantwortung des Schriftstellers," in Poesie und Politik: Zur Situation der Literatur in Deutschland, ed. Wolfgang Ippen (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1973), p. 55.

¹⁶Helmut Kreuzer, "Zur Literatur der siebziger Jahre in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland," Basis, 8 (1978), 10.

¹⁷Reich-Ranicki, "Anmerkungen," 172.

¹⁸Quoted according to Heinz Ludwig Arnold, "Über die Vergangenheit der alten und die Notwendigkeit einer neuen Literaturkritik," in Brauchen wir noch die Literatur? Zur literarischen Situation in der Bundesrepublik (Düsseldorf: Bertelsmann Universitätsverlag, 1972), p. 35.

¹⁹Hazel E. Hazel, "Die alte und die neue Sensibilität: Erfahrungen mit dem Subjekt, das zwischen die Kulturen gefallen ist," in Literaturmagazin 4: Die Literatur nach dem Tod der Literatur: Bilanz der Politisierung, ed. Hans Christoph Buch (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1975), p. 131.

²⁰Hazel, p. 130.

²¹Jörg Drews, "Selbsterfahrung und Neue Subjektivität in der Lyrik," in Akzente, 24 (1977), 90.

²²Gabriele Wohmann, "So ist die Lage," Tintenfisch, 8 (1975), 35-36.

²³Hinrich C. Seeba, "Persönliches Engagement: Zur Autorenpoetik der siebziger Jahre," Monatshefte, 73 (1981), 141.

²⁴Opening quote by Johannes R. Becher in Christa Wolf, Nachdenken über Christ T., special ed. of the Sammlung Luchterhand (DDR, 1968; rpt. Berlin: Luchterhand, 1971).

²⁵Quoted according to Walter Hinderer, "Kommt ins Offene, Freunde: Tendenzen der westdeutschen Lyrik nach 1965," in Deutsche Literatur in der Bundesrepublik seit 1965: Untersuchungen und Berichte, ed. Paul Michael Lützeler and Egon Schwarz (Königstein: Athenäum, 1980), p. 19. Original quote in Herburger, "Dogmatisches über Gedichte," in Was alles hat Platz in einem Gedicht?, ed. Hans Bender and Michael Krüger (München, 1977), p. 76.

²⁶Peter Handke, "Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms," in Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972), p. 26.

²⁷Peter Handke, "Die Literatur ist romantisch," in Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972), p. 43.

²⁸Seeba, 148-49.

²⁹Dieter Wellershoff, "Wiederherstellung der Fremdheit," in Grenzverschiebung: Neue Tendenzen in der deutschen Literatur, ed. Renate Matthaei (Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1970), pp. 9-15 of "Theorie und Programm."

³⁰Lämmert, p. 52.

³¹Reich-Ranicki, "Anmerkungen," 171.

³²For an excellent and comprehensive treatment of literary subjectivity see Edgar Piel, Der Schrecken der 'wahren' Wirklichkeit: Das Problem der Subjektivität in der modernen Literatur (München: Beck, 1978).

³³Hegel is quoted and discussed here by Bodo Helmann, Experimentelle Prosa der Gegenwart (München: Oldenbourg, 1978), pp. 11-12. Original quote in Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Sämtliche Werke, Jubiläumsausgabe in zwanzig Bdn., XIV, pp. 340ff.

³⁴Helmann, pp. 11-12.

³⁵Zsuzsa Széll, "Subjektive Prosa?" Weimarer Beiträge, 25, No. 12 (1979), 137.

³⁶This parallel is discussed in Peter M. Stephan, "Schlecht geträumt: Über Gefühle, Sinnlichkeit, Vernunft und andere Absurditäten in der Literatur," in Literaturmagazin 9: Der neue Irrationalismus, ed. Nicolas Born et al. (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1978), pp. 171-72.

³⁷Scherpe and Treichel, 193.

³⁸Schäfer, p. 21.

³⁹Schäfer, p. 21.

⁴⁰Hugo von Hofmannsthal, "Ein Brief," in Gesammelte Werke in Einzelausgaben: Prosa II, ed. Herbert Steiner (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1951), p. 13. Hereafter cited in the text with page number only.

⁴¹Franz Kafka, "Gespräch mit dem Beter," in Prosa des Expressionismus, ed. Fritz Martini (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1970), p. 63.

⁴²The new subjective experience of alienation will be discussed in detail in the following chapters.

⁴³Nicolas Born, Die erdabgewandte Seite der Geschichte (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1976), p. 97. Hereafter cited in the text with (SG) and page number only. For a complete list of all primary works cited in the text and their abbreviations see the Appendix.

⁴⁴Peter Handke, Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1975), p. 8. Hereafter cited in the text with (SE) and the page number only.

⁴⁵Robert Musil, "Tonka," in Prosa und Stücke, Vol. VI of Gesammelte Werke, ed. Adolf Frisé (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1978), p. 298.

⁴⁶Fritz Martini, ed., Prosa des Expressionismus (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1970), p. 9.

⁴⁷Martini, p. 7. Martini quotes Carlo Mierendorff, "Wortkunst / Von der Novelle zum Roman," in Zur Ästhetik und Poetik, Vol. I of Literatur-Revolution 1910-1925: Dokumente. Manifeste. Programme, ed. Paul Pörtner (1920; rpt. Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1960), pp. 307-13.

⁴⁸Rainer Maria Rilke, Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge, in Sämtliche Werke (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1966), VI, 710.

⁴⁹Dieter Wellershoff, Die Schönheit des Schimpansen (Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1977), p. 26. Hereafter cited in the text with (SS) and page number only.

⁵⁰Peter Handke, Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972), p. 95. Hereafter cited in the text with (BA) and page number only.

⁵¹Martini, p. 7.

⁵²Gottfried Benn, "Ithaka," in Einakter und kleine Dramen des Expressionismus, ed. Horst Denkler (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1968), p. 97. Hereafter cited in the text with page number only.

⁵³Stephan Reinhardt, "Nach innen führt der geheimnisvolle Weg, aber er führt auch wieder heraus: Unvollständige Anmerkungen zum neuen Irrationalismus in der Literatur," in Nach dem Protest: Literatur im Umbruch, ed. Martin W. Lüdke (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979), p. 167.

⁵⁴Martini, p. 11.

⁵⁵The discussion of Expressionism and above all the definition of "Parabolkunst" are based upon a seminar concerning Expressionism conducted by Professor Kurt W. Schild in the Winter of 1980 at the Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan.

⁵⁶Wassily Kandinsky, "Der gelbe Klang," in Einakter und kleine Dramen des Expressionismus, ed. Horst Denkler (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1968), pp. 54-64.

⁵⁷Peter Handke, Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1980). Hereafter cited in the text with (LS-V) and page number only.

⁵⁸Alfred Döblin, "Lydia und Mäxchen," in Einakter und kleine Dramen des Expressionismus, ed. Horst Denkler (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1968), pp. 22-46.

⁵⁹Botho Strauß, Rumor (München: Carl Hanser, 1980), pp. 213-14. Hereafter cited in the text with (R) and page number only.

⁶⁰Vormweg, p. 247.

Chapter Two--The Themes of New Subjectivity: The Destructive Experience of Alienation

Introduction

For the twentieth century, totality has become untrustworthy, and its denial characterizes the modern experience as portrayed in general in the tradition of the novel, and specifically in New Subjectivity: "Der Totalitätsverlust, zentraler Topos moderner Bewußtseinsverfälschung und Romantradition, der 'abendländische Generalschmerz' (Reinhard Baumgart) überhaupt, ist auch die zentrale Erfahrung der Helden der neuen Sensibilität."¹ Prerequisite to a subjective literature is exactly such a loss of validity of the outer, objective world or systematic order, which initiates an experience of extreme alienation and isolation. This chapter discusses in detail the experience of alienation and its ramifications for the new subjective protagonist. After establishing a type of contextual loss as the departure point or axis of most new subjective works, the phenomenon of skepticism is examined. The loss of unquestionable truth results in distrust of answers and pat explanations. Instead of systematic reasoning one finds a desire to express personal feelings, and many protagonists embark upon a journey to rediscover themselves. In the absence of an objectively trustworthy reality the subject must question the role used to define himself. This questioning can lead to the total dissolution of the subject, which is treated in the third section of this chapter. Out of context, the protagonist's perspective of reality is slightly warped, and he finds himself an outsider looking in upon a society functioning without him. The world previously taken for granted suddenly appears new and frightening in its unfamiliarity.

This chapter focuses primarily on the destructive and negative aspects of New Subjectivity. The fear, isolation, confusion, and doubt of an alienated protagonist are portrayed. In addition, this chapter presents the criticism which has been aimed at New Subjectivity. Each of the three central sections closes with frequently heard reproaches of this literature. It is the destruction of New Subjectivity which prompts so many commentators to discredit this most recent literary trend. Critics complain that the New Subjectivists negate for the sake of negation. There is no direction or reason for the destruction, and the protagonists lack hope and the will to change. Commentators fault the lack of a realistically portrayed society and fear that the subject wallows in narcissism. In short, critics question the relevance of New Subjectivity: When does subjectivity become trivial and mere exhibitionism? To pose such a question is legitimate. But the response of commentators as presented in this chapter is far too shortsighted. Those critics who demand the portrayal of an objective, historical, and political reality misunderstand the very nature of New Subjectivity and the experience of alienation.

A. The Loss of Context

At the outset of Dieter Wellershoffs novel Die Schönheit des Schlimpansen one finds a description of the experience of alienation:

Das kunstvolle Gleichgewicht, in dem ein Mensch lebt, ist manchmal nichts anderes als der angehaltene Moment vor seinem unvermeidlichen Sturz. Tag für Tag lebt er dahin, scheinbar in gesicherten Bahnen, und er selbst mag sich für jemanden halten, der sein Leben nach klugen und überlegenen Grundsätzen führt, bis er, aufgestört durch eine winzige Veränderung, vor der verdunkelten Seite seiner Welt steht. Das, was er nun sieht, hat er eigentlich immer schon gewußt, doch ohne den Schrecken, der, wie ein verspätet nachhallendes Echo, ihn erst jetzt erreicht und ihn taumeln

läßt. Nichts ist passiert, sagt die Vernunft. Die Welt steht in ihren alten Formen da, es ist das Bild von gestern und vorgestern, nur um eine Winzigkeit verrückt. Doch dieser Unterschied hat den Dingen einen scharfen Rand gegeben, als stünden sie vor einem falschen Hintergrund. Und zwischen heute und morgen ist eine Schwelle, über die die Gedanken nicht mehr hinwegkommen. Wenn du dich morgen siehst, bist du es schon nicht mehr (SS.4).

Weltershoff describes a very fragile and delicately balanced state of equilibrium which the subject strives in vain to maintain in the face of an unavoidable fall. This fall is caused by a slight shift in perspective, which renders reality frightening and dark. The experience of alienation, which occurs in spite of the principles guiding the individual's life, cannot be comprehended and is in fact denied by reason. But the individual is left staggering upon loss of a secure context, and is no longer the person he was the day before.

In Martin Walser's works Jenseits der Liebe² and Ein fliehendes Pferd³ the loss of familiarity is gradual but none the less threatening. In the latter the main character, Helmut Halms, is confronted with his old school buddy, Klaus Buch, who leads a radically different life than Helmut. The novella is structured upon the juxtaposition of these two styles of living, and the contradiction between them serves to place each in question. During the course of the novella Helmut feels increasingly threatened, and the safety and security of his normal routine or habitual life are corroded:

Er, Helmut, kann sich fast nirgends mehr festhalten. Aber der Wasserschwall läßt einfach nicht nach. Es ist keine Frage mehr, wie das ausgehen wird. Trotzdem krallt und krallt er sich fest. Und verlängert so, da der Ausgang gewiß ist, nur die Qual des Kampfes (fP.92).

Franz Horn, the protagonist of Jenseits der Liebe, expresses his experience of alienation in very similar terminology: "Er hatte das Gefühl, er sei

ausgerutscht und könne sich einfach nirgends mehr festhalten" (JL.162). Horn experiences himself sliding down a mountain of sand: "Und wie zum Hohn auf seinen Warnruf, sah er sich jetzt einen riesigen Sandberg herunterrutschen" (JL.158). This metaphor, similar to that of the waterfall, expresses the elusiveness of any kind of foothold to prevent the loss of a familiar context.

There are additional examples of a sudden or gradual loss of familiarity in other new subjective works. The strangeness of the world and an accompanying dizziness afflict Lenz of Peter Schneider's novel Lenz.⁴ He feels as if he has fallen out of the world: "...er habe das Gefühl, aus der Welt herausgefallen zu sein" (L.48), and wants to feel asphalt under his feet. The static and quiet contentment portrayed in the opening pages of Hans J. Fröhlich's Im Garten der Gefühle⁵ is burst with the arrival of the first summer guests. The disturbing element which the constant stream of guests represents is manifest in the sudden and unusual headaches which will plague the narrator throughout the summer's events. Gabriele Wohmann, who in her novel Frühherbst in Badenweiler⁶ parodies the new subjective experience, nevertheless testifies to the frequency of some type of underlying trauma for New Subjectivity. The main character, Hubert Frey, retires to a rest home to impatiently but futilely await his nervous breakdown.

Thomas Bernhard's autobiographical works Die Ursache: Eine Andeutung (1975), Der Keller: Eine Entziehung (1976), Der Atem: Eine Entscheidung (1978), and Die Kälte: Eine Isolation (1981),⁷ have been described as chains of catastrophes, usually sickness or death, in which the narrator experiences not a meaningful development, but rather a

senseless sequence of crises: "Er [Bernhard] beschreibt: Katastrophen, Krisen, das Leben als Dauerkrise, die Lebensgeschichte als einen Krisenzusammenhang."⁸ Bernhard can be considered an extreme example of what is typical for contemporary literature in general. The presentation of out of the ordinary actions, of disturbance and deviation from the norm, is, according to Horst Albert Glaser, the dominant theme of modern German literature:

Die Simulation abweichenden und gestörten Verhaltens - in der zeitgenössischen deutschsprachigen Literatur von Thomas Bernhard am entschiedensten vorangetrieben bis in Zustände geistiger Zerrüttung - ist in der Tat das dominante Thema der Moderne geworden. Sie ist die extreme Form eines Subjektivismus, der die Entfremdung des Subjekts von fremd gewordener Objektivität bis in die Verstörung der Schizophrenie verfolgt.⁹

The departure point for a new subjective work is the experience of the objective reality as unknown and strange. Central to the concept of subjectivity is the experience of alienation.

B. Irrationalism

1. Skepticism and Doubt

The Irrational, according to Peter M. Stephan, has overwhelmed the twentieth century and contemporary society: "Das Irrationale, um einmal heuristisch alle unbewältigten Tendenzen darin zusammenzufassen, zieht sich wie ein breiter Strom aus der Vergangenheit in das 20. Jahrhundert und in die Gegenwart hinein."¹⁰ This trend is clearly discernible in the skepticism shown toward any unequivocal statement. The seventies distrust systematization and explanations, and this wariness is reflected in a literature which rejects traditional definitions of mankind. The New Subjectivists are not interested in scientific or political theories which claim

to be able to rationally explain the condition of the individual man:

Die Forderung nach einer radikal subjektivistischen Literatur und die nach einer autonomen Literatur werden bezeichnenderweise begleitet von der Absage an Wissenschaft und Theorie: "Was die Biologie behauptet, was die Psychologie behauptet, wie der Marxismus mich definiert, das ist mir mit Leib und Seele gleichgültig", sagt Peter Handke der "Zeit"....¹¹

They are not interested in merely identifying themselves within some preexisting formula. Recognition in fact gives rise to feelings of disgust or aversion: "Erkenntnis, die Ekel bereitet."¹² It is a time of question, not assertion. Today's literary climate is most aptly summarized as one of doubt. Fritz J. Raddatz asserts that Peter Rühmkorfs lyrical position "ist nicht mehr die von Behauptung, sondern eine von Befragung, gar Zweifel.... Ein Stichwort ist damit gefallen, das fast den Wendepunkt markiert im literarischen Blick auf unsere Welt: Zweifel."¹³ History is discredited, because it presents a linear succession of cause and effect events at a time when any type of contextual integration is viewed with suspicion: "Geschichte wird eher in Frage gestellt als befragt."¹⁴

One of the best examples of the rejection of explanations can be found in Nicolas Born's Die erdabgewandte Seite der Geschichte: "Das Vertrauen, durch sinnvollen Gebrauch von Verstand und Vernunft die Weltverhältnisse schließlich erklären zu können, ist auch bei Nicolas Born nicht mehr vorhanden."¹⁵ The first person narrator in this story yearns for the ability to explain away the world to his daughter Ursel, but at the same time fears the fact that the truth implicit in explanations does not actually exist: "Nun wollte ich Ursel nur einholen, um ihr etwas zu erklären. Es war so ein Satz da wie: ICH KANN DIR ALLES ERKLÄREN! Und eine geheime Angst, ich könne doch nicht alles erklären" (SG.68). He realizes that he does not have any explanations or answers to offer.

and indeed scorns them: "Ich hatte keine Antworten auf bestimmte Fragen der Geschichte, konnte alle Antworten, je selbstgewisser und gerechter sie klangen, nur noch verachten" (SG.97).

The narrator protagonist rebels against two systems, that of love and that of political ideology. The entire story relates his attempt to break off the relationship with his girlfriend, Maria, who is a contrast figure in that she demands an explanation for everything. She believes that such a thing as truth exists and reproaches the narrator: "Du willst nicht reden, du willst mir nicht erklären warum, ...nur über nichts reden, es könnte sich ja was herausstellen dabel. Was denn, fragte ich. Die Wahrheit zum Beispiel, sagte sie" (SG.112). The narrator rejects the system of love represented by Maria: "Ein System hast du in dir getragen, in dem ich mitspielen sollte, eine gutorganisierte Liebeswelt, wie sie in vielen anderen längst versunken war" (SG.149).

The rebellion against a political ideology attempting to define and order the world is apparent as a subplot in Born's novel. Born has situated his characters in Berlin during the heyday of political agitation. Although the narrator accompanies his friends to the demonstration against the Shah, the whole incident appears unreal, distant, and even somehow funny ("komisch") to him. He simply cannot believe in the reality of the political demonstration: "Ich glaub's einfach nicht. Diese Wirklichkeit kommt mir lächerlich vor..." (SG.52). The narrator defines political involvement as a process of prepackaging information to counter any doubt: "Viele unserer Bekannten wurden schnell immer politischer, das hieß erst einmal, daß sie prinzipiell wurden und gewisse Verständigungen abkapselten gegen jeden Zweifel..." (SG.46). His inability to believe in a reality stifling all doubt is

consistant with his scorn and distrust of explanations.

A similar rebellion forms the central theme of Peter Schneider's Lenz. Situated in Northern Germany immediately after the height of student activism, the protagonist Lenz is dissatisfied with the „student groups to which he belongs. He rejects their ready made answers and notices that their opinions have all been „published“ previously: „Den Argumenten des Gönners merkte Lenz an, daß sie alle schon irgendwo veröffentlicht waren“ (L.25). Lenz has the urge to contradict such opinions: „Es störte Lenz, daß er nicht in allen Punkten gegensätzlicher Meinung war wie sein früherer Gönner. Unwillkürlich hatte Lenz öfter genickt. Trotzdem fühlte er sich gereizt, in allem und jedem zu widersprechen“ (L.25). The protagonist's rebellion against reasonable explanations manifests itself in a distrust of language. Lenz rejects the concepts used by his student friends to explain and order the world: „Lenz haßt die ‚fertigen Sätze‘, den ‚Singsang‘ der ‚rituellen Sätze‘, dieses ‚Blabla‘, mit dem seine politischen Freunde immer schon eine Antwort bereithalten....“¹⁶

2. The Emotions of the Individual

New Subjectivity rejects an objective and rational definition of man seen within a societal context to turn to the irrationality of the individual's feelings. The title of Hans J. Fröhlich's novel Im Garten der Gefühle is an apt characterization of the literature of the seventies:

Das, in der Tat, ist die Entdeckung und die Dominante der neuesten deutschen Literatur: das Individuum, der leidende Mensch. Man interessiert sich wieder für das Private, für das Intime. Der Titel eines Romans von Hans J. Fröhlich ist Symptom und Programm zugleich: „Im Garten der Gefühle“ (1975).¹⁷

Thematic for New Subjectivity are personal and even intimate feelings.

Thematic is the suffering individual. The reader is no longer interested in solving the conflicts of society, but rather in experiencing himself as an individual and private being: "Nicht wie man die Gesellschaft umbauen und die Menschheit erlösen könnte, möchte der Leser von den Autoren wissen. Vielmehr wollen sie etwas über sich selbst erfahren. Man interessiert sich also für Privates und Individuelles."¹⁸

The importance of emotion is obvious in Peter Schneider's Lenz, where the protagonist's rebellion against a society dictated by ideological concepts and jargon is accompanied with a yearning for the expression of human emotion. The success of this work can be attributed to its demand for personal feelings and concrete experience at a time (1973) when marxist dogma still controlled the lives and thoughts of the politically engaged. Lenz has become disillusioned with his student groups. He wants to be seen as an individual, which means that he exists separately from the group, and as a whole person, which means inclusion of his personal fears, desires, and needs. He wants to be able to experience his student friends as people with the same type of wishes and personal lives:

Es kam Lenz im Moment so komisch vor, daß alle diese Genossen mit ihren heimlichen Wünschen, mit ihren schwierigen und aufregenden Lebensgeschichten, mit ihren energischen Ärschen nichts weiter von einander wissen wollten als diese sauberen Sätze von Mao Tse-Tung, das kann doch nicht wahr sein, dachte Lenz. Wollten sie etwa nicht auch einfach zusammen sein, ihre Genüsse und Schwierigkeiten miteinander austauschen, einfach aufhören, allein zu sein? (L.28).

The world seems unreal to Lenz because it is so cold and devoid of personal contacts. He rejects his friend's abstract proposals and demands his feelings: "Und du mit deinen Ratschlägen", rief Lenz erregt, 'sage mir

endlich, was dir gefällt, was du liebst" (L.49). Lenz finally flees his group in Germany, where personal needs are considered as impediments to production and personal lives as crimes (L.28).

Other works of New Subjectivity testify to the significance of personal feelings by portraying scenes of intimacy which were previously considered taboo, or at least inappropriate for anything but trivial literature. This pertains most obviously to recent feminist works, and the most extreme example is undoubtedly Verena Stefan's Häutungen, in which the author wants to write "über empfindungen, erlebnisse, erotik unter frauen...."¹⁹ Its central theme is sexuality, and experiences such as defloration, obtaining contraceptives, and bisexuality are described in detail with total frankness. Again one finds the opposition between objective, reasonable concepts and personal sensitivity, between group solidarity and the isolated individual. The narrator feels the limits which explanations place upon her own personal development: "ich wollte anders denkend und anders lebend vorwärts preschen, ohne gebremst zu werden durch rechtfertigungen, erklärungen, übersetzungsversuche" (H.57).

Karin Struck is another female author who expresses the sensual and erotic needs of her protagonists within her works: "Auch Karin Strucks erster Roman, Klassenliebe, drückt die gemeinsamen, nach Sensibilität und Sinnlichkeit drängenden Bedürfnisse vieler aus: der Frauen und Studenten aus den Unterschichten."²⁰ Klassenliebe gained immediate notoriety due to its frank treatment of intimate, private, and previously taboo questions. Struck's protagonists strive for absolute openness and lay bare their feelings and experiences for the reader: "Dem Leser soll auch nicht die geheimste Falte des schreibenden Ich verborgenbleiben, auch nicht die

leiseste Regung des zuckenden Herzens soll ihm unterschlagen werden."²¹

Struck herself thematizes her intent of openness in Klassenliebe through the incorporation of a Kafka quote within her diary entries: "Schreiben bei völliger Öffnung des Leibes und der Seele . . ."-²²

Erika Runge's departure from documentary literature is almost as well-known as her documented book Böttroper Protokolle (1968). She turns away from the objective record of others' words which characterized her documentary works to express herself and her own needs and problems. Pondering why she wrote works which had so little to do with herself personally, she admits that she was afraid to speak of her own individual needs, wishes, and difficulties:

...warum habe ich dann nicht meine Erlebnisse und Erkenntnisse, meine Phantasie und meine Sprache eingebracht?
Ich war dazu nicht imstande, obgleich ich das Bedürfnis hatte. Ich wollte schreiben, aber mir fehlten die Worte. Ich wollte von mir, meinen Wünschen, und meinen Schwierigkeiten sprechen, aber ich hatte Angst, mich bloßzustellen.²³

Runge's desire to express herself in her literature is symptomatic of the contemporary German literary scene in general.²⁴

Max Frisch's story Montauk is an obvious example of an author relating his own personal story.²⁵ In the prologue, quoted from Montaigne, the narrator warns his reader that this book is devoted to himself. He is the content of his story:

Dies ist ein aufrichtiges Buch. Leser, es warnt dich schon beim Eintritt, dass ich mir darin kein anderes Ende vorgesetzt habe als ein häusliches und privates . . . Ich habe es dem persönlichen Gebrauch meiner Freunde und Angehörigen gewidmet, auf dass sie, wenn sie mich verloren haben, darin einige Züge meiner Lebensart und meiner Gemütsverfassung wiederfinden . . . denn ich bin es, den ich darstelle. Meine Fehler wird man hier finden, so wie sie sind, und mein unbefangenes Wesen, so weit es nur die öffentliche Schicklichkeit erlaubt . . . So bin ich selber, Leser, der

einziges Inhalt meines Buches; es ist nicht billig, dass du deine Musse auf einen so eiteln und geringfügigen Gegenstand verwendest. / Mit Gott denn, zu Montaigne, am ersten März 1580.

True to his word, the first person narrator portrays himself. He concentrates on a weekend spent with a young American woman at Montauk, but this short moment of his present story unleashes memories and past experiences, so that the reader is presented the narrator's life as a man. It is this thought--"My life as a man"--which runs throughout the book as a refrain. Frisch renounces his own stance of 1958 claiming society as his writing partner²⁶ and confesses that he writes for himself, in order to express himself:

Verantwortung des Schriftstellers gegenüber der Gesellschaft und das ganze Gerede, die Wahrheit ist, daß ich schreibe, um mich auszudrücken. Ich schreibe für mich. ... Öffentlichkeit als Partner? Ich finde glaubwürdigere Partner. ... Im Grunde schreibe ich aber für mich selbst . . . (M.28-29).

The emphasis on individual feelings in new subjective works has led to the thematization of interpersonal relationships. In Frisch's Montauk the narrator states that literature can always deal with the topic of love between man and woman. Because the relation between the sexes continually changes, new love stories will constantly appear:

(Über Liebe, als Beziehung zwischen den Geschlechtern, gebe es nichts Neues mehr zu berichten, das habe die Literatur dargestellt in allen Varianten ein für allemal, das sei für die Literatur, sofern sie diesen Namen verdient, kein Thema mehr – solche Verlautbarungen sind zu lesen; sie verkennen, daß das Verhältnis zwischen den Geschlechtern sich ändert, daß andere Liebesgeschichten stattfinden werden) (M.89).

The relationship portrayed is a modern day variation of the traditional love story. One finds a man and woman mutually consenting to spend a weekend together and then to separate. The rapidity with which the relationship is established, its momentariness, the absence of emotional

ties, and the friendly but unemotional separation all reflect changing patterns of societal intercourse.

More often than not the interpersonal relationship of new subjective works is viewed in its dissolution: "Die Literatur seit 1975 steht im Zeichen der Trennungen und Abschiede."²⁷ Martin Walser's protagonist Franz Horn lives divorced from his wife and family in self-imposed isolation, unreachable and "jenseits der Liebe." In Karin Struck's novel Trennung²⁸ the protagonist is involved in a never-ending process of separation, including divorce from her husband and then dropping one boyfriend for another, for another. The narrator of Born's Die erdabgewandte Seite der Geschichte relates the drawn out attempt to free himself from his girlfriend. The instability apparent here is a reflection of the turbulent state of marriage and divorce and the dissolution of the family common to contemporary society.

To substitute for the rejected rational and ordered systems or explanations of society used to understand the world and define the individual's place within it, New Subjectivity posits personal emotions and feelings. In some works then, the institution of marriage is replaced by a constant movement or agitation as determined by attractions between people. This is most obvious in Hans J. Fröhlich's Im Garten der Gefühle, who introduces his work with a quote from Goethe's Die Wahlverwandtschaften:

In diesem Fahrenlassen und Ergreifen,
in diesem Fliehen und Suchen glaubt man wirklich
eine höhere Bestimmung zu sehen;
man traut solchen Wesen eine Art von
Wollen und Wählen zu und hält das Kunstwort
"Wahlverwandtschaften"
für vollkommen gerechtfertigt.

These natural affinities between a man and woman dictate the action of the story, which consists of the forming and breaking of relationships. The characters throughout seek "Kontakte zu wahlverwandten Menschen" (GG.219). Even the narrator, exempt at first from such irresistible attractions and seemingly stabile in his marriage with Dorothee, succumbs to the attraction or pull of Kathrin: "Es gab da einen unterirdischen Strom, der uns verband, eine wechselseitige Anziehungskraft" (GG.169). The placid surface of the narrator and his story becomes increasingly agitated as the summer progresses. The tempo of guests coming and going and of changing interpersonal constellations accelerates and ultimately culminates in Dorothee's birthday party. At this point all control, all limitations as defined in traditional man-woman relationships cede to the power of natural affinities, and the party dissolves into an orgy of lust and incest.

3. Private Egocentricity and Triviality

The loss of belief in rationality and the distrust of explanatory systems have led many to question the validity of New Subjectivity. The opposition between objective society and the sensitive individual is suspect. Due to the radicalization of intimate feelings in general many critics fear that New Subjectivity suffers from a private and therefore trivial egocentricity. It is for these reasons that Heinrich Vormweg criticizes Frisch's Montauk and Wohmann's Schönes Gehege, among other autobiographical works:

Wie aber schon das Beispiel von Max Frischs Erzählung "Montauk" zeigt, dient autobiographisches Erzählen...weiterhin auch dem gewohnten Zweck der Ergründung und Stilisierung des Privaten. Manchen Autoren war die autobiographische Welle geradezu Alibi für erweiterte individualistische Egozentrik, und hier vor allem wird sie fragwürdig. Jüngstes Beispiel: der Roman "Schönes Gehege" von Gabriele Wohmann (Luchterhand 1975).²⁹

Hans Christoph Buch is afraid that the new found sensitivity for the person and his feelings is being applied solely to the author. Although such sensitivity should be a prerequisite for solidarity and for meaningful interaction between people, it has become its negation. In concentrating on one's person the authors have become insensitive to the problems of others:

...Ich habe den Verdacht, daß unsere sensiblen Schriftsteller ihre Sensibilität einzig und ausschließlich auf die eigene Person anwenden und gleichzeitig immer unempfindlicher werden für die Probleme anderer. Die Sensibilität wird so zur Negation der Solidarität, obwohl sie doch eigentlich deren Voraussetzung sein sollte.³⁰

"Narzißmus," according to Buch, is not only apparent in today's literature, but can be considered the sickness of contemporary Western society in general.

Lenz flees the impersonal objectivity of student groups in Germany for Rome, where he finds the exact opposite. The people he meets here are so totally entrapped in their own subjectivity that they display no interest for the events of the world except as points of comparison for their own personal problems. All conflicts, no matter how distant and objective, are reduced to the private level:

Führten jene [die politischen Gruppen] jeden Konflikt, auch noch den privatesten, auf den Widerspruch zwischen Kapital und Arbeit zurück, so versteiften sich diese [die Freunde in Rom] darauf, jeden Konflikt, auch noch den gesellschaftlichsten, aus der Familiensituation abzuleiten (L.71).

Lenz' rejection of a subjectivity which has become absolute, which extinguishes all objective outside world, is indicative of much of the criticism leveled at New Subjectivity.

Marcel Reich-Ranicki accuses contemporary authors of supporting

"eine neue Innerlichkeit" rather than "die neue Subjektivität." New Subjectivity is the necessary inclusion of the subject in literature. Hermann Hesse's "Innerlichkeit" on the other hand is evasion of the pressing current events of the world. Reich-Ranicki poses the question which disturbs so many critics of New Subjectivity: "Haben wir es gar mit Fluchtbewegungen von Enttäuschten und Resignierten zu tun?"³¹ He answers by stating that too many contemporary authors write as if they were living on another planet:

Das sind Fragen, die uns alle nun schon seit Jahren bedrängen. Wo ist ihr Echo in der deutschen Literatur? Gewiß, wenn wir lange genug suchen, werden wir auf diese oder jene kleine Arbeit verweisen können. Aber insgesamt ist das Echo so dürftig und kümmerlich, als lebten unsere Erzähler oder Dramatiker auf einem anderen Planeten. Sie weigern sich, die Herausforderungen unserer Epoche anzunehmen.³²

Reich-Ranicki fears that the subjective trend of the seventies offers an asylum for authors disappointed in the political activism of the late sixties and a retreat for the politically resigned.

In one of the harshest criticisms of New Subjectivity to date Renate and Rolf Wiggershaus describe a subject which spreads itself out ("sich breit machen"), engulfing all political or societal experiences in its own egotism and suffering: "Das Subjektive ist nicht Seismograph gesellschaftlicher Erfahrungen, sondern Schauplatz eines egoistischen, wehleidigen, sich spreizenden und deshalb letztlich tauben Ichs."³³ To exemplify their contentions the Wiggershaus pair quote from Jürgen Theobaldy, Peter Handke, and Nicolas Born:

Wo legt Theobaldy "die sinnlich erfahrenen Nöte offen"? In dem erwähnten Gedichtband ["Blaue Flecken"] heißt es: "Meine Jugend war nicht ohne Kämpfe / Ich hatte Verse im Kopf / und 'harte Eier' in der Hose" ... Alltägliche Nöte? "Ich öffne den Kühlschrank, blicke / hinein, er ist kalt und leer!"

Sinnlich erfahrene Nöte? ... Ähnliche Höchstleistungen der Sensibilität finden sich auch bei anderen Vertretern der neuen Subjektivität. So heißt es in einem Gedicht von Handke: "Und daß der Schnittlauch den ich kaufte / mit einem Gummiband zusammengehalten / wurde / hat mich fast zu Tränen gerührt." Und dem Schriftstellerhelden von Nicolas Borns Roman "Die erdabgewandte Seite der Geschichte" wird über dem Anblick einer rissig getrockneten Seife "flau".³⁴

The extreme exaggeration of such criticism serves perhaps in and by itself to best refute the critics. These commentators fault the lack of a societal portrayal as a matter of course and have not seriously asked themselves about the significance of this lack. The rejection of societal systems and the turn to individual irrationality cannot be denied. New Subjectivity portrays a confrontation of the self, stripped of societal conventions, with one's own self. The individual must come to terms with the question of identity. But this confrontation need not be an end point. It need not mean the exclusion of all else to wallow in narcissism. It could be a necessary starting point from which to better understand oneself, the world, and others.

C. The Portrayal of the Subject

1. The Dissolution of the Self

As long as an encompassing system remains intact, the individual is assured his meaningful place within the whole. But any questioning of the precepts used to understand one's world, which is, as already seen, thematic for New Subjectivity, will necessarily lead to self-question. The turn to the individual as noted in the previous section does not usually mean a triumphal acclamation of his power and the supremacy and truth of feelings. The individual presented is an uncertain one, a weakened and groping one. The loss of belief in a rationally ordered and meaningful

world must necessarily shake the individual's own definition of himself. The doubt of the world reflects back upon the individual doubting himself and the role he plays within society. Elvira Högemann-Ledwohn characterizes New Subjectivity with a loss of secure identity due to the lack of individual control over the world, and to the individual's desire to find himself through concrete experience rather than within some conceptual definition:

Im Blickpunkt steht die Ich-Suche nicht mehr ganz junger Helden, ihre Ich-Schwäche und Verunsicherung. Seine Identität zu finden, scheint heute für einen Angehörigen der Mittelschicht schwieriger denn je. Der Mangel an Beherrschbarkeit und Gestaltbarkeit von Welt, der Verlust an sozialer Tradition [sic] spielen da eine Rolle, auch der Wunsch, das Eigene in der erfahrbaren Welt, nicht im Jenseits einer höheren Idee zu finden.³⁵

New subjective literature presents an examination, not a static picture of the self,³⁶ and instead of proclaiming "wir sind wieder wer," asks "wer sind wir wieder."³⁷

The motif of a weakened self-identity appears above all in the works of Walser and Wellershoff. The protagonists of these two authors suffer under the realization that the life they lead is one of outward appearance only. All people wear masks, for a role is necessary in order to function within a society built upon roles. It serves as a direction in that it prescribes one's actions, reactions, and interactions. The loss of the ability to take one's mask for granted and to agree with it without question, has a crippling effect on the new subjective protagonist. Typically these characters fail in business or at whatever profession they undertake, and in love and marriage. They can offer no resistance to the forces exerted upon them from outside and observe their own dissolution passively.

In Martin Walser's Ein fliehendes Pferd the main character, Helmut

Halms, consciously, intentionally, and necessarily wears a mask. Although he feels disgust ("Ekel") at the realization that all life consists of outward appearances, he understands that they make life bearable: "Wie sollten denn die Leute das Leben aushalten, ohne Schein!" (fP,69). In order to function with ease and comfortably as a member of society one must conform to the dominion of appearances. Helmut's desire to remain "inkognito" motivates a flight away from recognition or definition of himself. He wants to learn how to agree with misconceptions and false pictures of himself. Helmut warns Klaus Buch from the outset that he wants neither to learn nor to communicate anything about himself: "Und wisse: Ich bin nicht interessiert, etwas über mich zu erfahren, geschweige denn, etwas über mich zu sagen. Deshalb sollten wir uns nicht noch einmal sehen. Ja, ich fliehe. Weiß ich. Wer sich mir in den Weg stellt, wird..." (fP,37). The direction of Helmut's flight is toward a nothingness, a heaviness, forgetfulness, toward death itself: "Schon jetzt wollte er vergangen sein. Das war seine Richtung" (fP,30). He approaches this state in his favorite mood, called "blutige Trägheit":

Zu Hause aber würde er sich gehen lassen. Er hatte den Zustand, in den er dann gelangte, schon getauft: blutige Trägheit. Das war seine Lieblingsstimmung. Da empfand er seine ganze Schwere, aber mit Zustimmung. Diese Schwere, ein bißchen schwitzend. Mit Zustimmung. Schwer und schwitzend und blaß. Auch die Farbe empfand er mit Zustimmung. Leichenfarbe. Mit Zustimmung. Er, eine schwere, schwitzende Leiche, das war seine Lieblingsstimmung, blutige Trägheit (fP,69-70).

Confronted with the threat of Klaus Buch, who unwittingly positions himself in the pathway of flight, Helmut's resistance takes place within his thoughts only.

Walser's Jenseits der Liebe presents a protagonist similar to Helmut

Halms in his passivity and lack of a firm self-identity. Franz Horn finds himself in a classic business triangle, where a younger colleague gradually takes over the position of second in command. Horn has undergone a process of degradation and deformation, which is above all apparent in his clamped together jaws. He feels increasingly useless and without purpose. But he does not fight back. Nor can he resist the power of his boss Thiele. Instead he is caught in a vicious circle whereby he hastens his own fall. In one of his many monologues he realizes that he must escape the power of Thiele: "Du mußt weg. Beziehungswise fort. Thiele beherrscht alles. Thiele zerquetscht dich" (JL.149). Although Horn realizes he must get away from Thiele, he does not know where to go: "Aber wohin denn, bitte, wohin?" (JL.149). The energy which should propel the blow against Thiele turns inward instead, and Horn self destructs: "Oder wendete sich alle Energie, weil er nie zurückschlagen konnte, gegen ihn selbst?" (JL.158). The steps he takes to keep up with and indeed hasten his own unavoidable ruin include his decision to support a Communist candidate for town councillor, his divorce and self-imposed isolation, the fact that he is overweight, and his intended suicide.

The protagonist of Wellershoffs Die Schönheit des Schimpansen, Klaus Jung, has lost his own inner core, which should define his contours and distinguish him from his surroundings:

Er wußte nicht, was es war, nur daß er von den anderen getrennt war durch das Gefühl eines verborgenen Mangels. Sie alle hatten etwas, was er nur vortäuschte, einen Kern innen, eine Kraft, die die Welt zu ihnen in Beziehung setzte und ihr drohendes Näherrücken verhinderte. Er konnte auf keinem Platz der Welt bleiben, ohne nach einer Welle zu fühlen, daß er erdrückt oder verschlungen wurde, überall verschwand er wieder... (SS.97).

Without this inner core Jung experiences the gradual dissolution of his

person. Wellershoff characterizes him with indifference and torpidity (SS.62), complaisance (SS.95), absent-mindedness (SS.95), and stupefaction (SS.97). Forgetfulness, heaviness, and an inability to recognize his own reflection are typical. Jung realizes that behind the mask of the world there exists a nothingness, which becomes his personal goal and direction (SS.198).

In the face of nothingness, the mask Jung wears is necessary for survival. Klaus Jung has in fact become the role he portrays: "Er war dieser wortkarge, langsam gehende, gravitatische Mann, den er darstellte" (SS.163). In order to prevent his own disappearance he subjugates himself to the appearance expected of him. He fulfills the tasks, answers the questions, and accepts others' ideas, plans, and suggestions, with patience and passivity. In order to see himself he needs the artificial contours of a structured working day: "Er brauchte Pläne, Termine, er mußte immer etwas anbieten, um sich noch sehen zu können, morgen und übermorgen" (SS.201). Jung artificially maintains his balance and ability to function within the world through the routine of his business day, and his final loss of context occurs when he is unexpectedly confronted with a Friday free of business appointments. Without an outwardly imposed plan of action for the day he must face the emptiness of his life: "Gleich...begann eine Zeit ohne Anhaltspunkte, leer und gestaltlos..." (SS.212-13).

Klaus Jung does not control the course and direction of his life, but rather seems to be bound to a thread of destiny pulling him on to its inescapable end:

Es war eine Welt ohne Anhaltspunkt und Ausweg, durch die er sich bewegte, wie jemand, der an einem gespannten Seil entlanggeht, das die einzige für ihn gangbare Fährte bezeichnet, und manchmal konnte man auch glauben, daß er

an das Seil gefesselt war und nicht zu dem Ziel vorzudringen versuchte, sondern von ihm gezogen wurde (SS.231).

For example, a strange woman's telephone number--his last reference point--dictates to him what he must do: "Jetzt war ihm vorgeschrieben, was er tun mußte" (SS.239). Jung's suicide is marked with the same absence of resistance. The narrator points out how easily Jung could have opened the car door at any time, "[a]ber er saß ohne ein Zeichen von Kampf, den Kopf gegen das Seitenfenster gelehnt, auf seinem weit zurückgekippten Sitz" (SS.310).

In the works just discussed the protagonists react to the experience of alienation with an attempt to forget it. The direction of these novels is toward peace and quiet. The protagonists strive to regain their lost inner peace and hope to find reconciliation with themselves and the world. Klaus Jung, for example, commits suicide in an attempt to find peace ("Friede) and reconciliation ("Versöhnung") (SS.309). As he prepares the car for his suicide, he is compared to a child building a hide-away, where he hopes to discover whatever it is he has lost:

Er arbeitete...mit dem Eifer eines Kindes, das sich eine Hütte baut, einen Unterschlupf, ein Versteck, in dem niemand es entdecken wird und wo es etwas zu finden hofft, was es irgendwann verloren hat, er könnte nicht sagen, was es ist (SS.309).

Typical of all three protagonists is their heaviness and a desire to sink into a state of calm and agreement by offering no resistance to what is happening to them.

2. Powerlessness and Lack of Resistance

New Subjectivity is often criticized because of the subject's lack of courage, his passiveness, and the unavoidable dissolution of his personality:

"Sie [neue Subjektivität] scheint mir gekennzeichnet durch Ich-Schwäche, Mutlosigkeit, seismographisches Gespür für Ohnmacht und deren ästhetizistisches Auskosten, eine Art Innerlicher Naturalismus unserer Flautenzeit."³⁸ The individual suffers under the experience of alienation and does nothing to resist the deformation undergone. The subject is portrayed in his powerlessness and impotence.

Elvira Högemann-Ledwohn raises such complaints specifically concerning Walser's novel Ein fliehendes Pferd, and in general concerning most other contemporary works dealing with the question of identity. She misses an ability to act in the protagonists, the willingness to fight back and actively resist what is happening to them. She finds it strange, "daß der Zusammenhang von Identitätsproblematik und lebensnotwendigem Widerstand in den heute geschriebenen Büchern relativ selten miteinander verklammert auftaucht."³⁹ Högemann-Ledwohn demands individual suffering in combination with resistance ("Leiden und Widerstand") as two equally important aspects of the identity question. One finds a willingness and even inclination to accept and conform to present conditions, where opposition to such over-powering conditions is called for.⁴⁰

The experience of alienation too often ends in passive acceptance and aimless melancholy⁴¹ rather than in the will to confront and perhaps change the destruction implicit in such an experience: "Fraglich, ob zeitgenössische Literatur nicht...eine masochistische Lust an diesen Zerstörungen empfindet und ihrer Wirkung eher das Moment innewohnt, sie als Faktum hinzunehmen, denn ihre reale Veränderung zu versuchen."⁴² The individual may be overcome by the nihilism of the experience and be reduced to despair. In the protagonist's paralyzed state his pathway

appears too absolute and determined. The implication is that no other alternative is possible. Stephan Reinhardt does not fault the portrayal of deformation itself, but fears that the experience of alienation is sometimes, for example in Born's Die erdabgewandte Seite der Geschichte, presented as eternal and unchangeable.⁴³

The demand for active resistance on the part of the new subjective protagonist is usually coupled with a call for the origin of the individual's suffering. Only if the cause of the deformation is known can the individual rebel and attempt to change it. Roman Ritter attacks a suffering not specifically directed against repressive societal conditions:

Brinkmann, Handke und Struck wurden angeführt als Paradebeispiele für eine Spielart der bürgerlichen Literatur. Bürgerlich schon deshalb, weil das Leiden an der Wirklichkeit nicht begriffen wird als das Resultat des Konflikts zwischen dem nach Selbstverwirklichung drängenden Individuum und repressiven gesellschaftlichen Verhältnissen, sondern als Leiden am Leben selbst. Der Einzelne hat zum Gegner nicht eine bestimmte Gesellschaftsordnung, nämlich eben die bürgerlich-kapitalistische, die ihm erst das Bewußtsein der Vereinzelung eingibt, sondern die Gesellschaft 'als solche', eine abstrakte Formation von Massen.⁴⁴

Ritter criticizes a general and abstract portrayal of a society lacking its historical context. Instead of protesting against a bourgeois class structure, contemporary "Innerlichkeit" is directed against society as such and expects only the individual to change: "Veränderung wird auf das metaphysisch verklärte Subjekt beschränkt. Diese Sorte von 'neuer' Innerlichkeit läßt in der Gesellschaft alles beim alten."⁴⁵

To demand active resistance to a specific cause of suffering is an attempt to recast the new subjective protagonist as a revolutionary heroically battling the evils of a bourgeois society. Such demands totally negate the new subjective experience of alienation. The realization of these

demands would lead the protagonist away from his inner conflict. With a sigh of relief he could be distracted from the intense questioning of himself and place responsibility for the state of today's society on the shoulders of an impersonal institution. The New Subjectivists have not given up hope for change, but see the origin of change as lying within the individual.

D. The Perception of Reality

1. The Protagonist's Warped Perspective

Dieter Wellershoff in his essay "Wiederherstellung der Fremdheit" defines a subjective perspective. According to him, concretization of distortion and dissolution of normal patterns of perception or understanding, which comprise his "Neuer Realismus," are actually merely a form of subjectivity:

Fortschreitende Konkretisierung der Verzerrung und Auflösung der Schemata ist also die Tendenz der realistischen Schreibweise. Man muß, vielleicht überraschend, ergänzen, daß das häufig eine Subjektivierung ist. Ein besonderer Blick setzt sich gegen allgemein gewordene, zu scheinbarer Objektivität verfestigte Sehweisen durch, ein neuer Standpunkt wird gewählt, der näher, intimer und spezieller als der gewohnte ist.⁴⁶

Wellershoff defines his subjective (and realistic) point of view as one which moves, thereby switching back and forth between distance and close up, totality and detail, sharpness and fuzziness, and movement and stillstand. The perception of time can be lengthened or shortened at will. Inner world and outer world blend into each other without warning:

Realistisch...wäre eine bewegte, subjektive Optik, die durch Zeitdehnung und Zeitraffung und den Wechsel zwischen Totale und Detail, Nähe und Ferne, Schärfe und Verschwommenheit des Blickfeldes, Bewegung und Stillstand, langer und kurzer Einstellung und den Wechsel von Innen- und Außenwelt die

konventionelle Ansicht eines bekannten Vorgangs und einer bekannten Situation...auflöst und verändert....⁴⁷

Weltershoffs "Neuer Realism" is an attempt to win back the strangeness of the world and to take away the unquestioning acceptance of what is.

The main points of Weltershoffs definition can be applied to the new subjective protagonist's perception of the world. In the absence of a societal context and personal role usually taken for granted, he must also do without the normal and commonly accepted standpoint from which to view the world. The new subjective protagonist stands outside the framework of time and space which encompasses all others. He has a special ("besonderer") point of view, which contrasts to the accepted and therefore objective one. His highly individual way of seeing prevails over the seemingly fixed perception modes of society. Reality has lost its concrete firmness and stability to flow and change according to the protagonist's subjective interpretation of it.

As is to be expected, in Weltershoffs own novel Die Schönheit des Schimpansen the protagonist's view of the world is slightly askew: "Die Welt steht in ihren alten Formen da, es ist das Bild von gestern und vorgestern, nur um eine Winzigkeit verrückt" (SS.7). Jung looks at an object, and although nothing visible is different than before, it appears strange and distanced:

Es war nichts, was er sehen konnte. Wenn er seine Aufmerksamkeit auf einen Gegenstand richtete, war nichts Auffallendes an ihm. Es war aber trotzdem da als eine Fremdheit und starre Entrücktheit der Welt, die ihm von überall her nur eins sagte: Du kannst nicht hineingelangen (SS.230-31).

The distance he feels here between the world and himself alternates with a perceived closeness at other times:

...sekundenlang schien die Meeresfläche zu schrumpfen und zog den Horizont heran, und wie mit einem Schlag standen die staubigen Palmwedel dort an der Straße unabwiesbar vor seinen Augen. Es war eine lautlose Veränderung, die begleitet wurde von dem körperlosen Wind, der durch ihn hindurch ging und seine Beziehung zum Raum verwirrte, denn an allen Gegenständen nahm er eine falsche Nähe und eine falsche Ferne wahr. Dann verging das, als habe sich der Wind gelegt, und die Welt blieb in einer ausdruckslosen Stille zurück. Alles war an seinem Platz. Er wußte nicht mehr, was es gewesen war (SS.97).

Similar to the subjective perspective switching from close to far away and back again are the confusion between inner and outer world and the movement between the sharpness of observed objects and their fuzziness. On Jung's walks through the city he perceives people and objects in a seemingly endless and meaningless film, the duration of which depends solely upon the length of his own walk. For Jung there no longer exists an objective and independently functioning realm outside of himself. At other times details and small occurrences within reality stand out sharply: "Manchmal allerdings sah er Einzelheiten, scharfumrissene Dinge oder kleine Geschehnisse, die ihm wie geheimnisvolle Zeichen erschienen, die er nicht verstand: Einmal eine gebrauchte Rasierklinge auf einem Waschtisch einer öffentlichen Toilette" (SS.27). Jung's tendency to focus in on seemingly unimportant details is typical of other new subjective protagonists, as is the fact that he feels the objects contain a message or meaning for him personally, but one which remains incomprehensible.

The tendency to perceive details has been noted for Martin Walser's characters. Details in the earlier works of Walser possess a twofold function:

Das Detail fungiert so nach zwei Richtungen: Es widersetzt sich einerseits der vorschnellen Ideologisierung, die es für sich in Anspruch nehmen möchte, es protestiert gegen den Ordnungsanspruch einer Gesellschaft, die nicht in Ordnung ist.

und es wird andererseits gerade zum Ausdruck dieser Unordnung, zum Signal für deformiertes Bewußtsein.⁴⁸

On the one hand, the detail contradicts the tendency of society to order details into a meaningful system or ideology, on the other hand the perception of details signals the presence of a consciousness no longer capable of such ordering. This is true of Franz Horn in Jenseits der Liebe, who, while walking through the streets of London, registers insignificant components of the world he goes through and imposes no order on their sequence:

Eine riesige geschminkte Metzgerin reglos in dem engen Metzgerladen. Als sei sie geschlachtet. Sein Darm meldete sich. Auch kein Laden breiter als 3m. Öfter ein Schaufenster voller Rollen wildgemusterter Teppichfußböden. Da sähe man keinen Brandfleck drin. Diesem glücklichen Knaben läuft ein silbernes Halskettchen mitten durch den violetten fünfmarkstückgroßen Saugfleck am Halsansatz (JL,54).

What he sees is interspersed with his interpretations or opinions, and the boundary between outside objective occurrence and subjectivity becomes confused. Later, upon seeing a man running from bus stop to bus stop, he concludes: "Entweder rannte der zur Beerdigung seiner Mutter oder floh vor Horn" (JL,65).

Scherpe and Treichel point out how the subjective perspective serves to reorganize the objects of reality in an antihierarchy, i.e. in a structure different than that imposed by society and the values of that society: "Sie [die Akte der gesteigerten subjektiven Wahrnehmung] zeichnen sich dadurch aus, daß sie um- bzw. neustrukturiert sind und sich den Objekten der Realität anti-hierarchisch, das heißt unterschieden von den üblichen sozialen Wertzuweisungen nähern."⁴⁹ Nicolas Born's novel offers an excellent example where the detail as an expression of a subjective point

of view undermines the objective and commonly accepted perception model. The narrator finds himself at a political demonstration against the visit of the Shah and describes it thusly:

In meiner Angst sah ich lauter ganz kleine, gestochen scharfe Momente.... Es gab nichts Ganzes mehr. Bärte rutschten durch Gesichter, Schultern flogen gegen Ohren. Ein Schlägertrupp setzte über die Absperrung in eine dünn gewordene Stelle hinein. Jetzt dachte ich schon wieder an ein Ballett (SG.49).

The narrator does not attempt to present a true account of the political scene, but rather describes his subjective perception of it. This leads to the concentration on seemingly insignificant details, the lack of an intentional order, and the switch back and forth between objective incident and subjective interpretation noted for New Subjectivity in general.

In the above examples the alienated subject serves as the medium through which reality is perceived. The subject does not transmit the picture of a meaningful, ordered, stable whole, but rather insignificant details lacking integration, the flow and inconstancy of objects, and a personal interpretation of reality. Realism, not in the sense of Wellershoff but as the traditional presentation of an objective world, is only possible for an author at peace with himself and his times. The portrayal of reality in New Subjectivity is actually the portrayal of the subject, and such a portrayal reflects the loss of peace--the experience of alienation--which plagues the neurotic subject of contemporary society:

Wenn wir uns heute einer objektiven Realität bewußt wären, so könnte sie in die Literatur als Realismus nur dann eingehen, wenn der Autor zumindest mit seiner eigenen Seele in Frieden lebte. Aber der Neurotiker schreibt, bewußt oder unbewußt, über sich selbst. Er nährt sich von Affekten, kann daher seine Realität nicht als objektiv anbieten, sondern nur sein Bildnis....⁵⁰

2. The Loss of a Political and Historical Moment

Critics of the portrayal of a subjectively experienced and perceived reality miss the political and historical dimension. Their most common fear concerns the lack of an objective reality which should serve the individual as a societal background. Manfred Durzak asks if the contemporary German novel is not indeed a very unreliable account of the historical development and political life in West Germany during the past few decades: "Ist nicht der zeitgenössische deutsche Roman tatsächlich ein sehr unzuverlässiges Protokoll der geschichtlichen Abläufe, die in den letzten Jahrzehnten das politische Leben dieser Bundesrepublik Deutschland – um nur davon zu sprechen – bestimmt haben?"⁵¹ He complains that in recent works by such authors as Hildesheimer, Nossack, Handke, and Frisch, reality, no longer a meaningful or recognizable system, becomes increasingly peripheral until ultimately the inner world of the protagonist completely replaces it.

The fear that New Subjectivity presents an individual in a vacuum also troubles Stephan Reinhardt. He faults Günter Steffens for an "Innerlichkeit" excluding all political reality and states that Steffens finds the real world only within oneself. Instead of reality, feelings are portrayed: "Steffens findet das, was er als die 'wirklichste' Welt bezeichnet, allein in sich selbst.... Gefühlszustände werden über die Realität gestülpt."⁵² There is a total lack of the objective societal pole; reality is registered through the individual for the sole purpose of elucidating the protagonist's inner state. Reinhardt demands a connection between the subject and the social object: "Ohne Bindung an soziale Objekte ist die Subjektivität leer, sie mag mit sich in Kontakt sein, solange sie will."⁵³

The lack of an historical and political consciousness is the main criterion used by Scherpe and Treichel to fault the New Subjectivity of Peter Handke, Nicolas Born, and Botho Strauß: "Sowohl Handkes Keuschnig als auch die Helden von Strauß und Born erleiden in jeweils spezifischer Weise ihr Schicksal jenseits der Geschichte."⁵⁴ In fact, the only historicism present in such works is its intentional absence. Scherpe und Treichel scold the narrator protagonist in Die erdabgewandte Seite der Geschichte for his portrayal of the political demonstration against the Shah cited earlier in this Chapter. Instead of presenting a true and reliable account of the political event, the narrator depicts aestheticized and abstract chains of perceptions and associations. The treatment of this scene is typical, according to these two critics, of the tendency in both Handke's and Born's works to concentrate on insignificant and peripheral phenomena. Instead of political reality New Subjectivity expresses the difficulty in intellectually understanding this reality. One finds the radicalization of the individual's perception of a banal reality:

Zur Sprache kommt weniger die gesellschaftliche Wirklichkeit als die Schwierigkeit der intellektuellen Verständigung über diese Wirklichkeit. Die Autoren der neuen Sensibilität tragen schwer am eigenen Anspruch der Politisierung, mit dem kein bürgerliches Heldenleben zu gewinnen war. Ihre neuen Romanhelden sind darum nicht weniger militant und radikal. Sie leben von der Radikalisierung der eigenen individuellen Wahrnehmungsweise gegenüber der banalen Wirklichkeit.⁵⁵

For this reason new subjective literature, according to Scherpe and Treichel, is assured impotency and powerlessness: "Die neue Subjektivität versichert sich von vornherein ihrer Ohnmacht."⁵⁶

Such criticism is so busy looking for a worker within the pages of the new subjective text that no energy remains to investigate the meaning of what is in fact to be found in the work. Again it cannot be denied that

the protagonist's world is portrayed as seen and experienced by this same protagonist. A realistically portrayed world situated within an historical and societal context is lacking. But what does this lack ensure New Subjectivity societal irrelevance and triviality, or does the perceived lack in fact intend to broaden and deepen the individual's perception, experience, and understanding of reality?

E. The "Social Greatness" of the Individual

New Subjectivity has long been embroiled in a controversy concerning its validity and societal relevance. When does the turn inward become narcissism and result in an egotistical disregard for others? How does one distinguish between the autonomy of the individual against the leveling norms of society and his autonomy as a retreat from society? What is the fine line between personal and private affairs? What is the difference between "alte Innerlichkeit" and "neue Subjektivität"?

For many critics the answer to such questions lies in a literature which includes the subject, but portrays it within its social context. While recognizing the danger of New Subjectivity in general, they suggest that certain authors avoid these dangers through placing the individual within an historical and societal moment. Bernhard Zimmermann finds that Peter Härtling's novel of 1976 entitled Hölderlin avoids the loss of an historical dimension and overcomes the exhibitionism inherent in New Subjectivity by portraying and understanding individual problems within a societal context. Political constellations and conflicts are made concrete through the individual case.⁵⁷ Individual problems are understood and portrayed within their societal context. Rainer Nägele, in positing a threatening or painful

departure point for Martin Walser's works, recognizes its danger: "Er [ein solcher Ausgangspunkt] kann im Allerweltschmerz verharren."⁵⁸ To counter this Nägele demands and discovers within Walser's works a direction for the threat or pain, and a localization of its origin within society.

Gerhard vom Hofe and Peter Pfaff state that the turn to the individual need not dead end in political irrelevancy:

Die Wendung zum Einzelnen, gar zur Autobiographie, muß aber nicht in politisch unverbindlicher Privatheit enden. Die Leidens-, ja Krankengeschichten Walsers und Vespers, Steffens', Muschgs oder auch des Mannes, der sich programmatisch Zorn nannte, werden vorgetragen im Gestus des ecce homo, der das Elend der Welt trägt. Der Königsweg in den Tod ist immer noch öffentlich, führt immer noch durch die Stadt, über den Markt, verklagt den, der seine Hände, wie vornehm auch immer, in Unschuld wäscht.⁵⁹

Hofe and Pfaff justify New Subjectivity in much the same manner as the examples already mentioned. The individual must be seen within his societal context and the origin of his pain and suffering must be determined. The individual should function as a measure and exemplification of a contradictory society: "Das Individuum...wird wieder zum Maß auch der gesellschaftlichen Widersprüche."⁶⁰

Jürgen Theobaldy has coined a phrase often used to justify a literature concentrating on the subject. In his discussion of new subjective poetry he posits a subject portrayed in its social greatness, or "soziale Größe." The individual and his life cannot be isolated from the political history of the times. The subject of the seventies is permeated by the contradictions and conflicts of society, and this condition distinguishes him from a subject who has fled into his own private world of "Innerlichkeit":

Es geht nämlich heute um ein Subjekt als einer sozialen Größe, durchdrungen von gesellschaftlichen Widersprüchen.... Dies aber stellt eine der Leistungen der neueren Lyrik dar, das Subjekt und sein Leben nicht von der politischen

Geschichte abzutrennenn, und genau dies unterscheidet sie auch von jeder Art von Innerlichkeit....⁶¹

Theobaldy differentiates private from personal by stating that personal concerns and experiences are those shared by a certain class, group, or generation. He cites the subject in Rolf Dieter Brinkmann's poems as an example of "soziale Größe," because its alienation is explainable only through the West German capitalist society, and because the personal deformation portrayed is an experience shared by many. For Theobaldy New Subjectivity is a step forward because it unites the personal with the political. He views it not as a retreat, but rather as a process of sensitization toward societal contradictions. The "Wendung zum eigenen Ich" is a "Schritt nach vorn, durch den die gesellschaftlichen Widersprüche sowohl als politische wie auch als persönliche erlebt werden."⁶²

The questions posed by commentators of New Subjectivity are legitimate and indeed necessary. However, the above responses to these questions are inadequate. They exemplify the same shortsightedness and misunderstanding as were displayed by the critics discussed previously. The criterion used to judge relevancy is societal integration. On the one hand there are those authors who cling to the old bourgeois concept of the autonomous subject, and on the other there are the "true" New Subjectivists who portray the subject in its "soziale Größe."⁶³ It is, however, exactly the negation of any all-encompassing context which initiates the new subjective experience of alienation.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the experience of alienation in new subjective works. It has accordingly outlined a process of destruction in

which all things rational, secure, meaningful, and ordered are questioned. The doubt applies to the subject's own definition of himself, and the individual has been seen in increasing isolation, increasingly thrown back upon himself and his own feelings as outer orientation is withdrawn. The protagonist's perception of reality is askew, so that he no longer registers the objective, never-changing reality seen by all others. Instead, the outer world is in a state of flux and has dissolved into unintegrated details. The protagonist's portrayal of reality is actually a portrayal of his own personal interpretation and experience of that reality.

This chapter has also reviewed the criticism most commonly leveled at New Subjectivity. The questions raised by such criticism are valid. Does the turn to the individual and his suffering end in narcissism? Is New Subjectivity merely a place of retreat for the politically disappointed and resigned? Is a literature portraying the individual subject socially relevant? Do the New Subjectivists negate solely for the sake of negation? However, the response to such questions goes far beyond the answers offered by most critics. To demand a societal context for the individual is to contradict the very nature of alienation through providing a hide-away for the disoriented or displaced. To demand the localization of the individual's deformation within society is to offer an explanation and provide a scapegoat for an experience which is inexplicable and traceable only to one's self. To demand an actively resisting subject is to see that subject set upon himself, for the conflict occurs within. If to be valid the individual must illuminate the contradictions of society, then the new subjective works chosen for this investigation, above all those of Botho Strauß and Peter Handke, must indeed be dismissed as bourgeois and irrelevant. Critics

who make such demands misunderstand the nature of the new subjective experience of alienation. Those who deny new subjective literature relevance and positive direction have not delved into the intent of the author. Nor have they investigated the effect of the work on the reader through literary form. This chapter has attempted to review the criticism of New Subjectivity. A response to this criticism and to the question of relevancy forms the substance of Chapters Three and Four.

¹Klaus R. Scherpe and Hans-Ulrich Treichel, "Vom Überdruß leben: Sensibilität und Intellektualität als Ereignis bei Handke, Born und Strauß," Monatshefte, 73 (1981), 200.

²Martin Walser, Jenseits der Liebe (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1976). Hereafter cited in the text with (JL) and page number only.

³Martin Walser, Ein fliehendes Pferd (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978). Hereafter cited in the text with (fP) and page number only.

⁴Peter Schneider, Lenz (Berlin: Rotbuch, 1973). Hereafter cited in the text with (L) and page number only.

⁵Hans J. Fröhlich, Im Garten der Gefühle (München: Carl Hanser, 1975). Hereafter cited in the text with (GG) and page number only.

⁶Gabriele Wohmann, Frühherbst in Badenweiler (1978; rpt. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 1980). Hereafter cited in the text with (FB) and page number only.

⁷The only Bernhard work discussed at length within this dissertation will be Der Atem (Wien: Residenz, 1978). Hereafter cited in the text with (A) and page number only.

⁸Martin W. Lüdke, "Ein 'Ich' in der Bewegung: stillgestellt: Wegmarken der Bernhardschen Autobiographie," Merkur, 35 (1981), 1178.

⁹Horst Albert Glaser, "Formen des Engagements: Ein Beitrag zur gegenwärtigen Diskussion," in Tendenzen der deutschen Literatur seit 1945, ed. Thomas Koebner (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1971), p. 150.

¹⁰Peter M. Stephan, "Schlecht geträumt: Über Gefühle, Sinnlichkeit, Vernunft und andere Absurditäten in der Literatur," in Literaturmagazin 9: Der neue Irrationalismus, ed. Nicolas Born et al. (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1978), p. 169.

¹¹Uwe Timm, "Über den Dogmatismus in der Literatur," in Kontext I: Literatur und Wirklichkeit, ed. Uwe Timm and Gerd Fuchs (München: Bertelsmann, 1976), p. 28.

¹²Fritz J. Raddatz, "Zweifel melken: Gedanken, die neueste deutsche Literatur betreffend," Frankfurter Hefte, 31, No. 4 (1976), 138.

¹³Raddatz, 138.

¹⁴Raddatz, 137.

¹⁵Stephan Reinhardt, "Nach Innen führt der geheimnisvolle Weg, aber

er führt auch wieder heraus: Unvollständige Anmerkungen zum neuen Irrationalismus in der Literatur." In Nach dem Protest: Literatur im Umbruch, ed. Martin W. Lüdke (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979), p. 159.

¹⁶Reinhardt, p. 165.

¹⁷Marcel Reich-Ranicki, "Anmerkungen zur deutschen Literatur der siebziger Jahre." Merkur, 33 (1979), 173.

¹⁸Marcel Reich-Ranicki, "Rückkehr zur schönen Literatur: Eine Bilanz aus Anlaß der Frankfurter Buchmesse." Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 8 Oct. 1975, p. 21.

¹⁹Verena Stefan, Häutungen (München: Frauenoffensive, 1975), p. 4. Hereafter cited in the text with (H) and page number only.

²⁰Reinhardt, p. 166.

²¹Elisabeth Schmid, "Frauenleben und -liebe: Zu den Romanen von Karin Struck." In Aufbrüche: Abschiede: Studien zur deutschen Literatur seit 1968, ed. Michael Zeller (Stuttgart: Klett, 1979), p. 85.

²²Karin Struck, Klassenliebe (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973), p. 53. Hereafter cited in the text with (K) and page number only. Note here also the spaced periods. A series of spaced periods (. . .) applies to the original text, whereas unspaced periods (...) indicates this author's own omissions. It is essential for the reader to be able to make this distinction, because a series of periods is an important stylistic device of the New Subjectivists, which will be discussed in the chapter on forms.

²³Erika Runge, "Abschied von den Protokollen: Überlegungen zur Dokumentarliteratur." Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 17 Aug. 1976, p. 19.

²⁴Marcel Reich-Ranicki, "Erika Runge's Schwierigkeiten." Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 17 Aug. 1976, p. 19.

²⁵Max Frisch, Montauk (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1975). Hereafter cited in the text with (M) and page number only.

²⁶Max Frisch, "Öffentlichkeit als Partner," in Öffentlichkeit als Partner (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1967), pp. 56-67.

²⁷Michael Zeller, "Einleitung: Versuch, zehn Jahre westdeutscher Literatur in den Blick zu nehmen," in Aufbrüche: Abschiede: Studien zur deutschen Literatur seit 1968 (Stuttgart: Klett, 1979), p. 12.

²⁸Karin Struck, Trennung (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978). Hereafter cited in the text with (T) and page number only.

²⁹Heinrich Vormweg, "Noch kein neuer Morgen: Literarische Neuerscheinungen Herbst 1975 und Frühjahr 1976." Jahresring, 1976/77.

p. 243.

³⁰Hans Christoph Buch, "Plädoyer für ein historisches Gedächtnis: Gedanken über Sensibilität und Solidarität," Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 13 Nov. 1976, p. 25.

³¹Marcel Reich-Ranicki, "Schriftsteller am stillen Herd," Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 18 Oct. 1975, p. 1.

³²Reich-Ranicki, "Schriftsteller," p. 1.

³³Renate and Rolf Wiggershaus, "Literatur des Verdrängten: Erwartungen, Hoffnungen und Befürchtungen angesichts der gegenwärtigen westdeutschen Literatur," Frankfurter Hefte, 32, No. 2 (1977), 64.

³⁴Wiggershaus, 64.

³⁵Elvira Högemann-Ledwohn, "Von Ich, Welt und 'neuer Subjektivität,'" Kürbiskern, No. 4 (1978), p. 118.

³⁶Raddatz, 138.

³⁷Raddatz, 148.

³⁸Georg Jappe, "Ende der Avantgarde? Nein danke: Ein Gemisch aus eigenen und belegbaren Gedanken zu Kunst und Dichtung," Merkur, 35 (1981), 350.

³⁹Högemann-Ledwohn, p. 120.

⁴⁰Högemann-Ledwohn, p. 120.

⁴¹Jörg Drews, "Selbsterfahrung und Neue Subjektivität in der Lyrik," Akzente, 24 (1977), 94.

⁴²Glaser, p. 151.

⁴³Reinhardt, p. 174.

⁴⁴Roman Ritter, "Die 'Neue Innerlichkeit' - von Innen und aussen betrachtet: (Karin Struck, Peter Handke, Rolf Dieter Brinkmann)," in Kontext I: Literatur und Wirklichkeit, ed. Uwe Timm and Gerd Fuchs (München: Bertelsmann, 1976), p. 255.

⁴⁵Ritter, p. 255.

⁴⁶Dieter Wellershoff, "Wiederherstellung der Fremdheit," in Gernzverschlebung: Neue Tendenzen in der deutschen Literatur, ed. Renate Matthaei (Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1970), pp. 12-13 in "Theorie und Programm".

⁴⁷Wellershoff, pp. 11-12.

⁴⁸Rainer Nägele, "Martin Walser. Die Gesellschaft im Spiegel des Subjekts." in Zeitkritische Romane des 20. Jahrhunderts, ed. Hans Wagener (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1975), p. 333.

⁴⁹Scherpe and Treichel, 201.

⁵⁰Wolfgang Hildesheimer, "The End of Fiction," Merkur, 30 (1976), 68.

⁵¹Manfred Durzak, "Zur Situation des aktuellen deutschen Romans." in Rezeption der deutschen Gegenwartsliteratur im Ausland: Internationale Forschungen zur neueren deutschen Literatur, ed. Dietrich Papenfuss and Jürgen Söring (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1976), pp. 415-16.

⁵²Reinhardt, p. 171.

⁵³Reinhardt quotes Ulrich Pothast here, p. 181.

⁵⁴Scherpe and Treichel, 199.

⁵⁵Scherpe and Treichel, 187-88.

⁵⁶Scherpe and Treichel, 187.

⁵⁷Bernhard Zimmermann, "Dichterfiguren in der biografischen Literatur der siebziger Jahre." in Deutsche Literatur in der Bundesrepublik seit 1965: Untersuchungen und Berichte, ed. Paul Michael Lützeler and Egon Schwarz (Königstein: Athenäum, 1980), pp. 219-20.

⁵⁸Nägele, p. 318.

⁵⁹Gerhard vom Hofe and Peter Pfaff, Das Elend des Polyphem: Zum Thema der Subjektivität bei Thomas Bernhard, Peter Handke, Wolfgang Koeppen und Botho Strauß (Königstein: Athenäum, 1980), p. 1.

⁶⁰Vom Hofe and Pfaff, p. 1.

⁶¹Jürgen Theobaldy, "Literaturkritik, astrologisch: Zu Jörg Drews' Aufsatz über Selbsterfahrung und Neue Subjektivität in der Lyrik," Akzente, 24 (1977), 189.

⁶²Theobaldy, 190.

⁶³Theobaldy, 189.

Chapter Three--The Themes of New Subjectivity: The Positive Potential of the Experience of Alienation

Introduction

The new subjective experience of alienation abandons the individual to a frightening world lacking security, meaning, and order. As such it is a destructive and negative process. Yet there exists a very positive potential in this experience, which has too often been overlooked by critics of New Subjectivity:

Es gehört zu den Versäumnissen der neuen Linken, daß sie sich blind machte für das systemüberwindende Potential im Charakter der "schönen" Künste; daß sie diesen Charakter der Fluchthilfe verdächtigte und über die treibende Kraft, die in der "privaten" Wurzel dieser Künste steckte, hinweg sah.¹

This chapter is devoted to "das systemüberwindende Potential" and "die treibende Kraft" of new subjective literature; i.e., it examines the potential discovery to be attained after the destruction of context which was detailed in Chapter Two. This chapter then can be viewed as a response to criticism of New Subjectivity, and it addresses the question of societal relevance. A literature portraying the denial of societal roles, the questioning of ideology and systems, and a distrust of truth and encompassing concepts presents an experience of freedom, in which the individual has the opportunity to explore and determine himself. In the confrontation of the known with the unknown the subject finds himself in a position to experience anew a world which was taken for granted in its familiarity. These two discoveries, that of self and of world, comprise the first two discussions of this chapter. In the final section the existentially relevant question concerning the meaning of life is examined as an important theme of New Subjectivity.

A. The Experience of Self

1. The Leveling Power of Society

For many New Subjectivists society is perceived as a bureaucratic system more interested in a functional whole than in its individual components. This system will thwart individual uniqueness for the sake of an abstract, objective norm. It will subjugate and standardize the subject to the point that he disappears. The shell left behind no longer seems real or tangible. People have become not only lifeless mannequins, but in fact mere reproductions of such storefront dummies:

...wie wirkliche, wirklich gewordene Gespenster hielten sie [die Schaufensterpuppen] inne in ihrem Leben, in einer Phase ihrer Bewegung, ihres Gehens, ihrer unheimlich verbindlichen Abwesenheit. Gleichzeitig schienen sie aber wirklicher und faßbarer zu sein als ihre Kopien, die sich an den Fassaden entlangdrückten, um Häuserecken gingen und sich und allen auch die Verlassenheit verschwiegen (SG,33).

At least the mannequins express their isolation and desolation, which remain silent within the people walking by.

Political society, according to Nicolas Born's narrator, drains the individual. So divided is he between various groups, cooperatives, and organizations that his identity is diluted. Within the group, individuals become less and less important and gradually sacrifice their own individuality: "Viele unserer Bekannten wurden schnell immer politischer, daß hieß, ...daß sie immer weniger gelten ließen, auch immer weniger Menschen gelten ließen und nach und nach ihre Eigenschaften aufgaben" (SG,46). In the absence of personal contact all that is left are "die unweigerlichen, immer neu benannten Gemeinsamkeiten, Übereinstimmungen, die eingeheizten Gemeinschaftsprogramme..." (SG,150-51). The narrator

speaks of love in similar terms. His girlfriend appears to him as an unyielding mistress who has engulfed him to the point that he should feel and see as she does (SG,113). He tries to escape her dominion and controlling power in order to be able to recognize his own personal view: "Ich fühlte mich einfach immer wohl, wenn ich den Blick aus dem Zugfenster als meinen erkannte" (SG,150).

Born depicts contemporary society, epitomized in the systems of politics and love, as an impersonal machine which destroys the individual's sense of his own identity. The narrator vaguely remembers that as a child he had feelings and personal thoughts. But the process of growing up overloads the subject with informational objectivities which do not accommodate the individual:

Die äußere Fülle der Erscheinungen, das Tages- und Jahrespensum, der unbewältigte Wissensstoff vertragen mich nicht als etwas Besonderes. ICH hatte keine Geltung, und als ich mich später zurückforderte, waren mein Interesse, Anspruch und Gefühl ganz krank vor lauter Bedeutung, ganz peinlich und ganz verachtenswert (SG,124-25).

Later, attempting to recall one's awareness of self, the subject finds only interests and feelings contaminated through the meanings assigned to them by the various interpretive systems of society.

Thematic in Peter O. Chotjewitz' novel Die Herren des Morgengrauens² is the absolute control exercised by the state over the lives of its citizens. The protagonist, Fritz Buchonia, suffers from the fear that he is under constant surveillance by "die Herren des Morgengrauens," the agents of the government, and everywhere he finds evidence that his paranoia is justified. He is subjected to an incomprehensible maze called the justice system and to repeated demands at border crossings to verify his state identity. Buchonia describes a country in which all sources of information are

controlled by one source, namely the state. This alleviates problems which could be caused through differing opinions. At a less ironic moment he expresses the desire to live in a country where state positions and regulations have not become so firmly implanted in its citizens' heads as to make such ironic distance impossible:

Er wünschte sich, in einer Gesellschaft zu leben, die sich den Staat und seine Glaubenssätze nicht dermaßen zu eigen gemacht hat wie die überwiegende Mehrheit der Bundesbürger. In einem Land, in dem die Menschen den Staat noch nicht im Kopf haben und lieber auf ironische Distanz zu ihm gehen, statt ihn angstvoll zu umarmen (HM,66).

In order to function most efficiently society needs a neat categorization of its citizens, which it accomplishes through the assignment of roles. The thematization of roles is widespread in New Subjectivity. Hubert Frey in Wohmann's Frühherbst in Badenweiler is revealed as a plagiarist. The music he composes expresses not his own moods and personal feelings but what others expect from him, and as such is a betrayal of himself (FB,12). The protagonist of Frisch's Montauk describes his public profession of author with all its commitments and obligations as a life within quotation marks (M,103). Even during his weekend trip to Montauk, it is impossible to leave behind or forget his role: "Er vergißt nicht seine Rolle, nicht die nächsten Verpflichtungen, die sich ergeben aus dieser Rolle..." (M,103). The significance and necessity of roles for the protagonists in Walser's and Wellerhoffs works have already been mentioned.

Even for those who withstand the pressures to conform, or are destroyed by them, there exists a category. Society labels them crazy and places them in an insane asylum. The narrator in Karin Struck's novel Klassenliebe reverses the values normally assigned to the states of health

and insanity. To be healthy is to conform, whereas the insane are those individuals who cannot or will not fit in and whose actions, motivated by spontaneity and characterized by a lack of inhibition, are abnormal:

Wahnsinnig werden können. Aber die würden einen hier schon fertigmachen, wenn man mitten an einem Wintertag auf den Dächern der Stadt nackt spazierenginge. Die würden einen auch kaputtmachen, wenn man auf dem Kopf gehen wollte. Menschen kommen sehr oft gerade dann in die psychiatrische Anstalt, wenn sie gesund werden (K.10-11).

The protagonist yearns for the ability to become "insane," but realizes societal normality would not allow for such deviation.

2. Subjective Freedom and Autonomy

The destruction of societal roles and the rejection of rational, objective definitions of the individual leave him in a frightening void, but within this vacuum lies the chance for self-autonomy and realization. Through springing the norms, rules, and controls which order the individual's life and make it, if not impossible, at least unnecessary to think for oneself, New Subjectivity allows the individual to become aware of the forces manipulating him. The opposition between individual and society, subjective feelings and objective norms, and irrationality and reason as discussed in the previous chapter need not be a retreat from society, but a confrontation, in which the subjective pole is used to topple, or at least shake, an hierarchy which squelches individuality. In the absence of societal definitions the individual has the chance to define himself and in the absence of objective constraints the subject can perhaps assert himself.

Wolfram Schütte calls the rediscovery of the individual the attempt to develop and maintain an ability to resist the control of an objective.

impersonal technocracy so as to find one's identity and to realize oneself autonomously:

Das, was als die Wiederentdeckung des Subjekts in der Neuen Linken oft erleichtert-bürgerlich als Reprivatisierung mißverstanden und dementsprechend lauthals gefeiert wurde, ist nichts anderes denn der Versuch, wider die Verfügungsgewalt einer Technokratie der außengesteuerten Sinne, ein Widerstandspotential zu erhalten und zu entwickeln, in dem wir unsere Identität finden und, wie schwierig auch immer, autonome Selbstbestimmung verwirklichen.³

Schütte's proclamation should not be interpreted as the attainment of self-autonomy and assertion, but as a search. The accent lies on the word attempt ("Versuch"). New Subjectivity presents the attempt to find oneself.

In the works of Walser and Wellershoff discussed previously the destruction of the protagonists' roles led to a dissolution of personality and to the revelation of, not self-identity, but nothingness. However, even these protagonists, faulted for their passivity and lack of self, do at one isolated moment during their progressive disintegration assert themselves. The acts of self-assertion are feeble, grotesquely misdirected, and motivated by a defense gesture, but they nevertheless represent the attempt to break out from under the control of the not only conforming but also deforming pressures of society, and to live as oneself. At least there is a realization that the effort to delve beyond societal conformity and appearances must be undertaken.

Martin Walser's protagonist Franz Horn attempts suicide as a blow against the authority of his boss Thiele and in the hopes of realizing himself without the confines of a role. An imaginary Thiele reproaches Horn: "Ganz klar, Franz, keine Frage, Franz, was Sie da tun, ist gedacht als ein Schlag gegen mich. ... In unserer Gesellschaft kann sich jeder verwirklichen. Und wenn Sie glauben, Sie könnten sich durch diese Tat

am besten verwirklichen, so darf ich...Sie nicht hindern" (JL,165-66). The significance of Horn's act lies in the direction it points, namely away from the role forced upon him and away from Thiele. During the moment on the stormy Bodensee where Helmut Halms of Walser's Ein fliehendes Pferd causes Klaus Buch to fall overboard Helmut lives without hiding behind appearance. In an act of self-defense against the assurance and threat of Klaus, Helmut's mask is destroyed and he really lives: "...du hast eben gelebt in diesem Augenblick, du bist aus dir herausgegangen, Ha-Ha, eine Sekunde lang hast du den Schein nicht geschafft..." (fP,129). Finally, even in the extreme example of Wellershoffs protagonist Klaus Jung, the passivity and dissolution are interrupted for one climactic moment. Jung murders the strange woman with whom he is spending the weekend in an act of self-protection and affirmation, similar to the motives of Helmut Halms. Jung feels defenseless before the will of the stranger. He feels the need to protect his own weak identity against the firmness, certainty, and assurance of the woman (SS,271).

3. The Autobiography as a Search for Identity

Arnulf Conradi notes the increase of autobiographical or diary-like works for the seventies. These texts relate the extremely personal and subjective experiences undergone by the protagonist, which are often extracted from the author's own life. Authenticity is, however, not necessarily based upon the correlation between the fictional story and its factual background, but rather upon the identity between experience and the expression of that experience:

Wenn ich aufgefordert wäre, in der deutschen Romanliteratur des letzten Jahrzehnts eine Entwicklungstendenz zu bezeichnen,

würde ich die auffallende Zunahme sehr subjektiver, persönlicher Texte nennen. Es sind Bücher, deren autobiographischer Bezug greifbar ist, die sich im Gehalt an einem Lebensabschnitt des Verfassers orientieren, ihn oft geradezu tagebuchartig referieren. ... Die Romane wirken wie Protokolle von Erfahrungen. ... Alle diese "Bücher" haben eines gemeinsam: die Ausstrahlung einer Authentizität, die auf der Identität von Erfahrung und Ausdruck beruht.⁴

In this definition one can, as Conradl does, include varied works, such as Verena Stefan's Häutungen, Karin Struck's Klassenliebe, Helga M. Novak's Die Eisheiligen, Nicolas Born's Die erdabgewandte Seite der Geschichte, and Botho Strauß' Die Widmung.

The autobiography's sudden popularity has been attributed to two main causes. First of all, in a world characterized with doubt and insecurity, the subject attends increasingly to himself in order to establish a type of stability or foothold. In a world so complex that it is no longer comprehensible to any one individual, the subject turns to himself and his own past as something understandable and recognizable: "Wo es keine absolute Wahrheit geben kann, herrscht individuelles Wissen. Wo alle Kenntnis relativ bleiben muß, bleibt die Identität des Individuums die einzig erfahrbare Wirklichkeit."⁵ Secondly, the autobiography has become so common due to the perceived disappearance of the subject within societal objectivities. The diary is considered an asylum for subjectivity and, at the same time, a forum for self-analysis and search.

Thematically central to modern diaries, according to Manfred Jurgensen, is an existential suffering, which is expressed in the works through the subject's sickness and fear. Diaries basically depict individual crises elicited by the one most important question of all diary-like literature: the ignorance concerning one's own identity:

Als komplementäres Begriffspaar der modernen Tagebuchliteratur

erweisen sich Krankheit und Angst. Sie umfassen ein durchaus zentrales Thema des diarischen Ich: das Leiden an der Existenz. ... Im Tagebuch identifiziert sich ein krankhaftes Ich, es registriert die individuelle "Krankheit zum Tode". ... Im Grunde seines Wesens ist das Tagebuch stets ein Krisenbuch. ... Das Leiden an sich selbst wird als Leiden an der Existenz überhaupt erfahren.... Immer aber liegt solchen Leiden an der Existenz das eine große Thema aller Tagebuchliteratur zugrunde: Ich weiß nicht, wer ich bin.⁶

The existential suffering and crisis discussed here by Jurgensen essentially constitute the experience of alienation. The diary or autobiography is both expression of and therapy for this experience: "Das Roman-Schreiben erscheint als Ausdruck und zugleich Therapie der eigenen Zerrissenheit...."⁷

The subject embarks upon a journey to discover his lost identity: "Die Autobiographie ist von der Suche nach der geistigen Identität geprägt."⁸

In some works this journey leads into the individual's past. In order to understand what one is today, it is necessary to explore and confront one's origins. Accordingly, the subject often brings back and relives his childhood. The protagonist of Helga M. Novak's Die Eisheiligen recounts her childhood and adolescent years spent under the control of brutal and unloving adoptive parents. The narrator in Peter Härtling's Nachgetragene Liebe⁹ recalls his early years so as to better understand and to learn to love a father he had always considered cowardly. The process of reflection, in addition to the emotions reawakened by this process, allow the protagonist not only to approach his father, but also himself: "Ich bin zehn. Ich schreibe: Ich bin zehn, was auch bedeutet, daß ich mich mir näher, daß ich spüre, wie zwei Erinnerungen, zwei Körper sich ineinanderschleiben. Ich nähere mich mir und bin sechsunddreißig Jahre von mir entfernt" (NL,109). The acts of remembering and reflecting serve as a type of self-analysis. The narrator had always felt guilt concerning

his father's death and also because of the distance which had existed between father and son. His literary confrontation with this guilt has resulted in a better understanding of himself.

Stephan Reinhardt compares the autobiographical trend in recent years to psychoanalysis: "In der Erinnerung an Vergangenheit und im momentanen Erlebnisprotokoll wird Literatur zu einer Art von Psychoanalyse."¹⁰ The relationship between diary-like literature and psychoanalysis is evident in their similar contexts. Both use dreams, phantasy, and memories in an attempt to find and define the subject: "Das heißt, das 'Material', der Stoff der Literatur ähnelt dem, den die Psychoanalyse zu Tage fördert: Tagträume, Träume, Kindheits- und Jugenderinnerungen, Schlüsselerlebnisse, Selbstvergewisserung an Beispielen der eigenen Erfahrung."¹¹ The function of recent autobiographies is confirmation of the self ("Ich-Vergewisserung"). David Bronsen states that autobiographical memory divides the subject, who becomes both the observer and the object being observed. In the confrontation of the self with his self, the literary process helps lead to subjective identity. Bronsen quotes Ingeborg Bachmann: "Man wirft das Netz Erinnerung aus, wirft es über sich und zieht sich selbst, Erbeuter und Beute in einem, über die Zeitschwelle, die Ortsschwelle, um zu sehen, wer man war und wer man geworden ist."¹²

In addition to serving the subject as a medium for self-analysis, the autobiography often offers the individual the opportunity to determine himself autonomously. It is seen by many as the last chance to preserve one's own subjectivity in face of the annihilating pressures of society: "Wir können hier durchaus von einer Flucht ins Tagebuch sprechen: es bietet

ihm [dem Diaristen] die letzte Gelegenheit zur Selbstbewahrung."¹³ The portrayal of the feeling, irrational subject is a type of resistance against the coercion exerted by society to conform. It is an attempt at independence. The diarist's fictionalized self-portrait acts as an example of opposition to the role society tries to impose upon the subject: "Als verselbständigte literarische Gestalt besitzt das fiktionale Ich somit einen musterhaft oppositionellen Charakter; es wehrt sich gegen das von außen auferlegte gesellschaftliche Bildnis."¹⁴

The protagonist narrator in Nicolas Born's novel Die erdabgewandte Seite der Geschichte tells the story of his relationship with Maria. It is the attempt to break out of her controlling, dictatorial, and impersonal system of love, under which the narrator's own identity has been subsumed and weakened to the point of disappearance. He tries to recapture his original sense of self through the expression of his intimate feelings, thoughts, and fears. He defends himself against the levelling forces of society, epitomized in Maria's love, through the literary reflection upon and reawakening of his personal and concrete experience of their relationship. He writes this story in order to find an appropriate end for it. He finally observes a scene which seems suitable--"Das könnte ein Ende sein, dachte ich nur" (SG.250)--and lays down his pen. The process of writing traces the process of freeing himself from Maria in an attempt to redefine and reexperience himself independently.

B. The Experience of World

1. The Loss of Immediacy

New Subjectivity in general is distinguished with distrust of the reality of one's perceived world. There exists doubt as to whether this reality is indeed real: "Es ist ein neuerwachtes Mißtrauen gegen die Wirklichkeit der Realität, die das Schreiben deutscher Zunge mehr und intensiver durchzieht als irgend anderswo."¹⁵ The subject feels as though there must exist a more authentic reality behind the everyday objects of the world, which is however unattainable and intangible. He feels he no longer stands in immediate contact with reality, as if some kind of veil separates the subjective from the objective. The contours of objects can be recognized through the veil, but the subject cannot experience reality directly and personally.

Such a loss of immediacy is attributed to societal patterns of perception through which the individual traditionally views and understands his world: "...auf der Suche nach sich selbst und nach unmittelbarer Erfahrung, stoßen die Menschen auf gesellschaftliche Vermittlungen und vorgegebene Muster, die sie hindern, sich selbst und ihre Welt authentisch zu erleben."¹⁶ Just as societal roles prevent the individual from discovering himself autonomously, societal definitions and explanations of the world bias the subject's perception of his surrounding. The numerous mediations between subject and object contained in today's industrialized world direct the subject's eyes to see only certain aspects of reality, and prejudice his interpretation of what is observed, so as to hinder an authentic registration: "...die Suche nach dem Unmittelbaren steht den vielfältigen Vermittlungen durch die moderne Industriegesellschaft

gegenüber."17

Nicolas Born's protagonist suffers under the realization of the fraudulence of what is commonly perceived to be reality ("Realitäts-schwindel: SG.148). Authentic reality has disappeared behind society's explanations and meanings for it. As soon as an object is logically and systematically described it is replaced by its description. In this manner the entire world has been emptied of its colors and forms. In its place one finds a film endlessly filming itself, which goes by the name of reality:

Städte abgeschrieben, hohl, Landschaften weg. Die Welt war leer, Farben und Formen waren nur noch Reflexe der Bibliotheken und Museen. Von denen und in denen lebten wir, ein Film- oder Konservenleben. So verschwand auch das Soziale und machte der Lehre vom Sozialen Platz; so peinigten uns nicht Krankheiten mehr, aber die Medizin; und so verloren wir schließlich unsere Körper an die Physiologie und die Psychiatrie; schließlich war Gott untergegangen, die Theologie auferstanden. Filmleben, das sich auch schon wieder in verfilmbare Wirklichkeit verwandelte. Hohler kommen wir uns entgegen und kommen uns immer hohler noch entgegen, wenn wir nur noch Erinnerungen sind. Und das Gras wird verschwunden sein, wegerklärt mit den Wurzeln. Und es wird immer schwieriger, neue Täuschungen zu erfinden, an denen eine Wirklichkeit Halt finden kann (SG.56).

The narrator is no longer able to believe in the deceptions commonly labelled reality. For him real objects have become unrealistic: "Aber in Wirklichkeit, was meinst du dazu, ist das Reale unrealistisch" (SG.25).

In Peter Handke's Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied an extreme example of the loss of immediacy is evident in the perception of Claire's young daughter, Benedictine. This child has been raised within a civilization based upon symbols and pictures once removed from reality. This distance is perhaps most adequately illustrated through the television. Benedictine accordingly no longer perceives nature, but takes society's signs for it as the objects of nature itself: "Es war eigenartig, daß

Benedictine die Natur fast nicht mehr wahrnahm, sondern die künstlichen Zeichen und Gegenstände der Zivilisation schon als Natur erlebte. ...das Nachbild hatte es [das Vorbild] für immer ersetzt" (BA,117-18). Similarly, an American couple sees behind every landscape not the real objects of nature but an historical and symbolic moment: "...so sehen wir auch die Landschaften nicht als Natur, sondern als die Taten derjenigen, die sie für Amerika in Besitz genommen haben..." (BA,120).

2. The Search for Authentic Reality

New Subjectivity is an attempt to confront and perhaps overcome the loss of immediacy: "Dieser Verlust der Unmittelbarkeit wird konfrontiert mit Dichtung und Theorie der 'Neuen Subjektivität....'"¹⁸ The destruction of explanations or systems and irrationality in general acquire a positive aspect. They can liberate the individual's interpretation and perception of the world from logical and systematic preestablished models and meanings: "Ablösung des Rationalen durch eine neu aufgereizte Sensibilität. Welt nicht mehr begriffen im Monopolspiel globaler Logik-Strategien, sondern ergriffen im Brennspeigel der kleinen Einheit Individuum."¹⁹ Freed from such logical strategies through the new subjective experience of alienation the individual has the opportunity to gain a more direct access to reality through experiencing it personally: "Die Abweichung, die prinzipielle Verfremdung ist notwendig, um den Ring aus öffentlichen Imperativen zu durchbrechen und überhaupt noch sinnliche Erfahrung zu vermitteln."²⁰ Personal participation has become the measure used to determine the authenticity of the individual's perceived surroundings: 'real' reality is only attainable through concrete experience of it.

Dieter Wellershoff, again proving through his theoretical writings to be a forerunner of New Subjectivity, explains in his essay of 1969 entitled "Fiktion und Praxis"²¹ that the world is so full of stimulation for the individual, that he needs its mediation by means of cultural and habitual perception models to give it order and meaning. Otherwise the individual finds himself bombarded with a chaos of stimulation ("Reizchaos") which would make efficient action impossible. The result of mediation is to reduce the chaos to a few well-defined patterns which will elicit the same response from the subject upon recognition. The intent of all true literature is, according to Wellershoff, to attack and change one's usual schemata of experience, so that the subject can discover new realities and rediscover old ones. This attack and constant process of change is the basis for his literary style called "Neuer Realismus":

Realismus ist für mich die Gegenteilstendenz, nämlich der immer neue Versuch, etablierte Begriffe und Ordnungsgestalten aufzulösen, um neue, bisher verbannte Erfahrungen zu ermöglichen, das Gegenteil also einer Wiederholung und Bestätigung des Bekannten. ... Neue Aufmerksamkeitsgrade und -richtungen werden entwickelt für das, was bisher unbewußt war oder gesperrt wurde mit Tabuwörtern wie banal, privat, pathologisch, aber vor allem auch für das nur scheinbar Bekannte, das unter diesem Schein sich verflüchtigt hat.²²

The disappearance of reality is related to the subject's feeling that everything is known and knowable: "alles sei bekannt, verfügbar und konsumierbar, alles zugänglich als Formel, Mode, Meinung, Information."²³ To experience one's surroundings more directly, reality must become strange and threatening. This is exactly what the experience of alienation, expressed and provoked for Wellershoff most aptly through a subjective point of view, intends. Martin Walser's "Realismus X" evidences many similarities to Wellershoffs "Neuer Realismus." "Realismus X" also intends

to overcome preformulated ways to view the world ("Betrachtungsweisen") and it is based upon Walser's belief that familiarity prevents experience of reality.²⁴

Turning to the new subjective works themselves, Nicolas Born's novel offers the most striking example of a protagonist suffering under the loss of reality because it has become too familiar. The narrator protagonist expresses the satiation and disgust he feels toward an all too knowable world in the words: "Mir war alles zu bekannt." These words run throughout the novel as a refrain. Reality has become totally predictable and definable because it is explainable. The narrator yearns to maintain the secret of the world: "Aber sind wir nicht spätestens dann am Ende, wenn alles erklärt ist, wenn das letzte Geheimnis aus uns rausgewaschen ist wie ein Dreck?" (SG,26). In order to overcome the loss of immediacy it is necessary to revive one's ability to believe in secrets. This implies that the individual must learn to live with a state of insecurity and fear, for it is fear which motivates people to order their world and their self into unambiguous pictures. The narrator, in contrast to the rest of society, wants to live with fear: "Auch ohne Angst wollte ich nicht leben, wenn du das gemeint hast, vielmehr wollte ich mit Angst leben. Das war mir wirklich lieber" (SG,150). At the end of the novel the protagonist concludes his story with Maria. The world, finally freed from an all too familiar and predictable system of love which had caused paralysis and distance, regains its movement and color: "Danach setzte sich alles wieder in Bewegung, und langsam kehrten die Farben zurück" (SG,251). The intent behind the rejection of logical explanation is to break through effete patterns of perception in order to rediscover the secret of the world

through a new perspective: "Den etablierten Sinn aufzubrechen durch Wahnhaftes, durch das ganz Andere, Spontane, die abgelebten Muster durch eine neue Sehweise, und sei es die des Wahnsinns, in neuem Licht erscheinen zu lassen...."-25

Wellershoffs protagonist Klaus Jung perceives less and less of an outer world which is known to him to the point of satiety:

Nein, er sah nicht das, was andere sahen, sah vielleicht weniger, von Jahr zu Jahr weniger, obwohl es ihm so vorkam, als seien seine Augen größer geworden, im gleichen Maße wie ihr wolkiges Grau sich eintrübte, oder im gleichen Maße wie er weniger von der Außenwelt wahrnahm, die er bis zum Überdruß kannte (SS.160-61).

Jung is aware, as was Born's narrator, of the non-existence ("Nicht-Leben") of normal everyday existence. This reality, although thoroughly familiar, has not become intimate and private for Jung because he cannot experience it. Instead, it appears colorless and tasteless: "...er kannte das, aber es war ihm nicht vertrauter geworden, sondern fremder, man konnte auch sagen, farbloser, geschmackloser, er hatte es das Nicht-Leben genannt" (SS.161).

The tendency for new subjective protagonists to perceive objective reality through a subjective perspective as noted in the previous chapter indicates their inability to believe in the authenticity of objective, known, and distant reality. It is at the same time an attempt to make this outside world real through personal experience. The compulsion to subjectively perceive reality ("Wahrnehmungszwang") which was noted and criticized by Scherpe and Treichel²⁶ cannot be denied, but it should not be dismissed as an act of narcissism intending to block reality from view. It often serves to distort the protagonist's perception to the point that the world regains its strangeness, or secret, thereby allowing the subject to

experience his surroundings anew.

C. What Is Life?

1. The Living Dead

In many new subjective works the protagonists express a dissatisfaction with everyday existence. The awareness that societal norms prevent individual autonomy and that institutional perception models hinder the experience of an authentic reality comprises part of a general concern voiced by much of New Subjectivity that life as led by most of society is actually a form of non-existence. The majority of people exist from day to day and proceed through the world without becoming aware of themselves or their surroundings. They go about their business in a mechanical and unconscious state, which is actually the opposite of life. The routines and movements of life continue endlessly and inevitably, each repeating the one which came before, until the whole functioning world and all its participants disappear. Yet life goes ever onward, even after its death:

...Weitermachen, auch nach dem Tode. Immer weiter, weil es nicht aufhören kann, auch wenn es längst schon tote Bewegungen sind. Immer weiter betäubende Wiederholungen. Immer wieder Aufschichtungen, geschichtete Wiederholungen, ein sichtbares. Immer sichtbarer werdendes Verschwinden. Es war so, als passiere alles nur noch in einem Traum, als wäre jede Bewegung nur eine Erinnerung an eine Bewegung, die einmal wirklich stattgefunden hatte, als könne man auf eine erträgliche Weise nur tot sein, indem man einfach weitermache, als wäre nichts geschehen (SG.126-27).

In Walser's Jenseits der Liebe Franz Horn is pronounced alive at the end of the novel after his unsuccessful suicide attempt. But the life he is condemned to continue is actually a state of non-existence, for he must carry on his miserable pretensions of being a business man. He must continue to function within a society which has robbed him of the love of

his family and his self-respect. The contradiction within his boss' pronouncement of life is manifest in its exaggerated and, to Horn's ears, terrible loudness: "Er hörte, wie Thieles Stimme, furchtbar laut, sagte: Er lebt" (JL,176). Peter Beicken notes the Kafkaesque quality of Thiele's damning judgment, which condemns Horn to the shameful state of living death ("Lebendigtotsein").²⁷

Life holds no immediate joy for its participants, but is perceived to be something to be endured. One should withstand hardship now in order to really start living sometime in the future: "Im Augenblick waren Mühsal und Beschwerden, Schweißausbrüche und die flaue uninteressierte Anwesenheit zu ertragen, damit später das eigentliche Leben mit freiem Kopf angefangen werden konnte" (SG,215). Yet this future with its promise of "das eigentliche Leben" never arrives, so that existence becomes one long expectation, not fulfillment, of living, which is death: "Gewißheit, daß es so bliebe, zeitlebens ohne Leben, bis zum Tode immer nur Anwartschaft auf Leben..." (SG,215).

People spend their whole lives behind the bars of the inevitable routines of life, shackled by society's numerous restrictions. Helmut Halms feels particularly at home in his vacation apartment because of its barred windows (fP,10). Walser uses a similar metaphor in his Jenseits der Liebe, where Franz Horn imagines lying in a bed surrounded by electrically equipped bars so as to prevent all movement: "Nachher wirst du im Bett liegen wie in einem zu engen Käfig, dessen Gitterstäbe mit Strom geladen sind, weshalb du jede Bewegung vermeidest" (JL,36-37). Nicolas Born's narrator connects the image of a cage-like existence to the state of living death: "IHR WOLLT MICH UMBRINGEN, ABER IHR KÖNNT MICH NICHT MEHR

UMBRINGEN, DENN ICH BIN VOR JAHREN SCHON GESTORBEN, IN EUREN GEFÄNGNISSEN" (SG.103-04).

New Subjectivists depict a world ruled with inhumanity and uncaring, and functioning by means of an often brutal power structure. In Bernhard's Der Atem the setting of the story, a hospital supposedly concerned with saving lives, is depicted as a machine which destroys existence, as an "Anti-heilungs-, ja Menschenvernichtungsmaschine" (A.99). The protagonist gets well not because of the doctors, but in spite of them. They treat the seriously sick cases as people already dead. Their medicine is not supposed to heal, but to facilitate death. The nurses are equally cold and unfeeling, worried only about the lack of space in the hospital, and even the priest performs the last rites as a thoughtless business (A.66). Dieter Kafitz states that Bernhard's theatrical figures are characterized by aggression: "Die Figurenbeziehungen in den Bernhardschen Stücken sind durch Aggressivität geprägt."²⁸ His remark applies equally well to the characters of Bernhard's novel.

The inhumanity and brutality characterizing the business world in Walser's Jenseits der Liebe filter down to the relationship between Horn and his family, so that defeats at the office result in aggressive behavior at home. Horn divorces himself from his family in order to protect them from such brutality: "Sie [Thiele und Liszt] konnten durch dich keine Familie mehr zertrümmern. Du arbeitetest jetzt nicht mehr in ihrem Auftrag an der Zerstörung deiner Familie. Deine Familie war in Sicherheit" (JL.142). The power struggles of society ("Macht der Welt": JL.121) drive themselves between and dehumanize all interpersonal relationships. Horn finds himself on a battle campaign against his delinquent business

associate in England. Unable to locate him at his office, Horn hunts him down to his country home: "Oh Mr. Heath, und nun jag ich Sie in Ihrer Gegend, dachte Horn" (JL.76). Heath had fled here, to his last secret recess, to escape Horn's chase: "Er [Heath] floh einfach. Und Horn, nicht faul, verfolgte ihn bis zu seinem letzten Schlupfwinkel. Tüchtig, tüchtig" (JL.78). Such business-like efficiency alternates in Horn with shame caused by the success of his hunt. He questions his own capacity for compassion ("Mitleid") and humanity ("Menschlichkeit"). The value behind these two concepts becomes blurred and confused within the business world where success has become the only true measure of merit. Horn imagines the discussion which will ensue between himself and his bosses, Thiele and Liszt, upon learning that Horn did not in fact achieve his mission. The most threatening acts are uttered with the friendliest tone, and the boxing match becomes increasingly affable as it nears its end: "Am Ende dieses Satzes würde er [Thiele] den Ton freundlichst drohend nach oben biegen. ... Und sie [Thiele und Liszt] würden von Runde zu Runde lebenswürdiger, freundschaftlicher werden..." (JL.106).

2. A New Life

a. Potential for Change

Most new subjective works leave room for hope and change, which although not realized, can be considered the positive or utopian direction of the text in general. The destruction, rejection, and criticism of what is, represents in most cases an appeal for what should and perhaps could be. In some works this hope may be difficult to discern, so overwhelming is the negative depiction of the individual and society. Walser's Jenseits

der Liebe for example concludes by condemning the protagonist to the unchanged continuation of his deformed and alienated non-existence. However, hope is expressed in the yearning of the protagonist for a more humane business intercourse. He longs to have been the connecting bridge between the two men now banded together against him: "Er, die Brücke zwischen Arthur und Horst. Das wäre eine Mission gewesen. Eine Lebensaufgabe. Nicht das Zünglein an der Waage. Nur eine Brücke. Über ihn sollten sie zu einander kommen" (JL,137). Thoughts of his family, tinged with desire, love, and expectation, continually pierce the wall of emotional neutrality which he artificially constructed for protection.

Hans J. Fröhlich recognizes within works of the late seventies the presence of suffering, loneliness, and retreat, but also the effort to begin a radically new life. The themes of these works include "Leiden an der Einsamkeit, aber auch Flucht in diese, das Untertauchen aus privaten oder politischen Motiven, Versuche ein neues, radikal verändertes Leben zu beginnen...."²⁹ For many of these texts the retreat into solitude and the protagonist's resignation mean "ein Aufbruch nach Utopia."³⁰ Fröhlich's own novel entitled Im Garten der Gefühle contains both resigned and utopian elements. Thematic are interpersonal relationships. Marriage, depicted as a superficial and demeaning system of interdependency causing a lack of personal freedom, is juxtaposed to the individual liberty and capacity for change characterizing elective affinities. At the conclusion of the novel it seems as though all has returned to its original state. Similar to Franz Horn, the last line of the text condemns the narrator to the unaltered continuation of his unsatisfactory marital existence: "Ja, man lebt. Man lebt dahin" (GG,295). But the finality of this judgement is

undermined by means of the recurring refrain of change and renewal.

Albert, the narrator's good friend, tells him: "Ihr müßt euer Leben ändern.

Du mußt es ändern, und Dorothee muß es auch ändern" (GG.70). The

goal of life is to follow one's natural attractions, which create change:

Das Erwartete, sagte Albert, ist nicht das Ziel.

Was ist das Ziel?

Das Schwarze im Auge, sagte Albert.

Das Naheliegende also?

Das Nächstliegende, sagte er, das uns Vertraute und Verwandte,
was uns anzieht und die Veränderung schafft (GG.36).

The solutions found in the final chapter, entitled "Lösungen und auch wieder keine," are admittedly questionable ones.

In Walser's Ein fliehendes Pferd the outcome of the experience of alienation is more obviously positive. The threat to Helmut Halms as embodied in Klaus Buch directly results in the destruction of Helmut's complacency. Klaus forcibly disrupts his plodding "Trott" and prevents him from skirting life. The outcome of this confrontation is change, and it has become a turning point in the life of its main protagonist. Helmut and his wife Sabine almost frantically leave their customary vacation place and depart for Montpellier. This act is significant in that it represents a change in direction for the first time in twelve years. Helmut finally takes the beginning step toward facing life, especially his impotency problem, in his decision to talk with Sabine about themselves, a discussion which he has long owed her: "Jetzt fange ich an, sagte er. Es tut mir leid, sagte er, aber es kann sein, ich erzähle dir alles von diesem Helmut, dieser Sabine" (fP.151).

b. The Confrontation with Death

The experience of alienation is, if pursued to its inevitable end, a confrontation with man's mortality and the world's decomposition. In the absence of an objective, meaningful order which provides a context for the world and accordingly orientation for the individual, the subject experiences his surroundings and himself as pure factuality subject to the process of decay resulting in death. Edgar Piel, in discussing subjectivity in general during the twentieth century, inextricably connects the subject's loss of context to the realization that all life exists as finiteness:

...die Endlichkeit wird vom Individuum ganz einfach faktisch vorgefunden, und es gelingt ihm nicht mehr, sich vertrauensvoll auf den Schultern irgendwelcher Vorfahren und Autoritäten zu halten, um über die Faktizitäten hinwegzuschauen. ... Während der Mensch erfährt, daß das Gesetz einer nichts als faktischen Endlichkeit die Verwesung ist, steigt bestürzend die Ahnung in ihm auf, daß er wohl sein Leben keine Orientierung mehr finden wird. Jede Verkörperung bleibt in ihrem Jetzt und Hier vor dem Gesetz der Verwesung völlig zufällig und außerhalb jedes umgreifenden Zusammenhalts, solange nicht dieser Zusammenhalt als Kategorie oder Sinn von der Subjektivität selbst in die Realität hineingearbeitet wird.³¹

Man's reaction to the confrontation with and fear of death is to ignore or endeavor to forget it. Piel poses the question: "Was ist der wahre Abgrund, vor dem nur das Vergessen zu helfen scheint, und den zu vergessen sich die Menschheit vielleicht sogar erst in ihre eigene Geschichte gestürzt hat?," and answers: "der Gedanke an den Tod."³² In the face of the abyss of death the individual flees into a life of mimicry and conformity. A state of stupefaction and insensibility successfully bans the fear of mortality, but it also means the death and paralysis of life: "Aber die Flucht in die Betäubung, das ist ja die von Todesangst gebannt vollzogene Mimikry, bei der das Leben sich tot stellt, sich nicht mehr zu

bewegen traut."³³

Piel's remarks can be directly applied to much of New Subjectivity. As has been seen, many works of the seventies deal with various forms of death. Suicide, threat, murder, or separation are common and important thematic elements. The state of living death due to paralyzing conformity and repetition has been noted in several prominent new subjective texts. Two works in particular thematicize death and the individual's fear and forced disregard of it: Wellershoffs Die Schönheit des Schimpansen and Bernhard's Der Atem.

In Wellershoffs novel the title serves as a thematic indicator, for the chimpanzee signifies death: "Der Titel deutet die Thematik des Romans an: der Schimpanse ist das Symbol des Todes."³⁴ Klaus Jung's experience of alienation consists of the terrifying realization that he must die. The inability to successfully suppress this understanding distinguishes him from the rest of society. Whereas Jung's future wife hastily rejects the chimpanzee with a gesture of disgust, Jung buys the small statue. The chimpanzee embodies the condition of man:

Es war ein aus Holz geschnitzter, kauernder Schimpanse, der in seinen großen unbewußten Händen einen Totenkopf hielt, auf den er wie gebannt hinunterstarrte. Natürlich begriff der Affe nicht, was er in den Händen hatte, aber in der greisenhaften Kindlichkeit seines Gesichtes zeigte sich ein dumpfes Nachdenken, als dämmere in seinem Kopf eine Ahnung seiner Ähnlichkeit mit diesem knöchernen Gegenstand (SS.154).

The subject, similar to the chimpanzee, is constantly confronted with and even fascinated by the fact of mortality. There exists within him a vague cognizance of his resemblance to the skull. However, this does not lead to identification or recognition, but rather to even more vehement aversion and denial: "Der Affe, der einen fremden Schädel betrachtete, sah in

Wirklichkeit sich selbst, als ein Wesen, das sterben mußte, doch er war unfähig, das zu erkennen" (SS,198).

The story of Bernhard's Der Atem is also one of sickness, disease, and death. The protagonist, first threatened by his own death, must then come to grips with his grandfather's decease and, later, his mother's hospitalization and probable death. Bernhard introduces his text with a quote from Pascal: "Da die Menschen unfähig waren, Tod, Elend, Unwissenheit zu überwinden, sind sie, um glücklich zu sein, übereingekommen, nicht daran zu denken." This passage echoes the idea that man cannot face his own condition of uncertainty, misery, and mortality.

Wellershoffs protagonist Klaus Jung reacts to the confrontation with death by committing suicide. For Jung there exists behind the skull held in the chimpanzee's hands, behind self-recognition, pure nothingness:

Was würde er sehen, wenn er sich erkannte? Auch darauf schien das Buch [das Tibetanische Totenbuch] eine Antwort zu geben. Nicht mehr das, was er in den Händen hielt, die zähnebleckende Fratze des Todes. Auch sie war nur eine furchterregende Maske, die einen zurücktreiben sollte in die Welt der Täuschungen. Doch wenn man ihr standhielt, würde sie zerfallen, und man würde das klare Licht des Nichts erblicken wie in einem leeren Spiegel (SS,198).

Burdened with the terrifying realization that life is merely an empty mirror, Jung yearns to attain the nothingness of death, for at least death is painless: "Erstrebenswert war nur das Nichts, denn es war ohne Leiden" (SS,198).

For most other new subjective protagonists the frightening realization of death precipitates an existential confirmation of being. Impending death results in an examination and reaffirmation of life for the protagonist in Frisch's Montauk. The narrator's account contains no message except that he is alive. He writes his autobiography "[o]hne seine Schriftstellerei zu

rechtfertigen durch Verantwortung gegenüber der Gesellschaft: ohne Botschaft. Er hat keine und lebt trotzdem. Er möchte bloß erzählen...: sein Leben" (M.155). The middle point of Frisch's novel is marked with the realization that to be eternal means to have existed: "AUF DER WELT SEIN.... EWIG SEIN: GEWESEN SEIN" (M.103). Similarly, Fritz Raddatz notes the dialectic between life and death in Peter Handke's works. The experience of alienation and loss of meaning is necessary for a more meaningful existence. Death or departure enable the protagonist to start out anew: "Abschied – also: Tod – als Möglichkeit neuen Lebens ist stets Motiv."³⁵

Thomas Bernhard, in his work Der Atem: Eine Entscheidung, attributes most directly a positive potential to the traumas of sickness and death undergone by the protagonist and illuminates the connection established so often between life and death. The title again serves as a thematic indication: life, epitomized throughout the novel as breathing, is a decision. Discarded in a hospital bathroom as a hopeless case, the protagonist decides to continue breathing, thereby forcing the nurses to wheel him back to his room. Life is an act of will. One must desperately desire and resolve on one's own to live:

Von zwei möglichen Wegen hatte ich mich in dieser Nacht in dem entscheidenden Augenblick für den des Lebens entschieden. ... Ich hatte nicht, wie der andere vor mir, aufhören wollen zu atmen, ich hatte weiteratmen und weiterleben wollen. Ich mußte die sicher auf meinen Tod eingestellte Schwester zwingen, mich aus dem Badezimmer heraus- und in den Krankensaal zurückführen zu lassen, und also mußte ich weiteratmen. Hätte ich nur einen Augenblick in diesem meinem Willen nachgelassen, ich hätte keine einzige Stunde länger gelebt. Es war an mir, ob ich weiteratmete oder nicht. ... Ich bestimmte, welchen der beiden möglichen Wege ich zu gehen hatte (A.20-21).

The protagonist, in the moment before death, consciously wills back life in

an act of self-autonomy and assertion: "Ich wollte leben, alles andere bedeutete nichts. Leben, und zwar mein Leben leben, wie und solange ich will. ... Der Weg in den Tod wäre leicht gewesen. Genauso hat der Lebensweg den Vorteil der Selbstbestimmung" (A.20-21).

It is the figure of the grandfather who expresses the existential necessity of life-endangering sickness. A realm such as the hospital, where one unavoidably faces death, provokes thoughts about one's life and situation which are normally avoided or ignored:

Dieser Krankenhausaufenthalt sei ihm urplötzlich, gar nicht im medizinischen, sondern in einem existentiellen Sinne, als eine unumgängliche Notwendigkeit erschienen, er sei hier im Krankenhaus, in dem, so er, zu lebenswichtigen und existenzentscheidenden Gedanken geradezu herausfordernden Leidensbezirk zu einem grundlegenden Überdenken seiner und auch meiner Situation gekommen. Von Zeit zu Zeit seien solche Krankheiten, tatsächliche oder nicht, wie er sich ausdrückte, notwendig, um sich jene Gedanken machen zu können, zu welchen der Mensch ohne eine solche zeitweise Krankheit nicht komme (A.59).

The world view of a seriously sick person, due to the opportunity he has to delve into those life and death questions ignored by a superficial society, is clearer than that of anyone else: "Der Kranke ist der Hellsichtige, keinem anderen ist das Weltbild klarer" (A.60). Sickness and approaching death create an awareness of and impart meaning to life. They rekindle in the stricken individual a consciousness of himself and his world: "In diesem Denkbezirk erreichen wir, was wir außerhalb niemals erreichen können, das Selbstbewußtsein und das Bewußtsein alles dessen, das ist" (A.62). It is exactly such an awareness or experience of self and of world which, to varying degrees, is intended in much of New Subjectivity and which constitutes the positive potential of the negative experience of alienation.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined an aspect of New Subjectivity too often overlooked by commentators, and yet convincingly documented within the primary literature of the seventies itself. The destructive and disorienting loss of context undergone by many new subjective protagonists intends a reawakening of the subject's awareness of himself and his world. The loss of a secure place within society initiates a search for self-identity and autonomy. In the absence of a stable and encompassing reality the subject, through his different perspective, is able to reexperience his world. New subjective works depict a society concerned only in functioning smoothly and accordingly one in which conformity is valued. They portray a reality no longer attainable due to the numerous institutional and traditional patterns of perception. Life is revealed as an oblivious and unconscious state of non-existence. At the same time, however, these works express the hope for change, and the justification and even realization of this hope lies in the experience of alienation. Change can only take place after the destruction or questioning of what is. An awareness of life is possible in the subject's confrontation with death. This chapter has responded to much of the criticism aimed at New Subjectivity, especially accusations of societal irrelevancy, triviality, and negativity for the sake of negation. The positive potential of New Subjectivity lies in the questions it poses, not the solutions it proposes, and the question raised again and again in these works is an existentially essential one: What is life?

Notes--Chapter Three

¹Adolf Muschg, "Bericht von einer falschen Front oder: Der Schein trügt nicht," in Literaturmagazin 5: Das Vergehen von Hören und Sehen: Aspekte der Kulturvernichtung, ed. Hermann Peter Piwitt and Peter Rühmkorf (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1976), p. 32.

²Peter O. Chotjewitz, Die Herren des Morgengrauens: Romanfragment (Berlin: Rotbuch, 1978). Hereafter cited in the text with (HM) and page number only.

³Quoted according to Michael Buselmeier, "Nach der Revolte. Die literarische Verarbeitung der Studentenbewegung," in Literatur und Studentenbewegung: Eine Zwischenbilanz, ed. Martin W. Lüdke (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1977), pp. 158-59. Original quote in Wolfram Schütte, "Ich weiß, das es nicht die schlechtesten Menschen sind, die jetzt bei der Literatur nach etwas suchen: Ein paar Zitate und Überlegungen aus und über das 'Literaturmagazin 4,'" in Frankfurter Rundschau, 11 Oct. 1975. The original quote reads: "Das, was als die Wiederentdeckung des Subjekts in der Neuen Linken oft erleichtert-bürgerlich als Reprivatisierung mißverstanden und dementsprechend lauthals gefeiert wurde, (als ob die Neue Linke schließlich und endlich auf die Introspektion eines Peter Handke zusammengeschnurrt sei), ist nichts anderes denn der Versuch...."!!!

⁴Arnulf Conradi, "Die Gezeiten des Subjektivismus: Über die Subjektivität in der neueren Literatur," horen, 25 (1980), 110-11.

⁵Manfred Jurgensen, "Das Tagebuch: Eine Einführung," in Das fiktionale Ich: Untersuchungen zum Tagebuch (Bern: Francke, 1979), p. 24.

⁶Jurgensen, pp. 15-16.

⁷Bernd Neumann, "Die Wiedergeburt des Erzählens aus dem Geist der Autobiographie? Einige Anmerkungen zum neuen autobiographischen Roman am Beispiel von Hermann Kinders 'Der Schleißtrog' und Bernhard Vespers 'Die Reise,'" Basis, 9 (1979), 105.

⁸Quoted according to David Bronsen, "Autobiographien der siebziger Jahre: Berühmte Schriftsteller befragen ihre Vergangenheit," in Deutsche Literatur in der Bundesrepublik seit 1965: Untersuchungen und Berichte, ed. Paul Michael Lützeler and Egon Schwarz (Königstein: Athenäum, 1980), p. 203. Original quote in Roy Pascal, Die Autobiographie. Gehalt und Gestalt (Stuttgart, Berlin, Köln, Mainz: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1965), p. 12.

⁹Peter Härtling, Nachgetragene Liebe (Darmstadt: Hermann Luchterhand Verlag, 1980). Hereafter cited in text with (NL) and page number only.

¹⁰Stephan Reinhardt, "Nach Innen führt der geheimnisvolle Weg, aber er führt auch wieder heraus: Unvollständige Anmerkungen zum neuen Irrationalismus in der Literatur," in Nach dem Protest: Literatur im

Umbruch, ed. Martin W. Lüdke (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979), p. 170.

¹¹Reinhardt, p. 170.

¹²Bronson, p. 203. Quoted according to Hans Bänziger, "Leben im Zitat. Zu Montauk: ein Formulierungsproblem in dessen Vorgeschichte," in Max Frisch: Aspekte des Prosawerks: Studien zum Werk Max Frischs, ed. Gerhard P. Knapp, I (Bern, Frankfurt am Main, Las Vegas: 1978), p. 277.

¹³Jurgensen, p. 18.

¹⁴Jurgensen, p. 18.

¹⁵Fritz J. Raddatz, "Zweifel melken: Gedanken, die neueste deutsche Literatur betreffend," Frankfurter Hefte, 31, No. 4 (1976), 142.

¹⁶Jan Knopf, "Verlust der Unmittelbarkeit: Über Max Frisch und die 'Neue Subjektivität,'" Orbis Litterarum, 34 (1979), 146.

¹⁷Knopf, 150.

¹⁸Knopf, 146.

¹⁹Raddatz, 140.

²⁰Nicolas Born, "Vorbemerkung," in Literaturmagazin 3: 'Die Phantasie an die Macht': Literatur als Utopie, ed. Nicolas Born (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1975), p. 10.

²¹Dieter Wellershoff, "Fiktion und Praxis," in Poesie und Politik: Zur Situation der Literatur in Deutschland, ed. Wolfgang Kuttenueler (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1973), especially pp. 336-39.

²²Dieter Wellershoff, "Wiederherstellung der Fremdheit," in Grenzverschiebung: Neue Tendenzen in der deutschen Literatur, ed. Renate Matthaei (Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1970), p. 11 of "Theorie und Programm".

²³Wellershoff, "Wiederherstellung," p. 11.

²⁴Discussed by Rainer Nägele, "Martin Walser. Die Gesellschaft im Spiegel des Subjekts," in Zeitkritische Romane des 20. Jahrhunderts, ed. Hans Wagener (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1975), p. 331.

²⁵Reinhardt, pp. 159-60.

²⁶Klaus R. Scherpe and Hans-Ulrich Treichel, "Vom Überdruß leben: Sensibilität und Intellektualität als Ereignis bei Handke, Born und Strauß," Monatshefte, 73 (1981), 202.

²⁷Peter Belcken, "Neue Subjektivität: Zur Prosa der siebziger Jahre."

in Deutsche Literatur in der Bundesrepublik seit 1965: Untersuchungen und Berichte, ed. Paul Michael Lützeler and Egon Schwarz (Königstein: Athenäum, 1980), p. 171.

²⁸Dieter Kafitz, "Die Problematisierung des individualistischen Menschenbildes im deutschsprachigen Drama der Gegenwart (Franz Xaver Kroetz, Thomas Bernhard, Botho Strauß)," Basis, 10 (1980), 105.

²⁹Hans J. Fröhlich, "Die Gewichte der Welt: Literarische Neuerscheinungen im Herbst 1977 und Frühjahr," Jahresring, 1978/79, p. 291.

³⁰Fröhlich, p. 291.

³¹Edgar Piel, Der Schrecken der 'wahren' Wirklichkeit: Das Problem der Subjektivität in der modernen Literatur (München: Beck, 1978), p. 211.

³²Piel, p. 215.

³³Piel, p. 216.

³⁴Fröhlich, p. 291.

³⁵Raddatz, 144.

Chapter Four--The Forms of New Subjectivity

Introduction

The focus of this chapter is turned upon the forms of New Subjectivity and the reader's reaction to those forms. The effect of the literary work upon the reader constitutes a significant and yet largely overlooked aspect of the text which can be used to ascertain its societal relevance. Only the reader personally afflicted with the conflict undergoes change. Only the reader burdened with the questions posed within the text accepts responsibility for the answers. The effect of a text upon the reader depends upon the form, and the second and third sections of this chapter deal with the forms typical to New Subjectivity. Although each work is stamped with the author's individual style, there exist common characteristics, most of which stem from the shared experience of alienation and/or the diary-like nature of such works. The author no longer presents a realistic picture of the world. Instead, the reader is confronted with fragmentation, ambiguity, structural openness, and a narrator who has lost his omnipotence. The process of writing as a groping search is presented, not the end result or message of the text. The formal elements create an aura of uncertainty around the reader and draw him as a participant into the experience undergone by the protagonist.

A. The Reader, the Text, and Engagement

Secondary literature concerning New Subjectivity too often ignores the forms of this literary trend. Formal consideration and effect on the reader

have, however, become increasingly important to many authors of the seventies. Above all, inclusion of form and reader is necessary to the discussion concerning the societal relevance of New Subjectivity.

Traditionally, literary engagement has meant that the text must present a realistic and trustworthy picture of societal and political conditions: "Wo von gesellschaftskritischer Literatur die Rede ist, lautet meistens die Gretchenfrage, wie hält sie es mit dem Realismus."¹ However, there exists among theoreticians of today a growing awareness that engaged literature implies more than a factual representation of reality. Instead of objectively telling the reader something, the text must afflict him. New subjective works, rich in question, not answer, intend not description, but provocation. Instead of desiring recognition or registration from the reader, the New Subjectivists attempt to propel him into his own individual experience of the portrayed reality.

Personal experience of a literary text can be considered engaged in several ways. A work transcends triviality by becoming a paradigmatic case, whereby the individual experience has been communicated to others through its form:

Wenn dann das Subjekt des Textes und das Subjekt des Lesers in Austausch treten, mit Sympathie oder im Konflikt, dann bedeutet das mehr als nur eine geglückte Lektüre, sondern es gewinnt paradigmatischen Charakter, und es entsteht so etwas wie herrschaftsfreie Kommunikation. Und dies hätte dann über den Einzelfall hinaus Bedeutung. Dazu bedarf es allerdings einer Literatur, die offen ist, und die eher Fragen stellt als Antworten gibt.²

Only through personal concretization can the critical potential of literature be realized. Otherwise engagement remains abstract and intangible: "Erst die persönliche Konkretisierung verschafft dem kritischen Potential der Literatur die glaubwürdige Wirkung, die dem abstrakten Engagement abging."³

Hinrich C. Seeba examines the theoretical writings of contemporary authors and discovers within them a common intent, which forms the basis of and justification for subjective literary production. Through examples drawn from both East and West Germany, Seeba exemplifies the continuity between the literary theory of the sixties and seventies. The authors of the seventies, at least in theory, still value engagement. Not the verbal activism of before, but rather personal engagement ("persönliches Engagement") motivates literary activity and distinguishes New Subjectivity from private and unengaged "Innerlichkeit." Personal engagement unites two supposedly contradictory terms. The authors do indeed express themselves and their own personal experiences and search for self-identity. However, this literary expression must gain its engaged character through communication with the reader: "Selbstbespiegelung ohne Rücksicht und Absicht auf den Leser, Produktion ohne Rezeption und Psychologie des Schriftstellers ohne Soziologie seines Publikums würden die persönlich engagierte Literatur zwangsläufig um die öffentliche Rolle bringen, die sie sich so mühsam erkämpft hat."⁴

There is no denying the fact that the literature of the seventies has become personal, but this should not be misconstrued as a retreat from engagement and society. Contemporary literature tends toward more personal themes because, according to Seeba, subjective deformation, alienation, and disappearance have become experiences shared by many:

Die Literatur der siebziger Jahre ist, wenn man ihr theoretisches Verständnis durch ganz verschiedene Schriftsteller auf einen nicht mit 'Verinnerlichung' zu verwechselnden Begriff bringen will, persönlicher geworden, weil die ihr vorausliegende Erfahrung allgemeiner geworden ist.⁵

The text offers the reader a model which the reader can personally

experience and then perhaps apply to a real setting and situation. Its most important function is to allow both author and reader to fictionally analyse and work through the damages inflicted upon the individual by societal reality: "So scheint die sowohl schreibende als auch lesende, in jedem Fall fiktionale Abarbeitung der Verklebungen und Beschädigungen, die die einzelne Seele von dieser unzumutbaren Wirklichkeit erfahren muß, die wichtigste Aufgabe einer bescheidener gewordenen Literatur zu sein...."⁶

The "modesty" of the literature of the seventies lies in the fact that change is attempted on a personal, not societal, level. Seeba nevertheless attributes potentially liberating forces of change ("systemverändernde Kräfte") to the personal participation of the reader in a text.⁷ If one considers the themes of New Subjectivity this claim is understandable, justifiable, and of utmost importance to the debate concerning new subjective societal validity. Many new subjective works illuminate the state of unconscious non-existence which has replaced an awareness of life for most of society. The experience of alienation disrupts and destroys this placid and stale surface. In this sense it serves as a very effective criticism of the existant order and as such fulfills the function of modern literature since Kafka: "...während die Literatur früherer Zeiten durch fiktionale Bestrafung der Normbrecher als Wahrer der Ordnung fungierte, übt die moderne Literatur seit Kafka, als exemplarische Vorführung brüchiger Existenz, Kritik an der bestehenden Ordnung."⁸

The participating reader, subjected to a similar negative, frightening, and threatening experience as the new subjective protagonist, can benefit from the same positive potential. Only if the reader is plunged into that abyss of uncertainty and question does he obtain the opportunity to explore

and re-experience himself and his world. The text provokes through its form the experience of alienation to free the reader from his existing condition and to burden him with his own individual change. Potentially and ideally, the literary work propels the reader into an unknown world and initiates a process of search, which continues after the conclusion of the novel and results in increasing awareness of self and reality. The new subjective forms of alienation have a twofold function: they engage the reader in communication with the text and elicit an existentially engaged, personal experience.

B. Realism and Alienation

Contemporary society has become increasingly unsure and distrustful of reality: "...wir wissen immer weniger, was wir eigentlich unter Realität zu verstehen haben."⁹ It no longer believes in logical governing laws and cannot comprehend its reality. Accordingly, the presentation of the world in a literary work has become problematical. A realistic writing form is one which corresponds to and reflects society. It responds to its actual situation and climate. Consequently, a realistic portrayal of modern times is one which destroys and dissolves a meaningful and ordered reality. Rainer Nägele discusses Realism in modern literature and finds that whereas previous centuries were marked by bourgeois Realism, the twentieth century, especially since Franz Kafka, evidences Anti-Realism. The former is based upon the principle of recognition which the latter intends to negate through alienation: "Verkürzt ließe sich sagen: Wenn die Kategorie des Wiedererkennens die Grundlage des bürgerlichen Realismus ausmacht, so ist die Grundlage des modernen 'Anti-Realismus' die

Verfremdung, die Negation des Wiedererkennens."¹⁰ Two important examples of contemporary Anti-Realism have already been mentioned in this dissertation: Walser's "Realismus X" and Wellershoffs "Neuer Realismus." Both literary styles reject the photographed and objective reproduction of what is, to transmit the distorted picture of a reality filtered through subjective consciousness. Both authors attribute a freeing and critical intent to their methods. Whereas mimesis serves only to reinforce and stabilize, subjective distortion or literary alienation allows its reader to question and criticize, thereby enabling change.

Commentators of New Subjectivity have lauded it as a return to more traditional aesthetic forms. The phrase heard so often to herald its advent--"Es wird wieder erzählt"¹¹--implies a restoration of plot, characters which act and are acted upon, and perhaps some type of progressive development. The single most obvious example of a return to traditional narration are the diary-like forms such as the autobiography, biography, and journal. These forms can be used to impose a chronological and even causal order, a unity of time and place, or an unproblematical and unambiguous narrative perspective upon the events of the story. Marcel Reich-Ranicki links the desire to be understood and to reach the reader to a return to classical forms and a weariness of experimentation:

Mit dem Wunsch, gelesen und verstanden zu werden, mag es auch zusammenhängen, daß sich viele Schriftsteller an überlieferte Formen, ja an klassische Vorbilder halten! Ob Lyrik oder Prosa, ob Autoren oder Leser – man scheint der Experimente müde und überdrüssig. Böll möchte "mal im klassischen Sinn autobiographisch schreiben". Frisch sehnt sich nach einer "einfältigen Erzähler-Position". Enzensberger entdeckt die Brauchbarkeit der traditionellen Balladenform. Peter Weiss knüpft offensichtlich an den alten Bildungsroman an.¹²

Caution must be exercised, however, with such an assertion. The

perceived return to traditional forms may in part be attributable to the juxtaposition of the seventies to the at times extreme experiments of either documentary literature or concrete poetry during the sixties. In addition, the themes of new subjective works, which dwell on everyday people and concrete reality, have undoubtedly increased the impression of formal traditionalism. Many of these forms, although their origins may be classical, have undergone a radical transition. The catastrophic autobiography of Thomas Bernhard, for example, has very little in common with its predecessors, which viewed life and the individual as comprehensible and meaningful entities. Other authors have utilized traditional narrative forms only for the sake of parody.

Hans J. Fröhlich discusses the stereotype accompanying New Subjectivity of traditional and realistic narrative forms. He notes the fact that many contemporary authors refer to the great narrators of the nineteenth century within their own works. Fröhlich himself makes repeated reference in his novel Im Garten der Gefühle to Goethe's Die Wahlverwandschaften. However, he asks if this really means that today's novelist attempts to narrate as did the quoted model: "Aber bedeutet das, daß Widmer oder Handke (Die linkshändige Frau', Suhrkamp-Verlag), Plenzdorf oder Schneider (Lenz) tatsächlich wie May oder Goethe, wie Büchner oder Jules Verne erzählen?"¹³ He answers that of course this is not the case. Contemporary narration lacks a conventional story. Neat connections and transitions, if present at all, serve only to parody:

So etwas wie story gibt es entweder nur im Ansatz oder gleich in inflationärer Fülle, dann aber ohne den berühmten roten Faden. Säuberliche Zusammenhänge oder picobello Übergänge erweisen sich, wenn man sie findet, als Parodie auf die klassische Knüpftechnik. Die Parole Es wird wieder erzählt, auf die genannten Autoren angewendet, zielt insofern genau

daneben, weil sie durch das Wörtchen wieder suggerieren möchte, es würde wie eh und je und in bewährter Manier erzählt.¹⁴

Fröhlich finds that slogans such as "Es wird wieder erzählt" and formulations such as Reich-Ranicki's concerning a return to traditional forms are dangerous because they suggest a mere replication of previous narrative methods.

Other commentators remark a tendency toward a type of Photo-Realism in new subjective works. Peter Wapnewski notes upon the advent of New Subjectivity "the new (or rediscovered) accuracy of factual description."¹⁵ There exists a tendency to focus in upon the everyday objects of reality: "The new preoccupation with accuracy tends to choose the familiar, the immediate, and the everyday to work upon. ... Reality begins at home."¹⁶ Peter M. Stephan discovers within new subjective works of the late seventies a similar trend, which he labels as "fotodokumentarischen Realismus" because it results in a photograph-like documentation of reality.¹⁷ The accuracy of these observations cannot be denied, for, as was discussed previously,¹⁸ many new subjective protagonists proceed throughout reality obsessed with its perception and detailed registration. This is, however, a question of content, not form. It is the manner in which segments of reality are arranged which is essential to the question of form, and it is the lack of ordered arrangement which constitutes the formal Anti-Realism and technique of alienation characteristic to these works. The so carefully documented and easily recognizable reality suddenly appears strange and unrealistic:

Seine Texte [die des schreibenden Ich] sind wie Filme, doch ohne Drehbuch, ohne Regie, ohne Schnitt. Eine so blind realistisch "gefilmte" Umwelt hat den Charakter des Abstrusen und Unheimlichen, weil ihr jeder Sinn zu fehlen scheint. Von

Realistik schlägt die verselbständigte Aufzählung des Alltäglichen um ins Groteske. Was wollen all diese zahllosen Dinge und kleinen Tätigkeiten des Alltags? Sie sind dem Ich fremd wie die Milchstraße dem Bürger auf der Straße.¹⁹

The lack of meaningful integration of the segments of reality defies the text's Realism. The portrayal of the isolated object alienates it, and, again echoing Walser's and Wellershoffs aesthetic theories of Anti-Realism, consequently renders reality newly discoverable:

It is the very act of exhibiting the familiar object, of transporting it into the isolation of the object d'art, which lends it its quality of novelty, of something experienced for the first time. For alienation is the technique which helps us discover what we already know, to comprehend the general in the particular.²⁰

New subjective works in general are not as concerned in describing existent reality as in disclosing a new one: "Merkmal dieser Bücher ist, daß sie nicht auf Realitätsbeschreibung aus sind, sondern auf Entdeckung einer noch unerforschten Realität."²¹ The description of reality implies Realism, whereas the provocation of a richer and broader experience of it demands anti-realistic forms. Alienation as discussed above is one anti-realistic method with exactly this intent. Another technique depends upon the individual's Imagination. Hans J. Fröhlich declares at the end of the seventies that Realism has not undergone the regeneration originally expected of it. But this does not mean the disappearance of reality, for many authors instead are discovering a new reality:

Den Gesundbetern des Realismus zum Trotz oder Possen hat dieser sich bei denen, die ihn erklärtermaßen pflegen wollen, nicht so recht regenerieren wollen, und auch, um sich am eigenen Zopf aus der Schwäche aufzuhelfen, fehlt es ihm offenbar an (Schreib-)Kräften. Daß mit dem Realismus aber nicht zugleich auch die Realität ins Siechbett mußte, dafür haben jene Autoren gesorgt, die ihr mit Phantasie aufs Fell gerückt sind, es freilich dabei nicht belleßen, sondern um sie schreibend zu erfassen, ihr auch unters Fell und unter die Haut gingen.²²

Instead of picturing the world in the attempt to elicit recognition, these authors rebel against the constraints of Realism. Their expeditions into the fantasy of the individual's mind can be considered an act of liberation:

"Was gezeigt wird, ist – wie es bei Eisendle heißt – der Raum des freien Denkens."²³

In keeping with the original definition of New Subjectivity as a subjective content and form, the specific formal elements discussed in the following pages all have one characteristic in common: they are determined by the subject's consciousness. The content is filtered through the subject and by this means gains its structure and arrangement. Such a process tends to break reality down, not to construct it. Instead of recognition, these formal elements express and intend anti-realistic alienation.

C. Alienation as Literary Form

1. Language

The language of New Subjectivity is generally everyday and simple. The vocabulary and syntax used can be considered colloquial German. Flowery and convoluted expression is avoided in favor of directness. One finds a preference for the stark subject/verb/object sentence composition, stripped of unnecessary frills: "Zuerst kam keine Stimmung auf. Einige gingen fort. Sie saßen zu sechst. Ein Mädchen verabschiedete sich – sie müsse um zehn zu Hause sein, sonst setze es Schläge..." (T,7). These opening lines of Karin Struck's Trennung are an extreme example bordering on monotony, but they serve to effectively depict a style typical for many New Subjectivists. Often the verb has been transposed from its traditional position at the end of a phrase to a place in closer proximity to its

subject. If unnecessary for comprehension, either subject or verb can be omitted. All of these characteristics result in a familiar and easily understood language.

Many of the new subjective works impart a conversational tone through the repeated interjection of such words as "also," "jawohl," "auch noch" (JL.55), or "tatsächlich" (GG). This effect is heightened by the sudden but frequent appearance of a direct address. Usually the reader knows to whom the words are directed. The narrator of Nachgetragene Liebe addresses his father in the desire to communicate with him. Other protagonists, such as the narrator in Frisch's Montauk or Franz Horn in Jenseits der Liebe, engage in conversations with themselves. However, it is not always clear with whom the protagonist is speaking. Horn for example in the following extract thinks to himself, but obviously for a larger, purely imaginary audience: "Und diese Leute! Wilde Gestalten, wißt ihr" (JL.53). Although one can assume from the context that he directs his thoughts toward his family, the reader is nevertheless momentarily puzzled and startled. All of these methods draw the reader into a more intimate identification with the characters and text.

New subjective works are marked with frequent parentheses, italicized words, dashes, slashes, capitalized words or phrases, and three dots indicating incompleteness. Frisch's Montauk brims with such stylistic devices:

Es ist genau Mittag – vielleicht möchte die junge Frau, die Lynn heißt, jetzt lieber allein sein anderswo . . . (M.80).

Warum macht man das. Es muß sein (meint der Verlag) für das Buch – (M.13).

Neulich (aber das ist auch schon vor Jahren gewesen) habe ich ihn in Zürich zufällig auf der Straße (Limmatquai) von weitem gesehen; ein schwerer Mann jetzt (M.29).

These dashes, dots, and parentheses signal the workings of the mind, which skips, switches directions, adds afterthoughts, or trails off. Numerous examples of italicized words can be found in Fröhlich's Im Garten der Gefühle:

Obwohl uns die meisten vor diesem Schritt in die Selbstverbannung gewarnt haben, bereue ich ihn nicht (GG.9).

Als gegen fünf Uhr nachmittags Norbert Klotz' rotes Auto auf unsern Hof fuhr (endlich – als ob ich nur auf diesen Augenblick gewartet hätte), saß ich mitten in meinem Zimmer auf dem drehbaren Schreibtischsessel und schaute düster aus dem Fenster (GG.12).

Herr Klotz sagte, es ginge ihm primastens, und Frau Klotz sagte, die Fahrt hierher sei überhaupt nur ein Klacks gewesen, sie hätte sich diese Gegend viel weiter weg vorgestellt (GG.13).

In the first two quotations the underscoring manifests the emphasis placed upon certain words important to the subject. In the third quote the italicization evidences subjective distortion through exaggeration of others' words.

Thomas Bernhard's prose style in Der Atem, a notable exception to the general tendency toward simplicity of syntax, reflects the protagonist's inner state and accordingly changes as does the subject. Bernhard's longest and most involved sentence, stretching over more than two pages, occurs during the protagonist's most seriously ill period of time:

Als ich zum erstenmal zur Funktion abgeholt worden war, sind mir naturgemäß noch nicht die ganze Größe und die ganze Häßlichkeit dieses Krankensaales zu Bewußtsein gekommen, was ich wahrgenommen hatte, waren Schatten von Menschen und Mauern und von Gegenständen an diesen Menschen und Mauern und die mit diesen Menschen und Mauern und Gegenständen zusammenhängenden Geräusche, alles zusammen hatte ich auf diesem Weg durch den Krankensaal, auf welchem mir mehrere geistliche Schwestern und wie diese weißgekleidete Pfleger behilflich gewesen waren, schon ein von den vielen Penicillin- und Kampferspritzen auf ein Minimum herabgesetztes, mich aber tatsächlich in einen gegenüber

meinen Anfangsschmerzen nicht nur erträglichen, sondern angenehmen Zustand versetzendes Wahrnehmungsvermögen gehabt, von allen Seiten hatten mich Hände, mir war vorgekommen, eine Unzahl von Händen, ohne daß ich diese Hände und auch nicht die zu diesen Händen gehörenden Menschen hätte sehen können, aus meinem Bett heraus und auf eine Tragbahre gehoben und gezogen und geschoben und in dicke Decken gewickelt und schließlich, alles war mir verschwommen und in der größten Undeutlichkeit... (A.12-13).

This sentence, only half of which is reproduced here, portrays in its confusion the condition of the protagonist. No objects or people stand out as events go by in one indistinguishable blur. It seems to the narrator as if there are hundreds or even thousands of other people around him in a flurry of activity. His physical state, described in the next sentence as the moment during his illness where his capacity to perceive had reached its lowest point, is mirrored in a style of frenzied repetition and endless, indistinct continuation.

The language of New Subjectivity expresses uncertainty, often by means of subjunctive verb forms. Very common to third person narratives is a subjunctive clause introduced with the fact that the protagonist felt or thought what follows:

Ihm war, als läge L. neben ihm und beugte sich mit ihren Haaren über sein Gesicht (L.11).

Als Horn den Laden verließ, hatte er das Gefühl, daß Ober- und Unterkiefer entspannt seien. ... Fast sofort hatte er das Gefühl, jetzt könne nichts mehr passieren (JL.8).

The reader is not presented believable and reliable facts, but rather events and episodes which are immediately questioned or even negated through the subjunctive forms. Indirect discourse is also widespread, particularly in works such as Jenseits der Liebe where all dialogue is filtered through the protagonist. It heightens uncertainty by placing in doubt the account of the conversation being rendered.

Related to language's uncertainty is the tendency to state something in the form of a hypothesis only. The opening sentence of Peter O. Chotjewitz' novel fragment Die Herren des Morgenrauens provides a good example of a statement made as an assumption which cannot be, and during the course of the story never is, verified: "Jemand mußte in Fritz Buchonia ein schlechtes Gewissen erzeugt haben, denn ohne daß er sich einer Schuld bewußt gewesen wäre, hatte er eines Morgens einen Traum" (HM,5). This of course replicates the form of the first line in Kafka's Der Prozeß,²⁴ and true to the expectations raised through this beginning reference, it is impossible to distinguish in Chotjewitz' novel between truth and mere hypothesis, between objective and subjective reality. The entire "real" action is instigated through Fritz' doubtful impressions and the conclusions he draws: "Offensichtlich streute jemand die Nachricht aus, um ihn bei der Bevölkerung in Mißkredit zu bringen. Wenn er verhaftet wurde, war die Zeitungsmeldung über seine angeblichen Straftaten doch wohl glaubwürdig, oder?" (HM,145). The important words here are "offensichtlich," "angeblich," "doch," and "oder?," because they, in addition to the recurring expressions "Fritz schloß daraus," "Fritz hatte den Eindruck," "er glaubte zu bemerken," or the prevalence of "scheinen," serve to transform any assertion into a questionable possibility. Other examples abound. Bernhard's Der Atem is littered with subjunctive forms and words functioning similarly to those discussed for Chotjewitz. The most common are "muß klar gewesen sein," "vermutlich," "wahrscheinlich," or "mag sein."

The abundance of question in new subjective works should also be mentioned:

Er spürte ein eindeutiges Entsetzen darüber, daß dieser Tag vorbei war, ohne daß . . . ohne was? Das weiß ich nicht.

sagte er. ... Mußte er nicht froh sein, daß dieser Tag vorbei war? Das ist es doch. ... Aber wirklich! Was sollte denn kommen. Hilde vielleicht?! Womöglich mit den Kindern, ja?! Und jedes einen mit brennenden Kerzen besteckten Weihnachtsbaum in der Hand, ja?! Und alle drei singen, ja?! ... Sie war etwas zu freundlich. Also bitte, war sie, die Strenge, nicht etwas zu freundlich? Das war sie doch, Herrgott (JL.27-29).

The narrative thread is continually interrupted by the doubt and uncertainty of the protagonist. His questions sometimes express helplessness or hesitation, sometimes they ridicule his dearest wishes. In the last quotation the question is redundant and serves to reinforce his original statement as if in self-defense. Important is the rhythm of such sentences, which switches back and forth between assertion and question. Sometimes the protagonist states a fact, only to cast doubt upon it in the new fragment. At other times the process is reversed, but both methods result in reader suspicion toward the narrator's next declaration.

2. Fragmentation

Fragmentation pervades the new subjective text from its smallest to most comprehensive structural element. Many of the stylistic devices mentioned above function to break up the sentence, thereby lending it a fragmented quality. The narrative flow, molded to the subject's thoughts, is interrupted by dashes, parentheses, and even incompleteness. Between sentences the stream is choppy due to slashes, topic change, and the noticeable lack of connective material. Paragraphs vary greatly in length and do not in general move in one direction toward an ultimate goal. Chapters as a means of arrangement and orientation have for the most part, Fröhlich's Im Garten der Gefühle presenting an exception, been eliminated.

Instead of a plot and a tightly ordered structure, one finds subjective, associative jumps: "...Fabel, Geschlossenheit der Darstellung können einem sich ins eigene Ich vertiefenden Springen, einem erzählerischen Fragmentarismus geopfert werden."²⁵ Examples of thought associations controlling the narration are numerous. The following is extracted from Walser's Jenseits der Liebe:

Der [der grüne Panzerspähwagen] war nämlich manchmal zwischen Büschen verschwunden und dann an einer Stelle wieder zum Vorschein gekommen, an der man ihn nicht erwartet hatte. Das hatte genügt, den Panzerspähwagen zu etwas Lustigem zu machen. Thiele hat einen Springbrunnen im Wohnzimmer. Einen beleuchteten. Horn war gern davorgestanden. In München war Horn im Bahnhof an einem dicken, jungen Mann vorbeigegangen, der gerade ins Telefon rief: An scheena Gruoß, es haut alles hin. Dann tauchte der Satz auf: Dürre Schluchten. Dann: Ein Eisenbahner-Satz. Dann: Bier, bitte, Bier, Bier her oder I fall um (JL.140).

The thoughts running through Horn's head are recounted as they occur, without order, meaning, or connection.

Arnulf Conradi compares the form of the subjective texts of the seventies to the television. The T.V. presents isolated details in a never-ending run-on script. A picture, quickly replaced by the one following and never reappearing, loses meaning and ceases to refer to the original event or person behind it, i.e. it loses its symbolic nature. The same process determines the form of New Subjectivity:

Das Bild, der Tag, das Detail – sie stehen für sich, verweisen auf nichts und bedeuten nichts. Das gilt für die Seh- und Erzählweise des Subjekts und konsequenterweise in gleichem Maße für die Komposition des Romanes. Gestalten tauchen für einen Moment auf und verschwinden sofort wieder, folgenlos, und ohne Einfluß auf das Geschehen.²⁶

The isolated and meaningless events and objects related replace the idea of a structural whole: "An die Stelle erzählerischer Komposition, die vom

vorgestellten Ganzen her arbeitet, tritt die Wiedergabe des Erlebten in seiner Isolierten Zufälligkeit und Ordnungslosigkeit....²⁷ Conradi finds that both new subjective prose and poetry consist solely of fragments, associations and certain codes which impart atmosphere but not meaning.²⁸

The example Conradi uses to exemplify his statements is extracted from Born's Die erdabgewandte Seite der Geschichte:

Ich war die Treppen hinuntergerannt und hatte mir gegenüber Zigaretten gezogen. An der Ecke sah ich einen Mann, der einen Strohhut trug. Er hatte eine Hundeleine in der Hand, und als er mich sah, fing er an, in alle Richtungen zu pfeifen. Langsam ging ich wieder hinauf und setzte Kaffeewasser auf den Kocher (SG.20).

The figure of this man with his dog appears momentarily, only to disappear just as quickly and unexpectedly. It serves no function for the plot of the story, contains no meaning for the protagonist, nor does it fit logically into an encompassing composition. Instead it is merely noted in passing and quickly forgotten.

In many other new subjective works one can find such momentary scenes. Chotjewitz' novel fragment Die Herren des Morgengrauens consists primarily of isolated and segmental impressions from the protagonist:

Fritz unterbrach sich abermals, weil aus dem Zuschauerraum das Kreischen einer weiblichen Stimme kam. Er drehte sich um und gewährte eine Schülerin, die einen der Polizisten beschuldigte, sie unsittlich berührt zu haben (HM.55).

Gericht und Staatsanwalt blickten zwar mit ziemlichem Unmut auf die stocksteif und schreckensbleich dasitzenden Zuhörer, denen der Schreck in die Köpfe gefahren war, während die Urkundsbeamtin unbeteiligt mit einem Lippenstift ihre Lippen nachzog (HM.47).

Scattered throughout Chotjewitz' entire text are similar pictures, disconnected and meaningless, bordering on the grotesque. The structure and causality

of the work are determined by the protagonist's dreams, and accordingly defy logic and lead nowhere. Scenes pop into his mind, cause associative jumps, blend into other memories, and eventually disappear as accidentally as they arose. The final chapter of the text, entitled "Unvollendete Kapitel und Notizen aus Buchonias Plastiktüte" (HM,169), is composed entirely of incomplete chapters and notes, and relates at random memories ("Erinnerungen an eine Bahnfahrt"), single episodes ("Einige Episoden"), varying versions of the same story ("Zwei Versionen"), notes ("Notizen zum sechsten Kapitel"), and a possible ending ("Das Ende").

The style of fragmentation affects the reader in two important ways. First of all, it creates gaps which elicit reader participation in a text. The reader himself is forced to fill in if possible and accordingly is involved in active creation. The narrator protagonist of Thomas Bernhard's work Der Atem admits that his account is fragmentary and invites the reader to assemble its disjointed pieces: "Hier sind Bruchstücke mitgeteilt, aus welchen sich, wenn der Leser gewillt ist, ohne Weiteres ein Ganzes zusammensetzen läßt. Nicht mehr. Bruchstücke meiner Kindheit und Jugend, nicht mehr" (A,87). Secondly, the reader is subjected to the same kind of meaningless fragmentation and disorder as experienced by the protagonist. Through the text's form, the author is able to communicate and perhaps provoke in the reader an experience similar to his own.

3. Thematization of the Writing Process

In many new subjective works the literary process itself is thematicized. The narrator not only recounts a story, but reflects upon the

act of writing and upon what he has written as he writes. The author does not present a finished and complete product, but rather a consciousness in the process of creating. This consciousness is usually motivated by either invention or memory. In some works the protagonist fictionalizes freely, in others he attempts to reconstruct events from his past. Both methods are characterized with uncertainty and hesitation, and serve to express the lack of an objective, trustworthy story which actually took place. Both influence the causality of the narration. The process of invention or memory propels the protagonist's thoughts, thereby determining the omission or inclusion of elements and their sequence or arrangement.

Novel to and of significance in many new subjective works is the thematization of the process of fictionalization. The protagonists are often professional writers, for example the narrator of Frisch's Montauk, Bernhard's Der Atem, Fröhlich's Im Garten der Gefühle, Born's Die erdabgewandte Seite der Geschichte, or Struck's Trennung, and it is natural that they speak of their work, sometimes expressing creative stalemate, at others describing texts in progress. The narrator protagonist in Frisch's novel conveys his desire to describe things as they really are, without invention:

...Ich möchte dieses Wochenende beschreiben können, ohne etwas zu erfinden, diese dünne Gegenwart – das hat er aber schon gestern gedacht in der Boutique; den Namen der Ortschaft hat er vergessen. Dann wieder denkt er gar nichts . . . Dann wieder dasselbe: Ich möchte nichts erfinden... (M, 137–38).

At the same time, however, he must admit that this is impossible and angrily repudiates the portrayal he just offered of his surroundings:

DAMNI

erstens ist das Meer nicht perlmuttergrau, die Möven sind nicht

weiß, der Sand weder gelb noch grau, nicht einmal das Gras
ist grün oder gelb, das tiefe Gewölk nicht violett -

DAMNI

Ich lebe stets in Unkenntnis der Lage.

DAMNI (M,139).

The thematization of the process of writing is most obvious in Born's Die erdabgewandte Seite der Geschichte and Chotjewitz' Die Herren des Morgengrauens. In both works there exists a layering of stories. These stories are difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish, and they ultimately merge. The protagonists express their inability to begin writing, complain about false starts, strike out in new directions, and frequently give up. The reader is drawn into the process of allegation and retraction. The protagonist asserts and describes an event in the story, only to question its authenticity by admitting it was invented. The acknowledged fictionality of the text constitutes its freedom and openness. The reader moves within a realm of possibilities where anything can happen, and yet nothing does in certainty.

In Born's work the process of writing a story accompanies the protagonist: at first his inability to start, then his difficulties in continuing, and finally his search for an ending. Similar to Frisch's narrator, the protagonist here realizes that to put on paper one's experiences necessarily implies their invention:

Ich konnte nicht schreiben, mir nicht einmal vorstellen, daß ich es könnte. Ich wollte auch immer nur etwas schreiben, nichts Bestimmtes, schon gar nicht, was ich erlebte. Ich hätte das, was ich erlebte, erst wieder erfinden müssen, und dazu war ich viel zu schwach und mutlos (SG,71).

In spite of the narrator's assertion that he is too weak and cowardly to invent, his imagination takes over more than once and spins the tale:

Eigentlich wartete ich immer nur auf einen Alarm, daß Lasski angerannt käme, weil sich etwas abgespielt hatte in der Geschichte, eine unerwartete Wendung oder das längst Erwartete, daß Lasski gerannt käme, nein, der Hauswart, und mit nach hinten gebogenem Oberkörper die Fäuste gegen meine Tür schlug. Vor der Tür stand ein Polizist, und Linda trat neben ihn und.... Das arbeitete in mir in lauter neuen Szenen... (SG,71-72).

He reworks the scene in several different variations in an attempt to change the course of the story. The fiction represents an alternative to what is and as such possesses freeing potential. The intent behind the entire narration is to liberate the protagonist from his inevitable story with Maria.

In Chotjewitz' novel fragment Die Herren des Morgengrauens the potential for fictionalization becomes endless. The fragment is written in the third person, i.e. one finds a narrator writing about a character named Fritz Buchonia. This protagonist, an author, decides to write a book about the experiences he has undergone and invents for this purpose a character called Franz Westphal, who in his turn also resolves to write. Thus one finds two or three narrative strands, all relating the same experience, which are not clearly distinguishable and tend to blend into each other and blur. Heightening the impression of fictionality--and confusion--are numerous repetitions and variations of previous scenes. Several lines of chapter two are, for example, repeated almost verbatim at the beginning of chapter three:

Im dritten Stock stieß Fritz Buchonia auf einen glasüberdachten Gang, der in ein älteres Gebäude führte (HM,30).

Im dritten Stock stieß Buchonia auf einen glasüberdachten Gang, der in ein älteres Gebäude führte (HM,45).

Here is obviously a narrator at work seeking an appropriate mode of expression for his experiences. The trouble plaguing the protagonist, as was the case with Frisch's and Born's narrators, is that he wants to tell

his story factually, truthfully, and objectively, and yet cannot. He feels as if his manuscript lacks essential facts and names: "Warum schilderte er die Ereignisse nicht so, wie sie sich zugetragen hatten..." (HM,119). The end result of his efforts is a picture entirely different than how it really was: "In ungeordneter Reihenfolge ferner, meine Unfähigkeit, die wahren Gefühle zu beschreiben, oder genauer, die Fähigkeit, unwahre Gefühle zu beschreiben. Es war alles ganz anders" (HM,178).

The lack of objectivity, the different versions of the same episodes, and the parallel fictional strands serve to confuse the reader and destroy his certainty. He is drawn into the same process as the protagonist, whereby nothing is definite or firm any longer. Events and figures pass before his eyes as if in a dream, which is indeed structurally and thematically central to the work. Due to the slightly varied repetition of scenes, they are not clearly recognizable and distinct, but appear familiar. The many direct and yet unidentified references to Kafka's Der Prozeß increase the reader's vague and uncomfortable feeling that he recognizes the reality portrayed, and yet cannot place it.

Many of the remarks concerning fictionalization can be applied to the usage of memory as a structural and causative element. The frequency of its usage is to be expected when one considers the predominance of the diary-like form in the seventies. These works present the narrator protagonist's attempt to relay a trustworthy account of past or present experiences: "Das geschichtliche Prinzip, 'zu sagen, wie es war', scheint - ins Individuelle gewendet - diese Form ganz zu beherrschen, und der Stil unterwirft sich der Genauigkeit, mit der Empfindungen von gestern eingetragen werden."²⁹ The desire for authenticity in many diary-like

works has led more than one commentator to postulate certain similarities between the autobiography and documentary literature. However, the authenticity of the autobiographical text depends solely upon the protagonist's capacity to recall, and more important than his desire is his inability to be accurate. Whereas the authenticity of the documentary derives from objective facts, that of a diary-like work is based upon subjective memory. Whereas the documentary on the basis of reliable material endeavors to persuade the reader, the diary-like text admits and thematicizes its fallibility, thereby casting doubt upon its events.

The process of remembering is important in Peter Härtling's novel Nachgetragene Liebe. The protagonist, presently forty-six years old, recounts the final seven years of his father's life, from 1938 to 1945, during which time he himself was between the ages of five and twelve. Again one finds the volition to describe without invention: "Ich habe nicht erfinden wollen, darum kommen die Geschichten auf mich zu" (NL,144). But this does not mean that the picture the narrator presents of his father is a true or accurate one, and the fragmentary and hesitant nature of his account is expressed in his reflection upon the process of remembering and writing. The story is a drama which the narrator, as stage-manager, must produce:

Ich bitte euch [die Familie], nachdem ihr, jeder für sich, die Wohnung in Ordnung gebracht habt, und euch ab und zu an die offenen Fenster stelltet, um Luft zu holen, die – sämig und warm – gar nicht erfrischt. Ich bitte euch, als ein allerdings sehr unsicherer Regisseur, eure Plätze einzunehmen an dem runden Tisch im Wohnzimmer. Da Großvater, wie ich vermute, sich von dem Rummel am wenigsten schikanieren ließ, lasse ich ihn anfangen (NL,27).

This uncertain director pieces together the story of his father from childhood memories, preserved as isolated pictures, or scenes. He breathes life into

his characters and puts words into their mouths: "Es ist sonderbar, das Gespräch der andern erfinde ich unangestrengt, mit der Lust an den Figuren, aber dir [dem Vater] lege ich Wort für Wort schwer in den Mund" (NL,28). Phrases scattered throughout the novel such as "und wenn mich die Erinnerung nicht trügt," "Ich bin sicher," "Ich weiß es nicht mehr," or the hypothetical modal construction "muß gewesen sein" express his difficulty and the doubt concerning the reliability of his memory. The dates are uncertain, the story changes, present moments creep unawares into the past: "Ich bilde mir ein, daß in dem Garten vor dem Fenster jemand singe, ein trauriges, endloses Lied. Ich bilde mir jetzt ein, daß ich es mir eingeblendet habe, denn damals kannte ich solche Lieder nicht" (NL,101).

In the center of Bernhard's Der Atem the incomplete nature and structural significance of memory are discussed. The narrator bases his writing upon his memory and reason: "Im Vertrauen auf sein Gedächtnis und auf seinen Verstand, auf diese zusammen, wie ich glaube, verlässliche Basis gestützt, wird auch dieser Versuch, wird auch diese Annäherung an einen Gegenstand unternommen..." (A,87). Characterizing his narration as an attempt and approach emphasizes the fact that it is incomplete and flawed, and the narrator continues by stating that deficiencies and mistakes are as much a part of his text as is its content:

Gerade diese Mängel und Fehler gehören genauso zu dieser Schrift als Versuch und Annäherung wie das in ihr Notierte. Die Vollkommenheit ist für nichts möglich, geschweige denn für Geschriebenes und schon gar nicht für Notizen wie diese, die aus Tausenden und Abertausenden von Möglichkeitsfetzen von Erinnerung zusammengesetzt sind (A,87).

The notes are composed of thousands of fragments of memory which represent possibilities--incomplete, flawed, and remembered scraps of

possibilities which the reader is invited to assemble.

Subjective invention and memory determine the arrangement and selection of narrated segments and function as the propelling force behind the story. Although the narrator would often like to give an objective account of events, the only authenticity his tale possesses lies in his admission that this is how he personally remembers or imagines the events. The thematization of the act of remembering and invention allows the reader to realize that such an account is, as Bernhard's narrator states, incomplete and flawed, and invites him to participate in its construction. The process of construction is one of allegation and doubt and remembrance and uncertainty, built upon possibility rather than objective facts.

4. The Narrator

The modern narrator is not an omnipotent and controlling creator who knows and manipulates the plot and characters of his story. Gone is the interpreter of actions, whose chief function it was to explain, motivate, and give meaning: "...da gab es einmal den auktorialen oder auch allwissenden Erzähler, dem das Innenleben seiner Gestalten uneingeschränkt zur Verfügung stand..."³⁰ In his place there have appeared two narrative types: "der personale Roman (mit dem berühmten 'point of view'), der alles Geschehen nur aus dem Bewußtsein und dem Empfinden einer Gestalt heraus an den Leser weitergibt, und der Roman des Ich-Erzählers."³¹ Literature of the seventies evidences examples of both the personal novel and the diary-like one, and its subjective nature is due primarily to the loss of an omnipotent narrator. The doubt and uncertainty thematicized

within the text as discussed in the preceding section are expression of a limited narrative perspective. The new subjective author may long for a hero of old, but he has no place in an epoch permeated with doubt and skepticism toward objective truth. The narrator is weak, without direction, and searches without finding answers. He constantly interrupts the flow of the text, but not to interpret and explain motivation to the reader. Instead he verifies his powerlessness and lack of insight. He confirms only his own uncertainty and skepticism, his own inability to comprehend the events and characters of his story:

Ich weiß nicht, was wirklich mit Dorothee los war. Vielleicht lag's auch am Wetter. Wir neigen beide etwas zu Wetterföhligkeit, bei Dorothee schlägt sie sich vor allem in tagelang anhaltenden Depressionen nieder. Ich habe auch gelegentlich Depressionen, wenn auch viel seltener, auch sind es ganz andere Depressionen, sie treten auch ganz anders in Erscheinung, meist als Angst vor dem Tode (GG,17).

The above intervention is typical of new subjective works and effectively manifests the fact that the narrator no longer functions to alleviate doubt, but to increase it.

Common to both types of narration found in the seventies--the personal novel written in the third person and the first person diary-like work--is the fact that the narrative perspective can never impart more to its reader than what is registered in the subject's mind. All perception of objects is filtered through this consciousness: "Beiden ist gemeinsam, daß der Autor nie mehr zu wissen vorgeben kann als seine fiktiven 'Stellvertreter' im Geschehen des Romans, er blickt gewissermaßen durch sie hindurch auf die anderen Gestalten, auf Umstände und Motive, und er geht nie ganz in ihnen auf."³² On the one hand, the reader receives a distorted picture of the reality presented, whereby all objective categories

such as time, space, and matter are subjectively warped. On the other hand, the narrative perspective cannot relay the total picture, for it is bound to subjective consciousness which registers in an accidental and fragmented fashion.

The narrative perspective in many new subjective works is split due to the protagonist's reflection upon the story, so that the categories of time, place, action, and even character are no longer unified but rather divided into past and present. The narrator switches back and forth at will between different settings, and between memory and the actual moment. In Frisch's Montauk the narrator yearns for an unambiguous and unified narrative perspective ("[e]ine einfältige Erzähler-Position": M.82),³³ but the fulfillment of this wish is thwarted by the process of remembering. The narrator as a character within his own story, as the stranger upon whom he (self-)reflects, is described from the more objective third person standpoint and juxtaposed to the thin and fleeting moment of present being, expressed through the first person. The narrative perspective alternates at will between a third and first person perspective, sometimes encompassing both within a single thought: "Der Kranke in mir, der tot sein will und dazu schweigt; sein gelassenes Bedürfnis, mein Hirn an die nächste Wand zu schmettern -" (M.140). Often a place the narrator visits will bring back memories of a different time:

ERYNNIEN

sie zerreißen dich nicht, sie stehen nur an irgendeiner Ecke:
Hier oben, im dritten Stock, hast du einmal gewohnt, WAVERLY
PLACE / CHRISTOPHER STREET, vor dreilundzwanzig Jahren.
Als wüßte ich's nicht! (M.26).

At other times an event or figure will transport him into the past. Lynn, for example, his companion for the weekend, is of approximately the same

age as the narrator's elder daughter and reminds him of her constantly.

Often the new subjective narrator makes no effort to delineate the borders between differing points of view, thereby creating ambiguity. It is difficult within Born's Die erdabgewandte Seite der Geschichte to distinguish the various frameworks of time which are layered one upon another. The narrator remembers his story with Maria, but not sequentially and, especially at its beginning, this story is continually interrupted by reflections upon his first marriage. The two stories progress side by side, and although fairly exact time references are made at the onset of each section, orientation as to which overall framework should be applied is lacking.

In other works there exists an unannounced and random movement between the protagonist's imagination, dreams, or desire, and what actually occurs:

Na bitte, sagte er sich. Die Beamten werden keinesfalls einen Lastwagen herbeifordern....
 Sie werden einfach alles durchsehen. Einer wird sich am Schreibtisch im Zimmer seiner Frau niederlassen, der andere wird sein Hauptquartier im Arbeitszimmer aufschlagen. Stumm werden sie vor sich hinarbeiten, nur gelegentlich über ihre Walkie-Talkies miteinander reden, wenn sie auf ein Papier stoßen, das ihre Aufmerksamkeit erregt, und ihr ruhiges, unauffälliges Treiben hatte noch den Vorteil, daß dieser ganze scheußliche Babel, der zum größten Teil noch so ungeordnet dalag, wie er ihn vor vier Jahren mitgebracht hatte, endlich einmal geordnet wurde, denn die beiden Beamten gingen systematisch vor, bildeten Sachgruppen, chronologische Reihenfolgen, ordneten nach Verlagen, presserechtlich Verantwortlichen, Absendern etcetera.
 Gegen elf bot Renate den beiden Herren ein Täßchen Kaffee an, das sie dankend annahmen (HM.6-7).

In the first paragraph of the quote above it is obvious that the protagonist is imagining to himself what could happen. This is indicated by means of "sagte er sich" and the utilization of the future tense. During the course

of the second paragraph the future tense is subtly replaced by the narrative past. The significance of this switch is that suddenly and imperceptibly what takes place within the protagonist's imagination becomes actual. The third paragraph continues the narrative past as if the action did indeed occur. In this manner the contours between the imagination and reality become blurred.

Ambiguity is also created by a narrator who assumes that his reader is as familiar with the events to come as he himself is. A subjective narrative perspective unfolds the story as it occurs to the filtering consciousness and does not attempt to orient or formally introduce the reader to the characters. Many new subjective works will mention names or events long before the reader is aware of who the people are or the fact that the event will take place. In Born's Die erdabgewandte Seite der Geschichte the narrator refers to his best friend as someone deceased close to two hundred pages before he relates the character's actual death. Similarly, the narrator speaks of Linda, Erika, or Ursel before the reader has learned of their place within the narrator's personal history.

Another characteristic formal element causing ambiguity and arising from a subjective narrative perspective is the usage of undefined pronouns. Frisch's narrator employs the pronouns "er" and "sie" at the beginning of his story before introducing characters to whom they could refer. Often during the narrative one reads about "sie" and is unclear as to whom is meant:

Neuerdings haben wir ein Kennwort dafür: Anfälle. Jedesmal ein Schrecken für sie, ich weiß, und vollkommen unverständlich. Dabei kommt es zu keiner körperlichen Bedrohung des Partners; sie irrt sich, wenn sie das fürchtet; nicht die mindeste Versuchung dazu (M.26).

The ambiguity is due to the fragmentary nature of the story which deprives the reader of a meaningful context. Related to both the aforementioned types of pronominal ambiguity is the lack of clarity within the many passages of direct address. On the one hand, the reader has difficulty ascertaining the speaker, and on the other hand, he is unable to determine to whom this speaker is actually directing his words.

A subjective narrative perspective forces the reader to participate in the text, for he himself must draw the conclusions and establish the connections lacking or merely implied within the text. To be engaged by the literary work and actively involved in its creation means that the reader is subjected to the same uncertainty and doubt which afflict the protagonist and which produced the subjective perspective in the first place. The loss of an omniscient narrator, resulting in the experience of doubt, is necessary to both protagonist and reader for new discovery:

...ein Schreiber, der alles schon weiß, oder alles schon besser weiß, der kann nicht mehr so schreiben, daß es zu jener spannenden Entdeckungsfahrt kommt, an der der Leser dann wirklich teilnimmt. Wenn der Autor die Arbeit des Schreibens nicht zur eigenen Veränderung braucht, dann wird er auch keinen anderen verändern.³⁴

The subjective narrative perspective is a vehicle for change.

5. Structural Openness

The formal elements discussed above all serve to ensure the text its structural openness. Subjunctive verb forms and hypothesis undermine the validity of an assertion. Similarly, a subjective narrative perspective questions the trustworthiness of the account rendered, while the narrator's limited knowledge and command of his story further subvert the text's conclusiveness. Both fragmentation and the thematization of the writing

process deny the story its finality. Openness is essential if the process of search instigated through the experience of alienation is to continue beyond the final page of the text.

Openness in Chotjewitz' Die Herren des Morgengrauens is guaranteed primarily by means of the radicalization of fragmentation. What is common to most of New Subjectivity on a more limited basis typifies the entire structure of this work, which is, after all, labelled a novel fragment ("Romanfragment"). The sixth chapter is missing, and the final pages consist of incomplete chapters, including some notes pertaining to the lost chapter. The novel does not come to a conclusion. Instead, as the narrator himself at one point states, when the manuscript ends the figures simply disappear:

Das erwartungsgemäße Verschwinden der Spielfiguren
Der Mensch, der das Unglück hat, in einem Buch
vorzukommen, lebt ein zweites Leben, wie es im Buche steht;
wenn Fritz Buchonia mit dem Schreiben aufhört, verschwindet
Franz Westphal wieder, und wenn das Buch zu Ende ist, geht
es ihm genauso spurlos. Unserkeiner lebt sich selber,
unserkeiner stirbt sich selber (HM,176).

Accordingly, at the close of the last full chapter, chapter ten, the protagonist Fritz Buchonia simply exits without leaving a trace behind (HM,168). Within the appended manuscript fragments one finds another possible ending to the story, which is, however, no more final or definitive than the protagonist's disappearance. This conclusion, entitled "Das Ende," is related almost exclusively in the subjunctive mode and is therefore purely illusory and hypothetical:

Er wäre am liebsten weggefahren.
Zum Beispiel nach Sizilien.
In ein winziges, weißes Zimmer am Meer, mit nichts als einem
Tisch, einem Stuhl, einem Bett, einem Kleiderhaken und einer
Glühbirne von der Decke (HM,190).

Another important method utilized by Chotjewitz to maintain the text's openness is absurdity and the matter-of-fact manner in which it is treated. At one point the protagonist receives a disposition containing two contradictory and therefore absurd orders:

Was ihn [Fritz Buchonia] störte, waren lediglich zwei Sätze der Anordnung. Der erste lautete: Sollte das Schreiben des Buchonia für ein Strafverfahren nicht mehr benötigt werden, so ist es zur Habe des Beschuldigten zu nehmen. Der zweite lautete: Schon wegen der Gewaltaufforderung in dem Schreiben des Buchonia kommt eine Aushändigung an den Beschuldigten nicht in Betracht (HM,14).

Buchonia's reaction to this meaningless order is to sit down immediately at his typewriter in order to inform the sender that henceforth he is to be referred to with his full and correct title, and not merely with "Buchonia": "Für Sie bin ich immer noch Herr Buchonia oder, um genau zu sein, Herr Rechtsanwalt Buchonia" (HM,15). Such a sequence is typical throughout the novel. Something totally illogical occurs, but Buchonia does not reply with outrage, confusion, or dismissal. Instead, he offers an equally absurd response, and accepts the absurdity of the incident as something everyday and normal: "- wie üblich in solchen Fällen -" (HM,14). The entire novel fragment is characterized by both elements, both the absurd and the matter-of-fact rejoinder often expressed in the phrases "wie üblich" or "wie gewöhnlich." Absurdity is an effective means to open a text because it continually shocks the reader's expectations and questions normality. The matter-of-fact tone is essential if the absurdity is to be taken seriously. The two in conjunction with each other form a tension-filled dialectic which is never resolved.

In many of the diary-like works of the seventies openness is created through the impression of incompleteness. The narrator relates only one

small segment within the continuum of his life. Paradoxically, the impression of a future is heightened by the characteristic reflection on the past. Works of an autobiographical nature do not conclusively end, nor do they present a definitive message or solution. In Bernhard's Der Atem the protagonist undergoes an existentially dangerous catastrophe which has changed him and will continue to influence his development. The story does not end with his recovery. Instead it points forward to the next catastrophe, namely his mother's impending death and his own future battle against tuberculosis. The protagonist in Frisch's Montauk explicitly states that he does not intend to communicate a message, but simply reflect on life. The questions which are posed during the weekend stay at Montauk, especially that concerning death, are not answered and will accompany the narrator back to his home country. Even Fröhlich's text Im Garten der Gefühle, which seems to present a more traditional narrative progression from a beginning conflict, through its climax, to a seemingly peaceful denouement, denies the finality of its conclusion through the titles of its last few chapters: "XX. Ein Abschied ohne Abschied," "XXII. Lösungen und auch wieder keine."

Martin Walser's Ein fliehendes Pferd is structured upon contradiction and contrast produced through the juxtaposition of the text's two main characters, Helmut Halms and Klaus Buch. They demonstrate contrasting manners of speech. Whereas Klaus speaks in fragmentary exclamations full of slang and superlatives, Helmut's language is typically tranquil, calm, and almost monotone:

Das ist wirklich lustig, daß sie seit drei Jahren nebeneinander Urlaub machen und einander nie gesehen haben. Also, wenn das nicht lustig ist, Helmut. Mensch, Helmut, wie findest du das? Doch, das findet er auch lustig (fP.22).

Helmut and Klaus are opposites in many other ways. Physically they look entirely different. Helmut is described as having a round stomach and a sunburn (fP,10). Klaus on the other hand is angular, hard, fit, and without extra pounds, and naturally suntanned (fP,19). The two characters eat and drink differently and participate in life from contrasting standpoints.

Whereas Helmut is content to sit at the edge of the throng promenading past him, Klaus feels he must be part of the milling crowd: "Hel und Klaus segeln viel. Sabine und Helmut liegen lieber faul am Wasser, dann sitzen sie herum" (fP,22). Klaus and Helmut even remember in dissimilar manners. Helmut's memories are typically lifeless and devoid of people and movement: "In seinen Erinnerungsbildern herrschte eine Leblosigkeit wie nach einer Katastrophe. Als wagten die Leute noch nicht, sich zu bewegen. Auf jeden Fall standen sie stumm an den Wänden. Die Mitte der Bilder blieb meistens leer" (fP,28). In contrast, Klaus narrates his past life with drastic exaggeration (fP,29).

Walser has built his text upon the contrast and comparison of two variant styles of life. At the conclusion of the novel there is neither a judgement preferring one over the other, nor a conversion, nor reconciliation. Walser introduces his work with a quote from Kierkegaard which expresses the intent of this novella:

"Man trifft zuweilen auf Novellen, in denen bestimmte Personen entgegengesetzte Lebensanschauungen vortragen. Das endet dann gerne damit, daß der eine den andern überzeugt. Anstatt daß also die Anschauung für sich sprechen muß, wird der Leser mit dem historischen Ergebnis bereichert, daß der andre überzeugt worden ist. Ich sehe es für ein Glück an, daß in solcher Hinsicht diese Papiere eine Aufklärung nicht gewähren."

Sören Kierkegaard, Entweder/Oder

This text does not attempt enlightenment, i.e. it offers no reconciliation

between the two contrasting poles and no answer to the questions it poses. These are left up to the reader.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused upon an examination of new subjective forms. Central to such a discussion is a consideration of the effect of the work on the reader. Too often a work of literature is viewed as an entity in itself, and yet it is the communicative process of literature which constitutes its engagement. New Subjectivists justify the expression of their individual experiences by means of "personal engagement." The reader who is drawn into personal participation with the text undergoes an experience of alienation and doubt similar to the protagonist. Existent reality has been critically questioned, and the reader is prompted to search for existential awareness. The forms used to elicit literary communication are those which destruct, rather than construct reality. Whereas traditional Realism intends recognition, modern Anti-Realism provokes alienation. Although some commentators have accused New Subjectivity of being a return to more traditional and realistic narrative forms, this is debatable, especially for those works considered in this dissertation, those in which subjectivity determines both the content and the form. A subjective form is manifest in stylistic and formal elements such as fragmentation, the loss of an omniscient narrator, the use of the subjunctive, hypothesis, ambiguity, memory, and invention. These elements ensure that the work cannot come to a neat and conclusive end; they create the text's openness. This openness leaves the reader not with an answer or solution, but rather burdens him with question, for each

Individual must embark upon his own personal search for meaning and identity.

¹Rainer Nägele, "Martin Walser. Die Gesellschaft im Spiegel des Subjekts," in Zeitkritische Romane des 20. Jahrhunderts, ed. Hans Wagener (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1975), p. 330.

²Ulrich Greiner, "Was es heißt, nach den Tendenzen der Literatur zu fragen," Akzente, 26 (1979), 302.

³Hinrich C. Seeba, "Persönliches Engagement: Zur Autorenpoetik der siebziger Jahre," Monatshefte, 73 (1981), 148-49.

⁴Seeba, 153.

⁵Seeba, 153.

⁶Seeba, 151.

⁷Seeba, 149.

⁸Seeba, 149.

⁹Wolfgang Hildesheimer, "The End of Fiction," Merkur, 30 (1976), 63.

¹⁰Rainer Nägele, "Geht es noch um Realismus? Politische Implikation moderner Erzählform im Roman," in Der deutsch Roman und seine historischen und politischen Bedingungen: Neuntes Amherster Kolloquium zur deutschen Literatur, ed. Wolfgang Paulsen (Bern: Francke, 1977), p. 38.

¹¹For example: Hans J. Fröhlich, "Ein Blick zurück, ein Blick nach vorn: Literarische Neuerscheinungen Herbst 1976, Frühjahr 1977," Jahresring, 1977/78, p. 274. Or: Adolf Muschg, "Bericht von einer falschen Front oder: Der Schein trügt nicht," in Literaturmagazin 5: Das Vergehen von Hören und Sehen: Aspekte der Kulturvernichtung, ed. Hermann Peter Piwitt and Peter Rühmkorf (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1976), p. 26.

¹²Marcel Reich-Ranicki, "Rückkehr zur schönen Literatur: Eine Bilanz aus Anlaß der Frankfurter Buchmesse," Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 8 Oct. 1975, p. 21.

¹³Fröhlich, p. 273.

¹⁴Fröhlich, pp. 273-74.

¹⁵Peter Wapnewski, "On Contemporary Narrative Literature In Germany - The Documentary Phase," Universitas: English Language Edition, 17 (1975), 161.

¹⁶Wapnewski, 161.

¹⁷Peter M. Stephan, "Schlecht geträumt: Über Gefühle, Sinnlichkeit, Vernunft und andere Absurditäten in der Literatur," in Literaturmagazin 9: Der neue Irrationalismus, ed. Nicolas Born et. al. (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1978), p. 173.

¹⁸Discussed in Chapter Two, Section D.

¹⁹Stephan, p. 173.

²⁰Wapnewski, 161.

²¹Hans J. Fröhlich, "Die Literatur kommt in die Jahre," Jahresring, 1979/80, p. 282.

²²Fröhlich, "Literatur," p. 282.

²³Fröhlich, "Literatur," p. 282.

²⁴"Jemand mußte Josef K. verleumdet haben, denn ohne daß er etwas Böses getan hätte, wurde er eines Morgens verhaftet." Franz Kafka, Der Prozeß (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1960), p. 7.

²⁵Peter Beicken, "Neue Subjektivität: Zur Prosa der siebziger Jahre," in Deutsche Literatur in der Bundesrepublik seit 1965: Untersuchungen und Berichte, ed. Paul Michael Lützeler and Egon Schwarz (Königstein: Athenäum, 1980), p. 167.

²⁶Arnulf Conradi, "Die Gezeiten des Subjektivismus: Über die Subjektivität in der neueren Literatur," horen, 25 (1980), 113.

²⁷Conradi, 111.

²⁸Conradi, 114.

²⁹Conradi, 111.

³⁰Conradi, 111.

³¹Conradi, 111-12.

³²Conradi, 112.

³³This is the source of the assertion quoted previously of Reich-Ranicki. See Footnote 12.

³⁴Martin Walser, "Wie und wovon handelt Literatur," in Wie und wovon handelt die Literatur? Aufsätze und Reden (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973), p. 136.

Chapter Five--Fear and Happiness in the Works of Peter Handke

Introduction

Peter Handke, more than any other single author, must be considered the predecessor to and epitome of the subjective literature produced during the past decade. Already in the late sixties Handke defiantly announces his subjectivity and explicitly rejects repeated demands for a politically engaged literature. Already in the late sixties he is attacked as a self-consuming narcissist unconcerned with society and its ills. Just as Handke presages this most recent literary trend, his works embody and indeed radicalize the general themes and forms of New Subjectivity once it arrives. Handke's literary production during the seventies is considered an extreme example of subjectivity, often denounced as trivial, private, and regressive even by those critics who admit to the positive potential of other new subjective works. This chapter is devoted to a discussion of Peter Handke and three of his works within the context of New Subjectivity. Parallels will become evident, as well as differences. Handke's intent and method are similar to those of New Subjectivity as discussed previously. Handke attempts to provoke an awareness within the reader or public of the artificiality of what seems natural. He endeavors to free the reader from the patterns of perception and societal conventions by means of the experience of alienation. Handke, however, differs from most New Subjectivists by realizing within his works the positive potential of alienation: he portrays a state of mystical union and peaceful existence freed from societal functionality and prejudice. The first section of this chapter will briefly outline the basis and development of Handke's subjectivity, the intent

of his literature, and the meaning of engagement for him as formulated in his theoretical works. The following three sections will investigate his works entitled Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter, Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung, and Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire.¹ These works will evidence both the continuity and the development within Handke's own personal literary production, and both the similarities and differences between Handke and New Subjectivity.

A. The Subjectivity of Peter Handke

1. The Inhabitant of the Ivory Tower

For Peter Handke literature offers the possibility for reflection and revelation concerning oneself. In his essay "Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms" (1967)² he states that literature is the means to learn of himself and to gain existential assurance of his very being: "Literatur ist für mich lange Zeit das Mittel gewesen, über mich selber, wenn nicht klar, so doch klarer zu werden. Sie hat mir geholfen zu erkennen, daß ich da war, daß ich auf der Welt war" (BE,19). The theme of Handke's works is himself as subject, and he desires by means of his literature to achieve a more thorough understanding of this subject: "Ich habe keine Themen, über die ich schreiben möchte, ich habe nur ein Thema: Über mich selbst klar, klarer zu werden..." (BE,26). Handke leaves the investigation of objective reality up to the sciences and presents instead his own reality:

Es interessiert mich als Autor übrigens gar nicht, die Wirklichkeit zu zeigen oder zu bewältigen, sondern es geht mir darum, meine Wirklichkeit zu zeigen (wenn auch nicht zu bewältigen). Das Erforschen und Bewältigen der Wirklichkeit (ich weiß gar nicht, was das ist) überlasse ich den Wissenschaften, die allerdings mir mit ihren Daten und Methoden (soziologischen, medizinischen, psychologischen, juristischen) wieder Material für meine Wirklichkeit liefern

können (BE,25).

He does not unequivocally discard objective scientific methods and conclusions. However, they will be used only to better portray his subjective picture of the world.

Handke's subjectivity necessarily implies the rejection of an engaged literature. Handke spurns the view held by many during the late sixties that the task of literature lies in revealing and thereby changing actual and political societal conditions. Engagement rests upon the assumption that the writer, by means of a transparent ("wie Glas") language (BE,41), transmits an objective picture of the world. But for Handke the engaged writer cannot observe or describe reality objectively because, on the one hand, unreflected language is loaded with predetermined meanings and judgements (BE,25), and on the other hand because the engaged author has a message to impart: "Er beschreibt nicht Dinge, sondern Werte, er beschreibt nicht ein Sein, sondern ein Sollen" (BE,41). Engagement and literature are mutually exclusive concepts. Whereas engagement is clear-cut, functional, and informational, literature deals with forms and has no underlying concrete goal or purpose (BE,44). The intent of Handke's autonomous literature is not to impart information or explanations, but rather to communicate an experience:

Da es Handke nicht darum geht, ein neues begriffliches Regelsystem zur Erklärung von Wirklichkeit (gesellschaftlicher, politischer) zu finden, sondern durch Rückbesinnung auf die anti-rationalistische (was nicht heißt: anti-rationale) Erfahrung von Wirklichkeit einen kommunikativen Handlungszusammenhang für das Leben des Einzelnen zu (re)konstruieren, sieht er sich auch nicht als einen "engagierten" Autor....³

Handke includes his own subjective dreams, irrational fears, and memories within his works: "Es würde mich nicht interessieren, etwas rein

in der Außenwelt Beobachtetes in Poesie zu bringen, sondern irgendwie müssen meine eigenen Geschichten und Verschlingungen hinzukommen...."⁴ Handke collects personally experienced incidents which he then assembles into a story: "...ich sammle ganz stumpfsinnig Einzelheiten, aus denen ich bestehe, ... und die fingiere ich zu einer Art Erzählung, zu einer Art Geschichte, die ich selber nicht erlebt habe; wohl aber habe ich viele einzelne Sachen erlebt."⁵ Accordingly, Handke's works, most obviously his Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied and Wunschloses Unglück, evidence many autobiographical moments. However, as was true of the new subjective diary-like works, Handke's autobiographies are not complete and static pictures, but rather exploration and discovery of the subject and its world: "Das sind Daten meiner eigenen Existenz, mit denen ich mich schreibend auf eine Art Reise begeben, von der ich nicht weiß, wo sie hinführen wird."⁶

It is not the facts of reality which concern Handke, but rather his own subjective reactions to and reflections upon those facts (BE,24). The subject constitutes the focal point of reality, for the outer world appears only as it is seen and experienced, only as filtered through an inner world. The title of one of Handke's poetry volumes--Die Innenwelt der Außenwelt der Innenwelt--effectively expresses the relationship between subjective experience and objective reality, "nämlich daß die Außenwelt nur in der Perspektive der Innenwelt erscheinen kann: es gibt keinen Blick, der hinter den Blick zurücktreten kann."⁷ Reality, prestructured through arbitrary and subjective models of language and perception, serves as a mirror and/or impetus for the feelings and experiences of the inner world. Handke thematicizes not the objective world, but the subject and its

subjective perspective.

The aspects of subjectivity noted for Handke and discussed above; i.e. the rejection of politically engaged literature, a subjective perspective, an autobiographical tendency, and the emphasis on personal individual experience, not only serve to establish a connection between Handke and New Subjectivity, but also subject him to similar vehemently critical rhetoric. Reinhard Lettau composed the following satirical poem in honor of the young Handke:

"Der Dramatiker Peter Handke,
unterwegs nach einem Interesse,
begegnet
der Sprache,
dann dem Senator Franz Burda aus
Offenburg, endlich
sich selbst.

'Nach innen', seufzt er, 'geht
der geheimnisvolle Weg.'⁸

Close to a decade later, Ulrich Greiner states of Handke's Das Gewicht der Welt: Ein Journal (1977) that its contextual unity and meaning rest solely in the figure of the author himself: "Alles bleibt für sich, atomisiert in Bruchstücke, die nur einen einzigen Zusammenhalt haben: Peter Handke. ... Nicht mehr die Poesie stiftet Sinn, sondern Handke."⁹ Handke is accused of egoism, narcissism, solipsism, extreme subjectivity and individuality, inwardness ("Innerlichkeit") etc. etc.¹⁰

2. The Revelation of Artificiality

Peter Handke's scorn of an engaged literature which seeks to objectively reveal societal conditions and ills does not mean that he denies societal relevance to literature. On the contrary, Handke burdens literature with an extremely political goal: literature is the medium of change. It is

the means to provoke the subject to consciousness and to re-evaluation of himself and of his world, it must disclose the manipulation and artificiality of all which is considered natural.

For Handke all of life is regulated, manipulated, and controlled, be it by means of language, roles, habits, conventions, ideologies or institutions: "Die ganze Welt ist 'systematisch' ausgelegt, und sie indoktriniert mit ihren bereits interpretierten und schablonenhaft hergerichteten Erscheinungen jede Beobachtung, jedes Gefühl und jeden Gedanken."¹¹ The unreflected naturalness of the already existant hinders variety, newness, and possibility. A natural state is a complete state, which no longer needs to be critically evaluated and which can undergo no development. Although matter-of-fact language, roles, and norms allow the individual to function in society with ease, they also predetermine one's view and experience of reality, or at times even prevent that experience totally: "Vielleicht kennst du Menschen, die alles, was sie sehen, auch das Erstaunlichste, sofort auf einen Begriff bringen wollen, es durch eine Formulierung bannen und damit aufhören, es zu erleben."¹² The constriction of individual growth and development by assumed naturalness has always been one of Handke's main themes: "...die Einschnürung des Individuums durch das Vorgegebene, bereits allgemein Gültige: das ist seit seinen Anfängen als Schriftsteller anno 1966 Peter Handkes Thema."¹³

Handke's main literary intent is the destruction of predetermined systems and concepts of reality: "Ich erwarte von der Literatur ein Zerbrechen aller endgültig scheinenden Weltbilder" (BE.20). The method of a literary work should question that which is taken for granted (BE.21-22), and Handke accordingly endeavors during the writing process to avoid all

conceptual systems: "Sowie beim Schreiben auch nur der Ansatz eines Begriffs auftaucht, weiche ich – wenn ich noch kann – aus in eine andere Richtung, in eine andere Landschaft, in der es noch keine Erleichterungen und Totalitätsansprüche durch Begriffe gibt."¹⁴ For the individual reader literature which destroys natural patterns of perception and thought can offer a new and previously unenvisioned possibility of perceiving reality and of existence:

Ich erwarte von einem literarischen Werk eine Neuigkeit für mich, etwas, das mich, wenn auch geringfügig, ändert, etwas, das mir eine noch nicht gedachte, noch nicht bewußte Möglichkeit der Wirklichkeit bewußt macht, eine neue Möglichkeit zu sehen, zu sprechen, zu denken, zu existieren (BE,19–20).

Literature can free the individual to growth and self-realization, as well as to a greater awareness of one's world.

Through writing Handke strives to become conscious of unthinking and automatic words, actions, and thoughts (BE,26). Attentiveness ("Aufmerksamkeit") is Handke's personal goal as well as the reaction he desires to elicit in his audience. He considers the theater (and all literary methods) as a means through which individual consciousness is made not broader, but more exact and precise. The theater then is a means to discover the world: "Wozu es [das Theater] taugen könnte...: als ein Mittel zum Empfindlichmachen: zum Reizbarmachen: zum Reagieren: als ein Mittel, auf die Welt zu kommen" (BE,54). Attentiveness or critical awareness is instilled by means of an aesthetic method which shows the artificiality and implicit manipulation within literary conventions. In his essay entitled "Die Arbeit des Zuschauers" (1969) Handke states that the public must learn, "Natur als Dramaturgie zu durchschauen, als Dramaturgie des herrschenden Systems, nicht nur im Theater, auch sonst" (BE,99). The political

dimension of such remarks is obvious. The critical awareness produced in the theater must be applied elsewhere ("auch sonst") to societal conventions in general: "Handke wants the public...to become more conscious of the fact that neither the order found inside nor that found outside the theater is permanent and natural."¹⁵ Handke's "neue Ästhetik" functions as the sharpening block for critical perception: "Nur die Ästhetik kann den Wahrnehmungsapparat so genau machen, daß die Natur in dieser Gesellschaft als gemacht, als manipuliert erkennbar wird, nur eine neue Ästhetik kann auch Beweise und Argumente liefern" (BE,99).

3. "Der fremde Blick" of Alienation

The perception finely honed through an aesthetic method is called by Handke the "fremder Blick" (BE,99). It is a poetical mode of perception free of concepts and systems:

"Für mich kommt es darauf an . . . Irgendetwas zu machen, was das Schauen und das Zuhören der Leute irgendwie befremdet, daß nicht jemand auftritt und sagt: 'Guten Tag', und der andere antwortet: 'Mir geht es gut.' Daß also nicht alles so abläuft, wie man es schon kennt, sondern daß eine Verstörung oder Verwirrung eintritt"¹⁶

Handke describes here an experience of alienation very similar to that of other New Subjectivists, and this experience serves as the point of departure in much of his literature: "All Handke's characters...suffer from feelings of intense isolation and estrangement, as if they, like Josef Bloch in the Tormann novel had been suddenly jolted out of the context...of everyday reality."¹⁷ The protagonist feels as if "Somewhere I lost connection..." (WÜ,121). Neither the world nor the self can be taken for granted any longer, and both are experienced as something alien. Handke attempts to explain this feeling, which is an autobiographical one, to

Manfred Durzak: "Das Gefühl hatte ich als Kind immer, daß man draußen auf der Straße spielt und plötzlich stellt sich heraus: das stimmt alles gar nicht...."¹⁸ The world suddenly and unexpectedly loses meaning: "...an einem solchen, unbeschreiblichen Tag / geht auf der Straße, / zwischen zwei Schritten, / plötzlich der Sinn verloren..." (Wü.103).

Handke, again similar to other new subjective authors, recognizes the positive potential of this experience:

"Und ich glaube, daß irgend jemand, der das mit fremden Augen plötzlich sieht, dann auch seine alltägliche Wirklichkeit, seine alltäglichen Beziehungen zu seiner Frau, zu Kindern, zu anderen Menschen, zu anderen Dingen, zu seinem Beruf irgendwie verändert, daß er die irgendwie befremdet sieht, und diese Befreiung ist dann so ein Anlaß für ihn, sich darüber klar zu werden, wie sich das verhält zu seinem Leben."¹⁹

The individual who perceives the world around him through a different and alienated perspective ("mit fremden Augen"), can, in the freedom granted from conventions and preconceptions, re-evaluate and even change his way of life.

In his address acknowledging receipt of the Georg-Büchner-Preis entitled "Die Geborgenheit unter der Schädeldecke" (1973), Handke reiterates and specifies his concept of alienation ("Verstörung") and its implications:

In seinem Arbeitsjournal schrieb Brecht am 31. 8. 44: "In augenblicken der verstörung fallen im gemüt die bestände auseinander wie die teile tödlich getroffener reiche. die verständigung zwischen den teilen hört auf (plötzlich wird deutlich, wie das ganze aus teilen besteht), sie haben nur noch die bedeutung, die sie für sich selber haben, das ist wenig bedeutung. es kann passieren, daß ich urplötzlich nicht mehr einen sinn in institutionen wie der musik oder auch der politik sehen kann, die nächststehenden wie fremde sehe usw. gesundheit besteht aus gleichgewicht." Was Brecht hier, aus kleinlicher angst vor der sinnlosigkeit, als krankheit und verstörung aburteilt, ist nichts anderes als das hoffnungsbestimmte poetische denken, das die welt immer wieder neu anfangen läßt, wenn ich sie in meiner verstocktheit schon für

versiegelt hielt, und es ist auch der Grund des Selbstbewußtseins, mit dem ich schreibe (Wü.79-80).

Whereas Brecht fears the loss of institutionalized meaning, the absence of an encompassing context, and the destruction of order, Handke intends to provoke and reach imbalance, for only in this poetical state can a world sealed by preconceptions be opened to new experience and a new beginning: "Ich bin überzeugt von der begriffsaflösenden und damit zukunfts mächtigen Kraft des poetischen Denkens" (Wü.76).

4. Fear and Happiness

Two opposing emotions characterize Handke's concept of alienation. On the one hand, the experience of alienation implies destruction of meaning, loss of familiarity, imbalance, and accordingly gives rise to fear. On the other hand, alienation can result in idyllic moments of happiness, whereby the subject, no longer hindered by patterns of perception, can directly experience the essence of the objects of reality. Fear predominates in much of Handke's literary production, but moments of happiness become increasingly common. The inclusion of hope and a type of utopian happiness in later works reveals a significant development within Handke's literary production. The portrayal of an idealistic and mystical union--the actualization of the positive potential of alienation--also constitutes the main difference between Handke and other New Subjectivists.

The experience of alienation creates feelings of fear, panic, and terror. An indistinct uneasiness characterizes the underlying mood of much of Handke's literature. Handke himself admits to his preoccupation with fear in a short piece entitled "Eine Zwischenbemerkung über die Angst": "Du hast immer nur Angst, Angst, Angst, hat gestern ein Kind zu mir

gesagt, und es sagte das ziemlich gelangweilt . . . Wann habe ich eigentlich k e i n e Angst?" (Wü,101). There is no particular cause for his fear: "Angst also wovor? Das ist eine mir unverständliche Frage. Ich habe einfach Angst..." (Wü,101). Fear, including fear of death, is simply part of life.

Fear is important for Handke personally and for his literature because it can lead to an experience of reasonable happiness ("das vernünftige Glück"). Reasonable happiness differs from an everyday state of blind and aggressive happiness in the subject's relationship to reality. Whereas a person in the common state of happiness perceives the outside world as a disturbance and reacts to it with impatience and anger, "das vernünftige Glück" fills the individual with sympathy for and attentiveness to other forms of existence: "Ich habe noch nicht recht gelernt, im Glück vernünftig zu bleiben und aufmerksam für die anderen zu sein. Sehr selten gelingt das vernünftige Glück, das von der Umwelt nicht abschließt, sondern für sie öffnet" (Wü,101). The longed for attentiveness of reasonable bliss or happiness is approximated in the moment after the feeling of fear:

Was soll also daran augenöffnend sein? Nicht den Zustand der Angst meine ich, sondern den Zustand danach – wenn die Angst vorbei ist. Da entsteht dann ein Gefühl, das jenem vernünftigen Glück nahekommt: das Gefühl für die Existenz und die Existenzbedingungen der anderen Menschen, ein starkes, mitteilbares, soziales Gefühl. Deswegen kann ich es mir nicht leisten, daß mir meine Angst nur auf die Nerven geht und deswegen schreibe ich darüber und lebe davon, daß ich darüber schreibe (Wü,102).

The experience of fear opens the individual's eyes to the world and other people, and for this reason it is essential to Handke's life and works.

In an interview with Heinz Ludwig Arnold in 1975 Handke himself admits to an increasing concern with the question of happiness and its

portrayal: "Das ist es, was mich seit diesen Jahren beschäftigt: Wie kann man das Glück darstellen? Wie kann man vor allem das Glück dauerhafter zu machen versuchen."²⁰ The first work in which moments of happiness play an important role is Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied. The feelings of fear and alienation have gained a different and more positive meaning: "Die [Fremdheitsmomente] haben sich ein bißchen gewandelt im 'Kurzen Brief zum langen Abschied'. Es ist zwar Fremdheit, aber diese Fremdheit wird zum ersten Mal als ein wirklicher Glückszustand erfahren."²¹ The experience of disorientation and lack of context is coupled for the first time with a longing for contextual orientation ("Sehnsucht nach einem Bezugssystem").²² This orientation is a harmonious union between subject and object, in which, however, neither subject nor object must sacrifice individuality. Bruno Hillebrand's description of blissful moments in Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied aptly characterizes the ideal of happiness for Handke: "Individuation ohne Isolation – das ist die Formel – identisch sein mit anderen, ohne sich selbst zu verlieren."²³ The utopian union is bonded by an acute awareness of others and of oneself based upon the feeling of shared existence.

B. Alienation in Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter

Peter Handke's novel of 1970 entitled Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter is a classic study in alienation. The protagonist, Josef Bloch, experiences the loss of an encompassing context: "Es war ein Ruck gewesen, und mit einem Ruck war er unnatürlich geworden, war er aus dem Zusammenhang gerissen worden. Er lag da, unmöglich, so wirklich;

kein Vergleich mehr" (ATE,78). Due to this "jolt," Bloch suddenly perceives himself and his world as unnatural and frighteningly strange, as incomparably alien. Manfred Durzak describes this experience as "die Erfahrung eines Sprungs, der alle vertrauten Systeme der Orientierung außer Kraft setzt, eines explosiven Rucks, mit dem man herausgerissen wird, um sich selbst und die Wirklichkeit als buchstäblich unvergleichlich, als erschreckend anders zu empfinden."²⁴ The systems, explanations, routines, and societal patterns which normally provide orientation have suddenly and without reason become invalid.

The jolt undergone by Bloch destroys an objectivity which can be taken for granted in its naturalness, and results in an extreme and exaggerated awareness of the subject. No longer part of the outer world, he is turned inside out to become the world: "Wehrlos, abwehrunfähig lag er da; ekelhaft das Innere nach außen gestülpt..." (ATE,78), and experiences himself as "etwas Geiles, Obszönes, Unangebrachtes, durch und durch Anstoßerregendes" (ATE,78). In the absence of a context which automatically--and objectively--assigns a place and a meaning to individual actions and single objects, even the most insignificant detail of Bloch's surroundings becomes conspicuous, and even the most meaningless picture relates a personal message: "Buchstäblich war alles, was er sah, auffällig. Die Bilder kamen einem nicht natürlich vor, sondern so, als seien sie extra für einen gemacht worden. Sie dienten zu etwas. Wenn man sie ansah, sprangen sie einem buchstäblich in die Augen" (ATE,96). Bloch's state of alienation manifests itself in the subjectivity of his perception: he notices every little detail and interprets all events and objects around him.

Karlheinz Rossbacher states that the disproportionately important detail

has, since Franz Kafka, become the sign of alienation, isolation, and a loss of context, and notes its frequent appearance in the earlier works of Handke, above all in Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter.²⁵ In the following extract Bloch's attention is caught by details normally overlooked:

Er las das Kinoplatat, das mit Heftklammern am Milchstand befestigt war; die anderen Plakate darunter waren abgeetzt. Bloch ging weiter und sah im Hof eines Bauernhauses einen Burschen stehen, der Schluckauf hatte. In einem Obstgarten sah er Wespen umherfliegen. An einem Wegkreuz standen verfaulte Blumen in Konservendosen. Im Gras neben der Straße lagen leere Zigarettschachteln. Neben den geschlossenen Fenstern sah er Fensterhaken von den Fensterläden hängen. Als er an einem offenen Fenster vorbeiging, roch er Verwestes (ATE.48).

The details Bloch perceives say nothing about the object as a whole. The boy has hiccups. In the fruit garden he sees only the wasps. Instead of observing panoramas, or at least whole pictures, within which details would be connected to other details, Bloch perceives disconnected segments: "Die verlorene Hierarchie der Funktions-, Ordnungs- und Bewertungs-zusammenhänge führt dazu, daß alles, was mit den Sinnen erfaßbar ist, auch auffällig werden kann, und alle diese Einzelheiten stehen nun unverbunden nebeneinander."²⁶ The individual segments often represent for him the totality: "Innerhalb der Ausschnitte sah er die Einzelheiten aufdringlich deutlich: als ob die Teile, die er sah, für das Ganze standen. ... So sah er das Ohr der Kellnerin mit dem einen Ohrklips als ein Signal für die ganze Person..." (ATE.84).

Bloch's eyes are directed toward the goal or the recipient of an action, and not the initiator. Instead of watching the person talking, Bloch observes the listener, and instead of following the ball and players on the field during a soccer game, he trains his eyes on the goalie:

"Es ist sehr schwierig, von den Stürmern und dem Ball

wegzuschauen und dem Tormann zuzuschauen", sagte Bloch. "Man muß sich vom Ball losreißen, es ist etwas ganz und gar Unnatürliches." Man sehe statt des Balls den Tormann, wie er, die Hände auf den Schenkeln, vorlaufe, zurücklaufe, sich nach links und rechts vorbeuge und die Verteidiger anschreie. "Üblicherweise bemerkt man ihn ja erst, wenn der Ball schon aufs Tor geschossen wird" (ATE.123-24).

This manner of perception is typical for Bloch,²⁷ and it manifests his loss of context. A causal order of events, whereby an action results in a reaction or a cause brings about an effect, has lost its validity for Bloch. His perception is accidental; it follows no purpose nor underlying logical progression.

In the absence of the objective interpretive system used by the rest of society, Bloch's interaction with other people is marked with misunderstandings:

Als sie [die Pächterin] am Tisch eine Kerze anzündete, sah er [Bloch] das Wachs auf einen Teller tropfen, weil sie die Kerze in der Hand ein wenig geneigt hielt. Sie solle doch aufpassen, sagte er, das Wachs rinne auf den sauberen Teller. Aber sie stellte schon die Kerze in das noch flüssige übergelaufene Wachs und preßte sie so lange darauf, bis sie von selber stehenblieb. "Ich habe nicht gewußt, daß du die Kerze auf den Teller stellen wolltest", sagte Bloch. Sie traf Anstalten, sich auf eine Stelle zu setzen, wo gar kein Stuhl war, und Bloch rief: "Vorsicht!", dabei hatte sie sich nur hingehockt und eine Münze aufgehoben, die ihr beim Zählen unter den Tisch gefallen war (ATE.106-07).

Bloch misinterprets the actions of the leaseholder due to his inability to deduct the purpose or reasons for such actions. At other times misunderstandings arise because Bloch reads meaning into an innocent and meaningless gesture. Because only the foreman takes notice of his arrival at work, Bloch assumes he has been fired (ATE.7). Later Bloch presupposes that because his friend places her hand on his shoulder, he is to order a round of schnapps: "Die Pächterin kam und legte ihm die Hand auf die Schulter. Er verstand und bestellte Schnaps für alle, die am

Tisch saßen" (ATE,101).

Not only does Bloch subjectively interpret the actions and gestures of others, but the objects of his surroundings obtain personal significance. The outer world no longer exists independent of Bloch's inner world, but is a reflection of subjective consciousness. Because Bloch feels vulnerable and suspicious, most of the phenomena he observes are interpreted as warnings or traps. In the post office the paper on the writing tables has been freshly changed, "damit also die Abdrücke zu lesen waren?" (ATE,91). Bloch reads a newspaper advertisement urging people to make telephone calls and fears a trap: "Schon am Morgen hatte Bloch in der Zeitung die kleine Anzeige 'Warum telefonierst Du nicht?' sofort für eine Falle gehalten" (ATE,91).

Phenomena do not exist objectively in their own right, but function as signs and eventually imperatives for Bloch. Handke states of his work: ". . . das Prinzip war, zu zeigen, wie sich jemandem die Gegenstände, die er wahrnimmt, infolge eines Ereignisses (eines Mordes) immer mehr versprachlichen und, indem die Bilder versprachlicht werden, auch zu Geboten und Verboten werden."²⁸ Probably the most well-known single example of "the hero's whole neurotic desire to discover messages and instructions in almost everything he observes"²⁹ occurs upon perceiving fish-shaped crackers:

Und warum hatten die Kekse dort auf dem Holzteller die Form von Fischen? Auf was spielten sie an? Sollte er 'stumm wie ein Fisch' sein? Durfte er nicht weiterreden? Sollten ihm die Kekse auf dem Holzteller das andeuten? Es war, als ob er das alles nicht sah, sondern es irgendwo, von einem Plakat mit Verhaltensmaßregeln, ablas. Ja, es waren Verhaltensmaßregeln. ...überall sah er eine Aufforderung: das eine zu tun, das andere nicht zu tun. Alles war ihm vorformuliert (ATE,109).

For Bloch the objects themselves have disappeared behind words or formulations which demand certain behaviors from him.

An important aspect of alienation consists in the gradual disintegration of Bloch's ability to use language. Handke's protagonist can no longer employ the words, phrases, and constructions taken for granted by the rest of society. Just as the loss of context destroys natural connections between the phenomena of the world, so too does it question the linkage normally taken for granted between the word and the object it designates or the occurrence it describes: "Parallel zur Atomisierung der Wahrnehmung findet auch ein Sprachzerfall statt...."³⁰ Bloch questions the meanings of words: "Zu der Frau...sagte er: 'Ich habe vergessen, einen Zettel zu hinterlegen', ohne zu wissen, was er mit den Worten 'Zettel' und 'hinterlegen' eigentlich meinte" (ATE,13). Causal relationships expressed by means of language are viewed with suspicion: "War es möglich, daß sich niemand in dem Raum befand, obwohl das Fenster weit geöffnet war? Warum 'obwohl'? War es möglich, daß sich niemand in dem Raum befand, weil das Fenster weit geöffnet war?" (ATE,40). Bloch thinks in quotation marks, which indicate the loss of natural agreement between word and object: "Er sah einen 'Schrank, 'danach' 'einen' 'kleinen' 'Tisch', 'danach' 'einen' 'Papierkorb'..." (ATE,117). Ultimately the words are replaced by pictures of the objects being described (ATE,117), and the connection between sign and denotatum is totally destroyed, resulting in speechlessness.

The structure of the novel reflects Bloch's manner of perception. The smallest to the most comprehensive structural unit is characterized by a lack of causal connection. Handke clearly prefers fragments or sentences with subject/verb/object/ simplicity to complex sentences in which

relationships between segments are established: "Zurück im Gasthaus.

Bloch bestellte einen Aufschnitt. Die Kellnerin schnitt mit einer Brotschneidemaschine Brot und Wurst und brachte ihm die Wurstblätter auf einem Teller; obenauf hatte sie etwas Senf gedrückt. Bloch aß, es wurde schon finster" (ATE.74-75). Instead of incorporating information within long involved periods, one usually finds a series of simple sentences or at most a compound sentence. The absence of hierarchical structure is also evident in the listing of objects or events. Bloch's perceptions are usually ordered according to the referential frameworks of time or place and not causality:

Er erblickte einen anderen Ausschnitt mit der Musicbox, durch die langsam ein Lichtpunkt wanderte, der dann bei der gewählten Nummer stehenblieb, daneben den Zigarettenautomaten, darauf wieder einen Blumenstrauß; dann wieder einen anderen Ausschnitt mit dem Wirt hinter der Theke, der für die Kellnerin, die danebenstand, eine Flasche öffnete, die die Kellnerin auf das Tablett stellte; und schließlich einen Ausschnitt von sich selber, wie er die Beine von sich gestreckt hatte, mit den nassen, schmutzigen Schuhkappen, dazu den riesigen Aschenbecher auf dem Tisch, daneben eine kleinere Blumenvase und das gefüllte Weinglas am Nebentisch, wo gerade niemand dabeisaß (ATE.83-84).

The key words in the description are "dann" and "daneben" which are repeated as Bloch's glance moves across the room. In addition to "dann," sequentiality is indicated with the word "schließlich." Other indicators of position include "darauf" and "dazu."

The narrator offers no reasons behind, explanations for, or motivation of the action and arrangement of events. The causality is dependent upon the protagonist, who acts without purpose or goal. For instance, Bloch goes to the Inn of his friend, the leaseholder. When the waitress observes him sitting alone in the Inn, she assumes that Bloch wants to see the leaseholder and tells him that his friend has gone to the castle

to renew her lease. Bloch then proceeds on to the castle. But is Bloch pursuing a plan of action, or does he act solely upon the waitress' directions? Does he go in order to find the leasee, or is he merely following the somewhat feeble-minded boy from the inn? The superfluous and distracting mention of trivial details and incidents which occur on the way to the castle undermine the assumption of causal action. Upon reaching the castle Bloch is not led to his friend, but is taken on a tour through the castle by the gate-keeper (another "misunderstanding"). Finally, he catches sight of the leaseholder outside in the garden. But even at the end of the tour he does not go to her, but rather walks slowly and aimlessly back to the inn (ATE,70-74). Bloch's actions here and throughout the entire novel are accidental, random, and disconnected: "So braucht Bloch sich nicht geradlinig und konsequent zu verhalten, sondern Handke kann ihn als punktuell Erfahrenden darstellen...."³¹

Applied to the structure of the novel as a whole the illogicality and discontinuity result in a type of monotonous sequentiality. There are a few climactic moments, such as the murder (ATE,23) or the experience of the jolt (ATE,78), but even these scenes are isolated and disconnected, leading nowhere. Bloch does not take the bus to Southern Germany because he has committed a murder. Instead, Bloch commits a murder and takes the bus to Southern Germany. Handke's protagonist does not undergo a development. His condition in the first scene does not differ appreciably from his state at the novel's conclusion. Such lack of development and inconclusiveness ensure the novel its openness³² and are consistent with the loss of context and orientation undergone by Bloch. Reader uncertainty is created throughout the novel by means of a narrative

perspective which is located within a consciousness, for whom all naturalness and matter-of-fact objectivity is questionable. The end of the novel does not relieve the reader by imparting conclusions, but rather leaves him in the insecure state of question.

C. Sudden Change in Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung

Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung (1975) is thematically and structurally based upon a concept of vacillation, or sudden change. The protagonist is torn back and forth between contradictory extremes: normality and strangeness, objectivity and subjectivity, dispassion and emotionality, aggression and sympathy. These oppositions can be encompassed under the conditions of fear and happiness, of disorientation and a yearning for and even discovery of a new context. Such thematic oscillation is reflected within a structure of juxtaposition. The novel is composed of rapidly changing segments, ordered according to a principle of contrast. However, underlying the abrupt and at times panicked seesawing movement of the novel, a general direction becomes apparent as the protagonist moves ever closer to a mystical state of reasonable happiness, where alienation is overcome and the subject lives in harmony with the world of objects and other people—at least until the next sudden change.

1. "Auf einmal gehörte er nicht mehr dazu"

Handke's novel relates the story of a typical and common man, Gregor Keuschnig,³³ Austrian press attaché to France, who unexpectedly falls out of his everyday and routine context. Suddenly and against his will everything seems strange and alien to Keuschnig. Handke states of

his character:

Dann habe Ich gedacht, das muß ein Mann sein, der ganz gewöhnlich ist, der nicht wie ein Schriftsteller, also wie Ich, davon lebt, daß er plötzlich das Gefühl hat, alles sei fremd, anders, widerlich, sondern der das wider Willen, gegen seinen Willen so erlebt.³⁴

This totally normal man dreams one night that he murders an old woman, and this dream propels Gregor Keuschnig into the totally abnormal and frightening experience of alienation: "Auf einmal gehörte er nicht mehr dazu" (SE.8). Out of context, Keuschnig experiences alienation from himself, the world of objects, and other people.

Alienation destroys the natural harmony between the protagonist and his previous role: "Was sich so vertraut ereignen sollte, vollführte er als zeremonielle Vorgänge, ängstlich bedacht, nicht aus der Rolle zu fallen: das-den-Korken-aus-der-Flasche-Ziehen, das-die-Serviette-auf-die-Knie-Legen" (SE.28). Keuschnig has lost the "ungebrochene Äußerlichkeit" (SE.64) of someone who still agrees with the definition assigned to him from an outside and objective system. Without a role he can take for granted, Keuschnig is burdened with the weight of his own sense of self as his sole point of reference. He perceives of himself "als etwas zum SCHREIEN Fremdes" (SE.99), as "something obscene and monstrous, like a kind of cancerous growth,"³⁵ which bursts into his surroundings: "Im nächsten Moment war ihm, als platzte er aus seiner Haut heraus, und ein Fleisch- und Sehnenklumpen läge naß und schwer auf dem Teppich" (SE.13-14). No longer part of the context which encompasses everyone else, Keuschnig stands superfluous and unprotected (SE.41). He alone is the afflicted individual, and Keuschnig feels as if the rest of the world points at him in horror: "Aber auch wenn er mit noch jemandem gewesen

wäre, mit vielen, hätte man bei einer Gegenüberstellung sofort auf ihn gezeigt: Das ist er!" (SE.64).³⁶

Keuschnig longs to escape his exaggerated subjectivity by means of a defined identity within a system which would provide him a preprogrammed, objectively determined chain of actions and reactions: "Bei Ihnen [den Polizisten] war alles geprobt; und es konnte ihnen nichts mehr zustoßen, weil sie für alles schon von vornherein eine REIHENFOLGE hatten. Jede Möglichkeit durchgespielt, für jede Eventualität gesorgt" (SE.64). For the policemen there are no unanswered questions, no need to even consider their actions. Keuschnig yearns in vain for such an objective system:

Ich brauche auch eine Reihenfolge, dachte Keuschnig. – Aber für eine Reihenfolge brauchte er voraus ein System. – Aber es gab für ihn kein System mehr. – Aber wozu brauchte er dann eigentlich eine Reihenfolge? – Um zu vertuschen, daß er kein System mehr hatte. – Mir fällt nur ein, was ich nicht gebrauchen kann, dachte er (SE.65).

The essence of Keuschnig's experience of alienation lies in the invalidation of any encompassing system which could dictate a causal and automatic pattern of behavior.

Keuschnig's alienation not only affects his self-perception but also distorts his view of the world. On the one hand, objects, no longer within a context, disintegrate into insignificant details, and on the other hand, in the absence of objective meaning, they become subjective and arbitrary signs: "...er [Keuschnig] erfährt ein Chaos von Einzelheiten, die alle zeichenhaft und unbegreiflich auf ihn selber hinzuweisen scheinen."³⁷

Handke's protagonist proceeds through the streets of Paris with the "fremden Blick" of alienation:

Er schaute nur noch zu Boden. Ein Pfirsichkern, gerade weggeworfen, lag feucht auf dem Gehsteig, und bei diesem Anblick erlebte er auf einmal, daß Sommer war, und das

wurde jetzt seltsam wichtig. Ein gutes Omen, dachte er und konnte langsamer gehen. Vielleicht gab es noch mehr solcher Hinweise? Die Scheiben eines Cafés, das den Sommer über geschlossen hatte, waren von innen angeweißt . . . Ein Auto fuhr vorbei, auf seinem Dach ein Fahrrad, dessen Speichen sich blinkend drehten (SE,41-42).

For Keuschnig the objects have lost their matter-of-factness and can no longer be taken for granted. The outer world is a reflection of the inner state of the observer, and Keuschnig accordingly interprets many objects, especially ones in disorder, not as good omens but as portents of death: "Der Wind warf eine Parkverbotstafel um, und wieder begann er die Todeszeichen zu sehen" (SE,65).

The experience of alienation also destroys the system of societal conventions which normally control interpersonal relationships: "Bei der Radikalität von Keuschnigs Zweifel an den Systemen, in denen er bisher gelebt hat, müssen auch die sozialen Werte zusammenbrechen."³⁸ Both on a familial and societal level, the values which normally guide one's behavior have been invalidated for Keuschnig. He suddenly and without reason feels apathetic or even aggressive toward his wife Stefanie. At the office Keuschnig makes love to a totally unfamiliar woman (SE,54-55). Later that same evening he undresses in front of his dinner guests, an Austrian writer and his girlfriend, smears his face with leftovers, pounces on the girlfriend, and finally engages in a scuffle with the writer (SE,100). Standardized rituals or monuments of solidarity elicit feelings of aggression from Keuschnig. At the sight of a freshly cleaned and decorated memorial tablet commemorating an Austrian born partisan's death at the hands of the Nazis, Keuschnig thinks: "Dieses arschloch..." (SE,16). The brutality and inhumanity³⁹ of Keuschnig's actions are thematicized in the opening quote of the novel: "Sind Gewalt und Sinnlosigkeit nicht zuletzt ein und

dasselbe? M. Horkheimer."

Handke's protagonist Keuschnig finds himself in a situation where neither his old system is intact, nor does there exist a new one as a replacement. His previous mode of life has become impossible, and yet a new form is unimaginable: "Ab heute führe ich also ein Doppelleben, dachte er. Nein, gar kein Leben; weder das gewohnte noch ein neues..." (SE,13). The invalidation of all systems leaves him in a void, where it is impossible to conceive of a future or of alternatives, where it is impossible to imagine anything at all: "Er versuchte sich vorzustellen, wie es nun weitergehen sollte. Weil alles so ungünstig geworden war, konnte er sich auch nichts mehr vorstellen" (SE,9). Keuschnig's situation is described repeatedly as one of futility and hopelessness (SE,17;SE,36), which leaves him in apathy (SE,121) and without feelings (SE,25;SE,116). He experiences himself as the figure of a story concluded long ago: "Auf einmal erlebte er sich wie die Figur einer längst zu Ende erzählten Geschichte" (SE,116).

The two most common responses provoked through the experience of alienation are fear and disgust, and they manifest the protagonist's neither/nor state. Keuschnig experiences disgust at the never-ending and never-changing routines of life, and yet is afraid to relinquish his old patterns and role. He remembers a question from his wife so typical and banal that he is close to vomiting (SE,112). The most everyday actions become grotesque and disgusting for Keuschnig because of their inevitability (SE,78-79). Disgust is aroused not because he has changed, but because the change did not affect everyone (SE,36-37): "Brechreiz und Ekel, die leitmotivisch Keuschnigs Erfahrungen mit seiner Umwelt

beherrschen, rühren aus jener verstimmenden Überfütterung mit dem allzu Bekannten....⁻⁴⁰ At the same time Keuschnig fears the chaos which results from the loss of his typical and predetermined existence. Fear or panic and safety or security are repeatedly juxtaposed (SE.73; SE.14): "Die Reaktionen auf diesen Verlust der Deutungssysteme der alltäglichen Lebenswelt sind bei Handke Angst und Schrecken, denn dem Menschen werden Schutz und Bestätigung entzogen."⁴¹

2. "Herbeigezauberte Nähe"

The experience of alienation negates and destroys systems, it places the individual in a vacuum of invalidity which denies and empties. Yet it is also necessary for new feelings, new possibilities, and future expectation. The loss of an objective and meaningful context which normally mediates between subject and object places the disconnected Keuschnig in the center of the world. And yet this extreme subjectivity has as its intent and goal a rediscovery of the world and of others: "Handkes Stunde der wahren Empfindung ist das Protokoll einer Vereinzelung des Ich, das in dem Versprechen einer neuen Gemeinschaft gipfelt."⁴² Thematic is "die Suche nach einem noch nicht zum System geronnen Glück."⁴³

The dream which initiates Keuschnig's experience of alienation serves to shock the protagonist out of a life totally paralyzed in its routines. It is a warning meant to awaken Keuschnig from civilization's slumber (SE.46) to the world around him and to a new awareness of life:

Der Traum ist wahr gewesen.... Der Traum ist vielleicht mein erstes Lebenszeichen seit langem gewesen. Er hat mich warnen sollen. Er wollte mich umdrehen, wie jemanden, der lange auf der falschen Seite gestanden hat. Ich möchte die schlafwandlerischen Sicherheiten für den Wachzustand vergessen (SE.35).

Keuschnig, freed from his previous pattern of life, embarks upon an adventure: "Abenteuerlich! Alles, was er tat, kam ihm an diesem Morgen abenteuerlich vor" (SE.12), and approaches his world with curiosity: "Er straffte sich kurz vor Neugier" (SE.15). The adventure undertaken by Handke's protagonist is one of rediscovery.

Within contemporary society it is difficult if not impossible to personally experience one's own existence, for instead of leading an individual life, the subject merely memorizes a role, memorizes "WIE MAN LEBEN VORTAUSCHTE" (SE.50). The inability to participate in life is linked to regulatory meanings, patterns, and systems. The alienated Keuschnig rejects these meanings: "Ausweichen, ihr Sinnreichen!" (SE.58), and empties himself of artificial societal patterns of experience: "Das Abstoßen als der Widerwille vor all den Fremdbeatmungen: die international bewährten Erlebnisformen als bloße Kurpfuscherei!" (SE.66). Keuschnig realizes that the infrequency of personal experience is due to preconceptions and predefinitions: "Vielleicht kommt es mir deswegen so vor, als hätte ich, jedenfalls bis zur letzten Nacht, seit langem kaum etwas erlebt, weil ich mir im voraus zurechtmachte, was ein Erlebnis ist" (SE.84). Handke's protagonist determines that for him an experience will be the water flowing in the drainage channel (SE.84). This motif accompanies Keuschnig throughout his adventure.

During the course of the first day Keuschnig undergoes a series of fleeting experiences of his surroundings. These moments, initiated through viewing the river Seine, the clouds, and a drugstore, are characterized by a loss of self as Keuschnig becomes totally absorbed in the objects around him. A context is established under which he perceives details.

but as part of the whole: "Ich möchte erreichen, diese selbstlosen und doch ausgefüllten Momente, wo man nichts extra beobachtet, wo einem aber auch nichts entgeht, länger auszuhalten" (SE,58). These experiences can be viewed as preparatory for those to come. However, they do not last, and what is more, Keuschnig cannot recall the feelings undergone during these brief scenes: "Er konnte zwar alles aufzählen, sich aber an nichts erinnern. Er hatte die Tatsachen behalten, aber nicht die Gefühle" (SE,60). He resolves to rediscover his feelings: "Ich muß alle Gefühle neu entdecken! dachte er" (SE,62).

Keuschnig's journey of rediscovery climaxes on the first day in a brief moment of epiphany and happiness: "Hier also geschieht das Wunder der wiedergewonnenen Unmittelbarkeit, die zeitgenössische Pathologie wird überwunden, Handkes Protagonist fühlt sich in Harmonie mit sich selbst und der Welt – er ist glücklich."⁴⁴ Keuschnig undergoes a mystical experience upon noticing three objects lying at his feet in the sand. These objects--a chestnut leaf, a piece of mirror, and a child's barrette--become magical as they form a union among themselves:

Im Sand zu seinen Füßen erblickte er drei Dinge: ein Kastanienblatt; ein Stück von einem Taschenspiegel; eine Kinderzopfspanne. Sie hatten schon die ganze Zeit so dagelegen, doch auf einmal rückten diese Gegenstände zusammen zu Wunderdingen (SE,81).

Keuschnig, for whom standard perception models are no longer valid, is able to directly and personally experience these three objects, which are arranged accidentally and serve no function. In this moment the world becomes discoverable: "Wer sagt denn, daß die Welt schon entdeckt ist?" (SE,81).

The discovery of the world occurs only in the absence of society's

rigid patterns or systems of perception and meanings. The alienated Keuschnig has rejected the systematized secrets of society used to safely order, explain, and define the world. He discovers instead the idea of a secret, which he shares with all other beings: "Ich habe an ihnen [den Wunschdingen] kein persönliches Geheimnis für mich entdeckt, dachte er, sondern die IDEE eines Geheimnisses, die für alle da ist!" (SE.82). Fallen from context, Keuschnig experiences the three magical objects, which have also been stripped of their meaning within society, as entities for and by themselves. The idea ("IDEE") which he discovers is an existential one, for he has experienced the essence of simple existence. Moreover, this is a secret which he can discover and share with all other beings. The mystery of mutual existence creates an encompassing context and feeling of harmony between Keuschnig and the rest of the world:

Das Kastanienblatt, die Spiegelscherbe und die Zopfspange schienen noch enger zusammenzurücken – und mit ihnen rückte auch das andere zusammen . . . bis es nichts anderes mehr gab. Herbeigezauberte Nähe! "Ich kann mich ändern", sagte er laut. Er stampfte auf, aber es war kein Spuk. Er schaute sich um, aber er sah keinen Gegner mehr. ... Er fühlte sich von neuem allmächtig, aber nicht mächtiger als irgend jemand anderer (SE.82-83).

Keuschnig has overcome the experience of alienation in a brief moment of happiness. He feels a helpless sympathy for the world and welcomes this attachment as a reasonable feeling: "Bei dem bestärkenden Anblick der drei wunderbaren Dinge im Sand erlebte er eine hilflose Zuneigung zu allen, aus der er sich aber auch nicht helfen lassen wollte, weil sie ihm jetzt als das Vernünftige erschien" (SE.82). This is the state called by Handke "reasonable happiness" and discussed in the first section of this chapter. It is that moment directly after the fear of alienation in which the individual is open and attentive to the other forms of existence

in the world around him. It is the moment of rediscovery. The state of happiness lasts only a few seconds, after which Keuschnig is again plunged into his alienated and fearful condition, but this moment instills hope within Keuschnig:

...In diesem Moment, an diesem Abend, eine, zwei Sekunden lang, erlebt er das wie eine Besänftigung, wie eine Beruhigung – so wie man im Märchen im Wald auf dem Boden drei Wunderdinge sieht, und die helfen einem weiter –, Einverständnis, Zufriedenheit und Geheimnis...⁴⁵

The brief moments of happiness experienced by Keuschnig culminate on the second day in an idyllic hour of true feeling. Keuschnig loses his extreme subjectivity and becomes part of the world around him: "Er, der nicht mehr zählte, war in die anderen gefahren.... Er lebte noch irgendwie – mit ihnen" (SE,152). He has rediscovered an encompassing context which not only melds details, but also provides him orientation: "Weit auseinanderliegende Einzelheiten...vibrierten in einer Zusammengehörigkeit...: ein Gefühl, daß man von jedem Punkt aus zu Fuß nach Hause gehen konnte" (SE,152). The lost balance between subject and object is re-established. The objects have been freed of Keuschnig's subjective interpretation and of systematic preformulated meaning, to simply exist "für sich": "...er [ein Schirm] war kein Hinweis auf etwas andres mehr, sondern eine Sache für sich, für sich schön oder häßlich, und häßlich und schön gemeinsam mit allem anderen" (SE,152). Keuschnig's new sense of orientation is founded in a shared feeling of existence.

Just as during the moment of true feeling previously, Keuschnig allows the world to retain its secret. But the difference between then and now lies in the duration of his feeling:

Dieser Zustand war keine Laune, keine Augenblicksstimmung mehr, die gleich wieder aufhörte, sondern eine, auch aus all

den flüchtigen Augenblicksstimmungen!, gewonnene Überzeugung, mit der man arbeiten konnte. Jetzt erschien ihm die Idee, die ihm gekommen war beim Anblick der drei Dinge im Sand des Carré Marigny, anwendbar. Indem ihm die Welt geheimnisvoll wurde, öffnete sie sich und konnte zurückerobert werden (SE,152).

Whereas the experiences of before were fleeting moods, Keuschnig here wins a conviction with which he can work, thereby transforming happiness into a more lasting state. Keuschnig can now actively use the idea formed previously. It is his newly found task to rediscover a world made inaccessible by means of the systems and explanations which eradicate its strangeness and secrecy.⁴⁶

The experiences of the previous two days have left Keuschnig not a replacement system, but a more persistent yearning for the people and objects around him:

Er brauchte eine Arbeit, deren Ergebnis verbindlich und unverrückbar wäre wie ein Gesetz! Er wollte kein System für sein Leben, dachte nur, daß es in Zukunft wenn keine neuen Gegenstände und neuen Menschen geben würde, so doch eine beständigere Sehnsucht (SE,161).

Armed with his newly won conviction and longing, a new set of clothes (SE,159), and a new direction (SE,153;SE,159), Keuschnig sets to work ("Arbeit"). Although his surroundings are the same as always, Keuschnig experiences them now for the first time: "Obwohl er dasselbe sah wie sonst, mit demselben Blickwinkel, war es doch fremdartig geworden, und damit erlebbar" (SE,162). He feels like the hero of an adventure story, out to conquer the world and thereby experience an unprecedented, unknown, and matchless event:

Eroberungslustig fing er hügelab zu laufen an... (SE,162).

Er trat fest auf und reckte sich (SE,162).

Als er an einer Passage vorbeiging, dachte er: Hier könnte sie

passieren, die einmalige, noch nie erzählte Begebenheit! (SE,163).

Bei dem Anblick des von der Tageshitze noch weichen Pflasters zu seinen Füßen erlebte er sich plötzlich als der Held einer unbekannten Geschichte . . . (SE,166).

In the final scene of Handke's novel Keuschnig realizes such premonitions and expectations as he steps into the beginning of a new story (SE,167).

3. A Seesawing Rhythm

Handke's novel is structured upon dynamic contrasts and contradiction. Sudden and unexpected change determines the rhythm of the entire work and provokes in the reader an uncertainty and instability similar to that undergone by the protagonist.

Keuschnig's reaction to his sudden disorientation is an unsuccessful attempt to recreate his old system or to create a new system. This results in several patterns especially prevalent in the first half of the novel. The protagonist, threatened by the loss of a role he can take for granted, seeks shelter within his previous habits, only to realize their invalidity: "Er verschränkte die Hände hinter dem Kopf, doch diese Gewohnheit stellte nichts wieder her" (SE,9). The irreversible change undergone by Keuschnig is expressed through numerous comparisons of his previous ("früher") and normal ("gewöhnlich") condition to the present: "Wenn Keuschnig früher etwas nicht aushielt, legte er sich gewöhnlich irgendwo abseits nieder und schlief ein. In dieser Nacht war es umgekehrt..." (SE,8). At other times Keuschnig attempts to counter his insecurity with a new meaning or system, only to realize that it is artificial and invalid (SE,65). Irene Wellershoff aptly describes Keuschnig's situation as a "Kippmoment," because he continually seesaws back and forth between a

normal and an alienated world:

Keuschnig schwankt nun beständig zwischen seiner vertrauten Routinewelt und der Erkenntnis, daß er alles neu sehen muß, hin und her. Es ist eigentlich dieser Kippmoment, in dem er sich dauernd befindet, denn nie gehört er der einen oder der anderen Sphäre ganz an. Kurzzeitig kann ihm die Welt wieder harmonisch und heil erscheinen, doch das erweist sich gleich als trügerisch und der Anblick schlägt in Fremdheit um.⁴⁷

Handke's protagonist does not undergo an orderly progression from initial alienation to refound orientation. Although the novel's general direction points toward a state of happiness, Keuschnig's pathway leads "durch ein Labyrinth von sich widersprechenden Gefühlen."⁴⁸ Keuschnig is torn back and forth between the contrasting emotional poles of fear and happiness: "Selten war er bis jetzt so heiter gewesen, noch nie so hoffnungslos" (SE,36). One moment he is overcome with feelings of sympathy and solidarity for others, but in the next he refuses to help a fellow passenger in the bus he takes home (SE,82-85). Many commentators criticize Handke's novel because of the protagonist's cruelty and unfounded vacillation of feelings.⁴⁸ For Handke, the emotional interchangeability of objects constitutes the radically new aspect of the novel. He is not concerned with the question of solidarity, but with the fact that the same object will elicit contradictory emotional responses in the protagonist from one moment to the next: "Gerade dieses Austauschbare, daß jeder Gegenstand in seinem emotionalen Wert plötzlich austauschbar ist, das erscheint mir als das wirklich Neue und als das Radikale an der Geschichte: daß eben nichts mehr gilt."⁵⁰ Such vacillation is symptomatic for Keuschnig's loss of context and the invalidation of all that was ordered, foreseeable, and systematic. For the reader it serves to continually negate that which was just established.

thereby creating distrust and a feeling of precariousness.

The narrative perspective in Handke's novel vacillates between subjectivity and objectivity. For the most part the narrator is implanted within the protagonist, so that the view of the world is as subjective, distorted, and arbitrary as it appears to Keuschnig: "Auch Peter Handke verwendet die Methode der verkürzten Perspektive, um den entfremdeten Menschen darzustellen. Ganz nach dem Kafkaschen Muster sieht der Leser alles ausschließlich mit den Augen der Hauptperson."⁵¹ The reader is not presented a trustworthy picture of reality but rather a world as Keuschnig experiences it in all his uncertainty, questioning, and sudden emotional changes. The subjunctive is often utilized, further undermining the stability and firmness of the world. At other times however, the subjective point of view is interrupted by an objective narrator who suddenly stands at a distance from his story and protagonist. At the end of the fourth chapter this narrator steps back for a moment to over-see what is to come: "So begann der Tag, an dem seine Frau von ihm wegging, an dem ihm sein Kind abhanden kam, an dem er zu leben aufhören wollte und an dem schließlich doch einiges anders wurde" (SE,113). This heightens the expectant and anticipatory tone which accompanies Keuschnig's adventure throughout the entire novel.

The work opens with distanced objectivity which imparts to the reader a sense of security. The main character is introduced, his profession, place of dwelling, and family situation; the frameworks of time and place are established. Harmless details are given in a calm and flowing style. The perspective becomes increasingly focused until it rests upon the protagonist and his dream. And then suddenly Keuschnig loses orientation.

The security of the introduction is revealed as deceptive. Chapter Two also begins with seemingly harmless objectivity: "Keuschnig arbeitete seit einigen Tagen an einem Bericht für das Außenministerium mit dem Titel 'Das Österreichbild im französischen Fernsehen', Untertitel: 'Österreich, ein Atelierfilm'" (SE.49). However, the distance of the introduction is gradually corroded. More and more Keuschnig's own thoughts and questions creep into the report:

Keuschnig wollte nun beweisen, daß die Personen dieser Filme, dadurch, daß das Land nie mitspielte und nie ein Seitenblick in eine Landschaft etwa die Geschichte wendete, ihre Erlebnisse nur noch AUFZUSAGEN schienen (nachdem sie diese im Vorzimmer vielleicht noch memoriert hatten) – AUSWENDIG gelernte Umarmungen; AUSWENDIG gelernt, wie zwei sich in die Augen schauten; AUSWENDIG gewußt, wie man die Lippen aufeinanderpreßte –, und daß die Filme selber . . . (was wollte er eigentlich?), daß also dadurch, daß die Personen dieser Filme . . . (auch er konnte also auswendig Sätze bilden?) . . . nicht wirklich lebten (was hieß das?), sondern . . . nur AUSWENDIG gelernt hatten, WIE MAN LEBEN VORTAUSCHTE . . . (SE.49–50).

The capitalized words, parantheses, questions, fragmentation, and incompleteness all indicate subjective doubt, which intensifies to the point where, suddenly, Keuschnig no longer knows what he wanted to prove. Again the matter-of-fact objectivity evident in the opening lines is destroyed and the reader finds himself plunged into Keuschnig's subjectivity.

The structure of Handke's novel is determined by the subjective consciousness of the protagonist. Because there no longer exists an uninterrupted sense of being ("kontinuierliches Lebensgefühl") or context ("Zusammenhang") for Keuschnig,⁵² the incidents he experiences are subject to a principle of discontinuity: "...die Zerstörung des Zusammenhangs, die totale Diskontinuität ist auch organisierendes Prinzip dieses Buches...."⁵³ Keuschnig's experiences are loosely strung together, one after

the other, each existing as a separate entity resulting neither in nor from another experience. Accordingly, common transition elements, especially between paragraphs, are expressions of time such as "dann," "Nach einiger Zeit" (SE,81), and "In diesem Moment" (SE,103). At other times no connection at all is made between individual segments:

Zu Mittag ging Keuschnig durch die Rue St. Dominique bis zum Autobus 68, um wie üblich auf den Montmartre zu einer Freundin zu fahren. Eine Zeitlang folgte er durch Seitenstraßen einem Mädchen, auf dessen Hose hinten CHICAGO CITY stand. Er wollte ihr Gesicht sehen. Dann merkte er, daß er das Mädchen vergessen hatte. Im Autobus freute er sich einen Moment ganz unbändig, als er merkte, daß er allein war. Ein Schauer überlief ihn und erzeugte ein auf niemanden gerichtetes Machtgefühl. An der nächsten Station schaute er auf, und schon waren einige Hinterköpfe vor ihm (SE,24-25).

In the above quotation Keuschnig's activities and feelings are related as they occur, the sole relationship between the individual segments being that of sequential time.

The loss of an explanatory system results in the negation of logical causality. There are no reasons for the events of the story: "An keiner Stelle gibt es ein 'Weil'."⁵⁴ No motivation behind Keuschnig's differing feelings is given: "Der Umschwung zwischen Depression und Heterkeit, Ohnmacht und Allmacht erfolgt plötzlich und unmotiviert – wie im Traum."⁵⁵ The progression from sentence to sentence, experience to experience, and paragraph to paragraph is therefore not smooth and foreseeable, but broken, shocking, and usually sudden. "Auf einmal" and "plötzlich" are two of the most frequently found connecting elements in the entire novel. Similar in function but more directly indicative of the contradiction between the segments being linked are phrases such as "und doch" or "trotzdem." The narration does not logically flow from one event to the next, but

rather is constantly disrupted by the unexpected. The reader undergoes a process of invalidation similar to Keuschnig's as he is subjected to a rhythm of constant and sudden change, in which his expectations and efforts to organize the events of the novel into a comprehensible whole are repeatedly thwarted.

Underlying the discontinuity and contradiction of Handke's novel there exists an undeniable development, which is, however, presented as a possibility and a direction, not a conclusive endpoint: "Wer vom Titel das Ende einer Entwicklung erwartet, irrt sich, falls ich mich nicht irre. Wie ich diesen Dauerempfinder kenne, werden sich weiterhin die gegensätzlichsten Gefühle in ihm ablösen und die Erfahrungen dialektisch bleiben."⁵⁶ In the final pages of the novel Keuschnig overcomes his disorientation and regains his balance, but the balance is tentative. Just as these past two days are marked with a movement back and forth between fear and happiness, one can expect that Keuschnig's future experiences will continue to seesaw. The experiences of fear and happiness are dialectically and inextricably linked in this work of Handke. Alienation is necessary for the rediscovery of the world; extreme subjectivity leads to the recognition of the mutuality of existence.

D. Orientation in Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire

In his work entitled Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire (1980) Handke portrays the state of reasonable happiness. Alienation is overcome and replaced by a feeling of security and contextual reorientation. The narrator protagonist discovers a unity between himself as subject and the world as object, a commonality which transcends time and individuation. The key to

the protagonist's orientation and sense of security lies in his perception of the world as pictures composed of only form and color. Aesthetic perception allows the narrator protagonist to experience his world and develop an openness for it. Art is, in addition, the means to communicate this experience to others. The narrator observes the forms and colors of nature, experiences these pictures, and attempts to translate his experience into words and a form which can be visualized and experienced by the reader.

The action of Handke's novel consists of several walks around and on the Mont Sainte-Victoire in the Provence of Southern France. Standing on the road leading to the mountain, the narrator experiences a oneness and a moment of eternity: "Naturwelt und Menschenwerk, eins durch das andere, bereiteten mir einen Beseligungsmoment, ...der Nunc stans genannt worden ist: Augenblick der Ewigkeit" (LS-V.9-10). This is the desired state of harmony, orientation, a feeling of being at home: "Einmal bin ich dann in den Farben zu Hause gewesen" (LS-V.9). The narrator returns to the mountain later that year in order to find the form in which to communicate his experience. He describes his moment of reasonable bliss and gives it lasting quality by means of analogy. These analogous moments, at times reaching back into his childhood, but more often relating the remembered reaction at the sight of a painting, especially the paintings of Cézanne, circle around the central experience of the Mont Sainte-Victoire. Thus, through the mountain, the narrator learns of both the moments of transcendence and of the form appropriate for their communication.

The narrator has experienced moments of orientation and bliss

previously within dream-like pictures (LS-V.9). These pictures were, however, threatening to the narrator. They were founded in the narrator's existential feeling of fear and terror, which, although continuing to direct his literary production, no longer comprises his principal topic (LS-V.21). The narrator reflects upon his previous manner of writing, whereby he would dream himself into an object in order to comprehend its essence: "Sich einträumen in die Dinge' war ja lange eine Maxime beim Schreiben gewesen: sich die zu erfassenden Gegenstände derart vorstellen, als ob ich sie im Traum sähe, in der Überzeugung, daß sie dort erst in ihrem Wesen erscheinen" (LS-V.26). In this manner the objects of his world became magical and provided him a place of safety and orientation ("Hain"). However, it was difficult to return to everyday life from this magical realm, for its dream-like contours dissolved into "ein gar nicht friedliches Nichts, in das Ich freiwillig nie mehr zurück möchte" (LS-V.26).⁵⁷

The difference between the magical pictures of before and the reasonable ones the narrator is in the process of discovering is that there is a distance between the narrator and an object in reasonable pictures which does not exist in magical ones. The picture which inspired and justifies the narrator's present account expresses this distance: "Es war nicht in einem Traum, sondern an einem sonnenhellen Tag; auch kein Vergehen vor südlichen Zypressen, sondern Ich hier, und mein Gegenstand dort" (LS-v.27). The narrator reflects upon two different landscapes:

In einer Erzählung, die Ich ein halbes Jahrzehnt davor geschrieben hatte, wölbte sich einmal eine Landschaft, obwohl sie eben war, so nah an den Helden heran, daß sie ihn zu verdrängen schien. Die ganz andere, konkav geweitete, vom Druck entlastende und den Körper freidenkende Welt von 1974 steht jedoch immer noch vor mir... (LS-V.24).

The earlier landscape is too close for the hero to perceive of either himself

or the objects of the landscape. In contrast, the latter allows both the individual and the phenomena of the world to exist separately, and yet, as expressed in the concavity of the landscape, connected and reflective of each other.

The subject can realize his own individual right to exist only in allowing his vis-a-vis its independent being: "Nur außen, bei den Tagesfarben, bin ich" (LS-V.26). The present moments of bliss and orientation are marked with a new relationship between subject and world. The objects still offer the protagonist a place of refuge, but he does not disappear within them: "Nicht etwa verschwunden oder aufgegangen in der Landschaft kam ich mir vor, sondern in deren Gegenständen (den Gegenständen Cézannes) gut verborgen" (LS-V.68). The protagonist yearns for a place of safe secrecy ("Verborgenheit"),⁵⁷ and during moments of reasonable bliss feels part of a general context ("Nähe," "Nähegefühl," "Zusammenhalt": LS-V.76-77). But at the same time these moments intensify individual existential awareness. Whereas the convex landscapes resulted in a state described as "geistesabwesend-fassungslos," concavity heightens the protagonist's "Daseinsfreude" (LS-V.24).

Cézanne, who at first painted terrifying and shocking pictures, turned increasingly to the problem concerning the realization of the essence of an object by means of form. A perfect form ensures peaceful and eternal being:

Cézanne hat ja anfangs Schreckensbilder, wie die Versuchung des Heiligen Antonius, gemalt. Aber mit der Zeit wurde sein einziges Problem die Verwirklichung ("réalisation") des reinen, schuldlosen Irdischen: des Apfels, des Felsens, eines menschlichen Gesichts. Das Wirkliche war dann die erreichte Form; die nicht das Vergehen in den Wechselfällen der Geschichte beklagt, sondern ein Sein im Frieden weitergibt (LS-V.21).

Cézanne's later pictures, so close to this realization, celebrate the object with colors and forms: "Es waren die Arbeiten seines letzten Jahrzehnts, wo er dann so nah an dem erstrebten 'Verwirklichen' seines jeweiligen Gegenstands war, daß die Farben und Formen diesen schon feiern können" (LS-V,35). In giving up the dream-like magical pictures connected to fear, the narrator, similar to the development of Cézanne, attempts to realize the essence of an object through its form.

Reality for the narrator protagonist does not consist of individual, time-bound and therefore fleeting appearances of the phenomena, but rather of form, which, through never-ending repetition, must be seen as an eternal and powerful example: "Ich...weiß mich verpflichtet dem Reich der Formen, als einer anderen Rechtsordnung, in der 'die wahren Ideen', wie der Philosoph gesagt hat, 'mit Ihren Gegenständen übereinstimmen', und jede Form machtvoll ist als Beispiel..." (LS-V,26). The narrator belongs to a realm where the idea of an object, which encompasses all its various actualizations, finds its appropriate form. This is the realm of exemplary beauty (LS-V,80), free from the violent force of society's "Zweckformen" (LS-V,91). The patterns which the protagonist discovers within nature are repeated again and again on his walks: "Im Nachschauen wiederholte sich an der Bergwand, mit den in den Felsritzen wachsenden dunklen Büschen, das Muster der Zikadenflügel" (LS-V,49).

The narrator pictures the beauty of nature by naming its colors: "Denk nicht immer Himmelsvergleiche bei der Schönheit – sondern sieh die Erde. Sprich von der Erde, oder bloß von dem Fleck hier. Nenn ihn, mit seinen Farben" (LS-V,71). This principle, exemplified in the following extract, is applied throughout the novel: "Da waren die Risse im Felsen,

Da waren die Pinien und säumten einen Seitenweg; am Ende des Wegs groß das Schwarzweiß einer Elster" (LS-V.42). The narrator names the objects of his surroundings without placing them in relationships or assigning them functions. Stylistically this is achieved by means of the omission of verbs and by the usage of "da waren" ("there were"), or, in other passages, of "da" ("there") alone: "Als er [Cézanne] im Louvre vor Courbets Bildern stand, rief er immer wieder nur die Namen der Dinge darauf aus: 'Da, die Meute, die Blutlache, der Baum. Da, die Handschuhe, die Spitzen, die gebrochene Seide des Rocks'" (LS-V.33). The effect of the objects in and of themselves is so strong that Cézanne can merely name them. The protagonist rejects the "plötzlich" of the magical pictures for the "da" of his reasonable and objective pictures (LS-V.23). When naming the objects, the protagonist does so by means of their colors. In the above passage the narrator does not see a magpie which is black and white, but rather he sees the black-and-white of a magpie. The color becomes the object and is therefore capitalized, a trademark of Handke's entire work:

Knapp über mir, fast zum Angreifen, schwebte im Wind eine Rabenkrähe. Ich sah das wie ins Inbild eines Vogels gehörende Gelb der an den Körper gezogenen Krallen; das Goldbraun der von der Sonne schimmernden Flügel; das Blau des Himmels. – Zu dritt ergab das die Bahnen einer weiten luftigen Fläche, die ich im selben Augenblick als dreifarbige Fahne empfand. Es war eine Fahne ohne Anspruch, ein Ding rein aus Farben (LS-V.12).

Describing an object with color alone robs it of all pretensions ("Anspruch") such as meaning, symbolism, or function. A picture of pure form and color is silent and dark, imparting not a message, but a subjective experience which can be shared by all participating imaginations (LS-V.31). The narrator protagonist finds that the late pictures of Cézanne,

celebrations of color and form, are so completely silent, that they provoke a communicative jump, whereby two onlookers--two sets of eyes--separated by time, nevertheless unite in an artistic experience:

...das Schweigen der Bilder wirkte hier so vollkommen, weil die Dunkelbahnen einer Konstruktion einen Allgemein-Zug verstärkten, zu dem ich (Wort des Dichters) "hinüberdunkeln" konnte: Erlebnis des Sprungs, mit dem zwei Augenpaare, in der Zeit auseinander, auf einer Bildfläche zusammenkamen (LS-V,35-36).

The motifs of silence and darkness are found throughout the novel.

Aesthetic communication expressed through the metaphor "das Augenpaar" becomes the yearned for Ideal with its promise of contextual unity and belonging: "Wohl also dem, den zu Hause ein Augenpaar erwartet!" (LS-V,82); "Zu Hause das Augenpaar?" (LS-V,139).

Through a darkness left undefined, through a silence which simply is, the narrator experiences, in a moment of imagination, an existential mutuality which unites all forms of being: "...der Augenblick der Phantasie [vereinte]...nicht bloß die eigenen Lebensbruchstücke in Unschuld, sondern eröffnete mir auch neu meine Verwandtschaft mit anderen, unbekannten Leben, und wirkte so als unbestimmte Liebe..." (LS-V,72). Unspecified love becomes an "erleichternder, erhelternder, verwegener Sollensmoment des Schreibens" (LS-V,73). The love felt by the narrator needs to find aesthetic expression, it needs to be communicated "in einer treuestiftenden Form!...als berechtigten Vorschlag, für den Zusammenhalt meines nie bestimmbaren, verborgenen Volkes, als unsere gemeinsame Daseinsform" (LS-V,72-73). The "Verwandlung" undergone by the narrator protagonist during moments of reasonable bliss is his transformation into "der Schriftsteller" (LS-V,72).

The quest the narrator-writer undertakes upon his return later that

year to the Mont Sainte-Victoire has as its goal the "treustiftende Form" in which to communicate his experience: "Aber was war das Gesetz meines Gegenstands – seine selbstverständliche, verbindliche Form?" (LS-V,98-99). The narrator is guided by two maxims on his search for form: unity and creative imagination:

Und so kam wieder die Lust auf das Eine in Allem. Ich wußte ja: Der Zusammenhang ist möglich. Jeder einzelne Augenblick meines Lebens geht mit jedem anderen zusammen – ohne Hilfglieder. Es existiert eine unmittelbare Verbindung; ich muß sie nur freiphantasieren (LS-V,100).

The problem confronting the narrator-writer is that of connection: how does one intertwine the many single moments of life into a whole? His friend D. formulates the contradiction: "Der Übergang muß für mich klar trennend und ineinander sein" (LS-V,119). The solution to this problem is experienced--is creatively imagined--upon observing the site of a fracture on the Mont Sainte-Victoire. This rupture, which shows two different types of stone lying side by side as part of the same slope, provides the form for the protagonist's experiences.

The form found for the structure of the novel is based on analogies arranged as dictated by the creative imagination of the protagonist: "Sie [die Analogien] waren, Gegenteil von dem täglichen Durcheinander im Kopf, nach heißen Erschütterungen die goldenen Früchte der Phantasie, standen da als die wahren Vergleiche, und bildeten so erst, nach dem Wort des Dichters, 'des Werkes welthin strahlende Stirn'" (LS-V,100). The narrator's description of reasonable happiness is comprised of the many previous fleeting instances of it, each distinctive in time and place, and yet similar in feeling. Reflecting upon places and objects of refuge the narrator asks: "Sollte es nicht seit je so sein, und gab es nicht schon in der Kindheit

etwas, das für mich, wie später L'Estaque der Ort, das Ding der Verborgtheit war?" (LS-V,68). Above all, the forms and colors of the mountain reoccur in never-ending analogies: "Dafür kehrt der Berg aber in der Analogie von Farben und Formen fast alltäglich wieder" (LS-V,85).

The two verbs "weitergeben" and "bewirken" occur repeatedly within Handke's text.⁵⁹ The narrator protagonist desires to communicate ("weitergeben") his experience of harmony to the reader in such a manner as to provoke ("bewirken") within this reader a similar experience. The difference between the narrator's experience of the essence of being during the time of his magical pictures and his present experiences of that essence lies in his present communicative intent (LS-V,26). Communication is the societal link which was lacking in his dream-like experiences. To provoke in the reader the narrator's experience of orientation it is necessary to engage the reader's imagination, not his reason (LS-V,99), for contextual unity can be told, but not explained: "Ein Zusammenhang ist da, nicht erklärbar, doch zu erzählen" (LS-V,69). The forms and colors used by the narrator to describe nature impart to the reader a picture, not an explanation, of an object which must be imagined, not comprehended. Integration of single incidents or objects into a context is achieved by means of analogies. The calmness and flowing complexity of style and the repetition of motifs and experiences, which by means of their intertwinement become vague, mystical, and fluid, all contribute to the reader's feeling of safety and contextual refuge.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the concepts of fear and happiness, alienation and reorientation in the works of Peter Handke, who is considered by many critics to be the most extreme representative of New Subjectivity. The preceding analysis possessed a twofold intent: to evidence correlations between Handke's portrayal of alienation and that of other New Subjectivists, and to trace a development within Handke's works themselves away from fear toward happiness. The first work investigated here, Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter, proved to be most similar to other new subjective works in both themes and forms. The protagonist suffers under the loss of context and proceeds throughout his world with the subjective "fremden Blick" of alienation. The most significant difference between Bloch and the new subjective heroes to come is the extremity of the former's condition, manifest in the disintegration of all communication systems and in the absence of hope or acknowledgement of alienation's positive potential as was seen in later new subjective works. Handke's Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung also portrays an alienated individual and accordingly evidences parallels to both his previous novel and other new subjective works. But Keuschnig, in contrast to Bloch, undergoes moments of true feeling in which alienation is overcome in expectation of a new life. In this novel, Handke attempts to portray the realization of alienation's freeing function, which other New Subjectivists present in its potentiality only. The most recent novel by Handke examined here, Die Lehre der Saint-Victoire, portrays the attainment of reorientation through aesthetic communication. The moments of happiness are no longer subject to the sudden change of before, and subjective alienation is overcome within a

feeling of contextual belonging and existential mutuality.

¹Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970). Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1975). Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1980). Hereafter cited in the text with (ATE), (SE), and (LS-V) respectively.

²This essay is in a collection of early theoretical essays of the same title: Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972), pp. 19-28. Hereafter all essays of this collection will be cited in the text with (BE) and page number only.

³Manfred Mixner, Peter Handke (Kronberg: Athenäum, 1977), p. 167.

⁴Manfred Durzak, Gespräche über den Roman mit Joseph Breitbach, Elias Canetti, Heinrich Böll, Siegfried Lenz, Hermann Lenz, Wolfgang Hildesheimer, Peter Handke, Hans Erich Nossack, Uwe Johnson, Walter Höllerer: Formbestimmungen und Analysen (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1976), p. 320.

⁵Heinz Ludwig Arnold, "Nicht Literatur machen, sondern als Schriftsteller leben: Gespräch mit Peter Handke," in Als Schriftsteller leben: Gespräche mit Peter Handke, Franz Xaver Kroetz, Gerhard Zwerenz, Walter Jens, Peter Rühmkorf, Günter Grass (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1979), p. 17.

⁶Arnold, p. 17.

⁷Irene Wellershoff, Innen und Außen: Wahrnehmung und Vorstellung bei Alain Robbe-Grillet und Peter Handke (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1980), p. 7.

⁸Quoted according to Rolf Michaelis, "Ohrfeigen für das Lieblingskind: Peter Handke und seine Kritiker. Eine Beispielsammlung," Text + Kritik, 24/24a (1976), ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold, 83. Original quote in Merkur 318, p. 225.

⁹Ulrich Greiner, Der Tod des Nachsommers. Aufsätze, Porträts, Kritiken zur österreichischen Gegenwartsliteratur (München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1979), pp. 94-95.

¹⁰Michaelis offers a review of Handke criticism and a brief outline of its development in his article.

¹¹Peter Pütz, "Peter Handke," in Deutsche Dichter der Gegenwart. Ihr Leben und Werk, ed. Benno von Wiese (Berlin: E. Schmidt, 1973), p. 668.

¹²Quoted according to Hellmuth Karasek, "Das Abenteuer, ein anderer zu werden: Peter Handkes 'Kurzer Brief zum langen Abschied,'" Die Zeit, 31 March 1972, p. LIT 1. Original quote from Handke's Der kurze Brief zum

langen Abschied.

¹³Ernst Nef, "Peter Handkes neue Schriften und seine Entwicklung." Universitas, 31 (1976), 1241.

¹⁴Peter Handke, Als das Wünschen noch geholfen hat (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974), p. 76. Hereafter cited in the text with (Wü) and page number only.

¹⁵Michael Hays, "Peter Handke and the End of the 'Modern,'" Modern Drama, 23 (1981), 349.

¹⁶Handke is quoted according to Rolf Michaelis, "Die Katze vor dem Spiegel: Oder: Peter Handkes Traum von der 'anderen Zeit,'" Theater heute, 14, No. 12 (1973), 5.

¹⁷Thomas F. Barry, "Sehnsucht nach einem Bezugssystem: The Existential Aestheticism of Peter Handke's Recent Fiction," Handke Session, MLA Convention, New York, December 1981, p. 2.

¹⁸Durzak, p. 334.

¹⁹Handke is quoted here according to Michaelis, "Die Katze," 5.

²⁰Arnold, "Gespräch," p. 26.

²¹Durzak, p. 333.

²²Christian Linder, "Die Ausbeutung des Bewußtseins: Gespräch mit Peter Handke," in Schreiben und Leben: Gespräche mit Jürgen Becker, Peter Handke, Walter Kempowski, Wolfgang Koeppen, Günter Wallraff, Dieter Wellershoff (Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1974), p. 34.

²³Bruno Hillebrand, "Auf der Suche nach der verlorenen Identität. Peter Handke - 'Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied,'" in Der deutsche Roman im 20. Jahrhundert: Analysen und Materialien zur Theorie und Soziologie des Romans, ed. Manfred Brauneck (Bamberg: Buchner, 1976), II, 106.

²⁴Durzak, pp. 346-47.

²⁵Karlheinz Rossbacher, "Detail und Geschichte," in Erzähltechniken in der modernen österreichischen Literatur, ed. Alfred Doppler and Friedbert Aspöckberger (Wien: Österreichischer Bundesverlag, 1976), p. 93.

²⁶Wellershoff, p. 42.

²⁷See for example pp. 35, 36, and 96.

²⁸Peter Handke, "Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter," Text + Kritik, 24 (1969), ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold, 3.

²⁹J. J. White, "Signs of Disturbance: The Semiological Import of Some Recent Fiction by Michael Tournier and Peter Handke," Journal of European Studies, 4, No. 3 (1974), 244.

³⁰Wellershoff, p. 47.

³¹Heinz Ludwig Arnold, "Reine Künstlichkeit: Peter Handkes Roman 'Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter,'" in Brauchen wir noch die Literatur? Zur literarischen Situation in der Bundesrepublik (Düsseldorf: Bertelsmann Universitätsverlag, 1972), p. 189.

³²Irene Wellershoff discusses differing opinions concerning the ending of Handke's novel and concludes: "Beim Tormann hat Handke es aber noch in der Schwebe gelassen, ob Bloch wirklich auf dem Weg der Heilung ist," p. 69.

³³The name is reminiscent of several Kafka figures, above all Gregor Samsa in Die Verwandlung, whose experience of deforming alienation is also similar to Gregor Keuschnig's. Numerous parallels have been drawn between Handke and other authors, particularly Kafka and Sartre (La Nausée). See for example: Michael Wood, "Play It Again, Franz," The New York Review of Books, 23 June 1977, pp. 22-24, and Wolfgang Kraus, "Laudatio auf Peter Handke: Zur Verleihung des Kafka-Preises 10. Oktober 1979," Literatur und Kritik, 14 (1979), 577-78.

³⁴Arnold, "Gespräch," p. 21.

³⁵Barry, p. 2.

³⁶Compare this feeling to Handke's description of fear in "Eine Zwischenbemerkung über die Angst": "...das Gefühl, daß jetzt ich gemeint bin..." (WÜ, 101).

³⁷William H. Rey, "Peter Handke - oder die Auferstehung der Tradition," Literatur und Kritik, 12 (1977), 396.

³⁸Wellershoff, p. 33.

³⁹Handke himself admits to an intentional "Inhumanen Akzent" in his interview with Heinz Ludwig Arnold, "Gespräch," p. 33. Handke has been harshly criticized for his portrayal of other people and societal solidarity. Peter Schneider, for example, accuses Keuschnig of perceiving other people, especially women, with a "bösen Blick": "Angst aus dem Zettelkasten: Peter Handkes Roman 'Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung,'" Frankfurter Rundschau, 28 June 1975, Sec. Zeit und Bild, p. 4. Martin Roda Becher complains that Handke's protagonist reacts "mit brutaler Begriffsstutzigkeit" to anything or anyone who approaches too closely: "Peter Handke - ein Euphorion? Zu seinen letzten Büchern," Merkur, 30 (1976), 197.

⁴⁰Becher, 196.

⁴¹Wellershoff, p. 37.

⁴²Manfred Jurgensen, "Die zuständig gewordene Poesie? Peter Handke: Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung," in Erzählformen des fiktionalen Ich: Beiträge zum deutschen Gegenwartsroman (Bern: Francke, 1980), p. 9.

⁴³Peter Pütz, "Peter Handke," in Kritisches Lexikon zur deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur, ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold (München: edition text + kritik, 1978), p. 5.

⁴⁴Rey, 397.

⁴⁵Arnold, "Gespräch," p. 24.

⁴⁶Handke complains that this task ("Arbeit") is too often overlooked by critics. See Arnold, "Gespräch," p. 26.

⁴⁷Wellershoff, p. 32.

⁴⁸Jürgen Sang, Fiktion und Aufklärung: Werkskizzen zu Andersch, Bernhard, Böll, Fichte, Frisch, Fröhlich, Grass, Handke, Härtling, Johnson, Lenz, Loetscher, Nossack, Roth, Walser, Wellershoff, Wohmann, Zwerenz (Bern: Peter Lang, 1980), p. 58.

⁴⁹Peter Schneider derogatorily calls Keuschnig's feelings "Launen." Jean Améry criticizes the accidental and arbitrary nature of Keuschnig's feelings in his review: "Grundloser Ekel: Marginales zu Peter Handkes neuem Buch 'Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung,'" Merkur, 29 (1975). Handke states of Améry's review: "Gerade das, was mir an dem Buch als wahr erscheint, erschien ihm [Améry] als zufällig": Arnold, "Gespräch," p. 23.

⁵⁰Arnold, "Gespräch," pp. 22-23.

⁵¹Gunther Pakendorf, "Empfindungen eines entfremdeten Individuums. Zu Peter Handkes Geschichte des Gregor Keuschnig," in Handke. Ansätze - Analysen - Anmerkungen, ed. Manfred Jurgensen (Bern: Francke, 1979), p. 136.

⁵²Arnold, "Gespräch," p. 23.

⁵³Gustav Zürcher, "Leben mit Poesie," Text + Kritik, 24/24a (1976), ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold, 52.

⁵⁴Améry, 469.

⁵⁵Michael Buselmeier, "Das Paradies ist verriegelt," Text + Kritik, 24/24a (1976), ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold, 58.

⁵⁶Gabriele Wohmann, "Lebenszeichen - Todeszeichen : Peter Handkes neue Erzählung 'Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung,'" Die Welt, 20 March

1975, Sec. Welt des Buches, p. 1.

⁵⁷It is a simple matter to draw correlations between the narrator's comments and Handke's own works. The significance of dreams and the "als-ob" perspective are common to many of his earlier works, including Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter and Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung. Magical objects, i.e. everyday things made special by means of the "fremden Blick" are also typical. For the narrator's reference to the experience of swaying cypress trees, see Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied, p. 95. For the landscape which closes in upon the subject, see Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter, p. 47, and the poem "Leben ohne Poesie," p. 16 in Als das Wünschen noch geholfen hat. The stylistic element "plötzlich" was discussed earlier in this chapter as typical for Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung.

⁵⁸The feeling of "Verborgenheit" is acquired through reading the quiet, patient, and calm descriptive pictures in Hermann Lenz' works. See Handke's essay about this writer entitled "Jemand anderer: Hermann Lenz" and contained in his collection of pieces Als das Wünschen noch geholfen hat. See especially pp. 84 and 99. The ability of Lenz to quiet fear and provoke feelings of naturalness and happiness through his works undoubtedly played a significant role in Handke's decision to dedicate Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire to this author: "für Hermann Lenz und Hanne Lenz, zum Dank für den Januar 1979."

⁵⁹See pp. 21, 24, 26, and 99 for example.

Chapter Six--The Love Stories of Botho Strauß

Introduction

As a literary critic, as a dramatic advisor for the "Berliner Schaubühne," and above all as an increasingly important and well-known author of drama, prose, and even poetry, Botho Strauß is most noted for his sensitivity and for the portrayal of personal feelings. On the basis of his adaptations of dramatic pieces in Berlin during the early seventies Strauß is credited with the sensitization of a theater devoted too exclusively to objective and rational political enlightenment:

Strauß hat zu Beginn der siebziger Jahre als erster auf der Bühne etwas von dem ahnen lassen, was man später "neue Sensibilität" genannt hat: das Eindringen von Gefühlen ins politische Agitations- und Belehrungstheater der sechziger Jahre. Als Dramaturg an der mit so viel politischem Elan gestarteten Berliner Schaubühne hat er vor allem mit seinen Bearbeitungen "Kleist's Traum vom Prinzen Homburg", 1972, und der "Sommergäste" von Gorki, Dezember 1974, dieses "neue" Gefühl in Stücken der Vergangenheit aufgespürt und in der Gegenwart heimisch gemacht.¹

The first dramatic work written by Strauß himself, Die Hypochonder in 1972, served in its extreme subjectivity as the breakthrough to a theater concerned with the individual's inner emotional and psychic world.² Strauß' later dramatic pieces unfold and explore the many possibilities of what in the meantime had earned the label of New Subjectivity: "Dennoch kommt es im Drama erst während der siebziger Jahre zur Entfaltung dessen, was wir Neue Subjektivität nennen.... Und nirgendwo sind ihre Möglichkeiten in solcher Vielfalt und mit solcher Subtilität realisiert wie in den Stücken von Botho Strauß."³

Strauß, in an essay of 1970 entitled "Versuch, ästhetische und politische Ereignisse zusammenzudenken," discusses two ideas, one

concerning theme and the other form, which characterize his literary production and also comprise his subjectivity. Strauß understands craziness ("das Irresein") as a typical metaphor to express the state of the individual within today's society:

Zur Zeit ist das Irresein, so scheint es, eine ganz gewöhnliche Metapher für das Befinden des Individuums überhaupt, für die internierten Kräfte seiner Fantasie, inmitten einer Gesellschaft, welche nur zur Raison zu bringen versteht, welche im Namen der Vernunft eine perverse Unterdrückungsherrschaft ausübt.⁴

Strauß' concept of craziness is very similar to that of alienation. The individual finds himself alone and deprived of a societal context. He has lost contact with an objectivity existing outside of himself. This leads to a focusing of attention solely upon the afflicted self. The figures of Strauß' literature, suffering from the loss of societal integration, are obsessed with self-observation ("Selbstbeobachtung").⁵ His characters are involved in the new subjective confrontation of the self with self. The individual's alienated state is for Strauß most succinctly and intensely expressed in human abandonment and separation:

Im Verlassensein findet Strauß die für ihn charakteristische Metapher für den Zustand des Individuums in der heutigen Zeit. Ob es sich um die Zurückgelassenen in den beiden Erzählungen oder ob es sich um die 'Paare' in den frühen Stücken handelt – sie alle empfinden das gleiche: sie haben den Zusammenhang verloren, sind "aus der Zeit gefallen" und ständig bedroht, zur "Beute von wilden Empfindungen und Redensarten" zu werden.⁶

It is important to note that the state of alienation is for Strauß not an exception, but rather typical of the individual within today's society in general. Herein lies the politically critical consequence of his literature. Irrationality, or "craziness," serves as the last preserve of the individual within the face of rational society. Strauß contrasts the internal drives, dreams, and imagination of his characters to the oppressive reasonableness

of society. He portrays the alienated individual, deprived of societal contact and left to his own feelings and thoughts. This portrayal possesses, as was true of other New Subjectivists, a positive and socially relevant potential. Strauß' characters send out an unmistakable cry for a humanity so sadly lacking in today's functionalized and rationalized society. Individual subjectivity undermines the order of an oppressively objective society.

The formal idea expressed in the early essay quoted above is that of ambiguity. Strauß agrees with the words of Manfred Bierwisch:

"... Man muß sich zuerst klarmachen, daß es im Grunde in den meisten Fällen bei interessanten Stücken 'die' Fabel gar nicht gibt, sondern daß das, was an Szenen und Situationen aneinandergereiht ist, oft eine ganze Serie von Fabeln darstellen kann. ... Nun ist die Frage, ob man Mittel entwickeln kann, in denen die Doppeldeutigkeit oder die mehrfache Interpretationsmöglichkeit eines Zusammenhangs aktualisiert werden kann.... Es scheint mir wichtig, daß man nicht zwei oder drei Versionen hintereinander spielt, sondern zeigt: In einem und demselben Strukturzusammenhang stecken mehrere Möglichkeiten."⁷

A work is not structured upon one linearly developed storyline, but upon a multitude of disconnected threads ("Spuren"),⁸ or upon fragments ("Bruchstücke von Handlungszusammenhängen").⁹ The form of Strauß' works can be compared to the irrationality and disruption of dreams,¹⁰ or to the leaping and hallucinatory discontinuity of a fever. As such it reflects and expresses the alienated state of the protagonist: "Entfremdung...wird so nicht beschreibend oder analysierend dargestellt, sondern in der Bewegung innerhalb der Texte, die den Ängsten, Halluzinationen und Obsessionen der Figuren folgt, konkret vorgeführt."¹¹

In this chapter three of Strauß' prose pieces will be examined, namely Marlenes Schwester, Die Widmung, and Rumor.¹² They are all stories of

a love which has been or is being retracted, thereby exposing the protagonist to the new subjective experience of alienation.

A. Separation as Alienation in Marlenes Schwester

Botho Strauß' short piece entitled Marlenes Schwester (1975) recounts the story of the love between and separation of two inseparable sisters. Marlene's decision to divorce herself from her sister deprives Marlene's sister of all meaning and context for her life, thereby plunging her into an alienated state of isolation and dissolution very similar to other new subjective protagonists. In the absence of a societal link, Marlene's sister sinks into her own personal world of feelings. This world is critically contrasted to the rationality of society. The form of Strauß' piece reflects the confusion and dream-like or even delirious condition of the protagonist. It best expresses the experience of disorientation and, in addition, evidences many of the trademarks noted for other new subjective works.

The character of the relationship between Marlene's sister and Marlene is manifested in the fact that the narrator protagonist refers to herself throughout the work only as Marlene's sister and never with her own name. The narrator protagonist is totally dependent upon her sister Marlene for her sense of self and identity: "Ich? - sie fuhr zusammen und erwachte . . . Ich bin Marlenes Schwester" (MS,14). Even just before their separation the two sisters embody one final picture of inseparableness (MS,15). The attachment of the two is founded upon their relationship as sisters, which, because it is a blood tie, is permanent and lifelong: "Eine Schwester verliert man doch nicht, wie einen Mann, wie einen Kerl, aus dem Leben. Eine Schwester ist eine angeborene Lebensgefährtin. Deine

Eltern haben dir ein Schwesterlein geschenkt" (MS.17). Marlene constitutes the meaning of life itself for her sister: "Ach, sagte ich [Marlenes Schwester] schwach und bequem, es genügt ja, wenn du [Marlene] der Sinn alles Unverständlichen bist" (MS.19).

The separation from Marlene destroys the narrator protagonist's reason for existence itself and abandons her to meaninglessness. She feels as if she is acting out her life before the eyes of the dead: "Ich lebe für eine Abwesende. Mein Gedächtnistheater gibt eine Vorstellung für eine abwesende Zuschauerin. Ich ziere mich, so allein ich auch bin. Es ist, als führe man diese ganze affige Existenz vor den Augen der Toten auf" (MS.19). Even her repeated attempts to kill herself are meaningful only in reference to Marlene, so that her suicide becomes senseless when she has a brief foreboding of Marlene's death: "Sie [Marlenes Schwester] geriet in eine alles umstürzende Konfusion; wie sinnlos wäre dann, wie komisch umsonst ihr eigener Tod, wie grundfalsch alles, was sie jetzt noch erwog und empfand" (MS.36). The separation from her beloved sister plunges the narrator protagonist into a state of alienation. She is no longer firmly rooted within society and is susceptible to the same type of vertigo or imbalance as was noted for other new subjective characters (MS.17). The withdrawal of Marlene means at the same time a withdrawal of existential orientation.

The experience undergone by Marlene's sister upon the departure of her sister consists of increasing isolation and the gradual disintegration of her social identity. Immediately after the interruption of the sisters' summer vacation together, the narrator protagonist travels to the apartment of a common friend where she seeks quiet refuge and shelter (MS.18).

From here she retreats to a commune in the countryside close to Aschaffenburg, where contact with the outside is totally broken. She wants neither to work nor to meet the other members of the community and, relinquishing what remains of her money, pleads only to be left in peace to die (MS,25). The narrator protagonist, alone, without a home, or a job, or money, and desiring to see no one and nothing, has surrendered all those things which establish the contours of individual identity within its social context:

Die Liebe zu Marlene -, vielleicht der letzte gesellschaftliche Ort, den ich passiert habe, sehr entlegen schon, wenn man zurückblickt auf die breite Stadt, in der ich mich ausdehnte, in unvordenklicher Zeit, der Beruf und der Geldumsatz, die Straßen und die Besuche, die Abwechslung und die Wiederkehr -; sehr entlegen schon, aber immer noch ein Ort der Sprache, der Verständigungs- und Gefühlsarbeit. Und jetzt? Ich habe den Höhenweg gefunden, auf dem meine Spur sich verliert (MS,18).

The love of Marlene was the protagonist's last societal connection, and in the wake of separation, all trace of her social being threatens to simply disappear.

Divorced from the outside world, Marlene's sister steps into her own inner consciousness. She loses herself within the "Einbildungen, Wahnideen, Wachträume"¹³ of her own mind, within her thoughts, memories, and feelings. The narrator protagonist retreats into the world of her own personal memories. No longer participating in the life around her, she relives jumbled segments of her past, especially her past with Marlene. In the opening pages of the story the protagonist returns again and again to an outing at the sea with her sister. She also relives the more recent pain and suffering undergone during their quarrel and Marlene's decision to break off future contact. So absolute is the

protagonist's isolation, so close is her dissolution to its endpoint of death, that all which remains of warmth, life, and feelings huddles within these thoughts and memories. Her body is described as an icecold corpse, and her terrified scream within sounds apathetic when uttered aloud (MS.35). The narrator protagonist turns from the outer phenomena to focus in upon her own self. An objective or neutral reality has been replaced by her fears, hallucinations, and dreams, by her irrational, at times close to delirious, and threatened inner mind. On one of Marlene's sister's last walks outside of her own room all of nature menaces her in oppressive closeness and overabundance:

Die Natur fiel ihr zur Last, sie ertrug sie nicht, sie wurde bedrängend wie eine Überfülle von Menschen. Diese Baummenschen, dachte sie, diese unzähligen Grasmenschen, diese Erdfurchenmenschen, diese Haselnußstrauchmenschen, diese tobenden Grillenmenschen . . . ein böses Märchen (MS.8).

Even while physically outside in nature, the narrator protagonist remains bound to the realm of her inner thoughts: "Doch ihr Blick erfaßte kaum, was sie sah - er kehrte sich nicht ab von ihren Gedanken" (MS.7).

The thoughts of the narrator protagonist are transformed into a language heard solely by the narrator protagonist herself. The only language which remains for Marlene's sister is the silent, non-communicative, and circular one of wildly drifting thoughts: "Nicht weit unter dem Gipfel, das wilde unsinnige Gedankengestöber seit den frühen Morgenstunden. Das ist jetzt meine Sprache" (MS.18). Language, normally a medium of communication in which words are directed toward another person, becomes for Marlene's sister self-expression in the most literal sense of the word. On the one hand, Marlene's sister verbalizes her innermost thoughts and feelings and expresses her self in this manner.

On the other hand, she verbalizes solely to herself, and this verbalization transports her deeper and deeper into her self. Strauß' story consists of a stream of language pouring directly forth from the consciousness of the narrator protagonist.

The reflection of the narrator protagonist upon herself results in a constantly shifting narrative perspective. The language switches back and forth at will and without warning between third and first person, between past and present:

Die jungen Landarbeiter hatten sie ohne Umstände aufgenommen und ihr ein kleines Zimmer im Nebentrakt des Bauernhauses eingerichtet. Sie lassen mich in Ruhe, sie lassen mir Zeit.
Sie bekam zu essen, wenn sie es wünschte (MS.8).

Es riß sie, wie ein Startschuß, aus der Mulde des Bettes. Und sie lief, lief, lief . . .
(Schneller muß ich sein als die Kugel, die durch den Kopf jagt.) Sie lief über die Felder, die Straße, durch den Wald, durchs Dorf und dann immer den Schienen entlang (MS.36).

The narrative perspective traces the movement within the protagonist's mind between memories of her past life or reflections upon her present condition and the sudden, sometimes panicked, thoughts from the present. A shifting narrative perspective is typical for the prose works of Strauß in general. It is the keystone of his subjectivity, for it indicates the confrontation and questioning of self undergone by a protagonist upon loss of a societal context.

The form of Strauß' work is governed by the narrator protagonist's mind. Just as her stream of consciousness comprises the action or plot of the story, so too does it determine the manner in which it is narrated, i.e., its chronology, causality, flow, and style. The narrator protagonist's memory serves as the moving force behind the story, which begins with

her final days and proceeds backwards to reconstruct her life. The key to the chronology in which her life is unfolded lies in the description of her memory: "Und sie haßte nichts so sehr wie diese fahrigen, überreizten Gedächtniszustände, wenn ihr das Leben in tausend Fetzen um die Ohren flog" (MS.9). Marlene's sister exercises no control over the vehemently wild and unruly fragments of her past which swirl by. There exists no logical order to the sequence of events, and it is extremely difficult to unravel the "chronologische Verschachtelung"¹⁴ of remembered incidents. Some incidences occur in exact replication at two different times (MS.11-12;MS.39). Other occurrences are slowly pieced together through the narrator protagonist's later return and addition. A good example of this type of gradual reconstruction is a scene at the beach (MS.9-11).

Not only is the sequence of events subject to an unruly and disordered memory, but in addition it is jumbled and fragmented by means of the drifting thought pattern of the narrator protagonist: "...das wilde unsinnige Gedankengestöber..." (MS.18). The narration is interrupted by "wild platzenden Gedankenblasen, die Erinnerungsfetzen der Wirklichkeit verdrängen und ihrerseits überspült werden von schäumenden Assoziationenketten."¹⁵ Jumps in thought caused by association are apparent as, for example, the narrator protagonist sits in the bathroom of a train crying and, upon observing her girlish knees, suddenly leaps to a picture of herself as a young girl with her father (MS.16). Examples of brief and disjointed flashes of thought are common throughout: "Sie sollen mir um Himmels willen die Schuhe nicht ausziehen!" (MS.9): "Wie? Liegt Staub auf dem Wasser?" (MS.10).

Fragmentation, again reflective of the choppy and disjointed flow of

the narrator protagonist's inner consciousness, must be considered the trademark of the work's entire form. Strauß' short piece evidences many of the fragmentary methods discussed previously for New Subjectivity in general. One finds Incompletion, repetition (especially three times), interruption, omissions of verbs, and short choppy sentences:

Die Brille stinkt, die Uhr stinkt, wirf sie weg! (MS.10).

Geträumt wie ich lese, lese, lese (MS.13).

Wie? Was war das? Ein Witz? Ein Kind? Ein pathetischer Irrtum? . . . Ich habe es nicht erkannt (MS.36).

Ausgeraucht, der Erdboden ist ausgeraucht. Wie komisch, in der Erinnerung, die überschwenglichen Gefühle! (MS.7).

Will es dir nicht besser gehen? Marlene legte ihr die Hand auf die Stirn, stützte ihren Kopf, als sie erbrach. Marlene schöpfte Wasser aus der Quelle am Meer, sie trank aus Marlenes Händen. Marlenes gnädige Darreichung. Marlenes unerforschte Schönheit (MS.9).

All of these devices are indicative of a subjective and disturbed consciousness.

The form of the work serves to involve the reader in the alienation and dissolution which the narrator protagonist herself is experiencing. Her stream of words effectively undermines objective safety as it draws the reader into the uncertainty and instability of a subjective viewpoint. The lack of an orderly progression for the events of the story bewilders and frustrates the reader. His attempts to logically connect and order the chronology are thwarted again and again. The constantly changing narrative perspective functions similarly. It subjects the reader to instability and fluctuation, and undermines any attempt to stand back and view the story with distanced objectivity. The reader is allowed just enough time to start to feel comfortable within a perspective, and then it changes, thereby

necessitating on the part of the reader a reorientation. In general, the reader is burdened with the narrator protagonist's irrationality, or "craziness." The atmosphere of an evil fairy tale (MS.7) pervades much of the narrator protagonist's thought and is intensified by the fact that Marlene's sister is situated on the border between sleep and wakefulness (MS.7). The pictures she imagines in her state of half-sleep are unclear, contourless, eerie, and often grotesque. The reader is left the impression of shadowy indistinction. Nothing happens in certainty, but rather must be surmised: "Offenbar, offenbar: mit letzter Gewißheit lassen sich hier Motive und Schlüsse nicht fassen."¹⁶ The reader, in his attempt to reconstruct and unravel--in his attempt to rationally understand--has only the subjective testimony of the protagonist with which to work. This account is fragmentary, incomplete, illogical, disordered, and often hysterical--it defies rational comprehension and instead imparts to the reader a feeling of threat, of impending doom, of darkness. The reader is drawn into an irrationality similar to that of the protagonist in which objects, events and even people lose their objective, harmless, and definitive outlines to merge and dissolve and disappear.

The irrationality of the protagonist's inner world is contrasted to the unemotional practicality and reasonableness of a politically oriented society. A young worker of the commune where Marlene's sister is staying questions her feelings. By means of unsuspecting reason ("mit unaufdringlicher, doch ahnungsloser Vernunft") he hopes to distract Marlene's sister and reinvolve her in the life around her (MS.24-25). Later, while reading the newspaper, Marlene's sister feels disgust at the self-satisfied and profound tone of the commentaries and leafs hurriedly to

a page full of pictured catastrophies (MS.34). The protagonist, unable to weaken her feelings, cannot be reassimilated into society. From the viewpoint of society she is a crazy person (MS.8). Within her uncompromised domain of irrational feelings she represents an alternative, or "eine Gegenposition: das Versteifen auf den Gefühlsanspruch gegenüber der pseudoaufklärerischen Verurteilung des Psychischen in der Politisierungsphase."¹⁷

In other new subjective works the turn to the irrational and to emotion was understood as a correction of an overly mechanized and functional society. In Strauß' piece there is also societal criticism and positive direction implied by means of the juxtapositions discussed above. This is more directly apparent in a story of communal and idyllic love free of individual need and selfish desire:

Sie waren nun zu fünft mit sich allein und an nichts mehr gebunden als jeder an den anderen. Ein Bann von Sympathie fesselte sie aneinander und niemand konnte ihm entkommen. Wie im Schlaf, wie in einer zweiten Natur entschwanden ihnen die aufsässigen Gefühle und Bedürfnisse, die das soziale und körperliche Leben des vereinzeltten Bürgers üblicherweise beherrschen, vor allem das Wollustgefühl und das Ungleichheitsgefühl lösten sich in nichts auf. Denk dir nur: eine Liebe ohne Begehren, gewaltlos, nur diese glühende Leidenschaft, einander unablässig zu beobachten, aus wechselnden räumlichen Entfernungen (MS.29).

However, the hopeful alternative position of love is grotesquely destroyed by the vampiric relationship between all lovers: "Von dem Aufbruch in eine neue Zukunft...verbleibt in seinen ersten Werken ein ins Groteske verzerrter...Abglanz: ...der utopische Freundschaftsbund...beruht auf Vampirismus...."¹⁸ Vampirism is a metaphor used by Strauß to express the dependency of one's own life upon that of the beloved.¹⁹ The members of the commune can no longer lead independent lives and die when

separated. Similarly, the narrator protagonist's love of Marlene is so overwhelming that it destroys her own self-identity and threatens to engulf that of her sister Marlene as well. Marlene's decision to separate is based on her fear of the oppressive and destructive force of her sister's love (MS,15). The paradoxical and problematical nature of love is thematicized in the work's opening quote: "Ich wünschte, Sie liebten mich nur mit dem Teil Ihres Innern, der unempfindlich und fühllos ist. Maurice Blanchot, Warten Vergessen." This wish is similar to Marlene's desire that the narrator protagonist control and moderate her feelings of love (MS,38). Both wishes are not only contradictory but indeed impossible.

Marlene's Schwester is a story of love between two sisters. But of importance to Strauß is not the realization, but the withdrawal of this love. Withdrawal of love brings about the state of "Irresein," or alienation, whereby the individual is plunged into subjective irrationality. It is this individual irrationality which is critically contrasted to the objectivity and rationality of today's society. Within this irrationality lies the hope and positive potential of Strauß' literature. The narrator protagonist must ultimately die from the experience of dissolution and alienation. But through the form of the work the reader has been afflicted and burdened with this same experience. The oppressive and unquestioned objectivity of society has been undermined during the subject's confrontation with self.

B. A Search for Connection in Die Widmung

Strauß' narration entitled Die Widmung (1977) also, as was seen for Marlenes Schwester, revolves around separation, this time between Richard Schroubek and his girlfriend Hannah Beyl. This separation, again similar

to its predecessor, serves to destroy the normal and established patterns of life for the protagonist Richard, the partner left behind. The difference between the two protagonists lies in their reaction to the crisis undergone. Richard reacts by maintaining a journal, or a dedication ("Widmung") to Hannah. This journal serves the protagonist as a forum for self-confrontation. The written word reveals the alienated Richard in his societal nakedness and at the same time intensifies the feelings of the irrational inner self. The journey into the consciousness of the protagonist critically highlights the superficiality of a society disconnected from its historical, cultural, and erotic roots and bound only to present rationality.

The sudden and unexpected departure of Hannah exposes Richard to the destructive experience of alienation. The protagonist himself reflects upon his separation as the most terrifying and shattering of all types of personal catastrophe:

Keine andere Form des gewöhnlichen Scheiterns, weder Krankheit noch Ruin oder Versagen im Beruf, findet einen solch tiefen, grausamen Widerhall im Unbewußten wie die Trennung. Sie rührt unmittelbar an den Ursprung aller Angst und weckt ihn auf. Sie greift mit einem Griff so tief, wie überhaupt Leben in uns reicht (Wl,27).

Abandonment means the withdrawal of the closest and warmest of all contexts for the individual. Security is suddenly revealed as false, and the human being most intimate to oneself becomes painfully cold and distant: "Es geht ums Verlassenwerden, um jenen jähen Moment, in dem sich das harmonische Gefühl der Geborgenheit in einer Beziehung als Trug enthüllt und Kälte einbricht, wo vorher so selbstverständlich Wärme war."²⁰

Separation itself is undergone by all of society at one time or another. Although it is generally thought that normality consists of togetherness, the truth is actually just the opposite: "...und das Negative, das Scheitern, die

Trennung, der Irrtum machen das Allgemeine aus.... So ermittelt schließlich die äußerste Subjektivität des Scheiterns den einzig verlässlichen Erfahrungswert für das Wort 'normal...' (Wi,25-26). As common as this experience may be, Richard is not a companion in suffering:

Ich weiß wohl: jeder hat das, was mir mit H. zugestoßen ist, in dieser oder jener Form schon einmal durchgemacht oder es wird ihm bevorstehen. Ja, Tausende erleben es jetzt vielleicht zur selben Stunde, und doch bin ich fest davon überzeugt: nicht ein einziger würde sich in mir wiedererkennen. Ich bin kein Leidensgenosse (Wi,110).

The lack of mutuality between Richard and other abandoned people is obvious in a farcical scene where Fritz, who also briefly knew and was abandoned by Hannah, pays a visit to the protagonist. The exaggerated effusiveness of his emotions quickly reveals him to Richard as a fake, "nicht wirklich ein leidenschaftlicher Mensch..., nur ein Halb-Irrer, noch als Irrer ein Stümper" (Wi,52).

The difference between the abandoned of society and the deserted Richard lies in the former's desire to assuage the pain, whereas Strauß' protagonist seeks to intensify it. The experience of separation is one so profound that it defies reason and touches upon emotions lodged deep within the unconscious (Wi,27;Wi,103). Society turns to the science of psychoanalysis to explain these feelings and, in the process of categorization, the pain and fear disappear behind prefabricated and rational clarification: "Ausgerechnet das, was mich am tiefsten trifft, verschwindet in ein Schema von Betroffenheit, in dem vor lauter Papa und Mama der eigentliche Leidensgegenstand, meine einzige Freundin kaum noch fühlbar ist" (Wi,101-102). For this reason psychological explanations hold no interest for Richard. He prefers an analysis which will augment his unconscious and thereby nurture his feelings: "Unterdessen will ich

mich weiterhin einer Art der Analyse zuwenden, deren Worte an der Realität des Unbewußten mitwirken und diese eher zu vermehren suchen, statt sie der alternden Idee einer Enthüllung zu unterwerfen" (Wi,41). The different type of analysis undertaken by Richard is his decision to write. While other people seek diversion ("Ablenkung") in their work to ease their condition in forgetfulness (Wi,36), Richard finds a diversion ("Ablenkung") in his dedication, which he hopes will enable him to bear his pain over a long period of time (Wi,106). While society sinks into an apathetic paralysis before the television, Strauß' protagonist picks up his pen. The written word serves Richard as the means by which to intensify his pain (Wi,104).

The experience of abandonment leads to the gradual but total withdrawal of the protagonist from the society around him. The loss of context destroys Richard's previous life of certainty and safety which was based on reason: "Gesicherte Erfahrungen und feste Gewohnheiten der Vernunft verschmolzen wieder zu einer Rohmasse von Unfertigkeit, Angst und Unwissen" (Wi,103). The protagonist quits his job, or rather simply stops working. He sells a work of art for money which he places in a post office account so as to have cash available through the mail. He retreats to his apartment, closes the curtains, and there he remains, in darkness and isolation. After a while he stops caring for his own body and for the cleanliness of his apartment. He becomes prone to accidents and mishaps which increase the disarray of his surroundings. Richard sinks into the contourless realm of his subconscious, of pain, and of fear. The dedication he composes is testimony to his loss of contact with outer reality. The protagonist is stripped of the outer garb displayed by most of

society for the sake of self-advertisement and show. Left behind is his irreducible and irreplaceable core:

Übergesichtig sind die Leute. Jeder ein Zuviel, ein Supermarkt, überschwemmt mit Merkmalen, Hinweisen, Blickfängen, durch die man kaum noch zur Ware findet. ... Kein Augenblick, wo der Typ einmal für sich sein könnte – wann sehe ich einmal seinen Irreduzibeln, unersetzbaren Ernst? Doch nur, wenn er ganz in sich zusammensinkt. Vielleicht nur diese vier, fünf, Intensivstationen der Normalität, Schrei, Trauer, Glück, Fanatismus, in denen das verschwenderische Geschäft mit der Personifizierung eingeschränkt und die Person zu einem einzigen, klar erkennbaren Ausdruck zusammengefaßt wird (Wi,38).

Richard has been reduced to the single feeling of pain. His dedication traces the loss of outer reality as he sinks into himself.

The written word shows Richard his self in its nakedness, devoid of societal definition and context. But in its nakedness the self has finally become discoverable. Thus the written word serves as a medium of self-constitution:²¹ "In der Schrift bin ich nackter als ausgezogen. Kein Bein, kein Atem, kein Kleid, kein Ton. Weder Stimme noch Abglanz. Alles ausgeräumt. Statt dessen die ganze Fülle eines Menschen, verschrumpelt und verwachsen, in seinem Krickel-krakel. Seine Zeilen sind sein Rest und seine Vermehrung" (Wi,21). From within the state of outer reduction and dissolution the protagonist is involved in an investigation and exploration of self ("Ich-Forschung": Wi,41). Richard's dedication to Hannah intensifies and deepens the emotional trauma of separation. It augments ("Vermehrung") the realm of the unconscious in general. It leads Richard into his past, his feelings, in short into his inner consciousness. The stream of words produced by Richard represents verbalization of the irrational inner self, a self which remains silent within societal definitions and roles.

Richard's dedication is propelled by the loss of outer context upon Hannah's departure, i.e., it is propelled by the experience of separation, but it serves as a bridge of connection by plunging Richard into a realm beyond societal consciousness. Society as portrayed in this work by Strauß is shallow and superficial. It has lost its connection to an historic, symbolic, and erotic heritage. Only the individual who has, like Richard, fallen from societal context has the opportunity to refind this lost linkage. The dedication is both a protocol of his state of abandonment²² and the medium of relinkage: "Die Trennung scheint sich, eine Familie der Brüche, in alle Lebensverrichtungen auszusiedeln. Überall ist der 'stete Fluß' unterbrochen. ...Infolgedessen bildet das Schreiben...die aufbegehrende Mitte all dessen, was verstopft, geteilt und eingeschnürt ist" (WI,27). The written word provides Richard the opportunity for erotic, cultural, historical, and biographical reconnection. The protagonist is called a collector of all things divided ("Sammler des Geteilten": WI,40), and he sinks into his condition of abandonment. At the same time, however, he seeks linkage, or a context, on both a personal and societal level.

On the personal level, Richard's dedication is an attempt to maintain connection with Hannah. On the one hand, the dedication links Richard to Hannah by continuing their dialogue. It represents one half of a conversation abruptly and dangerously interrupted upon Hannah's departure: "Ich überbrücke eine gefährliche Unterbrechung unseres Gesprächs" (WI,37). By delivering this half to Hannah, Richard hopes to restore continuity and wholeness not only to their conversation, but to their relationship:

Am Ende ihrer Trennung, die er nach wie vor für eine befristete hielt, wollte er Hannah das gewissenhafte und entsetzliche Protokoll ihrer Abwesenheit überreichen, und es sollte die Lücke zwischen dem Abschied und der Wiederkehr

ausfüllen, so daß sich später das Ganze eines niemals abgerissenen Gesprächs wiederherstellen ließ (Wi,106).

In addition, the dedication, by means of sharpening the protagonist's pain, ensures the closeness of Hannah at least emotionally: "Jedenfalls will er sich von diesem Schmerz nicht trennen, denn das würde ja bedeuten, daß er die Frau, deren Verschwinden er nicht begreifen kann, für immer aufgibt."²³

The structure of separation and connection apparent on the personal level within Richard's state of abandonment and longing for reunion, is mirrored in the contrast of a disconnected society to the desired flow ("Fluß," "fließen": Wi,114) of remythicization ("remythisiert": Wi,113). The television epitomizes the fragmentation, apathy, falseness, and entrapment within the retreat for connection, linkage, and context. Here lie lost emotions, cultural experiences, symbolic meaning, and the continuum of history and biography. The society surrounding Richard is one totally lacking in passion and eroticism. The women who scream in excitement and pleasure at a soccer game are apathetic in bed with their husbands (Wi,64). Everyone possesses an inborn and natural ability to affect the opposite sex erotically, an ability which depends upon the unconscious and yet intentional symbolic interaction between sexuality and language, but this ability has been lost:

Woher nun der Tod aller Reize bei dieser jungen Frau? ... Ich bin aber überzeugt von der natürlichen Befähigung eines jeden Menschen, erotisch zu wirken, zu verlocken, auf sich aufmerksam zu machen, von einer symbolischen Tätigkeit zwischen Sexualität und Sprache, und doch von beiden angeregt und geformt, ein unbewußtes Können mit erklärten Absichten.

Warum hat Frau N. dies Können eingebüßt, warum habe ich es eingebüßt? (Wi,67).

In today's sexually enlightened society it is more embarrassing to inquire

about the last name of one's partner than to sleep with him or her: "Das erste Mal mit ihr zu schlafen, bereitete weniger Verlegenheit, als sie nach ihrem Nachnamen zu fragen" (Wi,15).

The passion of love and the eroticism of a relationship are only possible at the end of that love or relationship. Only at the point of separation does one today expend the energy of ardor which previously marked the beginning of a love affair: "Leidenschaft, Briefwechsel eventuell, Wahnsinnstagen gehören heute dem Ende allein, der Krise, der Trennung, dem Gehen" (Wi,15). The power of love first becomes apparent only upon its dissolution, only when it is broken: "Den Sinn eines wissenschaftlichen Versuchs enthüllt erst sein Scheitern. Die Kraft, die eine Liebesbeziehung bewegt hat, kommt erst im Bruch zur größten Wirkung" (Wi,25). The effect of Hannah's disappearance on Richard is to bring him closer than ever before to the departed: "Gewiß war ihm die Verschwundene niemals näher als jetzt, da er sie so lebhaft entbehrt. Er braucht Stillstand, nicht Beschäftigung, er braucht Urlaub zum Erinnern, Flitterwochen nach der Trennung, er hat sich mit einer Abwesenden vermählt" (Wi,37). Separation creates in Richard an awareness of the superficiality of feelings. He endeavors within his dedication to deepen and strengthen his experience of pain. The protagonist is called an investigator of emotions ("Empfindungsforscher": Wi,42), for he examines and dwells upon feelings. He subjects himself to an implosion of feelings.²⁴ By this means he attempts to overcome society's superficiality ("kleinbürgerliche Schrumpfmelancholie": Wi,120) and rediscover a realm of true and profound feeling.

Society perceives surrounding reality through eyes prejudiced by means of prelearned perception models. The individual is taught several

methods to approach reality. Richard remembers that as a child he received a magazine called "Der Späher" which sent its reader on expeditions to recognize and visually gather objects or events of reality. Later, the protagonist learned to approach reality by attempting to reveal it through the science of psychology: "Das Reale erspähen blieb unbefriedigend. Um so größer meine Neugierde, als es einige Jahre später plötzlich hieß: das Reale demaskieren!" (WI,87). Even later, reality is understood within the confining parameters of a political ideology (WI,88). Such methods prevent awareness of an object in its own uniqueness and individuality. Instead it appears only as part of a learned and perhaps imaginary context:

Und selbst wenn es so etwas wie Einzelheiten und Individuelles wirklich gäbe, wären wir nicht in der Lage, es wahrzunehmen. Unsere Organe werden uns immer nur verständigen, wenn sie irgendeinen Zusammenhang gefunden haben, eine Typik, oder zumindest etwas davon, gerade so viel, daß der Rest zum Ganzen halluziniert wird (WI,134).

The manner in which society perceives is manifest in a scene between a mother and her handicapped child at the zoo. The child is briefly moved from his apathy in a supreme effort to express the wonder of a dove perched atop a giraffe's head. But the woman, for whom this appearance could also elicit at least a brief moment of astonishment, does not look up from her magazine: "Sie sieht aber nicht hin und sagt noch einmal: 'Ja, das ist eine Giraffe, Herbert. Die Giraffe ist das höchste Tier auf Erden.' Der Behinderte nickt. Nun sagt er nichts mehr. Fehlschlag der Begeisterung" (WI,13-14).

The crisis of separation experienced by Richard distorts his manner of perception: "Die Krise, verursacht durch den Verlust der Freundin Hanna, bezeugt...einen Schub veränderter Wahrnehmungen...."²⁵ The pain he

strives to intensify activates his power of observation: "Mit wachem Schmerz, der die Wahrnehmung aufgerauht hält, beobachtet Richard sich und die Rudimente seiner Umwelt..."²⁶ Richard proceeds through his surroundings and notes scenes similar to the one at the zoo. These are scenes of deviation which frequently involve people handicapped in some way. His own loss of context has freed him from the need to discover unity and totality in all that he observes, thereby allowing him to note the fragments of a context which does indeed exist, but remains incomprehensible: "Das eigentlich Sehenswerte wird doch immer nur als Bruchstück einer tiefen, mächtigen Typik auftauchen, die wir als Ganzes genauso schwer begreifen und festhalten können wie der Behinderte die Taube auf dem Giraffenkopf" (Wi,14).

Today's society has broken all connection with the past to become totally entrapped within isolated moments of the present. It is an epoch of immobility and silence, an epoch characterized with paralyzing conformity, an epoch in which destinies are not decided, nor are individual biographies made: "Nach einunddreißig Jahren, denkt er [Richard], äußerlich gesehen, ein halbes Leben ohne Biographie. Stille Epoche, die keine Schicksale macht" (Wi,15). Instead of historical differentiation, depth, and reference, there exists today a nervous tendency for synchronous accumulation: "Dem Gedächtnis der Dauer erscheint alles ebenbürtig präsent. Anstelle der Differenz, anstelle eines Zeitmaßes, das zwischen Hoffnung und Widerspruch, Erinnerung und Fortschritt unterscheiden kann, vermehrt sich eine seltsam gedrängte, sammlerische, nervöse Synchronität" (Wi,16).

Richard's dedication to Hannah is a record of the discovery of his

own personal biography. In the process of reflection and remembrance Richard links the isolated moments of his life into a continuum. The flow of words reflects a stream of consciousness which connects past and present. The separation sends him back into his childhood where his present words are reunited with his first word ever laboriously written--
Richard:

Bis ihn ein Liebesunglück aus seinem Beruf und dem Umlauf der Bücher herausschleuderte und so weit zurück schickte, daß er sich zuletzt vor seinem erstgeschriebenen und einst aufgegebenen Wort wiederfand und nun, gierig und mühsam, alles versuchte, daran anzuknüpfen, es endlich fortzusetzen (Wi,119-20).

Through the process of writing the protagonist frees his first word from the lifeless and still collection in which his parents had placed it (Wi,18). His life regains at least a fraction of its lost mobility within the historical continuity of his biography: "Soviel Vorgang, soviel Lauf der Schrift, nur um sich in einer ausweglosen Lage ein bißchen Bewegung zu verschaffen . . ." (Wi,119; see also Wi,23).

Finally, Strauß portrays a society of rituals and concepts rendered empty and meaningless because they can no longer be personally experienced. Society of today has lost connection with its cultural and ancestral heritage, maintaining the ceremonies of old but unable to remember their significance:

So ergeht es uns nicht anders als jenem abessinischen Eingeborenen, der einen wichtigen Mythos nicht mehr wußte und sich deshalb nicht erklären konnte, weshalb er zu so verschiedenartigen Anlässen ein Stück Butter auf dem Kopf trug. "Unsere Vorfahren kannten den Sinn der Dinge, aber wir haben ihn vergessen."
Wir kennen den Sinn der unzähligen Überbleibsel, in denen wir uns ausdrücken, noch sehr viel weniger. Das allermeiste ist uns Butter auf dem Kopf (Wi,84-85).

Similarly, words such as shame and honor must be used within quotation

marks, for their emotional value lies buried deep within the past (WI,84). The symbolic connection between past meaning and contemporary usage has been interrupted, and the only hope for relinkage lies in the hands of poets (WI,85). Richard, as a compulsive reader ("Triebleser": WI,82) and a writer himself, experiences the connective stream between past and present produced within literature's memory. He rejects the ordered and trivial symbols of today in his yearning for those of old: "...schnell ergriffen von alten, primären Symbolen: Blindheit, Meer, Haus, Schrift, Pferd. Bei gleichzeitig aggressivem Überdruß an kleineren, 'sozialeren' Symbolen: Spiegel, Geld, Schuh, Blume, Teig, Uhr – und was dergleichen Plunder uns täglich in seine niedrige Ordnung ruft" (WI,114).

The form of Strauß' novel is determined by the protagonist's inner mind. It reflects the endless flow of words pouring forth from Richard. This flow is not governed by laws of causality and logical progression, because Richard's mind no longer functions according to such order. Order is a system imposed upon the individual by a rational society. The formless flow of Richard's words, propelled by his irrational and subjective inner consciousness, represents a rejection of such an outside order. He demands a form which has no purpose or endpoint. Only a form determined by deviation and divergence leads into the self: "Alle Form muß ans Ziellose gelangen. Schluß mit dem Ende! Ohne Ziel: Fernsehen, Zerstäuber, Mischmasch, Abweichung in sich selbst, lebensecht" (WI, 89). These words of the protagonist are an accurate description of his style and form. The dedication is composed of a mishmash of loosely connected fragments which lack reason and causal motivation and which lead nowhere except ever deeper into Richard's own self.

The first impression received by the reader through the form and style of the work is one of choppy interruption. As was noted for Strauß' earlier work, typically one finds short sentences and many fragments lacking either a verb or subject, and sometimes both. The work opens as follows:

Ganz Europa leidet gegenwärtig unter dieser Hitze. Dreißig Grad im Schatten. Mitte Juni, leichte Quellbewölkung, jeden Tag das gleiche. Es soll ein Jahrhundertsommer werden. Morgens um sieben fährt der erste Sprühwagen unter seinem Fenster vorbei. Er wacht im selben Trübsinn auf, der ihn am Abend eingeschläfert hat. Aus Langeweile zum Friseur gegangen. Herrensalon. Der Besitzer scheint ein Pferdenarr zu sein. Überall neben den Spiegeln Käppis und Reitgerten, Bilder von Rennpferden und Jagdhunden (Wi,7).

Fragmentation is manifest in the snapshots of reality observed by the protagonist. Scenes such as the handicapped child and the giraffe appear and disappear. Other examples include two roofers (Wi,112-13), a man and his wife in a photography store (Wi,76), or the old singer of the closing lines (Wi,145). Such scenes exert no influence on the progression or causality of the action. They remain without consequence ("ein Zwischenfall ohne Folgen": Wi,122), and as such resemble the loosely strung together and disconnected segments of a T.V. news broadcast. Richard himself wonders about the meaning of the rhythm of interruption to which he is prone:

Welches ist der Sinn der Unterbrechung, die sich mir aufzwingt, wenn ich schreibe, und der Ich mich füge, ohne sie zu verstehen? Woher diese stockende Lust? Ansatz, Absatz, aus. Und wieder von vorn: Ansatz, Absatz, aus. Sekundenlang anfangen, um in Sekundenschnelle wieder aufzuhören (Wi,26-27).

In his dedication Richard recounts the personal trauma and suffering he undergoes. In addition, he constantly intersperses his subjective

testimony with general and distanced commentaries. Strauß' work is filled with the random thoughts and reflections of the protagonist: "Reflexion und Erfahrung treten in ein Wechselverhältnis. Strauß' literarische Bebilderung des individuellen Leidens wird daher auch zu einem Diskurs über das Leiden."²⁷ A good example of this back and forth between experience and reflection can be found as Richard, who suffers the pain of abandonment, ponders the normality of separation and crisis. The protagonist's discourse includes a wide variety of topics, as evident in the many passages about society and its ills. It is important to note that these reflections lead nowhere, nor do they intend or pursue a goal. Rather they must be considered one digression after another. The protagonist himself admits to the many digressions within his writings: "Viel Digression auf meinen Blättern. Tut mir wohl. Die richtige Sammlung für H." (WI,89).

This novel by Strauß is marked, as was true of Marlenes Schwester, with a shifting narrative perspective. The changes are not as abrupt as in the earlier work. Usually they correspond to the start of a new numbered chapter. Of the eleven divisions within the dedication six are written in the first person and the remaining five in the third, i.e., approximately half of the dedication is written in the form of a diary and the other half from the seemingly objective viewpoint of an outside observer. This observer, however, knows Richard's every thought and feeling. The narrator, although in the third person, reports from within the protagonist's consciousness. His account may start objectively but it is often undermined by the protagonist's own subjective viewpoint. This subjectivity is evident in both the content and form of the following passage. Although it starts out with distance, it delves deeper and deeper into Richard's thoughts. Accordingly,

the flow becomes fragmentary and interspersed with exclamation marks:

Er [Richard] gings ins Badezimmer. Er spülte und gurgelte mit einem Mundwasser, um den Geschmack des Zigarettenqualms, den er unfreiwillig eingeatmet hatte, loszuwerden. Allmählich wurde ihm klar, wie der unbegreifliche Anruf zustande gekommen war. Hannah mußte auf einem Postamt seine unbeglichene Telefonrechnung bezahlt haben, anders war es nicht möglich; zweihundertsiebenundsechzig Mark, nur um die Leitung frei zu bekommen!, nur für diesen einen Anruf, der selbstverständlich ihm gegolten hatte; sie konnte ja nicht wissen, daß sich zu diesem Zeitpunkt Fritz, der Schuldieners, bei ihm aufhielt. Wahrscheinlich wollte sie ihn um Hilfe rufen und, da es dringend war, hatte sie ohne Zögern mit der Hilfe des anderen vorlieb genommen. Durchtriebene Verfehlung! Wenn auch nur um Haaresbreite. Der nächste Zufall wird auf deiner Seite sein, sagte er spöttisch; so und nicht anders gehört es in deine Schmerzensgeschichte, paßt genau! Er kämmte seine strähnigen Haare zusammen. Duschen später, nicht alles auf einmal (Wi,60).

The shifting narrative perspective is indicative of a protagonist confronting and coming to terms with his own self. In the pages of the dedication Richard reflects upon himself and upon his life. At the beginning of his story the protagonist states that at times he feels that this life story is writing itself and that he is merely the medium of expression. The subject itself is missing: "Was in diesen Séancen geschrieben wird, könnte man gewissermaßen ein Biograf nennen: das Leben hat, nach der Niederwerfung des Subjekts, damit begonnen, seinen Rest zu schreiben" (Wi,24-25). This life story follows Richard around and he tries desperately to find its subject: "Seit Wochen verfolgt mich ein winziges, aber überdeutliches Biograf, zu dem ich verzweifelt das zugehörige Subjekt suche" (Wi,40). In the pages of the dedication Richard does indeed rediscover himself as the subject of his life. When he finally gives his writings to Hannah, he calls the dedication a biography of his last hours (Wi,127).

A feeling of suspension is created due to a general inactivity.

monotony, and lack of distinction. Timelessness is created by means of the prevailing and seemingly endless heat wave which lies over all of Europe. Language plays an important role in producing the sense of suspension. Verbs are frequently found missing or as an Infinitive, past participle, or gerund. This stylistic device generates a feeling of inactivity similar to the state of the protagonist himself: "Vermehrte Neigung zum Gerundiv, dem verpönten: 'die nicht zu ziehende Summe', 'das nicht zu öffnende Hemd', 'das nicht zu schreibende Werk' – tätiges Nichtwerden als Eigenschaft eines Dings" (Wi,102). Indistinction is produced through the lack of a specifically determined subject or by means of the frequent utilization of indefinite subjects such as "was," "nichts," "man," or "Leute." Similar in function is Strauß' usage of pronouns in the absence of a determinable antecedent. Finally, nothing happens or unfolds in this novel except Richard's stream of words. When the reader is first introduced to Richard the latter has already been abandoned. At the end of the novel his condition has become more intense, but it has not changed in nature. No resolution or conclusion is foreseeable, except perhaps the eventual total physical dissolution of the protagonist.

The departure of Hannah confronts the protagonist Richard with the question of why she left him, and the answer to this question lies within himself: "Warum ist sie weggegangen? Er war der Antwort um keinen Schritt näher gekommen. Und doch gab es keinen anderen Weg, als den Grund beharrlich weiter bei sich selber zu suchen" (Wi,44). The dedication must be seen as the attempt to answer this question. It represents the search and exploration of self elicited by separation, i.e., by the experience of alienation. The protagonist, stripped naked of societal pretensions,

reconstitutes himself as subject--he finds the subject of his biography--by means of the written word. Writing intensifies and augments his irrational unconscious self, thereby providing Richard possible linkage to an historic, biographical, cultural, and erotic past long since forgotten by rational society. Toward the end of Strauß' novel, upon handing Hannah his dedication, Richard tells her that everything that he knows about himself is contained in those pages: "Mehr weiß ich nicht von mir" (WI, 141). But Hannah does not read the dedication, and Richard returns to his desk. His flow of words is never-ending, for the subject it plumbs is unfathomable: "Ich bin noch nicht ganz am Ziel . . ."

C. Love and Hate in Rumor

The main character of Strauß' novel entitled Rumor (1980) is similar in many ways to the protagonists already discussed. Bekker is also a figure who seeks love and contact and who, in their absence, undergoes a gradual physical and mental dissolution and increasing alienation from objective reality. Once again the action of Strauß' novel consists of the protagonist's thoughts flowing forth in a jumbled and chaotic stream of words. But Bekker rebels with hate against a world ruled through power and demeaning subordination, and this hate propels him on a final rampage of disquiet and disturbance, of "Rumor." Bekker plunges into a tumultuous underworld of destruction and insurgency, an underworld which threatens the placid surface of society. The protagonist's language leads him into the ugliness of human existence and forces the reader down into this hell to confront an existential chaos common to all but overlooked and suppressed by a society struggling to get ahead. The positive potential of

Strauß' work lies in the ripples Bekker creates which, although they ultimately dissipate in apathy here, nevertheless serve as a warning and leave in their wake a gnawing uneasiness and agitation.

The first impression which the reader receives of Strauß' main character is a contradictory one of forceful distinction on the one hand and of degenerating dislocation on the other: "Die ganze Erscheinung in diesem gespaltenen, auseinanderstrebenden Aufzug wirkt wechselnd ältlich und gebrochen, dann wieder männlich überragend" (R.8). Bekker, suddenly and unexpectedly appearing at a party held by his former boss Zachler, is described as the man from outside (R.7). He possesses a discordant and rebellious mind which prevents assimilation into a system. In contrast to his former coworkers, Bekker never allowed himself to be specialized within Zachler's Institute for Information ("Institut für Nachricht"), or to be limited to only this place of employment. Surrounded by the ineffectual meekness of others, Bekker stands out as a man of determination who could be powerful if he so desired: "Unter all dem Winke-Winke von uns anderen ist Bekker wahrhaftig eine schneidende Gebärde. Wenn er je Macht besäße (und sie besitzen wollte!), er könnte mehr Leute an sich ziehen und stärker binden als selbst Zachler..." (R.8). But accompanying Bekker's status as an outsider there is a disconnection. Without a job, without a home, and long since divorced, Bekker finds himself, as exemplified in the opening party scene (R.7), in a circle of isolation, silence, and strangeness, which weakens and disables the protagonist: "Er [Bekker] kommt mir heute etwas schwächtiger vor als in früheren Jahren, trotz der hohen Gestalt, trotz des breiten Schädels mit dem glatt nach hinten gekämmten Haar und den starken Stirnhöckern. Die Schultern hängen so"

(R,7).

The protagonist in this work as in Strauß' earlier ones undergoes a process of increasing isolation and accompanying dissolution. Bekker's isolation and position as an outsider become increasingly absolute as contact with the outside world is gradually destroyed. Breadth of setting and number of characters shrink until focused solely upon Bekker and Grit in the latter's apartment. Bekker sinks into himself to the point that he no longer recognizes an outside objectivity. The protagonist becomes more and more apathetic, increasingly prone to mishaps, and less and less interested in his own outward appearance. He succumbs to paralysis ("Starre": R,109;R,132) and decay ("faulen": R,76;R,92;R,225). One of the final portrayals of Bekker emphasizes his paleness ("ein jähes, absolutes Erbleichen"), slackness and softness ("aufgedunsen," "erschlaft," "weiches"), and his loss of control and determination ("halb aufgeklapptes Maul," "schwach und fahl"). The latent power of his stature and broad forehead as noted in his first description becomes lame, and Bekker becomes an old man nearing death: "So ist er, wie durch ein Gewitter höchster Strahlen, plötzlich Greis und ein halber Idiot geworden, mitten im besten Mannesalter..." (R,224). Oldness is a particularly appropriate metaphor used by Strauß to describe Bekker's condition, for his alienation is motivated by feelings of uselessness and a lack of personal contact, the two worst diseases afflicting the old in today's society:

"Vor allem das Altsein", sagt Bekker und spricht das Mikrophon persönlich an, "ist ein wahres Wesen des Seins. Und plötzlich. Sie schrecken einer jenseits vom anderen über und sind's. Die anderen Leute sind nicht geneigt, die Alten noch suchend anzusehen. Die wollen von ihnen nichts. Das muß man ertragen. Die eigenen Träume noch haben dich ausgesperrt. Aber wenn draußen nachts nur ein bißchen Verkehr von ferne raunt, bist du beruhigt. Diese Leute sind

beschäftigt, sie fahren, sie lieben sich nicht" (R,196).

Again in this novel by Strauß one finds a love story: Bekker loves, he seeks warm human contact, and he needs to be needed. This is obvious in the pitiful scene with the Pakistanis, where Bekker promises them jobs in order to create a refuge of belonging and companionship for himself (R,198-210). It is above all apparent in the relationship between Bekker and his daughter Grit, who comes to represent for Bekker the final resting place for his hope of love. The plot of the novel consists of the actions of Bekker and his daughter: they renew their acquaintance at the party, Bekker moves into Grit's apartment, they vacation together, Bekker visits Grit at the hospital and tries to take care of her. It is at times when Grit needs help that Bekker remains in command of his facilities and the situation (R,115-116). Bekker becomes more and more dependent upon Grit, to the point that he lives only for her and threatens to suffocate her in his embrace: "Ohne die rechten Begriffe dafür zu haben, geht Ihr [Grit] plötzlich, in einem hohen Grauen, der letzte Sinn dieser langsamen Umschlingung auf: "Das ist keine Liebe!" ruft sie, 'das ist wirklich keine Liebe!" (R,229).

Bekker's longing for human closeness is manifest in the importance of communication for him, both non-verbal and verbal. Eye contact is essential to eradicate fear and suspicion and to foster love between two people: "Oh, da muß man sich aber gut ansehen, muß sich geduldig in den Augen liegen, um die Gewißheit zu gewinnen, daß man wahrlich nicht Angst voreinander zu haben braucht. ... Die Liebe wartet aufs Augenlicht" (R,96). Bekker judges people on the basis of their eye contact (R,172), and becomes immediately suspicious when Grit's doctor hides behind his

sunglasses (R.182). Furthermore, he conveys and receives emotional signals through his eyes (R.174). To establish contact with another person the capacity to listen, in addition to frank eye contact, is necessary: "[s]chau sie an, hör hin..." (R.163). Listening is the only worthy act of submission which exists, and Grit draws out her father's words with her patient ear: "Nun hast du kleine Augen bekommen, Grit. Dein Zuhören hat mich bis hierher geführt und besänftigt mich jetzt. Zuhören ist eine schöne Unterwerfung und die einzig würdige" (R.49).

Bekker is driven by his need to speak, to unleash his torrent of words ("Redeschwall": R.97) before an audience, and even if the public is imaginary or only desired, he continues to talk to them, to reach out to a "du." In the opening scene at Zachler's party Bekker and Grit retreat to another room where the father talks on and on until the morning hours: "Je mehr er davon trinkt, je feiner und bewegter Grit zugegen ist und hört, wunderschön hört, desto rücksichtsloser redet der Vater seine zerstückelte Welt hervor, und diese Rede will nicht enden..." (R.19). The remaining pages of the novel present this stream of words. Seldom is it clear to whom Bekker speaks, whether to Grit, to Zachler, to his father, or to the world. But he consistently uses his language as a means of communication which reaches out to a listening and answering partner: "Bleib bei mir. Rede mit mir" (R.25). Bekker's words are repeatedly interspersed with a direct address to his opposite. In addition, the frequent usage of the pronoun "we" instead of "I" emphasizes Bekker's need not only to talk, but to talk to someone. Upon withdrawal of such a partner as the protagonist becomes increasingly isolated, the seemingly endless flow of words breaks. Bekker stammers and utters meaningless

and incomprehensible sounds: "Der aufgebäumte Redner ist jetzt in sich zusammengerutscht. Es will sich nur noch ein dünnes, trauriges Murmeln erheben" (R,213). Finally, even the stuttering of the protagonist is silenced.

The flow of words springs directly from the protagonist's inner mind. He does not talk about his everyday activities, but rather reveals the state of his subjective consciousness, i.e., his imagination, dreams, fears, and thoughts. The irrational frenzy of his language manifests the restlessness of his mind: "Er redet aufgewühlt und oft in dunklen, schroffen Fantasien, die wenig über sein Tun und Handeln, sein äußerliches Leben und viel über seinen Zustand, seinen unfriedlichen, nach allen Seiten zugleich sich aufbäumenden Geist verraten" (R,18-19). Bekker's speech leads him into his memory: "Damals in der Vierundvierzigsten Straße – Ich hatte ja keine Ahnung! Ich hatte ja keine Ahnung von dem, der sich da heute erinnert. Und dies unwissende Gestern, eine nie erlebte, animalische Unschuld, dies Tier jagt dich jetzt durch die Straßen" (R,34). Memories plague and pursue the protagonist. Long since forgotten incidences propel themselves into the protagonist's awareness and force Bekker to confront these pictures of his past. As was true of the previous two works by Strauß, the protagonist here comes face to face with his inner self.

The reflection, confrontation, and expression of self through language are manifest within a narrative perspective which is difficult to pinpoint. At times the viewpoint is that of a third person narrator, at other times the self speaks directly in the first person. The narrator seems to attempt an objective account of a fragment of Bekker's life, but again and again slips almost unnoticed into the protagonist's own thoughts, feelings, and words:

Och, ich bin eigentlich nicht alt", antwortet der Vater zerstreut und behaglich, "und ich lebe ja auch gar nicht besonders von meinen Erinnerungen." Indem er nun schweigend weitergeht, spürt er, wie sehr er die Stadt vermißt und die Ruhe, die ihm die Stadt hin und wieder gönnt. So in der Ruhe nach einer durchwanderten Nacht auf einer Bank endlich zum Sitzen kommen, draußen auf leerem Spielplatz am Rande irgendeiner Schlafstadt. Der breite Quader einer Mietskaserne im kühlen Morgen. Um sechs Uhr zwanzig springen in den kleinen Küchen von oben bis unten, kreuz und quer über die ganze Wand die Lichter an. Arbeiter mit Frau im Morgenmantel und Thermosflasche auf dem Tisch. Arbeiter mit Frau, beide zum Dienst gekleidet, am Küchentisch. Frau allein in Jeans und Pullover mit Kaffeetasse im Stehen. Ein Morgen in über fünfzig kleinen Fenstern, wie auf einer Videowabenwand . . . Da ist zum einen das Geld, das wir gut verdienen (noch sogar ich, bei größter Schmach, bekomme es aus sicherer Kasse), zum anderen das Deutschland, dessen Scharren und Schübe wir nicht wahrheitsgetreu bemessen und bemerken können, so angestrengt wir auch hinstarren und die Ohren spitzen, wir dürftigen Spanner des Zeitgeschehens (R.94-95).

The above passage begins in the third person, calling Bekker "the father" and "he." The protagonist's words are clearly marked with quotations. His feelings are objectively discussed ("er spürt"). But in listing the feelings of the protagonist one gradually loses sight of an objective narrator. Instead of stating that Bekker sees certain scenes with his mind's eye, these scenes are simply related. It has become unclear as to who is now the narrator. In the second paragraph the narrative perspective of the first person has taken over.

Central to the novel is not only Bekker's relationship with his daughter, but interpersonal interaction of all types within many varying societal settings. Scenes unroll between doctor and patient, teacher and pupil, father and son, man and woman, boss and worker, and between friends. The common denominator of all these relationships is the structure of suppressor and suppressed. Interaction between people functions not according to mutual respect and love, but based upon power

and humiliation. The world, as miniaturized in Zachler's Institute for Information, is divided into a handful of people with a strong self-image and the many people suffering from weak identities. Both groups are totally dependent upon each other. The majority of people are so concerned with climbing the social ladder that they are willing to give up their own being and identity. In their weakness they must seek the life-giving and strengthening ether of a hero, i.e., of one of those few people who possess a strong self (R.12-13). These heroes are equally dependent upon their underlings, for the latter form the basis of the former's support and power: "Die Ichstarken werden täglich stärker. Die, denen sie folgen dürfen, Geniegegeschmeiß, gefräßige Wracks, sprechen sie Größe um Größe zu, weil ja niemand eines unsicheren Wackelkopfes Diener sein mag" (R.14).

Bekker refuses to accept power in any kind of interpersonal relationship, a refusal which accounts for his position as an outsider. He is the only man who has courage enough to exist, or at least attempt to exist, without the system of societal dependencies epitomized in Zachler's Institute (R.7). Power within a relationship, above all within the one of love, places one of the partners in a position of humiliation and degradation: "Doch nur nicht Macht haben! Über niemanden. Macht in jeder Form ist lächerlich und abscheulich, auch im allerengsten Eck, auch und erst recht in der Liebe, wo so schnell einer zum Absteiger wird in des anderen Auge" (R.46). Bekker prefers an openly declared fight to the deceit and falsity which typifies interpersonal relationships: "Ach, es ist mir ja so lieb, wenn es nur wirklich ein Kampf ist, statt zu ersticken in dieser vermauschelten, dreckigen Lügenwelt der Beziehungen!" (R.161). Open

conflict implies two worthy if not equal adversaries who oppose each other in a manner which allows the opponents to maintain their independence and dignity. Bekker treasures his previous relationship of war with his boss Zachler because, far from demeaning either partner, it in fact forced Bekker to develop his own power and esteem to a maximum: "Man findet im Leben nur einmal einen solchen Gegner, um den es sich lohnt, auf der Höhe seiner Kräfte – und seines Ansehens! – zu bleiben, und wahrscheinlich ist das eine noch seltenere Kostbarkeit als die sogenannte große Liebe" (R.54–55).

The most effective weapon of the powerful is language. Regardless of whether the interaction of suppressor/suppressed takes place at the interpersonal level or between a state and its citizens, the order of language ensures the ruler the position of dominance. Bekker observes a German couple belittling their Danish "friends" struggling to communicate in German (R.157). The protagonist feels no fear of people who do not speak his own language, for they do not possess the tool of manipulation and suppression. Society is obsessed with languages of all sorts, i.e., with any type of code which systematizes accumulated information. It collects systems and logic and proof and gathers meanings and laws to the point that the subject has vanished within explanations and codes: "In Allem ist Information und Sprache, von der winzigen Bakterienzelle bis in den geheimsten Traumzipfel, wir sind überfüllt mit Mikrotexen, Codes und Alphabeten, Sprache überall und lauter Gesetzesherrschaft und fremde Ordnungen. Wo sollte da noch für ein Ich Platz sein?" (R.144–45). These languages impose law and order which are alien to the subject. Religions and ideologies are examples of languages which guarantee man a safe

and meaningful position at the center of the world (R,143). But such guarantees are increasingly threatened in today's world. Society's neatly ordered bits and pieces of information are menaced by anarchy, by disorder and tumult, by an uneasy "Rumor":

Der Ordnungen habe wir schließlich viel zu viele gesammelt und wild aufeinander getürmt und ein bestürzend Übermaß an Sinn in die Welt gesetzt. Zuviel der Logiken, Beweise, Erfahrungen, Vernünfte, als daß das Ganze nicht doch auf die krauseste und ursprünglichste Unordnung hinausliefe. Die Unordnung, die immer noch unterdrückte Rede des Ganzen, ein Rumor bloß, aber überall stärker hervordringend (R,146-47).

Bekker, as the declared enemy of the powerful (R,196-97), rejects the systems and orders of society and listens for the disquiet and rumbling just barely audible below a placid surface. He wants to peel back the modern layers of skin to reach this state of original disorder (R,147). He fights his battle against the powerful with hate and rebellion, and by means of a language of turmoil.

In the darkness behind the protagonist there looms an old man, a fallen but tyrannical war officer, desirous of revenge, who drapes his heavy cloak of battle around the shoulders of his son (R,21). With this cloak Bekker inherits the boiling rage, destructive anger, frustrated desire for revenge, and hate lodged within his father: "Haß, Verachtung, Vernichtungsdrang und Wille zum Tod . . ." (R,21). Armed with these gifts Bekker approaches the world in a final frenzy of hate and anarchy. He will expend himself on one last tumultuous rampage: "Noch einmal aus sich herausgehen, noch einmal sich austoben, ja?" (R,24). The energy and disquiet of hate propel him toward his declared enemies, the powerful. Bekker's rebellion, although driven by hate, is not to be judged in an exclusively negative light. In fact, on both a personal and societal level

one finds within the destruction of hate the hope for rebirth or change. Hate is the ultimate in opposition. For Bekker personally his rebellious hate offers him a final refuge before submission and dissolution. It provides him a direction and goal. Only within opposition can he still manage to gather himself into assertiveness and action. Seen within a broader context, hate forms a nucleus of opposition indigestible for a state which gobbles up all other traces of nonconformity:

Der Staat, der mit allem und jedem, was sich ihm als die Kraft des Ganz Anderen in den Weg stellt, fertig und nichts als fertig werden will, es immer versteht, zu verteufeln, zu verdrängen, zu zerschlagen, er hat seinen unheimlichen Meister, seinen ersten nichtschluckbaren Widerstand gefunden in einer kleinen, stammelnden Elite von Hassern... (R.75).

This small and stammering, yet indestructible and uncompromising core of haters endeavors by means of its otherness to bring the machinery of functionalized society into disarray. They are fighters against the uniformity and sameness of politics and of a purposeless life (R.75). As is true of all divisive forces, the destruction produced by the haters, sometimes called assassins, could result in a different order and new life, and for this reason the state wars against them (R.215).

Bekker's rebellion takes place within the realm of language. His many speeches and long conversations reflect his inner disquiet and turmoil, and are accordingly marked with chaotic disruption: "Eine Angst geht übers Land, als würde der Herzog von Württemberg wieder junge Männer ausheben und für Soldaten nach England vergeben . . . Die ganze Richtung sprengen. Schatten schaffen und. Das ist des Gekröses Jeden Tag. Von Vielen nach Oldenburg. Warum schließen die? . . ." (R.37-38). Choppiness, fragmentation, and omission of connective material typify the flow of words which give expression to Bekker's thoughts: "Abwarten.

Schürfen und Scharren. Der Leib ist Gestein, verschlossen der Leib, verschlossen die Sprache. Ablagerung, Verwerfung. Eine neben vielen Krusten der Erde. Aber unter unserer stockend trockenen Rede muß ein Großer Fluß sein . . ." (R.178). The subjective irrationality and chaos of Bekker's language serves to defy the order of society. It undermines the codes and systems used by the suppressors to contain and control the suppressed. He attempts by means of language to break the codes of order and reveal the actual disorder of existence. Stuttering and stumbling within one's speech is a sign that the totality of the system has been questioned by the individual: "Öffentliche Sprache, deren Besonnenheit schutzgepanzert. Und wenn nur ein Öffentlicher wagte, ein klein wenig frei schweifen ließe – es müßte ihm auf der Stelle schwindelig werden, so daß seine Rede durcheinanderpurzelte..." (R.77) Stammering indicates a measure of individual thought and freedom. The rebellious haters, with Bekker included, are described as a group of stammerers (R.75). To escape the power of the suppressors it is necessary to escape their language of order: "Es rasselt, und abgehackt. Sprachballungsräume. Bloß raus hier! Raus aus der Sprache . . .! Ich will nichts mehr hören und sehen. Lieber sein als scharren!" (R.78).

Bekker's language leads him into the depths of a tumultuous city. The downward pathway appears as a motif throughout the entire novel²⁸ and must be considered the direction or intent behind the novel. Bekker is drawn to the darkness of the city's streets, for it is here that the power of hate and pain is boiling and building beneath the placid calm of society's order. It is here that the rumbling of unrest is audible: "Ich werd mal langsam weiterstreifen, die Stadt hinunter, Grit, weil da im Grund ein

Rumor ist, der noch gehört werden will . . ." (R.42). Here, in the deepest regions of hell itself, one finds the rose of explosion and destruction which threatens to bloom (R.76). The protagonist commands the reader down into a hell which has surfaced: "Gehen wir also die Stadt hinunter. Sehen wir uns um. Wir sind angelangt. Hier ist es, Tartarien. Mehr kommt nicht. Von himmelsweit unter der Erde, wo sie die Alten dachten, ist unsere Unterwelt emporgetaucht bis ans Tageslicht, für jedermann begehbbare Hölle . . ." (R.25). This hell is the boiling pot of chaos, and the reader is submerged within this disorder by means of the protagonist's unruly but strongly rhythmical language. Bekker repeatedly commands the reader to see and hear and follow him. In addition, Bekker's speech is characterized by repetition of parallel structures and by rich alliterations, often in connection with a multiplication of words of similar meaning:

Machtstreber, Ehrgeizlinge, Herostrate, Brandstifter (R.77).

So nicht und nicht anders. Kein Danach und keine Utopie.
Schüsse überm Kuchen, Entführung, Schlag, Schreck und
Schock (R.74).

Rumor, dumpfes Geröll, wiederholtes Gerede, Gerücht (R.65).

The chanting heaviness and the slowly building intensification of the language serve not only to mirror, but also to immerse the reader within the thickly churning pot of uneasy disturbance menacing to boil over and rebel at any moment.

The journey into the depths of the city represents for both Bekker and the reader a confrontation with the existential suffering of mankind. The reality of the city is likened to hell and to the worst of concentration camps, but this is the reality of contemporary society. To plunge into the

disorder and irrationality of this reality is to come to terms with the existential chaos lying in wait behind the veneer of civilized order. The protagonist does not reflect upon the state of mankind, as was true of the narrator protagonist in Die Widmung, but rather shows its condition by unfolding and repeating anonymous scenes of ugliness and brutality before the eyes and ears of the reader: "Du hörst, die nackten Glieder mit ihren Mulden klatschen gegen eine Wand von Kacheln im Baderaum. ... Siehst du: er schlägt sie, doch sie fällt nicht um" (R,25). The protagonist commands the reader to open his eyes and ears to the pitiful existence of all of mankind. This is at the same time a demand to confront one's own self, for the reality of pain and suffering--the reality of mishaps and chaos--is one shared by all of society: "Und doch befehle ich mir: schau sie an, hör hin, geiz nicht mit deinem Mitleid, denn das steht dir nicht zu. Wir sind Ein Leid, Ein Wunsch, Ein Danebengehen" (R,163).

Bekker exhausts his energy and inevitably his very life in a rebellion and unrest which, lacking an enemy, turns inward. He finds no partner for either his love or his hate and foresees his madly spinning end: "...der enge Umlauf meiner Lebensschritte [schließt] immer enger [zu] und [endet] bald vielleicht in einem tollen Wirbel um die eigene Achse" (R,21). But he has left behind a feeling of disquiet and agitation. He has communicated some of his restless energy to the reader, and this reader has heard the rumblings of a rebellion ready to explode into chaos.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined three prose pieces of Botho Strauß within the context of New Subjectivity. It has been seen that Strauß' protagonists

undergo an experience of alienation similar in many ways to other new subjective characters. All three works trace the dissolution of the protagonists' sense of self and identity and their gradual isolation. All three delve into the inner mind of the main character and portray not objective reality but the subject's thoughts, dreams, hallucinations, and feelings. Unique to Strauß is his emphasis on interpersonal relationships and love of varying types: sisterly in Marlenes Schwester, between man and woman in Die Widmung, and between father and daughter in Rumor. In all three works the turn to the self is motivated by separation or abandonment, which is the most devastating of all personal crises for Strauß. Upon loss of a societal context the subject is plunged into subjective irrationality. This is the state of "Irresein," or craziness--this is the new subjective experience of alienation. Strauß critically contrasts this individual irrationality to the reason of contemporary society. Society is so concerned with logic, informational systems, and order that there is no longer room for individual feelings and thoughts. The form of all three works is molded to the consciousness of the subject and as such can be termed a stream of consciousness whereby the subject reflects upon the self. The most notable characteristic of subjective reflection is a constantly changing narrative perspective. In addition, Strauß' works are marked with fragmentation, a lack of orderly progression, and an absence of causality. Through such formal elements the reader is provoked into an experience of alienation and self-confrontation similar to that of the protagonist. The oppressive reason and objectivity of society has been undermined through the new subjective confrontation with self.

¹Georg Hensel, "Vom Lehrtheater zum Leertheater: Beobachtungen in der Spielzeit 1978/79," Jahresring, 1979/80, p. 305

²Hensel, p. 305.

³Walter Hinck, "Deutsche Dramatik in der Bundesrepublik seit 1965: (Mit einer Auswahlbibliographie und einer Liste der Uraufführungen)," in Deutsche Literatur in der Bundesrepublik seit 1965: Untersuchungen und Berichte, ed. Paul Michael Lützeler and Egon Schwarz (Königstein: Athenäum, 1980), p. 73.

⁴Botho Strauß, "Versuch, ästhetische und politische Ereignisse zusammenzudenken: Neues Theater 1967-70," Theater heute, 11, No.10 (1970), 68.

⁵Hans Wolfschütz, "Botho Strauß," in Kritisches Lexikon zur deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur, ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold (München: edition text + kritik, 1978), pp. 2-3.

⁶Wolfschütz, p. 5.

⁷Strauß, 68.

⁸Hansjoachim Bleyl, "Ein Theater-Ereignis in der Berliner Schaubühne: 'Die Hypochonder' von Botho Strauß," Neue Rundschau, 84 (1973), 340.

⁹Wolfschütz, p. 4.

¹⁰Wolfschütz, p. 4.

¹¹Wolfschütz, p. 5.

¹²Marlenes Schwester (München: Carl Hanser, 1977). Die Widmung: Eine Erzählung (München: Carl Hanser, 1977). Rumor: Roman (München: Carl Hanser, 1980). Hereafter cited in the text with (MS), (Wi), and (R) respectively.

¹³Rolf Michaelis, "Stimmen - Meer im Kopf: 'Marlenes Schwester' - Botho Strauß debütiert als Erzähler," Die Zeit, 21 March 1975, Sec. Literatur-Beilage, p. 4.

¹⁴Michaelis, p. 4.

¹⁵Michaelis, p. 4.

¹⁶Reinhard Baumgart, "Gefühle als Handlungen: Die ersten Erzählungen von Botho Strauß," Süddeutsche Zeitung, 17 May 1975, p. 80.

¹⁷Peter Belcken, "Neue Subjektivität: Zur Prosa der siebziger Jahre." in Deutsche Literatur in der Bundesrepublik seit 1965: Untersuchungen und Berichte (Königstein: Athenäum, 1980), p. 175.

¹⁸Wolfschütz, p. 7.

¹⁹Gerhard vom Hofe and Peter Pfaff, Das Elend des Polyphem: Zum Thema der Subjektivität bei Thomas Bernhard, Peter Handke, Wolfgang Koeppen und Botho Strauß (Königstein, Athenäum, 1980), p. 114.

²⁰Wolfgang Limmer, "Flitterwochen einer Trennung," Der Spiegel, 28 Nov. 1977, p. 228.

²¹Hofe and Pfaff, p. 124.

²²Martin Roda Becher, "Poesie der Unglücksfälle: Über die Schriften von Botho Strauß," Merkur, 32 (1978), 626.

²³Marcel Reich-Ranicki, "Gleicht die Liebe einem Monolog?: 'Widmung', eine Erzählung von Botho Strauß," Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 10 Sept. 1977, Sec. Literatur.

²⁴Limmer, p. 228.

²⁵Klaus R. Scherpe and Hans-Ulrich Treichel, "Vom Überdruß leben: Sensibilität und Intellektualität als Ereignis bei Handke, Born und Strauß," Monatshefte, 73 (1981), 188. The authors not only create a different spelling for Strauß' character Hannah, but even rename the protagonist RobertIII

²⁶Limmer, p. 228.

²⁷Scherpe and Treichel, 194.

²⁸See for example pp. 24, 36, 42, 76, 104, 131, and 194.

Conclusion

This dissertation has investigated the themes and forms of new subjective literature. On the basis of this investigation a definition of New Subjectivity is provided: the subject is both the object and means of portrayal. The turn inward to the personal world of the subject is motivated by the shocking invalidation of objective truths and systems. Subjectivity is dependent upon a preceding experience of alienation, and this experience is the common denominator of new subjective literature. The protagonist's alienated state is not only thematically central, but also determines the form of the work. A pattern of alienation has been traced for New Subjectivity in general, and the contours of this same pattern, although with variations, became apparent in the works of two specific new subjective authors.

A comparison in Chapter One of New Subjectivity to the literature immediately preceding it revealed that the literature of the seventies is new because it so radically rejects the politically oriented literature produced during the late sixties. Instead of objective ideology and societal revolution, the new subjective author portrays the irrational consciousness of the subject. However, the boundary between the two literary trends is not as absolute as it appears at first glance. Peter Handke, for instance, wrote subjective literature even at the height of political activism. New Subjectivity is the latest manifestation of a literary tradition of subjectivity. The first chapter discussed the many similarities between New Subjectivity and Expressionism. These similarities rest upon the common experience of alienation, and New Subjectivity can be viewed as a reaffirmation of

Nietzsche's break with tradition.

The second chapter traced the destruction which accompanies the new subjective experience of alienation. The new subjective protagonist no longer trusts in the explanations and systems of society. The rejection of a political ideology is especially prevalent. The loss of a trustworthy context plunges the individual into the irrationality and instability of his own feelings. No longer assured a meaningful definition or role within society, many new subjective protagonists experience the dissolution of identity. They become apathetic, lose touch with the world, and often their pathway leads to death. New Subjectivity is harshly criticized for its rejection of explanatory systems and for the lack of individual resistance. Many commentators find that new subjective literature possesses no societal relevance.

Chapter Three responded to the criticism leveled at New Subjectivity by positing a positive potential for the experience of alienation. The destruction of alienation frees the individual from preconceptions and prejudices to rediscover an awareness of himself and his world. In the absence of a predefined role, the subject embarks upon a search for self. In the absence of an objective and preconceived manner of perception, the individual has the opportunity to re-experience the world. In the confrontation with death the individual becomes fully conscious of life. Far from being trivial and socially irrelevant, New Subjectivity portrays societal non-existence, and the hope for change lies in the experience of alienation.

The positive potential often remains unrealized within the new subjective work itself, but the potential for change has been directed at the reader by means of the form of the work. Personal engagement,

whereby the author communicates the experience of alienation to the reader, is revealed in Chapter Four as the common engaged intent of the New Subjectivists. The form of the literary work draws the reader into active participation with the text and afflicts him with the uncertainty and instability of the protagonist. Common formal elements in new subjective works are fragmentation, an uncertain narrator, and structural openness. The reader is left with the questions of the protagonist, and the responsibility for change lies in his hands.

The chapter devoted to Peter Handke disclosed the typical new subjective pattern as discussed in the preceding chapters and outlined a development within Handke's works toward refound orientation. The dialectic relationship evident in Handke's theoretical and primary works between fear and happiness corresponds to the pattern of alienation and positive potential discussed for New Subjectivity in general. His work Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter must be considered an early and radical example of new subjective alienation. As such it is characterized by fear and evidences many of the themes and forms of New Subjectivity. Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung is a pivotal work and clearly evidences the contradictory states of fear and happiness and the relationship between them. The fear of alienation is necessary for mystical moments of happiness in which the individual experiences a refound harmony and union with the world. The most recent Handke work discussed here, Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire, portrays the attainment of orientation. The protagonist overcomes subjective alienation by means of aesthetic communication.

In the works of Botho Strauß examined in Chapter Six the personal crisis of separation plunges the protagonists into a state of alienation.

Another human being provides the meaning and context for the individual's life: In Marlenes Schwester it is the sister, for Richard in Die Widmung it is Hannah, and Bekker of Rumor seeks human contact in general, and specifically the love of his daughter. Upon the withdrawal of the loved one, all three protagonists undergo a process of dissolution and increasing isolation very similar to other new subjective protagonists. Lacking societal context Strauß' protagonists turn inward to question, explore, and confront the self. Lacking outer objectivity they are plunged into their own subjective irrationality. Herein lies the positive potential and intent of Strauß' literature, for this irrationality is critically contrasted to the oppressive reason of society. Although the potential is not realized within the work itself, the reader is subjected to the experience of alienation and subjective irrationality by means of a form determined by the protagonists' inner mind.

In conclusion, New Subjectivity presents an experience of alienation which is irrational and terrifying. Through the work's form the reader is drawn into the experience and burdened with the questions, uncertainties, and yearnings of the protagonist. Within the reader lies the hope for the realization of the positive potential of the negative experience of alienation.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

Abbreviations for Primary Literature

- (A) Bernhard, Der Atem: Eine Entscheidung, 1978.
- (ATE) Peter Handke, Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter, 1970.
- (BA) Peter Handke, Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied, 1972.
- (BE) Peter Handke, Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms, 1972.
- (FB) Gabriele Wohmann, Frühherbst in Badenweiler, 1978.
- (fP) Martin Walser, Ein fliehendes Pferd, 1978.
- (GG) Hans J. Fröhlich, Im Garten der Gefühle, 1975.
- (H) Verena Stefan, Häutungen, 1975.
- (HM) Peter O. Chotjewitz, Die Herren des Morgengrauens, 1978.
- (JL) Martin Walser, Jenseits der Liebe, 1976.
- (K) Karin Struck, Klassenliebe, 1973.
- (L) Peter Schneider, Lenz, 1973.
- (LS-V) Peter Handke, Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire, 1980.
- (M) Max Frisch, Montauk, 1975.
- (MS) Botho Strauß, Marlenes Schwester, 1975.
- (NL) Peter Härtling, Nachgetragene Liebe, 1980.
- (R) Botho Strauß, Rumor, 1980.
- (SE) Peter Handke, Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung, 1975.
- (SG) Nicolas Born, Die erdabgewandte Seite der Geschichte, 1976.
- (SS) Dieter Wellershoff, Die Schönheit des Schimpansen, 1977.
- (T) Karin Struck, Trennung, 1978.
- (Wi) Botho Strauß, Die Widmung, 1977.

(Wü)

Peter Handke, Als das Wünschen noch geholfen hat, 1974.

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- , Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972.
- , Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972.
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